

*My momma always said,
"Life was like a box of chocolates.
You never know what you're gonna get."*

Forrest Gump

I must confess that this report took me unexpectedly long time to finish and submit it. However, I am not sorry about, this scholarship, trips to Sweden, meeting and interviewing people there changed my life, and finally entailed to the crucial point of it. (In the good sense of the word – straightforward after it I have written my first serious work and spontaneously moved to another country.) Therefore, surely, I needed some time to realize these changes and collect my thoughts about to report them.

First of all, unlike the other scholars, I was affiliated with Finnish, not Swedish university, and most part of these four months under the scholarship, I have spent in Finland, not in Sweden. So within this program I was an outsider literally, I used ferryboats - can't count right now for how many times - to come to Stockholm and back again. Each time I have come for different reasons, different time and in different time, so it was never the same. Even Stockholm each time seemed different to me. Well, maybe, it didn't seem, it was: the Stockholm I have arrived to the very first time in February definitely was the different city from the Stockholm I have left at the end of June once again on ferryboat to Helsinki.

Using ferryboats so intensively should be, on the face of it, uncomfortable and stressful. Actually - nothing of the kind. You take on ferryboat in the early evening, sleep all the night, then you awake, take a shower, brush up and here you are – at 10 in the morning in Stockholm fresh, young and ready to go. More than that, I have found that a lot of Finns and Swedes take ferryboat trips just to get ferryboat trips. To enjoy sea views, spend good time and relax. (Surely, for cheap booze and gaming machines, too, but though mostly for relax.)

Before coming to Sweden, even before becoming a Sverker Åström Foundation's scholar, I was eager to visit Lund University. Since my specialty – philosophy of law (much often it is said that I learn Chinese language in the Institute of Asian and African studies of Lomonosov Moscow State University, but it's just because language visually takes much more time, so that is always an illusion of more learning Chinese than something else) I was very interested in specialty “Sociology of law” at the faculty of Humanities of Lund University. It is said, that Lund university is the only place in Europe, where you can learn it and blah-blah-blah. Finally, with this scholarship I got a chance to go there, get acquainted to people, look through learning program and so on. But when I came to know, I was very profoundly disappointed with it, especially with other students. Since education in Sweden is free for EU-citizens, in Lund university there are a lot of students, who come from different not very successful EU-countries (Rumania, Portugal, Lithuania and so on) and they talked and talked about social equity and how they do like Sweden because of it. Socialists' position is really pretty strong in Sweden, but these singings weren't about the Socialist Party of Sweden, they were about arrogance of other Nordic countries (especially Norway) because of their money. So if the country is rich and population there has money, Rumanian students in Lund don't like it at all, because they don't have any money, but more that that they don't like to realize that they don't have it, so they hate Norway and Denmark and eulogize Sweden, because in Sweden they don't feel it because of social equity. At least that kind of students allege like this. Well, Marxism definitely in trend once again.

The other famous Swedish university – Uppsala university, I visited two times. The first time it was on Easter, so it wasn't about any education or academic stuff, it was about sightseeing and about town as itself. So the impression was really different. That visit was worth the cost. Disa Håstad, the President of Sverker Åström Foundation, who not only spent her youth and studied in Uppsala, furthermore her father was a governor of Uppsala County, showed us (the four scholars of spring semester) views and places, we would never really find ourselves. That Easter, as a cherry to the cake, with Disa we have visited the church

in Täby (that is one of the municipal localities near Stockholm) to watch the original picture of “Death playing chess”, that Ingmar Bergman used as a source of inspiration for “The Seventh Seal”. Surely, in life it's almost not like on pictures in Internet or magazines, it's not so bright, it's not so thrilling, but since it's real - it's breathtaking to watch it.

The next time I have visited Uppsala university because of my academic activities and have heard a lot of complains about the depressing atmosphere of it. My first time on Easter, I certainly haven't noticed it, but this time... Perhaps, students all over the world are complaining on the depressing atmosphere in their universities., so nothing strange that Uppsala university students are no exception. But the professors at the conference on Modern Russian Literature (in which I took part as a native Russian Chinese language consultant) also talked about how Uppsala is depressing. Surely, they joked and laughed a lot about it, but definitely it was a matter, that you can't notice, unless you are a student of Uppsala university.

