ROBERT LEPAGE'S VISION

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French-Canadian director Robert Lepage's vision of modern life is full of chance encounters that later unfold in complex stories. In such recent theater classics as the *Seven Streams of River Ota* and *Lipsynch*, these complex narratives span the globe and bring together historical episodes, large and small, as well as different languages, cultures and biographies. They combine the everyday with the extraordinary in an increasingly globalized world that is still made up of specific local events and circumstances.

The buildings in Grunewald's Wallotstraße are a place that embodies Lepage's vision. The ten months that Fellows, spouses, children and guests spend together with the staff and the Berlin and international networks that make up the Wiko are a time of many

chance encounters, of beginning and continuing stories that transform all of us in the process.

The Wiko is also a place where the world slows down, at least a bit. Here the focus is on looking inward, reflecting and gaining new perspectives – something that is possible only if there is time to let ideas emerge slowly, gradually and without the rush of deadlines. To be sure, the Wiko in 2010 is certainly a different place from in the 1980s or even 1990s. E-mail, Skype and the much easier means of travel in and out of Berlin have turned the Wiko more into a hub than a monastery. And this is what we all experienced during our stay: a constant in and out of Fellows and guests that brought the world at large back to the Grunewald.

How then, did I experience the year at the Wiko? Was it productive? And, if so, by what metric? My own Wiko experience falls squarely within the "Lepenies paradigm". Early in our stay, when most Fellows were busy to unpack, get organized and tackle the plans we all came with – catching up with overdue papers and getting ready to finally write the planned book – we heard about former Rector Wolf Lepenies' criteria for a successful Wiko experience. "If, after 10 months, you have written exactly the book you wanted to write when you came here, this is a failure. If, on the other hand, you leave with a completely new book in mind, this is a success." Or any variation thereof – I think I have heard about six variations of this theme during our year. By this metric, my year was a smashing success that was only possible because of the genuine culture of the Wiko.

Rob Page and I came with a clear project in mind. We had mapped out a book that was the focus of our working group on the *Social Insects as a Model System for Evolutionary Developmental Biology,* a group that also included Olof Leimar, Adam Wilkins and several short-term Fellows and guests, most notably Bert Hölldobler. When we left, our understanding of the topic had been transformed. Thankfully we did not write the original book as planned. Rather, Rob wrote a manuscript that synthesized three decades of experimental work, we began a mathematical modeling project with Olof and we completely rethought the original project. And that is only what happened within our working group.

Very much in the spirit of Lepage's vision, during my year at the Wiko I crossed paths with Yehuda Elkana again. We are both travelers between worlds, geographic as well as intellectual, and share a wide range of interests – from the history of science to the university curriculum, and many friends. Yehuda has been connected with the Wiko "for-

ever"; so much so that he considers himself to be part of the furniture. This year, after his retirement as Rector of the Central European University, he was there as a Fellow and organized a working group on curriculum reform. Many Fellows joined and we had stimulating discussions that resulted in a manifesto and several initiatives related to curriculum reform. Among those, the collaboration between Leuphana University in Lüneburg and Arizona State University stands out and continues the series of unexpected events made possible by the Wiko experience. Both are reform universities in that they go beyond the traditional model and explore what the university of the 21st century could look like. And now we are working towards joint curricula and a global classroom that will enable students from both places to meet, discuss, collaborate and, in the process, expand their horizon – the Wiko model transplanted into university education.

It is difficult to list the many ways the Wiko provides intellectual stimulation. In my case, I came with ideas for two books and left with four clearly mapped-out manuscripts, bridging disciplines and languages. And even though I had been deeply connected to Berlin already, I formed many new collaborations in the city, most notably with the group of Horst Bredekamp at the Humboldt University. The friendships formed during this year continue to enrich our lives, and encounters with people around the globe connect individual biographies back to the Grunewald. (This fall alone, at two of the talks I gave, a former Wiko Fellow was in the audience, thus adding a different dimension to the traditional "after seminar" dinner conversation.) In our era of globalization, the few buildings in the Grunewald connect the world by less than six degrees.