Being in the Era of Acceleration

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Abstract

This paper explores "being" from an experiential and a physical/material perspective in the context of the era of acceleration. A focal point is the human relationship to technology and the environment, more specifically, this paper expands Anders' concepts of Herstellungskraft (productive powers) and Vorstellungskraft (imaginative powers) of nuclear weapons and then applies this framework to our current crisis of environmental destruction. The paper also explores defining technologies as they relate to the dilemmas above, analogies of traveller and tourist, and the Danish concept of hygge (as both a tradition and as a response to acceleration).

Keywords: Being, Acceleration, Anders, Technology, Hygge

Introduction

In many respects, we live in an era of acceleration via technologies that allow for faster, easier, cheaper, and increased production, consumption and waste. These processes have a profound impact on and challenge to "being" in an experiential and physical/material sense. These can be associated with an existential crisis in a figurative (experiential) and literal (physical/material) sense: What does "being" mean? In an attempt to capture some of issues of being in the context of technologies, I will explore some defining technologies and the analogies, such as the railway and the smart phone, the traveller and tourist; the relationships between production and destruction, control and lack of control, the intended and unintended, and in relation to Anders' (1979, 1982) concept of *Herstellungskraft* (productive powers) and *Vorstellungskraft* (imaginative powers); and responses to the era of acceleration. The concerns and consequences of "being" and everyday life mediated through technology have the potential impact of profound global and historical scale. This has also caught the attention of psychologists with calls to rethink the psychology of technology (Chimirri & Schraube, 2019).

The traveller and tourist: Being "there" without really "being-there"

A way to conceptualize "being" is the relationships with the world: Relationships to time, space, and the social and physical environments (Imamichi, 2019). These relationships have increasingly been mediated by technology. The mediation by technologies has caught the attention of philosophers, such as Nietzsche, and psychologists such as Freud, where the industrial and modern age epitomized by the railway laid the foundations for new modes of being, time-space compression and human expansion (acceleration), and changing social and environmental relations:

> Mit der ungeheuren Beschleunigung des Lebens, wird Geist und Auge an ein halbes oder falsches Sehen und Urteilen gewöhnt, und jedermann gleicht den Reisenden, welche Land und Volk von der Eisenbahn aus kennenlernen.

> With the tremendous acceleration of life, mind and eye become accustomed to a partial or false viewing and judging, and everyone is like a traveller, who gets to know land and people via the train.
> (Nietzsche, 1879: Human, All Too Human- Section 5, Lament)

Perhaps coincidentally, this quote was published in 1879, a date, which also saw the opening of Wundt's Laboratory in Leipzig and sometimes considered official birth year of modern psychology. This quote could have come from current times.

In current context, we may refer to global travels and tourists- frequent flyers, traveling to evermore and distant places to see staged destinations via tour-busses. The analogy of the traveller on the train or the tour-bus tourist easily applies to era- defining technologies turning people into television viewers, or surfers on the Internet. One is "there" without really "being-there". One does not really engage- one is merely passing through the world mediated by technology, overcome by speed.

Human existence in the digital age is marked by the acceleration of life, and a world mediated by technology- technology that allows much and instant access to information but often times may translate to partial and false knowledge: For one, the information itself is limited by being mediated- and information does not necessarily translate into knowledge, particularly when presented with googol (referring to the number with 100 digits) findings on a search engine, one may not necessarily find what one is looking for. Even if one precisely finds what one is looking for via an algorithm not only based on popular responses or general demographic characteristics, but on specific personal characteristics that tailors the findings based on one's preferences, past searchers and clicks, one may merely confirm one's biases and gains confidence in one's partial, if not false knowledge. And because the information is mediated, one is more vulnerable to corporate and government propaganda via mass media, and to conspiracy theories of special interest and extremist groups via social media.

