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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.