



WIKO: A MIXED BAG OF EXPERIENCES HUSEIN INUSAH

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To start, I must say that being in residency at Wiko has been a transformative experience for me professionally. It has also been a great learning experience for my family, who joined me four weeks into my three-month short stay in Berlin.

I arrived in Berlin on the early morning of the 15th of February 2023 to meet the ever-smiling and kind-hearted Vera Pfeffer, who ushered me into my three-bedroom apartment in the Villa Walther. Vera introduced me to the apartment, provided me with a small map of how to get around the Grunewald neighbourhood, and then said goodbye. On the evening of my arrival, I took a quick tour around the Grunewald surroundings

and walked on Koenigsallee towards the main building on Wallotstraße. There I saw the magnificent Wiko library and the Villa Jaffé, which were later to become my favourite hub of scholarly resources and the block on which my office was located, respectively. I took a rest on the second day of my stay to shed the fatigue from my travels, and I set to work immediately on the third day.

The first month at Wiko was a mixed bag of expectations of my family's arrival (due to visa application problems) and the choices of networks I had to make within my area of research. For the first part of my stay, I had several fascinating meetings, mainly with the staff of Wiko and Permanent Fellow Lorraine Daston, an astute and erudite academic, with whom I had my first meeting. My project at Wiko "Decolonising Knowledge, Shaping Norms for Epistemic Diversity: The Perspective of African Intellectual Virtue Proverbs" benefited immensely from my interactions with her. Unfortunately, she had to travel immediately afterwards and did not return until I left Wiko on the 15th of May, 2023. My second meeting was with Jana Petri, a very kind and burgeoning scholar with a focus on the life sciences. This was followed by several other meetings that led to very fascinating scholarly conversations and important networks. For example, through Jana, I was able to contact the Managing Director of the Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien, Georges Khalil, with whom I have had great conversations relating to my work. My other meetings were with Daniel Schönpflug, a very kind and widely read academic who loved to listen with rapt attention and then make very important contributions to discourses. My interaction with Daniel was so beneficial and shaped the focus of my project at Wiko. It helped me establish contact, for example, with Peggy Levitt, the convener of The Global (De)Centre (GDC), a platform that brings together a growing network of scholars from across the world to produce new knowledge while deploying various epistemologies and methods. Through Peggy, I became a member of the GDC and participated in one of their virtual conferences later in June 2023. Afterwards, I had interesting meetings with the Rector Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger and other academic staff of Wiko. All these meetings were also quite important to the focus of my project at Wiko.

Aside from meetings with the staff, the usual lunch and dinner conversations with Fellows were quite captivating. I benefited from my interactions with several Fellows, most especially Insa Nolte, from whom I learnt a lot about the use of African oral resources. I also benefited from my interactions with Deborah James, Joyce Nyairo, Surabhi Ranganathan, Oren Harman, Danaï Papageorgiou, and many others whose names I cannot readily recall.

During my second month at Wiko, I devoted a substantial amount of my time to writing my project and engaging in other research works. I wrote two chapters of my proposed monograph; wrote two proposals for a grant and a fellowship; revised three manuscripts for publication; and prepared my colloquium at Wiko, which I delivered in May. I used this period to also sample and request so many books from the Wiko library for use when in my home country. My second month in Berlin was exciting because my wife (Huseina) and children (Ayman, Amal, and Adnan) had joined me at Wiko a day before the Ramadhan of 2023 commenced. So my second month was a mixed bag of excitement of family reunion, religious festivities, and academic work. It was a packed month and quite overwhelming, but it was indeed worth my while.

In my third and final month at Wiko, I delivered my Thursday Colloquium on “Decolonizing Intellectual Decoloniality” and also gave a talk on “African Intellectual Virtue Proverbs” at the Institute for Asian and African Studies’ Afrikakolloquium series of 2023 at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. It was an exciting opportunity to share my work beyond the walls of Wiko during my stay in Berlin.

In all, Wiko offered me a valuable opportunity to establish a network and collaborate with other scholars, work on my proposed project, and improve my communication and presentation skills. My short stay at Wiko was quite refreshing for me and my family. It had a positive impact on my family and we are grateful for the opportunities and experiences gained during the residency. The experience at Wiko has indeed bolstered my confidence and increased my resolve to expand the frontiers of knowledge in my chosen area of research. I am excited to leverage these experiences as I progress on the journey of my academic career.