Another much defining aspect of "much and instant access of information" is the prioritization of quantity and speed, which has led to the degeneration of quality and content: Because quick access to information and communication has become possible, it is

increasingly expected. This is very much reflected in what is considered a reasonable response time, which has been mediated by technology when the primary communication mode may have been via desktop dependent on a desk, compared to a laptop where contingent on a lap, or a smartphone that is handheld communication can occur much quicker. This may come at the expense of content- while communication may happen faster, more frequent, with more people, each communication may be composed with less thought: letters that took days and contained several paragraphs, were replaced by e-mail message composed of a few sentences exchanged within a day or two, which in turn were replaced by text messages composed of fragments exchanged within an hour or less. We might even wonder at the emoji, for example (^_^). The emoji, in some cultures, is still an ornament within typed texts; but, increasingly, an emoji may constitute a whole and completed message. Once habituated to these modes of instant and superficial communications, one can imagine how increasingly challenging it must be to read, let alone compose a 5,000-word essay (the suggested length for this current submission). Even if one is blessed with a reasonable attention span, one may not still be immune to the expectations to attend to multiple communications in a reasonable response time that may pose a challenge. A constantly distracted mode of being may not allow for deeper reflections and then from a philosophical perspective make us then less of a human. This of course is ironic, as part of the promises of science and technology and "progress" was to make life better and allow for human flourishing, but somehow turned out to be rather moronic, ending up in not only in an existential, but ecological crisis.

The most significant benefits of information technologies are reaped not so much by the consumer of the technologies, but for the technologies that not only provide information, but gain information by the searches, website visits, purchases, communications with others, that then has more knowledge and predictive powers than the people have about themselves. And with that knowledge, information technologies can easily nudge their victims to behaviours that serve corporations at times making such victims even believe that they were making certain choices themselves (Zuboff, 2019).

Technologies change not only perspectives, but also land and people themselves. On the one hand, technologies are meant to accommodate people, but on the other hand people and environment are reshaped to accommodate technology to the degree to which, in several respects, does not necessarily make people and environments better off than before. This point was also made by Freud (1930) in *Civilization and its Discontents*, when referring to the mixed blessings of modern technology: the ease in which people can mutually drive each other to extinction, foretelling the horrors of mechanized and accelerated genocide which characterized the death toll of the twentieth century. Much of the framework problematizing technology and acceleration has already been laid several generations ago. However, the emerge of new technologies invite for additional theorizing and conceptualizing of "being."

Technology and "being" has been a focus of Heidegger's philosophy, identifying different modes of being in relationships to technology, but much of that technology was stuck in the 19th Century. Anders addresses the more profound consequences of modern technologies that go beyond the reaches of people's imagination.

Being-in-control, Being-out-of-control

With the railway, the epitome of modern technology and acceleration, emerged new disorders and metaphors. The most clinical (in tone) of these would be railway neurosis. But there were also more idiomatic expressions, as trains became analogies for anxieties and lack of control. The terms "runaway train" or "train-wreck" could be used to describe the accidental, sudden and violent death of flesh-and-blood persons as a result of high-speed, high-powered automation (Schivelbusch, 1977). But, they also entered the public vocabulary as expressions connoting unstable personalities and untenable situations.

In some sense the same powers were harnessed in World War I, when the same high-speed, high-powered automation (e.g. the machine gun), led to intentional mass slaughter on the battlefields. At the same time, the railway moved from being an accidental killer to a pre-mediated one: Railways moved millions of soldiers quickly but toward carnage. The "runaway train" was technology out of human control. But, during World War I, it was technology WITHIN human control that was horrifying.

Human evolution may be a story of the gradual control over nature via control over technology. However, it appears that humans have not been not quite able to gain control over their own nature and not quite able to keep up with the advances of technology. One has access to tools one is not mature enough or morally equipped to handle.

