Res Rhetorica

ISSN: 2392-3113

Rhetoric of remembrance/oblivion
Retoryka (nie)pamięci

11 (1) 2024 ISSUE EDITORS: MAREK JEZIŃSKI, ANNA M. KIEŁBIEWSKA

VARIA

KRISTINE MARIE BERG
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN, DENMARK
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3903-369X
kristinebe@hum.ku.dk

Perseverance and zeal? Yes thanks: The ecology and endurance of a protest logo
Wytrwałość i zapał? Tak, dzięki! Ekologia i trwałość logotypu protestu

Abstract

By tracing the rhetorical ecology of an iconic protest logo created in Denmark in 1975, this article sheds light on an important part of the rhetoric of the Danish (and global) anti-nuclear power movement and how it continues to influence collective life in unpredictable and contradictory ways. Initially, the logo created a sense of community amongst anti-nuclear power activists. It was a powerful recruitment and fundraising tool, now it circulates as nostalgia, sparking both solidarity and alienation. The article builds on interviews with members of the Danish anti-nuclear power movement and a group of Danish youth today, including the founder of a current pro-nuclear power group. It relies on theories of rhetorical agency and ecology that have pinpointed the unpredictability and interconnectedness of rhetoric, and reminds us, further, of rhetoric's potential endurance.

W artykule prześledzono tzw. ekologię (dzieje i społeczny wpływ) ikonicznego logotypu protestu wobec energii atomowej, który został stworzony w 1975 r. w Danii. Początkowo logotyp tworzył poczucie wspólnoty wśród aktywistów antynuklearnych. Był również narzędziem aktywizacji społecznej i pozyskiwania funduszy. W kolejnych latach motyw został wykorzystany do promocji różnych idei, w tym popierających wykorzystanie atomu. Współczesne pokolenie, choć wciąż rozpoznaje tzw. uśmiechnięte słońce, to ma z nim związane sprzeczne skojarzenia oraz traktuje je jako element nostalgiczny. W artykule wykorzystano analizę materiałów oraz wywiady, przeprowadzone m.in. z członkami duńskiego ruchu antynuklearnego z lat 70., a także z grupą współczesnej duńskiej młodzieży, aby w ten sposób przybliżyć retorykę nie tylko duńskiego, ale i globalnego ruchu antynuklearnego. Artykuł odwołuje się do teorii retorycznej sprawczości i ekologii, podkreślających nieprzewidywalność i wielostronne powiązania retoryki, a także jej potencjalną trwałość.

Key words

rhetorical ecology, anti-nuclear social movement, logo, agency, nostalgia
ekologia retoryczna, społeczny ruch antynuklearny, logotyp, sprawczość, nostalgia

Received: 25 July 2023 | Accepted: 14 February 2024
DOI: https://doi.org/10.29107/rr2024.1.5

Res Rhetorica, ISSN 2392-3113, 11 (1) 2024, p. 87

KRISTINE MARIE BERG
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN, DENMARK
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3903-369X
kristinebe@hum.ku.dk

Perseverance and zeal? Yes thanks: The ecology and endurance of a protest logo[1]

1. Introduction

Riding my bike with my kids to school I notice a round sticker on a door we pass. "5G? No thanks" it says, the question curving above and the answer below something round in the center. Arriving to the city of Örebro, Sweden for the Nordic Conference for Rhetoric Research 2023, prepared to give a paper on the rhetoric of the Danish anti-nuclear power movement I notice a mural depicting a red Covid-19 virus on a yellow background and the words "Corona? No thanks" (see figure 3/F below). Taking part in an idea generation meeting for a new local nature, arts and music festival I find myself discussing a logo on a yellow background, a cross section of a tree trunk in the center, the annual rings forming two barely visible eyes, a smile and the words "Festival name? Yes thanks".[2] Examples are legion. The Danish public abounds with variations of this form and phrase. It can be traced to 1975 when the Danish grassroots organization OOA, Organisationen til Oplysning om Atomkraft (Eng. Organization for Information on Nuclear Power) designed their "smiling sun logo" (see figure 1) – and it is ever evolving.

Figure 1. The OOA's smiling sun logo with the text "Nuclear power? No thanks". Reproduced with permission from OOA.

1. This article is a follow-up to the discussion on rhetoric in Scandinavia in volume 10, issue 4 of "Res Rhetorica", edited by Tommy Bruhn, Lisa S. Villadsen, and Ewa Modrzejewska. See https://resrhetorica.com/index.php/RR/issue/view/41.
2. In English the answer might more correctly be phrased "yes please", but in my translation I hold on to "thanks" here to show how clearly it mimes the original. All translations in this article are by the author.

Whereas rhetorical scholars based in the US have provided rich understandings of US social movements (see e.g. Foust and Alvaredo 2018; Crick, ed. 2020), Scandinavian rhetorical scholars have only more recently begun to show interest in the social movements impacting the region (see special issue about social movements in *Rhetorica Scandinavia*; Berg, Buhre, Nielsen 2023), an interest this article shares. As is the case of many current rhetorical studies of social movements I am less interested in questions of definitions (such as what a social movement is and whether a certain group or phenomenon can be said to make up a social movement), and more interested in understanding how the social is set in motion (Foust and Alvaredo 2018; Berg, Buhre, Nielsen 2023, 2). The editors of this journal's issue on rhetoric in Scandinavia, Tommy Bruhn, Lisa S. Villadsen, and Ewa Modrzejewska ask (2023, 3): "Is it possible to speak of a Scandinavian rhetorical culture for rhetoricians to study, and what would be its features?", and they go on to suggest that this is "a discussion perhaps best had through careful rhetorical analysis of cases." (Bruhn, Villadsen, and Modrzejewska 2023, 6).

This article picks up on this and on the question of how the social is set in motion by analyzing an important element of the rhetoric of a hugely successful, yet quite under-researched, Danish grassroots organisation (but see Rasmussen 1997; Jakobsen 2014) that continues to influence collective life and rhetorical praxis in Denmark (and elsewhere). The article relies on theories of rhetorical agency and ecology that have pinpointed the unpredictability and interconnectedness of rhetoric, and points, further, to rhetoric's potential endurance. It contributes with further empirical evidence to our understanding of how visual things take part in shaping collective life. The article's main contribution, however, is to our understanding of the rhetorical life of an iconic protest logo and one of the most successful grassroots organizations to grow in Denmark, and as such to our understanding of an important part of Scandinavian social movement rhetoric.

