



THE ENCHANTED WOODS
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The thing about the Wiko is that it is hard to pin down. It reminds me of a series of stories called “The Faraway Tree” by Enid Blyton that I read as a child. A group of children discover an extraordinary tree in the enchanted woods surrounding their home. The branches of this tree reach into the clouds and when the children climb up to the top they step through a portal into a magical world. These worlds come and go so that each time they climb up the tree they step into a different world, which they are free to explore, but must leave before it moves on. If they do not leave in time, they get stuck in that world until the next time it returns to the Faraway Tree. Life at the Wiko was just like that; every time you climbed up the tree you never knew what magic world awaited you.

Sometimes it was dreamy and other times a little topsy-turvy, but each time it was new and often surprising. My three months at the Wiko and in Berlin were a time of discovery.

On a personal level, it was a continuous struggle trying to find an equilibrium that best divided my time between social life at the Wiko, the delights of Berlin and what we were all basically meant to be doing ... work. The Grunewald at my doorstep, with its lakes to swim in, leafy paths to go running on and the infamous Devil's Mountain ("Teufelsberg") to explore did not make life any easier. But one can only complain so much about the problem of plenty without losing all credibility. From all this, my message to future Fellows: You are not alone.

During my time in Berlin, I began the groundwork for two new projects that will form a significant part of my research programme for the next few years. One of them relates to microfinance and the other to the effects of demography and, in particular, sex-biased migration on the evolution and maintenance of cooperation among humans. I am grateful to many people, and especially (but certainly not limited to) participants of the weekly evolution group, for discussions that stimulated and clarified my thoughts on many related issues. However, the big discovery for me was nothing even remotely related to these projects that I brought with me to the Wiko, but instead a renewed fascination with quantum physics and its potential interface with biology, courtesy of an exquisite talk by Atac Imamoglu. These introductions are the Wiko's forte.

It is easy to overlook the people who keep this enterprise running, not because they are not noteworthy, quite the contrary. It is because the flaws are so few that one forgets that there is an instrument to start with. I remember the precise moment that I became fully aware of this. It was a few days after the first winter snow and at lunchtime I heard that some of the Fellows had come into the Kolleg to find a pair of cleats in their pigeonholes and not because they asked. The anticipation, good humour and kindness of everyone who looked after us cannot be appreciated enough.

I cannot say I finished anything during my time at the Wiko, neither a paper nor a conversation. In balance, I left with more beginnings than endings. I see this as proof of concept; a place like this should exist.

The following is a list of projects/publications that I worked on during my time at the Wissenschaftskolleg

Lamba, S. “A comparison of the economic literature on microfinance and the evolutionary literature on cooperation.” In *Applied Evolutionary Anthropology: Darwinian Approaches to Contemporary World Issues*, edited by Mahari A. Gibson and David W. Lawson. Springer, 2014.

Lamba, S. “Social learning in cooperative dilemmas” (submitted).

Lamba, S. and V. Nityananda. “The evolution of self-deception: fooling yourself helps fool others” (submitted).

Three grant applications to the Royal Society, British Academy and Economic and Social Research Council (UK) respectively, all of which were successful.