

An outsider's seminar report

Skillebyholm, Sweden 5th - 15th October 2016

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I could try to tell from beginning to end, from dragging my orange-wheeled suitcase along the fields of Järna, to the final running crazy with the same suitcase, seven kilos of apples and missing the train back to Oslo. Alternatively, I could try starting with the end, tracing back the days at Skillebyholm from the last kind and loving 'see-you-soon's', in the fashion of the reflections we did at the end of each day throughout the seminar. Or, I would get it wrong, and my memory would linger too long with the delicious breakfast having cinnamon rolls, smelly cheeses, mouth-watering lunch vegetables and aromatic supper soups.

Let me instead offer some flash impressions from being a first-time visitor at a BINGN seminar!

Compost! We were outside in the chilly air, smelling the rotting heap of apples heading for the compost. Thomas Lüthi said to listen to the crunching sound of the carbon rich dried weeds, as we piled up garden materials, after pouring water over a dried-out compost heap that was white with fungi spores under the straw cover.

No dung there, no hot horse-manure or cold, wet pig-excrement like we talked about in the classes about manuring and nutrients with Johan Nielsson, but preparations were in place. Oak bark, chamomile, what else? I forgot, too confused (and habitually sceptical) about the reasons for applying these, deep into the changing territories of the microorganisms, masters of transformation.

Kids! Kids were not allowed in the impressive Järna Mejeri, but they did not seem to miss the sight of shiny milk tanks and competent staff packing rows of cheese under the steady hum of intricate machinery. Elsewhere, they were very welcoming though.

Pointing at familiar plants in the greenhouse at Ebba Breidersteins farm, looking with wide eyes at the goats at Sörbro Gård where Artur Borghs talked about their story there, and nursing in the field where soil scientist Artur Granstedt showed the impressive graphs of the 0,7 per cent yearly increase in soil carbon through the research period there.

Ice cream! Ice cream should never be left out of the report. Neither the Russian variety Ebba served when we came back to her place to share our many thoughts after listening to Stephen Hinton at Änggärdet Ecovillage project, nor the one I got when I asked the kind organic gardening students at Skillebyholm where the library was. There is nothing as a little locally produced liquorice ice cream before flickering through books about roses, perennials and/or self-sufficiency life style in Sweden in the seventies.

Singing! Was it perhaps after the day we talked about weather observation and microclimate with Peter Müller-Temme that we lit that fire in that hut in the forest nearby and Pernille, Johannes and Samuel (at least) played the guitar? Or was it the other day when the wonderful farm presentations started and Eva told us about her stay in Iceland?

A man fainted when he sang in the choir at Ytterjärna Culture house, but one of the other Waldorf teachers rescued him with a glass of water.

I met another teacher student who's mother was famous for riding her horse and carriage in between the cars in the Järna winter landscape.

I tasted the best *and* the second best tomatoes so far in my life.

I took notes of lessons and of questions.

In the end, I did not feel like an outsider at all!