

Bingn
Finland seminar
29 September – 6 October

Introduction

After a long journey from every corner of Scandinavia we finally made it to Finland for our fourth BINGN seminar. The warm welcome we received from Teija Kettunen at Labby would echo throughout the program. Our next 10 days together would combine farm visits, art, lectures and some well needed reflection.

Painting with Teija Kettunen

We had two refreshing painting sessions, first exploring the colours blue and yellow and eventually the whole colour circle. We had a chance to reflect on each other's work and share our experience as a group. Creative and meditative artistic sessions like these are a key part of the Bingn seminars.



CSA Herttoniemi, Helsinki



A 3 ha flat landscape hosts the Herttoniemi Food coop, run by Heidi Hovi. The CSA has been running for 4 years and boasts over 400 members from the Helsinki area, including families

and restaurants. They are growing around 40 different vegetables and provide a selection of 10 veggies per week to the members.

Toivo Tila, Heinola

Nestled deep in the forest lies Toivo Tila "Hope Farm". Jenni Ruotsalainen bought the farm 4 years ago and has been running as a cooperative with 5 others. The cultivated area is 12ha and spread over several plots with 3ha for vegetables and 5ha for cow pasture. They run an organic box scheme mostly to Steiner schools and kindergartens, around 60 per week.



Composting & Manuring

An introduction into composting and manuring with Katja Mahal, comparable to baking bread, each stage of the process is important. The 'kitchen' of the farm, the compost is integral to the health of the farm organism.

Majvik, Sipoo

Located in Sipoo, outside of Helsinki, the city is slowly encroaching on the farm. Ate took over the farm 2 years ago and, with nearly no previous farming experience, is impressively working the 25ha farm. The farm has an eastern finnish cattle breed herd and a selction of vegetable crops and cereals. The future of the farm, with the prospect of the building development, the farm must adapt to a 'community farm' system within the newcoming surburbia.



Labbyn Tila

Previously surrounded by water, the farm has a long and exciting history. Juha grew up on the farm and has, since taking over in 1987, had a wealth of activity. From herb production, bakery and cows the farm is now in a stage of developing an Eco village for the future.



Whilst at Labbyn we spent time with Jussi Ingero on the subject of Tree-care, learning the importance of trees in the landscapes and our relationships with them.



Biodynamics in Finland

We visited the biodynamic association in Helsinki and got a chance to speak with Pirkko Okkonen about the situation in Finland. A great insight into the biodynamic community the country has, and inspiring to hear of the young progressive movement in Finland. Particularly interesting was the alternative sowing calendar specifically made for the country to encourage farmers to practice observation skills themselves.

Rekola Tila, Pirkaanma



Rekola Biodyn Oy is owned 50:50 by Joono Rekola and Henry Murto. The company rents 36 ha from Joono's parents, Kalervo Rekola and Sirkka Silvennoinen-Rekola. A 2ha garden cultivating a large variety of vegetables and a herd of 30 Limousine cattle for meat production directly sold to customers. The farm also grows a selection of grains for their own bakery started in 1979. The Rekola family has owned this land since 1619 and Kalervo Rekola converted the farm to Biodynamic in 1977 with the goal of self sufficiency and soil improvement.

Conclusion

This seminar was full of impressions! The warmth of the Finnish people was overwhelming and it was inspiring to see how young men and women farmers can achieve so much. There's a lot that can be learnt from our Nordic neighbours and I hope we, the biodynamic community, come to work closely with Finland in the future.