

2020: Isolating in an Oasis

<http://xs4all.nl/~becha>

31 December 2020, Amsterdam

*Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on,
with all the wisdom that experience can instil in us.*

~~ Hal Borland ~~



2020 was a tragic year for the world, but a pleasant year for me **personally**:

no major traumas, no major dramas.

My deepest sympathy goes to all who suffered loss, hardships and pain.

I am grateful:

I was healthy, calm, relaxed... I COULD SLEEP!!! All my dearest ones are alive, healthy, thriving.

I've discovered creativity and playfulness in caring for the plants, inventing solutions to keep plants indoors, and "hacking" the hangers for plants; I discovered courage to stand up for myself - EARLY - before I regret being silent; I published a lot and was speaking at virtual events and hosted several events myself; I was skating, swimming and cycling; I was ENJOYING our new house...

I took time: time-out, time for myself, time to slow down, time to make decisions, time to change my mind...

A lot of these experiences have to do with the **positive** effects of taking the medication: Sertraline/Zoloft, against anxiety+depression but really against C-PTSD symptoms of "catastrophising", "perfectionism", "fawning" & hyper-vigilance. I am glad that all the accumulated efforts to improve my mental health have resulted in increasing joy: mindfulness meditation, therapies, NVC, yoga, affirmations, self-compassion, empathic listening...

I am grateful that we had SPACE, WE WERE TOGETHER, I was prepared, I am privileged, & I made space for nature & beauty, both inside & outside!



Long Story

These are some of the reasons for experiencing 2020 in pleasant ways:

- I had SPACE! It was a surprise to me that my previous lack of space was impacting me so much - - and now I had a HUGE house, big room for myself - - and for the PLANTS; open-ness of the new neighbourhood and quick access to the dyke, water, cycling & roller-skating lanes... and many garden-centres ;-)

- WE WERE TOGETHER (as a couple)!! I was happy that Arnd & me were finally living in the same house: I would not have been able to deal with the travel back & forth as we used to live... I was relieved that I was correct in guessing what I needed: I was so happy when I had ONLY TWO KEYS to carry with me: one house key & one bike key.

However, the old saying of "be careful of what you wish for, because you might get it" was true, too: we were LOCKED DOWN / LOCKED-UP together, we could not leave for work, or to change the scenery, or for a short trip... NOTHING was possible, there was no escape! That contributed to the "cooling down" of our relationship. We are good room-mates, and the passion / romance / spark will have to be a choice we make ... in the future.

- WE (as a family) HAD lots of SPACE: this was very important during multiple lock-downs, when we both had to "work from home", and Alisa and Charlie had to be "schooled from home": everyone was in their own room, AND we had three more rooms to spare, AND the kitchen/garden/bathroom!!! Such a luxury! Much luck! I am very grateful for this situation and proud of my/our achievement!
- I was prepared : expecting the collapse of society since 2013 finally paid off ;-)

I was already used to NOT FLYING - so I was happy when no-one could fly any more! I was already advocating for the "remote participation" at conferences - so I was ready to organise and join events fully online. And I had stashes of food, so there was no need for rushing to the supermarket in the first wave of panic of March lockdown...

... and I am used to consider death being part of life: I have lost many people every year, so I am able to deal with the grief: I allowed myself to cry, and I commemorated new deaths by celebrating life.

- I had help : I was receiving care and support from therapists, doctors, masseurs; from friends and family; from Arnd : our own sys-admin and OCD-chef ;-) from all the "essential workers": shop-assistants, delivery cyclists, farmers who grow food, truck drivers... Writers of books and voices of audio-books, actresses & directors of series that kept me entertained... Also, children got help - from teachers, from tram drivers, from bike-repairers, YouTube & TikTok content producers, programmers that made Instagram work, and developers of video-games... and most of all - from their own friends! **THANK YOU ALL!**
- I am privileged : I have a job, a house, a residence permit for a "developed" country with functioning infrastructure and more-less competent government. My job was possible to do "remotely"; I had enough money to buy food, to pay rent, to provide computers for children's remote-schooling needs... I am able-bodied and was capable of taking care of my health and my family even when many provisions and services were difficult to come by.

This crisis has made visible the structural inequalities and injustices that exist in this society (and around the world); the divisions became larger, the oppressions harsher. I have tried to study the anarchist and feminist approach to "building back better" when the pandemic is over...

... or, more realistically, when we start dealing with the next crisis: new pandemic, climate change, extinction...

I believe that we will need humility and solidarity, modesty and sharing, appreciation and honesty, and both strength and vulnerability for dealing with the future. If 2020 has shown anything, it's that we should expect the unexpected.

- Ultimate book recommendation: Kim Stanley Robinson, The Ministry for the Future
https://trantor.is/book/Nxu3_SKtNpbAwuls



Regrets

In addition to all the celebrations of what I've enjoyed, there were also regrets:

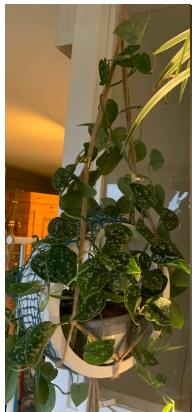
- I'm sad that I didn't see many of the friends: some I saw less often, and some not at all!
- I'm sorry I've stopped practicing NVC with my "people" : I miss empathy-exchange & doggy-piles!
- I have had planned several train-travels, I do wish some of them were possible
- My wish to host parties, have guests, make celebrations & gatherings in our huge house was NOT to be!
- I'm sorry I didn't join Alchorisma-reunion this summer. (and still that was a good decision for me)
- It's been two years since I haven't gone to Lika :(
- Mileva could not come to visit: she missed being present at all 4 birthdays of her grandchildren!
- Many dear people died: Fidani (Gračac), "tetak Ilija" (Novi Sad), two Arnd's aunts, and David Graeber.

CALLS FOR ACTIONS:

* Come visit! In a careful way: with a mask, keeping distance (we have a large house!), and no kissing... We can go for a walk, in our semi-rural neighbourhood. **Valutaboulevard 51**



* I have an Etsy shop! etsy.com/shop/GreenSquirrelUnCiv. These creations are for free for friends! Just ask!



- Do you need books? I still want to give away 1000 books to a good cause!! Like these on [BookCrossing](https://bookcrossing.org).
- If you are adventurous & want to stay in Croatia, for free, take a look: tinyurl.com/Lika-Lodge
- Wanna do a work project together? Email me at BECHA@ripe.net: hackathon, speaking at each-others events, dataViz, publishing articles... labs.ripe.net/Members/becha
- Wanna do an activist / art project together? Email me at BECHA@unciv.nl -> civil disobedience / climate activism / hacktivism / net.art / feminism / data Justice / co-liberation / mutual aid
Links: [COVID-19](https://covid-19.com) | [InternetPlumbing/5G](https://internetplumbing.com) | [DigitalDisobedience](https://digitaldisobedience.com)
- **We are again looking for tenants for Bonaireplein 14-2 & Goudenleeuw 904. Spread the word!**

Please keep in touch!
Call / chat / email / Signal / zoom / jitsy... !!

Tell me how your 2020 was!

Keep being genuine in 2021!



What is a more helpful thought?

What is another possibility?

What would the people who
care about me say?

What is the worst that
could really happen?

If my friend had this thought,
what would I tell them?

Can I be 100% sure this is true?

If the worst really did happen,
what could I do to deal with it and
who could help me?

What is the best possible outcome?