The article is structured as follows: First I introduce the OOA. I then present the study's theoretical and methodological foundations. This entails discussing the concepts of "agency" (Rand 2008; Just and Berg 2016) and "ecology" (Edbauer 2005; Gries 2015) including the methodological moves I make to understand the ecology of the smiling sun, specifically "iconographic tracking" (Gries 2015). The third part consists of unpacking relations to the logo of the smiling sun as they appear from the perspectives of:

1) OOA activists,
2) young Danish students today, and
3) the user of a particular version of the logo, namely founder and chair of the Danish organisation "Nuclear Power? Yes thanks".

The logo's enduring influence is unpredictable and contradictory. Initially it created a sense of community amongst OOA activists and was a powerful communication, recruitment and fundraising tool, now it circulates as nostalgia (Kurlinkus 2018; 2021), creating comfort and solidarity across time for some while for others, those situated at the crux of the nostalgia (Kurlinkus 2021), it functions as a powerful antagonist. As if in a cyclic movement the logo appears to currently create some of the difficulties it was initially created to resist.

2. OOA – still making rhetorical history

The story of OOA is a remarkable one about a group of young people in Denmark in the beginning of the 1970s feeling uneasy with the Danish government's plans for future construction of nuclear power plants and deciding to do something about it. It is a story about the formation of a non-hierarchical community, about building up expertise through learning by doing, and in OOA activists Bente Meillier's and Siegfried Christiansen's words a story about "perseverance" and "zeal". OOA had a decisive impact on Danish public opinion and eventually the Danish parliament's decision to reject nuclear power (Sidenius 1986, 399). I emphasize this from the beginning as the remainder of this article focuses less on the activists and their strategic actions and more on unplanned and unintended outcomes and on the rhetorical life and power of a logo. While things unplanned and unintended, of course, had an impact on Danish public opinion, (such as for example the accident of the Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, USA in 1979 and the Chernobyl disaster in Soviet Ukraine in 1986) and while matters acquired their own power and influenced the process as well – as with the logo – it would be neither fair nor correct to leave readers of this article without a sense of the immense effort the OOA activists put in during many years (see also Ehrenfeld 2020 for similar reflections). One feat that attests to the "perseverance" and "zeal" of the OOA is the funding and production of 2.1 million pamphlets titled *Danmark uden atomkraft* (*Denmark without nuclear power*) (OOA 1979) that were slipped into mailboxes by OOA activists in the autumn and winter of 1979-1980.[3] This meant that nearly every household in Denmark received one. And then of course there was the long haul of it. The OOA was formed in January of 1974 and 11 years would pass until in March 1985, a majority of the opposition parties (namely the Social Democrats, Socialist People's party, Social Liberal party and Left Socialists) passed a law on public energy that did not include nuclear power (Sidenius, 1986). Following this the work of OOA continued, now focusing on having the Swedish nuclear power plant Barsebäck, 20 km from Copenhagen, closed. As this was under

3. See https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/kampagnerne (accessed January 11, 2024).

way in the year 2000 the OOA decided to close themselves down.[4] As this article documents, however, what OOA set into motion continues to impact collective life and rhetorical praxis in Denmark today.

3. Rhetorical agency and ecologies – unpredictability, interconnectedness and movement

Rhetorical agency is commonly understood as both potential for and realization of action (Just and Berg 2016, 43). Understandings often differ when it comes to who or what can be said to act (Just and Berg 2016, 43). This article focuses on the smiling sun logo in its own right, on all the different kinds of unplanned and unpredictable consequences it has sparked, and human agency is therefore not foregrounded, as mentioned above. Erin Rand's (2008) conceptualization of agency in relation to the polemic is helpful when seeking to understand the smiling sun logo's travel in the world. Rand proposes to see agency as unpredictable, as lacking "a necessary or predictable relation between an intending agent and the effects of an action" (Rand 2008, 298). Rhetorical agency, in Rand's view, is "the capacity for words and/or actions to come to make sense and therefore to create effects through their particular formal and stylistic conventions" (Rand 2008, 299-300), we could add to this list, the capacity for matters/things to come to make sense and create effects. Rand argues, further, that the polemic as a recognizable rhetorical form, is particularly prone to create unpredictable effects and thus enable agency. In this article we see a logo that, likewise, creates myriads of unpredictable effects yet differs decidedly in form from the polemic. The logo of the smiling sun, I suggest, serves to remind us that agency emerges powerfully though conciliatory forms as well. Furthermore, while Rand's study focuses on the polemic as an already recognizable rhetorical form, the cordial hypophora of the smiling sun, I suggest, *becomes* a recognizable rhetorical form, "available to exploration and exploitation" (Rand 2008, 311) through the logo's travel in the world. Just as the specific polemics Rand analyses, the logo and its unpredictable effects continue their travel, and, thereby, I argue, serve as a reminder of rhetoric's potential endurance.

Where the understanding of agency I rely on is based on unpredictability, invoking the metaphor of "ecology" invites rhetorical scholars to focus on processes, interrelations and movement. Words such as "dispersion" (Ehrenfeld 2020, 305) "interconnectedness" (see Gries 2015, 56), "contagions" and "flux" (Edbauer 2005, 9, 14) also orbit around the metaphor of "ecology". Ecological perspectives have influenced rhetorical thinking and teaching on public theory (Edbauer 2005; Sheridan, Ridolf, and Michel 2012; Ehrenfeld 2020), writing

4. See https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/det_lykkedes/ (accessed May 25, 2023).

(Cooper 1986; Rivers and Weber, 2011), new media (Brooke 2009) visual rhetoric (Gries 2015), environmental rhetoric (McGreavy, Wells, McHendry, Senda-Cook, eds. 2018) and more.

