



THE SPIRIT OF THE WIKO
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I came. I wrote a book. I went home. That captures the professional essence of my year of accomplishment at Wiko, but completely misses the true meaning and value of this year. When I arrived I planned to hold a workshop that explored the use of social insects as models for developmental evolution. I wanted to ask whether we could substantiate our claims, and the claims of several other groups, that we can learn something about the developmental evolution of individual organisms by studying social insects. Are there broad

developmental principles of complex organizational structures that are maintained across different levels of biological organization and are the targets for natural selection? The workshop would be followed by a joint effort with my workgroup members to write a book about it. However, with the workshop I discovered that developmental evolution means different things to different people. And within the social insect community it has even more meanings, and, even more importantly, different levels of importance with respect to research agendas. The workshop did not develop along the principles I wished, and did not lead to a satisfactory answer to my question.

I became very skeptical of our objective, and the claims that we were going to explore, and decided that we were far from sitting down and writing a book about this very fuzzy, poorly articulated, and poorly understood topic. But, I had a wonderful distraction. I was invited to give the Ernst Mayr Lecture to the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science. I had just recently read *The Life of the Bee* by Maurice Maeterlinck and was fascinated by his very romantic and mystical treatment of the social organization of honey bees. He called it the “spirit of the hive”. I took that as a theme for my lecture and tried to work through how social organization emerges as a self-organized property of complex systems, and how it evolves in honey bees. I had the theme for a book.

I never planned to write this book. I never had the intention of being a sole author, and especially never planned to write a book that is geared more for a general audience than for professional specialists. But that is the beauty of the Wiko experience. I had lots of time on my hands, I had a wonderful staff to support my effort, and I had constant encouragement from all of the regulars and Fellows at Wiko. Wiko nurtures creativity. Even if you don't think you have that kind of creative drive or ability, it rubs off on you from all of the creative people who surround you and accept your feeble efforts as interesting and worthwhile. I thank all of them for constant encouragement.

My book is done (at least in draft form), and my Wiko year is over. The weekly colloquia, the Thursday night dinners (the highlight of the week for my wife Michele), the German classes that were so important for Michele, the wonderful ambience of the Wiko in the Grunewald, and of course Berlin, the most exciting city I have experienced. I will return to my university and my normal routines refreshed and eager to get back to work. And, I will work to keep my relationship with this very special institution.