Production, Destruction, and Imagination

The even more upgraded version of "technology in control of out of control humans" come to fruition in World War II, where again the railway played a significant role, both in war fighting, and in the mass slaughter of civilians. The Holocaust relied upon an efficiently engineered transportation system. It could not have occurred without the railway. Within the context of total war, the systems of mass production and automated organization, once belonging to industry, were easily converted into systems of mass destruction (see Edwin Black's IBM and the Holocaust). The culmination of these tragedies can be found in the Atomic Bomb and its use upon civilian targets.

In addition to an unimaginable death toll, atomic weaponry took technological potential and existential anxiety to a new, previously unthinkable level. For Anders this was the epitome of the widening gap between *Herstellungskraft* (productive powers) and *Vorstellungskraft* (imaginative powers), indicating that the new technologies come with increasingly unimaginable consequences. As of 1945, mass slaughter could be delivered via a single bomb via an airplane and a small crew that instantly would annihilate a whole city and tens of thousands of people. Killing has become even easier, not only in its delivery, but also in its aftereffects, as it became so depersonalized occurring from a distance. War has always shown humans at their cruellest; but now there was even less reason for hesitation or remorse, where one did not have to look into people's eyes or hear their screams or witness the horrors of their deeds. While the delivery was disproportionally easy and quick, the aftereffects were painful and lasting with radiation poisoning that plagued survivors and the following generation. The scale of the consequences exceeds imagination- ten thousand deaths, ten thousand years- while one may have an abstract understanding, one is not able to "picture" it. Not being able to "picture" is not only a reference the strict US censorship of the aftermath. Even an Atomic Bomb Museum cannot quite capture the scale of suffering.

But apparently there was some good to come out of the Atomic experiments: A new era of "Nuclear Peace." But, as in all Faustian bargains, there was a catch: the new era needed just one more sacrifice- the Marshall Islands. And so the tests were conducted unleashing fires of hell on an idyllic Pacific Island paradise to demonstrate the power of nuclear bomb to a group of international delegates to achieve World Peace by an attempt to convince them given the destructive potential war is not worth it. But in another tragic irony of technology, the result was that other nations scrambled to develop their own weapons to have a response to a nation "insane enough to use nuclear weapons on their fellow human beings" (Martinov, 2012). The built up of a nuclear arsenal over the coming decades, and the testing of evermore powerful weapons resulted in widespread radiation contaminations particularly in colonial- and post-colonial territories, a fact obscured in almost all narratives. More recently so-called "rogue nations" have developed nuclear capacities. Those capabilities have found some political leverage (e.g. North Korea). Ironically, some regimes that followed the recommendations of world organizations and abandoned their nuclear programs were quickly toppled (e.g. Iraq and Libya). Also, leaders of these more relatively more obedient regimes were subjected to humiliating debasement before death (Lankov, 2013). Meanwhile in the US, even under the presidency of a Noble Peace Laureate the budgetary spending on nuclear weapons increased. Since then, subsequent presidential candidates have raised concerns that they may trigger World War III: one by butt-dialling and the other by tweeting: The fate of many is in the hands of a questionable few.

The other "good" that was come out of nuclear technology was the "Atoms for Peace." Whereas industrial production could be easily converted for war and military uses as witnessed in World War I, innovations for war and military uses from World War II could be converted for civil purposes, most prominently in Nuclear Energy to generate "energy to cheap to meter." The limitation of such utopian energy source became apparent in the high-profile incidents such as Three Mile Island in 1979. A new twist to nuclear technologies and its unimaginable consequences have been witnessed in Chernobyl in 1986 and Fukushima in 2011. Looking to Anders we might contrast the nuclear bomb and nuclear accidents. The nuclear bomb where the intended purpose is destruction is connected to *Herstellungskraft* (productive powers). Nuclear accidents are a reflection of what I would call "*Zerstörungskraft"* (destructive powers), because they were never part of the intended purposes. The atom that was imagined to be under control, was not so much under control after all, the issue was not merely moral failure, but technological failure. Furthermore, the lack *Vorstellungskraft* (imaginative powers) in proportion to the catastrophe is applicable in this context as well. The lack of imaginative power, in a sense can be tied to "failure of imagination" a recurring theme in the US in the hindsight analysis of preventable disasters ranging from 9/11, the invasion of Iraq, Hurricane Katrina, the Financial Crisis, and COVID-19. In Japan, the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster was summarized as *sōteigai* (想定外) "beyond expectations" referring to the scale of the earthquake and tsunami that they did not plan or design for it "beyond their imagination." But at the same time disasters may have been a result of delusional optimism and wishful thinking of immense imaginative powers (Ehrenreich, 2009).