Here I will draw on two studies that are particularly relevant to understanding the smiling sun, namely Jenny Edbauer (2005) and Laurie E. Gries (2015). "Ecology" challenges our understanding of the context of rhetoric and points our interest towards, in Edbauer's words (2005, 14), "rhetoric's 'transversal communication' and travel in the world". Instead of seeing rhetoric's context as a conglomerate of distinct elements, as for instance Bitzer's (1968) conception of the rhetorical situation, an ecological perspective sees rhetoric emerging as "co-ordinating processes" (Edbauer 2005, 20). This makes it relevant for rhetorical scholars to show interest in "amalgamations and transformations – the spread – of a given rhetoric within its wider ecology" (Edbauer 2005, 20). Edbauer illustrates her theoretical arguments by tracing the spread of the phrase "Keep Austin Weird". This phrase was originally printed on stickers to protest gentrification of the city of Austin, Texas, but soon spread and started circulating on shirts, walls, and in all kinds of campaigns, sometimes even promoting the franchises it was originally designed to protest as well as in counter-campaigns calling for keeping Austin normal. "Keep Austin Weird" was, in Edbauer's words, included in the "cultural circulation, taking on the importance of a quasi-civic duty" (2005, 16). This, I argue, can be said about the logo of the smiling sun and its accompanying phrase as well. An ecology perspective includes affect and material interconnections and can, thus, help "give material factors their due", as Gries (2015, 6) articulates it. Coming from a new materialist and visual rhetoric perspective Gries (2015) tracks the "Obama Hope" image and in her ongoing work the circulation of the swastika in the US (Gries s.a.; 2023). As she puts it: "to consider something from an ecological perspective is to recognize its vital implication in networked systems of relations" (Gries 2015, 56). Gries (2015, 86-87) explains a certain "thought style" guiding new materialist rhetorical approaches, which challenges us to study things "as vital actants that are constantly changing, circulating, and triggering all kinds of collective actions via their multiple, divergent relations". As more specific methodological advice Gries (2015, 106) offers what she calls "iconographic tracking", which somewhat resembles the methodological moves I have made in this study. Very briefly, it entails:

1) following an image flow to see how it changes,
2) embracing uncertainty and openness to be able to account for rhetorical transformation,
3) tracing an image's exterior relations, and
4) offering rich descriptions of its collective activities (2015, 108).

Unlike this article Gries' studies draw not only on qualitative and interpretive research strategies but on quantitative and digital research strategies as well, but we share the interest in gaining insight into "peoples' encounters with an image" and the diverse consequences of these encounters (2023, 21).

4. Tracing the smiling sun

I first met OOA activists Siegfried Christiansen and Bente Meillier in 2019 when searching for manuscripts of speeches held at demonstrations in Denmark for a genre research project (Berg 2020). They introduced me to their extensive archive in Christiansen's attic, seemingly containing everything OOA has ever done that can be put into boxes; zines, flyers, stickers, strategy papers, letters to politicians and between activists, tin cans for collecting coins when selling badges, etc. Besides this archive, Christiansen also showed me a thick red plastic folder containing newspaper clippings with examples from Danish and German newspapers where the formulation "Something? Yes/No thanks" appeared. The editor's quick fix, he called it. I started meeting with Siegfried Christiansen and Bente Meillier and occasionally with other former OOA activists to document their stories about the OOA.

Then in 2021 I taught a rhetoric course about activism and social movements together with my colleague Pamela Pietrucci. My plan was to focus on the OOA and their archive. I soon realized, however, that the students were less motivated by this idea than I was. They were not sure that OOA's rhetorical work in the 1970s and 1980s was relevant for today's activism that often relies heavily on social media. So I suggested instead that we kept our eyes and ears open throughout the semester for anything that was perhaps or obviously inspired by the OOA. I hoped to make the point that the rhetorical work the OOA carried out then still circulates and influences us today. Thus began our search for the smiling sun and its continual transformation.[5] This work appears here as occasional descriptions and examples of new versions of the logo. Siegfried Christiansen and Bente Meillier visited us in class to talk about their activist experiences and their lessons learned. They brought a sun bleached flag with the smiling sun and hung it up in the classroom and Christiansen brought the red plastic folder and gave a talk on the smiling sun logo and the phrase "Nuclear power? No thanks". The following year I asked another group of students if they would be interested in sharing their experiences with the logo and asked them to write down their responses to me. During the process of gathering all of this in some kind of coherent research output I have met and corresponded continually with Christiansen. He has helped me think through the transformations of the logo and some of the consequences

5. See some of the students' works here: https://www.retoriskarena.dk/retorikogaktivisme/ (accessed May 25, 2023).

it has sparked. Christiansen, thus, is not exactly an informant nor are he and I conducting collaborative research. Instead the word "co-labor" might describe our working relation (Druschke 2019 via Cadena 2015): "the active co-creation of knowledge between researcher and researched" where they attempt to, but can never fully achieve to share their worlds (Druschke 2019).[6] This long and messy process (see Gries 2015, 110) has given me material to account for the smiling sun's ecology, how the sun transforms and creates relations with and between people close to it and far from it. And as I and many students have entered into relation with the smiling sun along the way, this long and messy process is now part of its rhetorical ecology. As Gries notes, "[t]o a great extent, images circulate because of the metacultural activity generated by talk about their actualized forms" (Gries 2015, 122, see also Gries 2015, 70). While I am not certain that I succeed in creating the kind of "symmetrical accounts that explain the dynamic movement of matter and the vital contributions it makes to collective life", as Gries articulates new materialist research aims, I hope that the descriptions I offer shows how the smiling sun logo has acquired its own life and power and how it continually sparks "a wide range of consequences" (Gries 2015, 86), even as it was conceived with specific aims and people continually attempt to tame it for their own purposes.

