



RE-DISCOVERING BERLIN
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Having been born in Berlin, I was looking forward to coming back and spending more time in a city that I left only with hesitation. Unlike in many other places, natives tend to stay in Berlin. It is a city that has much to offer and even before the Wall fell West Berlin was an interesting place to live. Yet, it did not cater for everyone and I left in 1994 to pursue my interests in animal behaviour and marine biology. I have only been back for short visits ever since. These visits allowed me to see changes, but there are many hidden aspects to any place that will only reveal themselves during a prolonged stay. The year at the Wiko was going to give me an opportunity to experience Berlin after a 15-year break and re-acquaint myself with it.

Koenigsallee provided an excellent base since it is one of the parts that had seen the fewest changes since the Wall came down and felt very familiar. Nevertheless, the stay at

the Wiko was my first time in Berlin that I did not recognize the city as my hometown. Part of living in West Berlin had been the feeling of living in a province that was cut off from the dominant hubbub of the world. It came with a certain self-centeredness that was perhaps not a good thing. This fairly central aspect of Berlin life to those who lived there seemed to be gone and has been replaced by a more cosmopolitan air and open attitude of most inhabitants. I enjoyed seeing these contrasts and am amazed at how quickly this major city had changed its face.

Being at the Wiko was, of course, a real treat and brought a life that was somewhat artificial in its academic richness. Few places allow, much less foster the degree of interdisciplinary exchange that is part of everyday life at the Wiko. I enjoyed the Tuesday colloquia and other seminars and conversations on subjects that I am usually not exposed to. One of the highlights was a discussion group on the topic of human uniqueness, a relatively informal gathering that was initiated by Steven Lukes to explore differences between animals and humans. It was open to all Fellows, but had a core group of around six people that attended it regularly. We discussed obvious topics such as teaching, theory of mind, language and culture, but also some less commonly found in human-animal comparisons, such as emotions, play, music, norms, social alliances and hierarchies. The multi-disciplinary composition of our group ensured a lively debate and novel insights for all of us. Outside of this group there were also many new inspirations to be found. I was able to discuss the origins of music and the relation between animal signals and music with Jonathan Harvey, Maria Majno and Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus at the Wiko and with staff of the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig. These interactions motivated me to explore the basic physiological changes caused by sounds in animals in relation to music.

My own plan for the year at the Wiko was to write on the evolution of complexity in mammalian communication. This was a project I had planned together with my colleague Klaus Zuberbühler. I used a large chunk of my time delving into the philosophical literature on the subject. Not surprisingly, this brought a fair amount of confusion to our well-laid plan. Fortunately, we were lucky in that there were a number of Fellows who shared at least some of our interests, which gave us the opportunity to engage in many discussions that were directly relevant to our project. Bert Hölldobler, Robert Page, Raghavendra Gadagkar and Olof Leimar brought me up to speed on communication in insects, Penny Brown introduced me to the intricacies of people reference and interaction in human language, Frank Pasemann explained the power of distributed representation in

neural networks and Vasilis Politis was at hand to answer my questions about the philosophical views on our subject. Furthermore, to enable and stimulate discussions with relevant people in our field, we organised two short meetings during our time at the Wiko. The first one, on complexity in animal communication, was generously supported by the Otto und Martha Fischbeck-Stiftung. Sadly, it was somewhat hampered by the eruption of an Icelandic volcano that stopped most air traffic in and around Europe, but undaunted we still had an interesting day of exchange with colleagues from Germany, Austria, Sweden and the UK. The second and somewhat larger meeting was on reference in animal communication and funded by an EU grant. This meeting focussed on the definition of reference in animal communication and the requirements to demonstrate its presence in communication systems. We invited colleagues from the fields of biology, psychology and philosophy to review data on reference in animal communication and to discuss the usefulness of the functional reference concept in animal communication studies. These meetings have been at the centre of our project. While it is usually a great undertaking to organise meetings, the professional help that the Wiko staff offered made it a painless experience. All in all, the Wiko has been invaluable in the progress of our project and instilled it with a unique level of input from outside our own discipline.

I am now back in St. Andrews in preparation for a new semester. Administration and teaching demands are back in full swing and the time at the Wiko seems like a distant memory of a now lost paradise. But while it was a real treat to be able to concentrate on one's work with no distractions, a perhaps even more enjoyable part of the stay was the new friendships that often formed outside of discipline boundaries. I enjoyed watching the World Cup and discussing the differences (or lack thereof) in research methods between the humanities and the natural sciences with Martin Puchner and Amanda Claybaugh, the interesting insights into all aspects of life in India provided by Yogendra Yadav and Madhulika Banerjee and discussions about the German and other academic systems with Harald Wolf and Galin Tihanov. These and other new friends found among the Fellows are a true gift that Wiko has bestowed upon us. Last but not least, a big advantage was the opportunity for our children to experience German culture and learn my native language as one of theirs. They have done remarkably well and are now truly living in two cultures. I thank the Wissenschaftskolleg and all of its staff for making this time for our whole family so enjoyable.