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# **Scandinavian Forest Economics**

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**Copenhagen**

## DESPITE VOLCANIC ASH ...

From all around the world they came  
through port and customs clearance,  
despite volcanic ash to blame  
for late (or non-)appearance;  
as humble walkers, first-class flyers  
and motorists who *meant* a  
carbon-neutral way to enter  
Sjælland (Nord), to Gilleleje's  
Folke Feriecenter.

They came from Joensuu and saw  
the old familiar faces;  
from Uppsala, Umeå  
and other Swedish places,  
from Ås and Vantaa in their plenty  
(of which more, by-and-by),  
of course they came in force from Twenty-  
three Rolighedsvej.

They came from every distant corner  
of the world's most populous nations,  
from Illinois and California  
to join these celebrations.

They flew, defying Iceland's ash,  
round which their planes must climb,  
though some of them were strapped for cash  
and all were short of time.

They came, Americans and Asians;  
Germans on the train;

And, with a truly British patience,  
one participant, at least, stood interminably in a queue, was eventually told  
that the airport would close five minutes before his flight was due to take  
off, rebooked for Tuesday, went home for a day, just as he was about to  
leave was texted to say that *that* flight was off, then telephoned to say that it  
was *on* again, spent the night on Manchester Airport, and, two days late,  
arrived ...

at Kastrup in an aeroplane  
(it's that Icelandic ash again).

They came from Russia and the Baltics,  
Oregon and Auburn,  
and met no atmospheric fault (ex-  
cept emitted cauburn).  
They travelled far, to bring a fund  
of stirring Third World tales:  
but nobody from Eng-er-land,  
and only one from Wales.

And, as for Iceland's ash it gives  
us reason to rehearse  
the case for stressing positives –  
not being risk-averse.  
So let's smooth frictions with a dash  
of optimistic oil,  
recalling that volcanic ash  
turns in the end to soil;  
that soil is good for growing trees,  
and growing trees is good,  
because our milling industries  
can turn trees into wood.  
It is not, this volcanic ash  
an agent of destruction.  
We recognise it in a flash:  
a factor of production! –  
though, with 10 000 years to wait  
until the profits show  
at any normal discount rate  
the MRP's quite low.  
So, thank you, soil scientists  
for pointing out the pluses;  
and, if we find good news exists,  
we'll call you – don't call us! – ess-  
entially, don't call ...  
at all.

They came for Niels Elers Koch's  
transforming thinking that unlocks  
doors to collaboration;  
though some, perhaps more orthodox,  
might wish he would have talked of Box-  
Cox data transformation.

They heard about the carbon sink all-  
owed by planting strange  
non-Nordic species; Hanewinkel  
on world climate change –  
though all may alter in the twinkle  
of a mitigating eye  
if sunlight is reflected by  
dust particles up in the sky  
for any country that might lie  
in Iceland's ash cloud range.

They came to hear Peter Berck  
describing things not planned,  
and whether, how and why they work  
in allocating land;  
of whisky and of wood as fuels  
replacing oil lost;  
of rates of carbon flux accruals,  
with linee-ar programming duals  
to shadow price the cost.

So, thinking of our fuel needs,  
we also need to keep al-  
ive the thought, the planet feeds  
a planet full of people.  
And can we soon contrive to feed an-  
other planet-full and ...  
plant out coconuts in Sweden,  
paddy-fields in Jylland?  
Might we be forced to plough up Ås  
to beat Norway's millet crop failure?  
And when elephant are crop-raiders in Vantaa,  
will vineyards adorn North Karelia?

Then Arild talked about the need  
for policy perspective  
on challenges of REDD (or REED?)  
and making them effective;  
and what research on REED (or REDD?)  
the Eurocrats have planned for.  
(I wish I'd *heard*, if someone said  
what REDD (or REED?) might stand for.)

They came to hear of trees windblown  
or ravaged by disease;  
how woodland owners see their own  
responsibilities;  
to hear of bubbles and of bus-  
inesses and trade, as well  
as ecosystem services  
that owners want to sell;  
and multi-hierarchic schemes,  
and carbon versus birds,  
and silvicultural regimes,  
and marketing of words;  
of poverty and livelihood,  
and Volvos that await  
replacement (though it's understood  
the rich can still pay late).  
They came to hear a lot of things  
that no-one really knows,  
and mix with data, ponderings  
on how the downturn goes.  
But some, or maybe all of these  
– plus topics not addressed –  
confirm the merits of our trees,  
we know they are the best!

\* \* \*

What wisdom will we take from these  
descriptors and regressors –  
you idealistic PhDs,  
we cynical professors?  
One takes no more than what one gives  
– to doubt that would be rash –  
so emphasise the positives  
despite volcanic ash.  
We wish you safely home again: oh,  
hurry on your way!  
We hear that Iceland's BIG volcan-o  
might blow any day.