5. Setting processes in motion[7]

OOA was a leaderless and non-hierarchical organization that relied on the competencies and motivations of whoever was active at the moment. In Christiansen's own words, others in the OOA gained more comprehensive knowledge of the substantial stuff of nuclear power, but he was a good administrator (and I would add archivist) and quickly became responsible for the organisation's production, logistics and economics. So, it was to him another OOA activist, Anne Lund, addressed a letter in April 1975 with the first draft of the smiling sun, which she hoped could be produced and sold to raise funds for future work.[8] In Christiansen's words:

> OOA didn't start with that logo. OOA started with asking questions. We wanted public reflections and considerations on nuclear power. The first slogan we came up with was a question: 'Do you feel safe with nuclear power?' So, we have always prioritised posing questions. That was essential in our thinking from the beginning, posing questions and providing information. We

6. The "two worlds" of co-labor which de la Cadena (2015) and Druschke (2019) attempt to inhabit together with their co-labor partners appear more complex than that of the worlds of Siegfried Christensen and myself. De la Cadena's for instance are her world of "sanctioned history or 'knowledge'" and her co-labor partner "Turpo's world of what has commonly been rendered as Andean 'belief'." (Druschke 2019).

7. This section is based on interviews with Siegfried Christiansen and Bente Meillier, documents from the OOA archive that Christiansen has shown me and on the digital museum of the OOA: https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/, accessed May 25, 2023). When possible I provide links that further document what I have from interviews and documents that are so far not accessible outside of Christiansen's attic.

8. See the letter here: https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/solmaerket/ (accessed May 11, 2023).

> decided we needed a strong national secretariat, but we also wanted local groups throughout the country. Four times a year we would have national seminars where we would all meet. Here we'd decide on all general campaign strategies. Besides this, all local groups had carte blanche. We didn't have national leadership or a board. We didn't have membership as such. It was a collective, those who wanted to be active could come and be active. And because of this, there was room for ideas to surface. Pretty early a rather large active group was formed in Aarhus. And they thought we needed a better slogan and logo. People used to ask us then if we didn't have an opinion, why we only asked questions: 'Are you for or against?', they would ask. We'd say, that's not what's most important, what we need is time to learn, people need time to form their own opinion about nuclear power, and we don't want to cut that process short by offering ready made opinions. We would say: 'no we don't like the idea, but what's important is that many people reflect and make up their mind'. And well, Anne Lund, she became active in the Aarhus group in the spring of 1975 and took part in the conversations we had then, the questions we asked and our discussions on how to provide answers.

The smiling sun logo was created in 1975 by the local OOA group in the city of Aarhus. The group consisted of approximately ten participants, most of them were from Gylling Næs, just south of Aarhus, the prospective site for the first nuclear power plant in Denmark. In the 1970s many wore badges to show their political stances and one of the young activists, Anne Lund, had the idea to create one for OOA. Lund had studied in Sweden and had noticed that a Swedish nuclear power resistance group had created a logo with two people surrounded by electron moving in orbits, a pregnant woman holding a child's hand. Lund felt this was too fear inducing. Another Swedish anti-nuclear power logo had a raised fist in the center. This, on the other hand, was too left wing. OOA wanted to create a movement where people across the political spectrum would feel included. Red and yellow had already become the signature colours of the OOA and as they signal danger, Anne Lund wanted an image that balanced this by showing happiness also. She wanted to create a logo that signaled a gracious rejection. "We all own the sun. It signals solar power. It creates wind. It should be happy, but showing rejection: 'No thanks, this is not what we want.'" Together with another OOA activist, Søren Lisberg, she came up with the words "Nuclear power? No thanks", and as she happened to know an advertising designer, Lene Hvidtved Larsen, she asked her to draw a happy sun. Anne Lund copied this design by hand and sent it to the OOA secretariat in Copenhagen where they found a graphic designer who made the final design. Noone remembers who that was and they have not succeeded in finding the person, although they have tried.[9] Christiansen remembers seeing the first sketch: "I didn't think it was lame… I thought it was very sweet, but was it serious enough? But then I thought 'yes, go for it'. Well, it turned out to be genius." The local Aarhus group shared the cost of producing the first 500 badges which were ready just in time for the May 1. demonstration

9. See https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/solmaerket/ (accessed May 25, 2023).

in Aarhus in 1975. The badges were sold in no time. From there it grew quickly. OOA started producing tote bags and t-shirts with the logo and every Saturday activists would walk around with old tomato boxes full of badges and sell them. This created a sense of community amongst the activists and meant they were in contact with a lot of people they could inform and influence about their case and possibly recruit to OOA. Anne Lund even met her husband this way. Wearing the badge often meant people would initiate conversations about nuclear power and this way the knowledge, opinions and emotions of different nuclear power opponents was put into circulation. Within two years after the first badges were produced, the logo had been translated to Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, German, Dutch, French, Italian, Spanish, English, and in the years to follow approximately 30 other national and regional languages, including smaller languages such as Welsh and Basque and versions in Canadian, Australian and American English. The Fukushima disaster in Japan in 2011 initiated another pull for additional language versions of the smiling sun. The number of language variations has now exceeded 60. Christiansen sums up:

> In the years 1975-1985 the OOA produced some 36 million Smiling Sun items for sale, not to mention the incalculable numbers of Smiling Suns that have appeared on leaflets and posters, in magazines, newspapers, media programmes, websites, etc. From 1978 some foreign groups began producing Smiling Suns on their own. The OOA did not manage to keep track on such independent Smiling Sun activities and has accordingly no record on the volume of such production.[10]

Two years after Anne Lund sent the hand drawn sketch from Aarhus to Siegfried Christiansen in Copenhagen, the logo was the focus of an international metadiscussion about its use. In 1977 Siegfried Christiansen travelled to Mexico to attend an international seminar about nonviolent activism. One of the planned activities was a workshop with the title "communication" focusing on the logo of the smiling sun. Christiansen has given me a copy of the typewritten notes in English from the workshop listing advantages and disadvantages of the logo. Some of the 14 "advantages" and 4 "disadvantages" mentioned in these notes are:

> Advantages:
> 1. It contains as well the target for protest as it shows the constructive alternative [...]
> 2. It is friendly looking, happy, attractive also towards people so far not involved or interested in the issue.
> 3. It says no in a polite way, so depolarising a controversy which easily develops violently, because of the enormous economic interests involved. [...]
> 4. The smiling sun is unisex. [...]