The speed and the scale in which the accidents happened may be markers of the era of acceleration. But even without the high-profile incidents, the ordinary operation of nuclear energy comes with unresolved issues of nuclear waste that remain toxic for thousands of years. But it is not merely the high-risk technologies (Perrow, 1984), but even the low-risk technologies such as plastics and minor pollutants that in its volume cause major problems,

particularly in the decay process that cannot be sped-up, speaks to the limitation of technology, and the limitations of acceleration.

Existential and physical being

We live in an era of an ironic twist: Whereas past existential questions cantered on making an impact, leaving a mark on this planet, and having some sort of significance, we no longer have to worry about that part. For the most part we are all making an impact, leaving a mark, and having significance, some certainly more than others. Unfortunately, the impact that we are making is not necessarily what one associates with and envisions in making an impact- some sort of major contribution to humanity, and it is unlikely the impact that one is intent on making- namely the physical and material impact which manifests itself in the ecological impact. This ecological impact is mostly the result of the modern life-style, which some now label as the Anthropocence, because of the defining impact of human activity on the planet: The impact that is leading to the demise of the planet, or at least to the demise of the planet as we know it. Some of these defining markers are the acceleration in the earth system trends (such as the increase in Carbon Dioxide, Ocean Acidification, and Terrestrial Biosphere Degradation) and the socio-economic trends (Population, Primary Energy Consumption, Telecommunication, and International Tourism) that when put on a graph all show are sharp incline around the 1950s (Steffen et al, 2015). Coinciding with the 1950s are markers such anthropogenic radiation (through nuclear testing), synthetic chemicals, particularly plastics, and climate change (associated with industrial production and mass consumption). Each of these markers show their traces in the most remote places on the planet as well as in the most intimate parts- in our bodies, and these traces are long-lasting, if not irreversible, affecting generation to come. In this respect the current generation has achieved near immortality based on its wastes.

Despite the knowledge, there does not seem to be a slowing of these effects, if anything they appear to be accelerating. This may one of the phenomena that support the claim of an "era of acceleration." Technology that has enabled this acceleration via the fast, easy, cheap mass production has also enabled fast, easy, and cheap mass consumption epitomized by single-use throwaway plastic items (Trentmann, 2016). But this is only part of the story. Disposal cannot quite keep up with the consequences of mass consumption. Waste management in the "developed" world has been very efficient in removing waste out of the consumer's sight and thereby out of mind. Big garbage containers are put out in the evening and their unwanted contents magically disappear in the morning. They certainly do not truly disappear; much of it is very much present in different forms (Rogers, 2006). After the short-lived usefulness, their long journey into the afterlife begins: Much of garbage involves being shipped to distant places nearby poor communities, and the more problematic waste is exported to "developing" countries to fill the containers ships on their return trip that brought consumer items produced by cheap labour and generous environmental laws- ideal conditions for not only outsourced production, but disposal. The supposedly compostable biodegradable items are mummified in landfills; other items may be incinerated and reborn as dioxins and toxic ashes (Leonard, 2010). And then there are the supposedly recyclable plastics that mysteriously turn up in oceans and beaches, which seem to enjoy particular longevity, up to 450 years, or, by other estimates, merely disintegrate into micro-plastics to stay around for even longer. These processes have escaped acceleration. And the "cultural legacy" of the more recent generations may be the engineering marvels of landfills, and

ubiquitous traces of consumption in forms of solids, such as plastic parts, or gases, such as greenhouse gases.