The third Swedish famous university in Umeå I've visited only in July, when Sweden was “closed” (means, everyone is on summer vacation) and on my own, without Sverker Åström Foundation support. I was on invitation there, visiting my colleague, who I get acquainted at the Nordic Association for China Studies conference in Turku in June (by the way, the next NACS conference will be held in Uppsala in 2015, really hope that I will have an opportunity to take part in it and at least to myself prove, that Uppsala is not so depressive after all). I took part in NACS conference as a student of Tampere university, so in Umeå I was also regarded as a Finnish student.

Umeå is situated even closer that Turku (which Swedish name is Åbo, as it was the Finnish capital during the time, when Finland was the part of Sweden) to Finland. That fact pretty much affects the population of Umeå, there are a lot of so called Sweden Finns there. I was told many interesting historical facts there. For example, that Umeå suffered from Russian attacks twice: in 1714 and in 1720 when it was burnt to the ground. Or that at the close of the Finnish War the Russian army under Barclay de Tolly (all the Russians know this name because of Napoleon wars) took Umeå and held it for some time in 1809. Even to know that there was a war between Sweden and the Russian Empire was a huge surprise to me. Russians know only one Finnish war – that is Winter war, that happened when Stalin tried to conquer Finland in 1939-1940.

So I took part in two conferences during my scholarship time. Both were successful, but it didn't help anyhow to my work, that I intended to write in Sweden.

My first interview with Johan Hirschfeldt, the former president of Court of Appeal, happened just right after I have arrives the first time. It was very helpful to my general law knowledge and interesting, even delightful I'd say, but I realized after it, that the preliminary plan of my work is no good. Long time later, it took a lot of time to correct it and make it real.

And after this bright (but due to my fault, a little bit upsetting to me) interview, I was present on the spot of Sverker Åström Foundation's board meeting. So get acquainted to the board and got some really good recommendations to interviews.

One of those was Torbjörn Tännsjö, a professor of philosophy at Stockholm University. This interview and the professor itself I like very much. Before coming to Sweden, to my great embarrassment, I have never heard about him and have never read his books. So some of his ideas on medical ethics and moral realism, that is called: hit me right between the eyes. (Later I've discovered, that most Swedes find him a little bit foppish and demonstrative because of his performances on television, but it didn't break the picture of him to me.)

Though it wasn't the most helpful interview to my work (as a matter of fact, the most helpful was the interview with Johan Schück, the editor of the Dagens Nyheter, a daily newspaper in Sweden, because finally, after all transformations, corrections and rewritings, I have used only information about the mechanisms for self-regulation of media in Sweden), but definitely it stuck to my memory and affected me a lot. Actually, now I am pretty often surprised and even annoyed, why a lot of people in Germany don't know him or his books? Wieso? :)

After the NACS conference in Turku and PhD course concerning publishing activities after it, I've arrived once again to Stockholm. But this time I didn't have any luck nor with researching, neither with interviews (as it was said in June, after the Midsummer, Sweden is "closed"). I was depressed, stuck with my work and it was too much tension, so obviously no reason to stay in Stockholm anymore. I came back to Helsinki (by ferryboat as usual) and try to rethink and to reevaluate all the matters and acquaintances, that happened to me during this time.

As with Disa and other scholars we have talked and discussed a lot former East Germany problems (Disa have witnessed the Fall of the Berlin Wall), these informal discussions opened some things I have never really thought before. My parents came from East Berlin, so I was going to seek my fortune in Berlin and finally decided to apply for publishing in one of the German science magazines. Surprisingly, it was accepted, but the most part of the article wasn't done or even draft at that time. So I had a lot of work to do. And that was the mood, in which I left hospitable and inspiring Sweden for the last time. With the hope for the best future (sounds like cliché, but still it's true) and the exact direction to get it. As usually on ferryboat. But this time one way to Hamburg (oh, such a pity, Berlin is not a port-city and one can't get from Stockholm to Berlin by ferryboat).

Now I have transmitted from Lomonosov Moscow State University to Free University of Berlin and, after all, waiting for being published in December. Surely, I'd like to add the link to my article as tangible accomplishment at the end of this report, but yet it is too early and Sverker Åström Foundation scholarships are not about such kind of success (though it is evaluated, too, surely), they are more about connection to people, so it's even better this way :)