10. See https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Smiling-Sun-Presentation.pdf (accessed May 25, 2023).

5. The symbol is directly understandable (if you can read). No barrier, because of abstract symbols (i.e. the cross, the pigeon) which meaning you have to learn before understanding those symbols.
6. The symbol is not by itself related to any group or organisation and thus usable, by anybody.
7. It is possible to translate the symbol into other languages and internationalize it, and thus having an international campaign symbol.

Disadvantages:

1. The symbol can not immediately be understood by illiterates. [...]
2. It is difficult to reproduce the symbol f.ex. in figures of tree, leather, metal etc.
3. It answers a question without giving the reasons.

The success of the smiling sun logo meant that it could be used as a way to decentralise financing of further campaigns. OOA set up a central production and offered badges and stickers to local OOA groups in Denmark and anti-nuclear power groups in other countries who could buy them just above production price and keep the profit to finance their own local activities. OOA would most often ship the badges and stickers but sometimes the local groups would set up their own production. Typically these badges and stickers were sold at street stalls and demonstrations.[11] This meant even further spread of the smiling sun and increased the actions of the various groups as they gained a means to finance their activities. If we want "to account for an image's rhetorical eventfulness", Gries argues, "it is important to study both intended and unintended consequences as well as to investigate as many consequences as possible to recover the nuanced way an image contributes to collective life" (Gries 2015, 124). It is with these words in mind I mention the various consequences above. And of course there is much more to mention, as for example when a Basque anti-nuclear power group planted the logo as a flag on Mount Everest in 1980. The many modified versions promoting or discouraging other things than nuclear power are some of the unintended consequences.

A B C D

Figure 2. Examples of the logo in different languages. **A**: the logo in Basque, produced from 1978. **B**: the logo in Polish, produced from 1980. **C**: in Esperanto, from 1980. **D**: in Sioux, 1980.

11. See https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Smiling-Sun-Presentation.pdf (accessed May 25, 2023).

While this may be fascinating for rhetorical scholars interested in ecologies and circulation, it has led to both astonishment and pride as well as frustration and countless hours of extra work for OOA activists. Because of the immediate and overwhelming success of the logo, OOA decided in 1976 to have the smiling sun registered as a trademark to ensure that it could not be used to advertise for commercial interests or political parties.[12] As Christiansen was responsible for the OOA's production, logistics and economics, the tracking of such actions fell on him. He has done what he could to stop this kind of use, or abuse as he words it, in many cases with legal help, but he has also realized and accepted along the way that parodic versions and versions used by media are protected as freedom of speech.

When different European political parties with direct affiliation to the anti-nuclear power movement wanted to use it as well, OOA created a code of conduct, including the words: "Political parties should refrain from the production of campaign material with the Smiling Sun Logo in context with symbols and colours of the party" and "Political parties should bear in mind that the Smiling Sun Logo's independence of political parties and ideologies is regarded as crucial for achieving the goals of the antinuclear movement." Eight boxes in the OOA archive in Christiansen's attic contain papers related to the cases of such abuse. Examples include the ferry company Scandlines using it in a newspaper advertisement for making a ferry trip from Denmark to Sweden and the Danish Cancer Society using it in a campaign for people to remember to put on sunscreen. I detect a certain ambivalence in Christiansen when he talks about this. He has been frustrated and surprised when people have contacted him and asked if they could use the logo and he has declined and they have used it anyway, or when he has seen the logo promoting commercial companies or cases that have nothing to do with anti-nuclear power. But he also believes that in "nine out of ten" cases when someone sees the logo in any other version, it still reminds them of the anti-nuclear power case. But what is it about this smiling sun and its politely phrased rejection that is so attractive? "Things are especially contagious when they propagate affective desires that induce unconscious imitative feelings, thoughts and behaviors", argues Gries (2015, 87). Which feelings, thoughts and behaviors does the smiling sun induce? Which relations does it make possible?

12. See https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20130420-BCN-25aniversary-Siegfried-Christiansen.pdf (accessed May 25, 2023).

E

F

G

H

I

Figure 3. Examples of new versions of the logo currently in circulation. **E**: "Kattegat connection No thanks". Logo protesting planned construction of a bridge over the sea of Kattegat. Reproduced with permission from the group "Kattegat Nej tak". **F**: the logo celebrating deceased Copenhagen DJ and media personality, Master Fatman [trans. "Good karma Yes thanks"]. Reproduced with permission from creator of the sticker, owners of the café Kaj – din ven i solen. **G**: the logo is commenting on university policy by the Danish government to move some university departments out of the bigger cities, hanging on campus of UCPH, 2022 [trans. "Relocation reform? Yes thanks"], creator unknown. **H**: a mural commenting on Covid-19, Örebro, Sweden, 2022, artist unknown. **I**: "War in Ukraine? No thanks". Reproduced with permission from creator, Lotte Sørensen.

6. Relations: Nostalgia creating solidarity across time

In the fall of 2022 I asked a group of rhetoric students at the University of Copenhagen, all in their 20s, if they knew the image of the smiling sun, if so from where, if they remember when they last saw it, whether they like it and what it makes them think about. I received 15 individual answers.[13] All of them know the image, mostly from stickers, badges and tote bags, some mention the logos' many new versions, many have encountered it recently somewhere in the cityscape, and one has seen it "just last week on my own tote bag hanging in the utility room." The answers indicate a host of warm feelings and pleasant memories connecting these young people of today with young, activist versions of people close to them.