But like the traveller on the train of the tourist on the tour-bus, these are aspects that tend to escape our attention due to the speed and the mediations with, and most particularly the routes on which we are traveling through life. Without really "being-there" one is there, because one's physical presence mediated by train or the tour-bus is contingent on a vast infrastructure of interconnected technologies (*Werkzeugzusammenhang*) that have a profound impact on people and environment. However, for the user they have become nearly invisible- in some cases, because of their taken-for-grantedness (*Selbstverständlichkeit*), in others, because they are literally hidden or shielded from view from the privileged user: Production and waste management happens backstage- and that is usually an unpretty sight.

Schuldlos schuldig - Guiltless Guilty beyond the nuclear

Untold suffering and mass extinction may be imminent threats. But being is not necessarily threatened by the spectacular acts of weapons of mass destructions by a few madmen that could occur by a push of a button and within a few minutes, or a sudden accidental nuclear explosion. Instead it is the seemingly trivial everyday behaviours by a collective of ordinary people accumulated over time that present a nebulous, but deadly danger. Thus, Anders' concept of *schuldlos schuldig*- guiltless guilty, the burden of being born into in a nuclear age and the having to shoulder the responsibility by the fact that one belongs to the human race, then easily translates the current realities beyond the nuclear. It is no longer the realities and threads of war, not to say that they are no longer relevant, but the realities and threats of "peace" within current industrial society that are destined to mass destruction and extinction.

Anders (1982) identifies three sorrows (*Trauer*):

The first is for the people, who we lost.

The second is that those people died for nothing.

The third comes from the shock, that the loss is so great, that we cannot grieve it.

Anders was writing this in reference to war, however, this can be expanded and applied to people and the other living and non-living things in "peace times" of the era of acceleration. But Anders makes a seamless transition into "peace times" by linking the origins of war to capitalism, a system that depends expansion and consumption, the liquidation of its creations.

In a sense, we are like travellers on a train, and it seems that we are no longer able change the course of our direction, stop the momentum, or even slow it down. And to what extend can passengers be blamed, particularly if they did not necessarily choose to be on that train?

Even the well-meaning, conscientious person, who may, by current standards, be even labelled as environmentally friendly, or environmental psychologists for that matter, who see it part of their mission to "save the planet" and "educate people to become more environmental" are no friends of the environment and probably doing more harm than good from an ecological perspective, by their mere existence- just by living in the default mode normal modern life, despite "recycling" and being a "green consumer" (Rogers, 2006, 2010). Partial examples may involve supporting corporations that proudly proclaim to give

1% of their profits to the planet and peddling their plant based plastic bottles as the panacea to pollution. (As this outward experience occurs, 99% of the profits go into the executives' pockets and towards environmental demise). When self-identified environmental psychologists travel to international conferences to over-excitingly present their statistically significant research (while sipping on plastic bottled water) on topics such as how wealthy white suburbanites were able to increase their recycling behaviours or reduce their energy consumption by 5-10%. They are not accounting for the McMansions that come with two oversized-car garage, private pools and unnatural green lawns. Instead they highlight the collaboration with energy companies and the installing of "smart meters." The literal power-grab continues unabated and unquestioned. One may be tempted to raise the question whether a more significant environmental behaviour would have been not to travel to the conference at all. This could also apply to a privileged young Swedish activist who in a PR stunt sailed across the ocean, but could have opted to travel on a cargo ship along with other Ikea containers, which would have lowered the cost and ecological footprint of the overall operation.

Guilt-relief?

