



THE WIKO DNA  
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I am frustrated whenever I need to submit a one-page CV with an application or a grant proposal. Is it really possible to summarize an entire life and academic career on a single page? The exercise definitely makes you feel humble. Even though Wiko is more generous with space, summarizing the multifarious experiences, interactions, and events of the past ten months on a few pages seems like a similarly daunting task. Browsing through the previous yearbooks makes the task appear even more overawing. Many Fellows – 1,650 to be precise – have left their memories and impressions behind. What

could I possibly add or say that hasn't been said, and very eloquently so, hundreds of times before? Perusal of only a handful of randomly chosen reports of former Fellows provides a very clear impression of what emerges as what one might call the Wiko DNA: everybody enjoyed the privilege of having uninterrupted time for reading and writing, the blessing of widening one's personal horizon through interesting discussions over lunch or during the weekly colloquia, the newly formed friendships and collaborations, the only administration in the world that works *for* scientists, and the many cultural and natural distractions offered by this wonderful city. So, no need to say all of that again, even though I would emphatically underline every single one of these points, and only struggle to find different words. But what about the other 23 letters of the alphabet? Is there more to Wiko than these dominant alleles of its DNA? What follows is therefore an attempt to capture some of these additional aspects, represented by key words covering the entire alphabet, that only the 2016/17 Fellows will remember and appreciate:

*Adult Sex Ratio.* The topic of the by far best and most productive Focus Group this year. I had the privilege of exploring the many causes and consequences of the number of adult females and males in a population with Tamás, Steve, and Michael, and I want to thank them for all these insightful, albeit sometimes chaotic discussions, either over Thursday lunch or a bottle of wine on Monday evening. We organized a topical workshop, edited and published a special issue in the world's oldest scientific journal, and struggled successfully to summarize all our newly gained insights in a review article. Although this single sentence summary does not look like much, that's about as much as a focal group can achieve in ten months.

*Breakfast.* Everybody in previous yearbooks has raved about the wonderful dinners. I enjoyed the Wiko breakfasts just as much. The selection of food is sensational and it is much quieter than during lunch or dinner, offering a less stressful environment for unexpected discussions. I definitely enjoyed mine with the few regulars, especially with Hubert and Shaheen.

*Champions League.* Very fond memories of the meetings in front of the Weiße Villa kitchen TV with the other football crazies. I will not forget Avishai's sharp analytical comments and Alberto's joy over winning it all, even though almost everybody else was rooting for Juve. At least Bayern didn't win – right Myles?

*Dunia et al.* I hardly find the words to thank Dunia and the entire kitchen staff for every single meal. It was not only absolutely delicious, but also served with so much love and attention to personal needs. I wish the alphabet had two Ds so I could write another page devoted to their desserts!

*Evening colloquium.* All wonderful encores for the intellectual thirst for additional learning and stimulation. Thanks to all who presented one for their additional work! Because Fellows continued wondering until the end about who got chosen as a speaker by whom and why, it might be good to provide some transparency on this issue early on for future Fellows, however.

*Facebook.* No – not the boring one on the Internet. Thanks to Frédéric, we have our very own collection of professional portraits. It was a very special and intense experience of staring at Frédéric's camera, and the collection of photos will be a unique Wiko souvenir. Thanks also to Hetty for organizing it all!

*Gesprächskonzert.* A new concept and term to me. Wonderful idea, but, honestly, I would have enjoyed one with Beethoven or Puccini even more.

*Home page.* Amazingly organized and up-to-date source of information about activities and previous Fellows. With our March for Science video statements, we left our mark by adding a new category.

*Internet.* Wiko must have been even better in the days before the Internet. I am just old enough to remember those days before the www. Can you imagine a time and place without review requests or e-mails from administrators, staff, and students interrupting your work? By funding a full-time replacement, Wiko created an effective buffer, however, and I am very grateful for that privilege.

*Jogging.* Grunewald offers so many beautiful options for a creative, active break. It is easy to forget that we're living in a city of four million. I will definitely miss my Trimm-Dich-Pfad and the possibility of integrating a run into my schedule at any time of day. I'm sure that Mary, David, and Thomas will agree on this point, even though this in-group includes two lawyers.

*Koenigsallee.* It epitomizes so much about the Wiko experience. It is full of history, from the Stolpersteine to the Villa used by Hermann Göring for his “Reichsbund Reichsjäger-schaft” to the place of Walter Rathenau’s assassination. The beautiful old villas, whose details were much more appreciated after Cornelia’s colloquium and the tour with the local lady in September. The little lake offers an ideal place for a welcome sunbath on the way home after lunch. Maybe only Michael’s campus in Canberra can compete?