13. Thanks to all of them for sharing their thoughts, emotions and experiences.

The smiling sun, thus, circulates what I think is best described as nostalgia.[14] Consider these reflections from five different students:

> I got to know it when I went on a study trip to Berlin in my first year in upper secondary school in 2015 and my class and I went to see a "climate city" built out of 100% reusable materials. The logo was in German and hung as a banner between apartments. In several other apartments I noticed it as a sticker on the windows. The following years I often noticed the logo in Copenhagen or other big cities, but I seldom saw it in my local area in mid Funen – except for when my mother once cleaned up her clothing from her youth and found a shirt with the logo.
>
> It had kitsch value in my school in 9th and 10th grade [Danish: efterskole] where it was probably original badges or t-shirts some had found in their parents' stashes – the parents might actually have been part of the anti-nuclear power movement in the 70s/80's.
>
> When I think of this logo I think of Barsebäck. The clearest memory I have of the logo is my mother in law who always finds her 'Nuclear Power? No thanks' when she wants to talk about the time she was a young activist.
>
> It makes me think of black and white photographs of big public protests and the activist songs of Cæsar [Danish protest singer in the 1960s and 1970s] for instance – and of my mum who sings those kinds of songs when she does the ironing in the living room.
>
> Strangely enough, it doesn't make me think of nuclear power, but rather about climate action and activism in general. It makes me think of our small country and all the harm a nuclear catastrophe could cause.

Writing from a psychological perspective Constantine Sedikides et al. (2015) pinpoint a facet of nostalgia that aptly reflects the students' experiences. Through nostalgia, they write, drawing on Hertz (1999, 95), "the mind is 'peopled' as important figures from one's past are brought to life and become part of one's present" (Sedikides et al. 2015, 219; see also Kurlinkus 2021, 429). As the smiling sun induces nostalgia it functions as a type of conductor of relations across time. In his studies on contemporary rhetorics of nostalgia William C. Kurlinkus (2018, 3, italics in original) proposes a definition that can help shed further light on some of the reflections above: "*pride and longing for lost or threatened* [personally or culturally experienced] *pasts*" . Importantly, nostalgia is seen here not as something particularly conservative or regressive, it is, rather, a general "human need to bathe in lost pasts" (Kurlinkus 2021, 422). When the students relate to the smiling sun, they connect themselves to their culturally experienced past of Danish anti-nuclear power activism, and this gives way to something that appears to be feelings of pride. Pride, I gather, that those close to them took active part in shaping society. Perhaps pride that humans in general can come together and affect such change. Kurlinkus (2021, 424) describes nostalgia as "an intoxicating home of identity-defining experiences". In the longing of a lost past lies the question of who we are.

14. Thanks to Erik Bengtson, Uppsala University, for pointing me in this direction.

The students' responses seem to indicate answers containing "engaged citizens", perhaps even "anti-nuclear power activists".

Another answer is illuminating as well:

> It makes me think of other times, when the problems were simpler, haha, even though I know they probably weren't. But (and this is also something that is happening inside of me) it reminds me of times and discourses where things were treated in a more binary way. It is a statement that I would always agree with without thinking really. But now it's more complicated, everything is, actually.

As the person providing this answer suspects, things were not simpler then. In fact many OOA activists were also active in the peace movement and the environmental movement. Focusing on nuclear power was an attempt to focus and unite their struggles, but this focus likewise seemed overwhelming. As Siegfried Christiansen described the question of nuclear power in a presentation on the OOA's campaign strategies in 1977, "a controversial problem which is saturated with conflicts".[15] So, no, things were probably not simpler then, but the smiling sun with its open question and polite answer brings up longings for a simpler and less conflict-ridden world. This is the work of nostalgia, it smooths the past (Kurlinkus 2021, 426). All the answers, furthermore, point to physical manifestations of the smiling sun, in the cityscape, on badges and t-shirts in stashes and old forgotten drawers. The smiling sun in all its versions circulates digitally as well, but it stimulates thoughts about analogue experiences, about "community gardens, cannabis", as one contemplates.

While most reflections point to this culturally experienced past, some do point forward and to our current moment when nuclear power is resurfacing in Danish public debate,[16] for instance by mentioning a currently circulating version of the logo arguing *for* nuclear power. In her tracing of the phrase "Keep Austin Weird", Edbauer found counter-campaigns as well, calling for keeping Austin normal. She writes: "Not only do these counter-rhetorics directly respond to and resist the original exigence, they also expand the lived experience of the original rhetorics by *adding* to them–even while changing and expanding their shape" (Edbauer 2005, 19). This can be said about the "Nuclear Power? Yes thanks" version (see figure 4), which is otherwise very obviously an imitation of the smiling sun. It has the same tilted smile and eyes, the same line for a nose, but instead of a red sun with rays it has a blue atom with electron orbits around it. Christiansen has of

15. See https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/1977-OOA-Campaign-Model-Siegfried-Christiansen.pdf (accessed May 25, 2023).

16. See for instance documentaries aired in 2023 on Danish public service about nuclear power, documentaries with titles such as "Nuclear power? yes thanks" and "Nuclear power? Well, why not": https://www.dr.dk/drtv/serie/atomkraft-_-ja-tak_363112. Or see the Danish libertarian party Liberal Alliance's website where they argue for "looking into nuclear power in Denmark" as a way to decrease CO_2 emissions: https://www.liberalalliance.dk/politik/klima/energi/atomkraft/ (accessed May 25, 2023).

course been in contact with the creator of this, Swedish Michael Karnerfors,[17] but has let it go. The smiling sun continues its rhetorical journey and transformation, now also promoting the opposite message. How might we explain the allure of this simple logo that makes even opponents of its message want to use it?

Figure 4. The logo of the organisation "Nuclear Power? Yes thanks". Reproduced with permission from foratom.dk.

7. Relations: The nostalgic crux and the logo as powerful antagonist

Johan Christian Sollid is the co-founder and chair of the Danish organisation "Nuclear power? Yes thanks". Sollid is wearing a T-shirt with the logo when I meet him online. He founded the organisation together with Theis Palm around 2020 and when they saw the logo online, apparently free to use, they immediately adopted it. Sollid explains:

> In Denmark the easy thing is to say 'no thanks' to nuclear power. It's as if it's part of Danish national identity, part of the Danish cultural canon to answer 'no thanks', when someone brings up nuclear power. You don't lose anything by saying 'no thanks', but try to say 'yes thanks' and you will see people reacting. People look at me when I wear this t-shirt, they come up to me. Sometimes they even tell me off. I love that. That's the energy this logo brings.