There is only so much damage one can do without the existence of technologies that allow for the amplifications of one's megalomania. While technologies can contribute to better environmental stewardship, much of them have been put to use for massively environmentally evasive projects with unforeseen consequences, the ordinary person can become an unintentional accessory to ecocide. There is of course a vast diffusion of responsibility, and the attention is turned away from governments, corporations, but towards the individual, the individual particularized as the consumer, and not so much the citizen. It is as if to suggest that all of the world's problems are to be solved by being responsible consumers as the primary criterion for good civic behaviour. This behaviour has undergone quite an evolution: First, it was about putting the trash in its place, mostly because of its unsightliness of increased single-use items (e.g. Keep America Beautiful), but putting the trash in its place has become much more complicated with the environmental awakening, because the "right" place now may involves compostable, recyclable- and the recyclable may further be subdivided in different material, the regular garbage, and the hazardous wastes.

But even the most meticulous trash separation has its limits and may divert the attention from the mechanisms of cost externalization, planned and perceived obsolescence, which produces trash in the first place and never questions consumer culture itself (Leonard, 2010). The costliest part of a product, the social and environmental costs, and the disposal part are not accounted for in the production and consumption process. So, the responsible consumer can bring one's obsolescent electronics to a recycling program (that may be exported to mine a few rare metal parts) with a clear conscience and make room for newer ones- ones that can process more data, faster (Woyke, 2014). It is not necessarily that one wants all this, but one needs to keep up to speed in a world where one can send more trivial mass mails and post larger trivial files easier, quicker, mindlessly. But not only trivial stuff of course: What at the time may have seemed a brilliant idea or joke and may have been intended for a specific audience can has the potential of taking on a life of its own and lead to an unplanned career ending and unintended life destroying consequences. The "train wreck" then applies in a figurative sense as well, and it is also qualifies as a, if not technology-caused, at least technology-aided disaster.

Social and environmental cost of have entered the consumer consciousness as well, and they are pacified by corporate propaganda that invest more in marketing and advertising than in their actual social and environmental programs. However, for consumer consciousness and conscience, or more importantly for sales and profiting purposes, this of course is the most rational thing to do. Most importantly it allows for business as usual and maintaining the status quo. This of course is contingent on growth and expansion, hence "acceleration." This acceleration appears to happen by itself, as much of modern life is entrenched in system that reinforces these very destructive practices built on antiquated and false premises of an earth with unlimited resources and infinite carrying capacity.

"We" often refer to environmental issues as "our" problems and that "we" need to do something, one of the major issues that this collectivism applies only selectively. Some of "us" are much more responsible for the demise, and some others are much more impacted, by what "we" are doing and not doing. Rarely are the producers and consumers confronted with the reality of pollution (Rogers, 2006; Leonard, 2010). The social and environmental costs of plastics floating in faraway oceans and stranded on faraway beaches on islands drowning in rising sea levels from climate change. As the low-lying lands vanish under seawater, some of the plastics become invisible as the breakup into microplastics and eventually end up as "gifts" in bodies of future generations.

So technically the existential question is not so much about making an impact, leaving a mark, or having significance, but precisely how not to make an impact, not leaving a mark, and not having significance, particularly if much of an existence is part of the material "culture" of the Anthroposcene. Does that then suggest pursuing, rather than "being", "non-being"?

Being: being-there, and over-there

Here, it may be good to return to the distinction between "being" from an experiential and physical and material perspective. Also, it may be good to think of "being", rather than in binaries of "being" and "non-being" in degrees and ways of "being". From a physical perspective the pursuit may in fact suggest striving towards "non-being", whereas from an existential perspective the pursuit would be towards "being". The default mode of modern lifestyle, however, suggests to be skewed in the opposite way. Our physical being is much more prevalent, whereas from an existential perspective it is much less so. While current realities of the physical presence usually imply a negative presence- that is a presence associated with harm from an ecological perspective, there are efforts to reduce this negative presence by various environmental initiatives to reduce our ecological footprint.

Given the widespread and long-lasting impact of our physical/material presence, we are not just about "being-there" (dasein), but technically also very much so, if not more so about "being-over-there" (dortsein). The experiential "being-there" concerns itself with the "over-there" best epitomized with the phrase "think globally, act locally". It is the awareness of the global consequence of local actions- the "over-there" (the global) is impacted by the "here" (the local). So technically, one is always acting globally in a sense as well, as the local actions are tied to the global as well. The challenge is that it is difficult to get a sense of the "over-there" and requires quite a bit of imaginative powers, and they may be pulled towards delusions.