*Library.* Most people think of the fabulous service of the Wiko library. My foremost association is with the few very informal discussions on sex and gender issues organized by the ASR focal group in the club room, aka “the other library”. Without a rigid list of discussants (perhaps worth trying in the colloquia?), lively discourse ensued. On those afternoons, the Wiko spirit was most tangible for me.

*Mahlzeit!* No one from the class of 2016/17 will ever be able to have lunch again without remembering Myles’ cheerful salutation on the way to lunch.

*Nur nach Hause gehen wir nicht!* The hymn of a mediocre local football club (apologies to Carey and Myles) encapsulates the dominant emotion in early July. Nobody wants to go home again! Couldn’t we just occupy Wiko?

*Opera.* My favorite way of making use of the many cultural temptations of Berlin. Always fun to chat with William, Tine, or Frédéric about the latest productions and to initiate Michael J. into this world.

*PowerPoint.* The length and sophistication of this presentation tool during the Tuesday colloquia was nearly bimodally distributed between “the scientists” and the rest (it never occurred to me before that historians and lawyers were not scientists), Giacomo being a notable outlier. Differences between disciplines were also evident in the language used and the way questions were asked, but I enjoyed the open, constructive, and egalitarian discussions we had. This is apparently not a given, as some Permanent Fellows report, and I am glad to have been a member of this particular cohort.

*Questions.* The discussions following the Tuesday Colloquia offered some memorable highlights and examples of the kinds of interdisciplinary experiences one can have at

Wiko. Here's a one-minute transcript from a non-random, but fortunately also non-representative example to illustrate this point: "To invoke the zombie category, is modernization the very natural alternative to a zombie category, or is it really a potentially fruitful and perhaps even necessary category that itself can be re-imagined and developed in a different way than a non-teleological way, non-prescriptive, non-reductionist, mannered multi-dimensional, open-ended, etc., that – yes – appeals to classic notions like urbanization and social mobilization in a Deutschian (?) sense, but also the spread of market relations that develop in a modern bureaucratic state, globalization, the Scaler effect, and the extension of scale of networks, medialization, expansion of media experience; all these dimensions including cultural ... (laughter) ... but it has also an autonomous cultural dimension that involves processes like individualization, maybe even secularization, but certainly the diffusion of all the individuals, citizenship, categories like the city itself, the state, individuals, citizenship, people, sexuality, ..." I think the question mark came another 40 seconds later.

*Research.* Just in case somebody is interested in the details: in addition to contributing to the group output, I wrote a review on my official Wiko topic (consequences of variation in the adult sex ratio for mammalian behavior), drafted five other reviews on a range of topics, and secretly started working on two books. In comparison, this was a very productive year for me, but I am just one data point in the sample size of nearly 1,700 in this matched-pairs design (before vs. during Wiko), demonstrating that productivity at Wiko is way higher than at our home institutions.

*Science, March for.* One of the personal and collective highlights of the year. The Wiko team in its royal blue T-shirts and many funny and highly visible banners, demonstrating for academic freedom in the freezing April wind. Great team performance!

*Trump.* Definitely the most discussed person of the year. To say the first good thing about him, in retrospect, I think he did more for our in-group formation than any other event or person in the last ten months.

*Unexpected.* I was initially not really prepared to meet and interact with our photographer, writers, filmmaker, composer, and other artists. In retrospect, interactions with these special Fellows made the Wiko experience so much richer than the more predictable glimpses into the world of lawyers, economists, or historians.

*Visitors.* What a great, generous opportunity to invite colleagues to Wiko for a couple of days! I had some of the most enjoyable and productive days with my visitors. Not just because they were so envious, but also because we produced several publications within a couple of days in this inspiring atmosphere.

*Walking Berlin!* Only Michael J. could have come up with this idea – and he followed through with it. None of the previous 1,650 Fellows could possibly have had a crazier plan for the long winter nights, and few would have had the stubbornness to complete it. Way to go Mike!

*AtaraXia.* A key personal discovery during this year. Many thanks to Katharina for introducing me to Epicurus and his philosophy. The following quote will hopefully provide the necessary guidance for my life after Wiko: “It is not by an unbroken succession of drinking bouts and of revelry, nor by sexual lust, nor the enjoyment of fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table that produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul.” Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus”.

*Young scientists.* It was very enriching to interact with the bright young colleagues from the College for Life Sciences. Not just because they were fellow biologists. It was rewarding, and hopefully helpful for them, to be able to offer some career advice, for example. Too bad they could not be here for a full year.

*Zusammenfassung.* A truly amazing year in a truly amazing environment. Thanks to all involved in the selection process for making this year possible for me, and thanks to all members of the staff and my fellow Fellows for making it such a special experience – both personally and professionally. *Auf Wiedersehen!*