What Sollid has noticed is something akin to what Edbauer describes about the "Keep Austin Weird" phrase: it became part of the "cultural circulation" and took on "the importance of a quasi-civic duty" (Edbauer 2005, 16). One can imagine a situation where someone mentions some quirky café in Austin in a negative tone and being reprimanded because we need to keep Austin weird. Just like in Sollid's experience "no thanks" is immediately activated on the tongue when talk touches on nuclear power. Sollid hopes he and his organization can start a more open debate, based, he says, on knowledge and rational argumentation, not emotions and fear. With the current planetary crisis in mind, he thinks it is irresponsible to not even want to consider nuclear power. He knows his organization will need to

17. See https://nuclearpoweryesplease.org/ (accessed May 25, 2023).

create an attractive community to recruit activists, and points to the OOA as an inspiration. Besides this, however, he is not much of a fan of the OOA's work. Perhaps understandably he is frustrated that they won the Danish public opinion over in such a profound way. However, Sollid, a young energetic person with a deep urge to make a change in society, a strong belief in knowledge and argumentation and the importance of collective action makes me think of how I imagine Bente Meillier, Siegfried Christiansen and all the other young activists of OOA in the 1970s. Their purposes are antithetical, but they hold many of the same ideals. And interestingly, Sollid and his organization reach for the smiling sun in the hope that the circulating relations to it and to its cause can be used to activate people and open up the debate again. Sollid explains:

> Of course we could have chosen a different logo, a different phrasing, even a different word for nuclear power. But when we do it like this, so closely aligning us with the original logo, we activate people. If we just said something about nuclear power in a completely different manner, I don't think people would be as interested. Now it's as if we yell a bad word in people's faces or say something offensive about their parents. Ok, now we have their attention.

Sollid offers "saying something offensive about their parents" as a comparison to how people seem to experience what he and his organization do when they argue pro nuclear power. With the informants' responses in mind, responses that so warmly connect the logo with people close to them, it might not be so far from what it actually feels like. Kurlinkus reminds us that although we assume that "everyone else's ideal past is just like ours" (Kurlinkus 2018, 4), nostalgia is always someone's nostalgia, not everyone's. Consequently, he urges rhetorical scholars to pay attention to those situated at what he calls the "nostalgic crux" (Kurlinkus 2021, 424), those who might be blamed for the loss of whatever is longed for and who therefore "triggers a motivating anger (and tacit fear)" (2021, 424). If the logo activates longings for a simpler, less conflict-ridden world, turning the logo and its message on its head can seem provocative, as a move that makes the world more complex and fuller of conflicts instead. In Sollid's experience associating oneself with being *pro* nuclear power in Denmark creates disgust, aversion, "it's almost as if you said you were a pedophile or something", he explains. But what about the connections of the logo to "engaged citizens"? One could imagine the smiling sun carrying reminders of this and motivating to celebrate all kinds of engaged citizens. Although they advocate for the opposite, there is after all no doubt that Sollid and others in his organization are engaged in a societal cause just like the OOA was. However, while the logo works as conductor of solidarity across time and induces feelings of pride of a cultural experienced past where engaged citizens changed the cause of action, it also carries with it a kind of de-politicized version of politics. Things were simpler then, not so conflict-ridden, as one informant

reflected. “It’s a sweet retro logo”, as it was also described. So this logo and this phrase that were designed to welcome debate about nuclear power and de-polarize a deeply conflictual political debate, appears to now in one of its current rhetorical transformations show us its potential to close this debate and polarize as well. What I called a conciliatory form earlier appears to become polemical when the form is kept recognizable, but the substance of the message is turned on its head.

8. Movements – from here to where?

How do the smiling sun and the phrase “Nuclear power? No thanks” contribute to collective life? The smiling sun and the phrase “Something? No/Yes thanks” circulate as well-known solutions when in need of a logo and a slogan. Siegfried Christiansen calls the phrase the editors’ quick fix. Perhaps there is something to this,[18] yet there is also more to it than this. The smiling sun carries and builds up strong affective forces. Forces that open up affective avenues for some and limit discursive opportunities for others. As if in a cyclic movement the logo appears to currently create some of the difficulties it was initially created to resist.

As mentioned earlier, Bruhn, Villadsen and Modrzejewska (2023, 6) suggest that a discussion of whether there is such a thing as a “Scandinavian rhetorical culture” for scholars to study might start with careful analysis of cases. They also point to what they describe as a “melioristic undertone” in rhetorical scholarship in the region, “a cooperative or dialogic rather than agonistic normative orientation” (2023, 6) and cautiously ponder if this might be characteristic of Scandinavian rhetorical culture as well. The case of the enduring smiling sun logo and its conciliatory form which works as both conductor of solidarity across time and as a powerful antagonist indicates that this would indeed be an interesting question for further studies.

At the time of writing the question of nuclear power is resurfacing in Denmark. Siegfried Christiansen experiences an increase in mails and phone calls from journalists, schoolchildren and students interested in the topic. The last time I visited him he asked me if I would be interested in having the red folder with variations of the logo passed on to me when the rest of the OOA archive is eventually handed over to the Danish Labour Museum and the Danish National Archive. I said yes, of course. Leaving Christiansen’s apartment building I started pondering ways to use it in my teaching. The smiling sun continues its journey. And as I think this article testifies to, it cannot be contained. Who knows where and with which consequences it will be spreading in the years to come. It has acquired its own life and power.

18. See Abdel-Raheem 2019 on visual/multimodal recycling.

For a discipline like rhetoric that has such a profound investment in human agency, seeking to understand social movement rhetoric by focusing on how rhetoric travels in the world and creates all kinds of unintended and unpredictable consequences can seem outlandish, unethical even – how is knowledge about *that* going to help anyone change society for some kind of better (see also Ehrenfeld 2020)? Ecology and agency as conceptualized here, OOA and the story of the smiling sun logo, I believe, point to similar answers: Focusing on isolated rhetorical acts and primarily intended consequences does not make much sense from the agency and ecological perspectives drawn on here, nor from the perspectives emerging from the experiences of Bente Meillier and Siegfried Christiansen or from tracing the smiling sun. It is not really about one rhetor or one rhetorical act. It is, rather, about cultivating ecologies that are worth living in, worth sharing. This means highlighting numerous and various types of collective rhetorical events rather than singular and individualised rhetorical acts. Or as Kristen Seas articulates it: "what we want to cultivate, then, is a rhetorical ecology that continually moves towards [...] opportunities for change. Therefore, rather than resting comfortably on our laurels with our "complete" text in hand, we would instead find ourselves impelled to keep writing, keep communicating, and keep participating [...]" (Seas 2012, 64). This is also the lesson we can take with us from OOA and the smiling sun. Perseverance and zeal? Yes thanks.