While most of our (physical) "being" may be associated with a negative presence- much is about reducing our ecological impact, technically one could also have a "positive presence"

by increasing the ecological impact in a positive way, engaging in practices that would restore on environment, that one "gives back" more than one "takes". One example would be with carbon-offsetting, in which airlines and energy companies give consumers the option to pay extra so trees could be planted to make up for one's share of the carbon emissions caused by the trip. They probably do not account for the other pollutants and harm caused by the trip or usage. One would pay even more than one's share, then, technically, if the math were to reflect reality (which it probably does not) one would actually not merely reduce one's negative impact but create a positive impact. Some corporations are trying to make consumers believe that they are no longer reducing deforestation- the idea of conservation, but that they are maintaining forests (replant trees)- the idea of sustainability, or even better, they are creating forests (plant new trees)- the idea of regeneration- not mere production power, *Herstellungskraft,* but reproduction power, *Wiederherstellungskraft* (as an expansion of Anders' concepts). Of course, planting a bunch of trees, even more trees than one has supposedly used, is not the equivalent of a forest or an ecosystem including indigenous cultures that have been destroyed. And that of course everything is under the assumption that the proceeds of the donations to the supposedly eco-system protecting and recreating organizations actually end up as planted trees sequestering the carbon as promised. But of course, one can always see for oneself.

The tourist revisited: The virtual and eco-tourist

How can we see for ourselves what is going on globally? One can easily virtually tour significant parts of the globe not only via a wide variety of texts and images about different places, but also via Google earth and Google maps that provide not only bird-eye views, but street eye views, that allows one to get the sense of a different places. It allows "being-there" or "being-over-there" psychologically without really being there physically. And technically we can virtually engage with various with people and places- and in this regard there is a sense of us "being-over-there" and others "being-over-here". This of course can happen in a literal sense as well. We can physically travel to other places and others (people and goods) can travel to us. Conscientious consumers turned eco-tourists and activists can carefully choose where and how to travel and what people, places, goods and services to support. However, all these tend to still be based existing modes of travel, consumption and social inequalities, and the "good" one does may not be as good as one thinks it is. The fundamental assumption is that "they" need "us" to consume and save their place to save our planet (Mbaria & Ogata, 2016; Martinez-Reyes, 2016).

Contributing to ecosystems, setting ambitions to not only reducing one's ecological footprint- one's negative impact, but working towards a future allows for a positive impact are certainly worthwhile. But they need to occur in a less delusional way than by supporting greenwashing corporations and organizations that promise us a clear conscience and allow us to continue with mindless consumption behaviours.

Perhaps some of the meaningful actions can be experienced, not on a grandiose scale, but a smaller scale in a humbler way?

A Danish Response: Hygge?

In this era of acceleration, hygge, something that could loosely be translated to cosiness, has become of much global interest (Viking, 2016). As Denmark, along with other Scandinavian Countries has fared consistently well on the World Happiness Report, there are attempts to

explain this phenomenon. While there may be a combination of factors, such as being a social democracy with extensive welfare benefits and well-functioning institutions, a high level of social trust, a high sense of autonomy and freedom, which and are considered to mutually reinforcing (Martela, Greve, Rothstein, Saari, 2020). Certainly, such aspects are not easy to export, and particularly ideas associated with a social democracy may be a threat to the status quo of countries where corporate interests and profitmaking are prioritized. This of course makes a concept such as hygge much more palatable, as it offers a relatively simple, non-threatening solution and something to be marketed.

It is interesting to look at degraded and decontextualized forms of hygge. One example could include a fireplace in the summer with the air conditioning on (as Nixon in the White house). While a fireplace indeed may be associated with hygge, it should go without saying that it is contingent on a cold dark winter. Another degraded form may be the buying Danish or overpriced fake Scandinavian products or services in the hopes of comfort and happiness. Furthermore, the justification for rest and comfort on the grounds that it makes people more productive (Pang 2016) may be problematic, when it merely becomes a means to squeeze out more labour. Technically, hygge then cannot be a way of life, but rather something to be used sparingly and assimilated into the capitalist society.

And yet, there is no need to dismiss hygge outright. It is worth to take a look, as it does seem to offer an antidote to acceleration, and possibly promote well-being with larger social and environmental benefits. If the markers of the era of acceleration include- being absent (distracted), rushing, stressing, newness and change, the artificial, the expensive, and the inauthentic then several of the associations with hygge seem particularly important that include being present, taking time, relaxing, comforting, healing, the relational- involving others, the familiar, the local, the natural, the inexpensive, and the authentic. Of course some of these association particularly the relational and involving others coupled with the familiar and local, then may raise the question whether hygge may be associated with a sort of nationalism and exclude foreigners, who just "don't get it" (do not understand), and disrupt the very feeling of hygge, hence they cannot be part of it.

Several of the hygge associations are not exclusive to Denmark. Particularly in the realm of comfort there is the German *Gemütlichkeit*, and for healing there is the Japanese *iyashi*（癒し） that are achieved by similar means. *Iyashi* in particular received much attention in the context of burnout since the late 1980s at the peak of Economic growth in Japan (Sato, 2000).

What is noteworthy is that these are achieved via simple pleasures, which then makes them accessible. They are not limited to the privileged and are not contingent on social or environmental costs. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of engaging in hygge associated activities is not only in what one is doing, but also in what one is not doing. This also evokes the Taoist concept of wu-wei (無為)-not doing. A virtue that then can be linked with increased health and well-being, and reduced social and environmental harm.

Conclusions

Despite the realities of the era of acceleration marked by widespread and long-lasting destruction and miseries, these may not be inevitable outcomes. But, it may take some considerable imaginative powers (*Vorstellungskraft*) that allow seeing through the false

promises of technological and capitalist solutions, and envisioning possibilities of healthier relationships with the world, each other, and our selves.

I was fortunate to have an experience of "being-there" by "taking my time" on a morning run through Copenhagen during my conference visit in late August: A spontaneous harbour swim. Running through a place, gives the feeling of "being-in-the-place" or "doing-the-place", but swimming in the harbour gives it an additional dimension to being "immersed" in a place. Something that cannot be accomplished by a "virtual visit." And while one would love to credit oneself for having an experience, much of the credit goes to the place and people:

In Copenhagen, there are numerous "harbour pools" with public access. The seemingly simple pleasure was contingent on a clean city with clean air and clear water, and an architecture that invited for running the waterfront, and a wooden deck with stairs and ladders leading in and out of the water that invited for swimming. There were invitational characteristics, what Lewin (1969) has identified as *Aufforderungscharakter* (valence), have prompted the running and swimming. There was also, what Heidegger (1927) identified as *Werkzeugzusammenhang-* of a multitude of high and low tech technological interrelationships, ranging from the energy choices such as the offshore windmills, an investment in public transit and bike lanes, where default modes of powering modern technologies (fair phones instead of smart phones?), to commuting to work does not need to be that detrimental to the environment. The ladders leading in and out of the water applied to the consideration of quality of life and the abundance of natural opportunities in everyday landscapes. The experience also involved witnessing other people in and near the water, and an atmosphere of mutual trust, that not only could one leave one's things unattended while in the water, but, I also felt, that in the unlikely event of an emergency that they would pull one out of the water, if they had to. As much as this was a "hedonistic" experience, it also allowed for much contemplation, digestion of the conference content, and inspiration of this manuscript. The seemingly simple pleasure is not so simple after all. Harbour swimming, even when swimming alone, is not something to be achieved by an individual, but by a communal and societal investment in the public good. I felt at home and I was merely a tourist.

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