Bibliography

Abdel-Raheem, Ahmed. 2019. "Visual recycling and intertextuality: a neurocognitive perspective." *Journal of Cultural Cognitive Science* 3: 1-19.

Berg, Kristine Marie. 2020. "Demonstrationstalen". In *Danske Taler*, ed. by Marie Lund, 215-228, Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

Berg, Kristine Marie, Frida Buhre, and **Esben Bjerggaard Nielsen.** 2023. "Introduktion: Att sätta det sociala i rörelse. Retoriska perspektiv på aktivism i norden," *Rhetorica Scandinavica* 27 (86): 1-7. https://doi.org/10.52610/rhs.v27i86.297.

Bitzer, Lloyd F. 1968. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1(1): 1-14.

Brooke, Collin G. 2009. *Lingua Fracta: Toward a Rhetoric of New Media*. New York: Hampton Press.

Bruhn, Tommy, Lisa S. Villadsen, and **Ewa Modrzejewska.** 2023. "Rhetoric in Scandinavia – a foreword." Res Rhetorica 10 (4): 2-9. https://resrhetorica.com/index.php/RR/article/view/809.

Cadena, Marisol de la. 2015. *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Cooper, Marilyn M. 1986. "The Ecology of Writing." *College English* 48 (4): 364-375.

Crick, Nathan (ed.) 2020. *The Rhetoric of Social Movements. Networks, Power, and New Media.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Edbauer, Jenny. 2005. "Unframing models of public distribution: From rhetorical situation to rhetorical ecologies." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35 (4): 5-24. https://doi.org/10.1080/02773940509391320.

Ehrenfeld, Dan. 2020. "'Sharing a World with Others': Rhetoric's Ecological Turn and the Transformation of the Networked Public Sphere." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 50(5): 305-320. https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2020.1813321.

Druschke, Caroline Gottschalk. 2019. "A Trophic Future for Rhetorical Ecologies." *Enculturation* 28. Accessed August 14, 2023. https://enculturation.net/28.

Foust, Christina R. and **Alvarado, Raisa.** 2018. "Rhetoric and Social Movements". In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, ed. Jon Nussbaum et al., 1-19. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gries, Laurie E. 2023. "Rhetorical Data Studies: A Methodology for Doing Scholarly Activism through Data Advocacy." *Rhetorica Scandinavica* 27 (87): 15-34. https://doi.org/10.52610/rhs.v27i87.310.

Gries, Laurie E. 2015. *Still Life with Rhetoric: A New Materialist Approach for Visual Rhetorics*. Denver: University Press of Colorado.

Gries, Laurie E. s.a. *The Swastika Monitor*. Accessed August 14, 2023. https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/makingfuturematters/gries-part-3.html.

Hertz, Dan G. 1990. "Trauma and nostalgia: New aspects of the coping of aging holocaust survivors". *Israeli Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences*, 27, 189–198.

Jakobsen, Lara J. 2014. "Solen takker nej til atomkraft." In *101 danske design ikoner*, ed. Lars Dybdahl, 302-305. København: Strandberg Publishing.

Just, Sine N., and **Berg, Kristine M.** 2016. "Disastrous Dialogue: Plastic Productions of Agency-Meaning Relationships." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 46 (1): 28-46. https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2015.1106008.

Kjerkegaard, Else Marie (ed.). 1976. *Levevilkår i Danmark. Statistisk oversigt 1976*. 1976. Danmarks Statistik. Socialforskningsintituttet. https://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/Udgivelser/GetPubFile.aspx?id=20252&sid=livdk1976.

Kurlinkus, William C. 2018. *Nostalgic Design. Rhetoric, Memory, and Democratizing Technology*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Kurlinkus, William C. 2021. "Nostalgic Design: Making Memories in the Rhetoric Classroom." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 51 (5): 422-438. https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2021.1972133.

McGreavy, Bridie, Justine Wells, George F. McHendry, Jr., Samantha Senda-Cook (eds.). 2018. *Tracing Rhetoric and Material Life. Ecological Approaches.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65711-0.

OOA. 1979, 1980. *Danmark uden atomkraft. Organisationen til Oplysning om Atomkraft*. Accessed August 14, 2023. http://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/OOAs-Folkepjece.pdf.

Rand Erin. 2008. "An inflammatory fag and a queer form: Larry Kramer, polemics and rhetorical agency." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94(3): 297-319. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630802210377

Rasmussen, Søren H. 1997. *Sære alliancer. Politiske bevægelser i efterkrigstidens Danmark*. Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag.

Rivers, Nathaniel A., and **Ryan P. Weber.** 2011."Ecological, Pedagogical, Public Rhetoric." *College Composition and Communication* 63 (2): 187-218.

Seas, Kristen. 2012. "Writing Ecologies, Rhetorical Epidemics." In *Ecology, Writing Theory, and New Media*, ed. Sidney Dobrin, 51-66. Abingdon: Routledge.

Sedikides, Constantine, Tim Wildschut, Clay Routledge, Jamie Arndt, Erica G. Hepper, Xinyue Zhou. 2015. "To Nostalgize: Mixing Memory with Affect and Desire". In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, eds. James M. Olson, Mark P. Zanna, 189-273. Cambridge: Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.aesp.2014.10.001.

Sidenius, Niels Chr. 1986. “Hvorfor er der ikke atomkraftværker i Danmark?” *Politica*. 18(4): 377-402. https://doi.org/10.7146/politica.v18i4.68847.

Sheridan, David M., Jim Ridolfo, and **Anthony J. Michel.** 2012. *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Public Rhetoric*. Anderson: Parlor Press.