

Newsletter « Summer in Paris », August 5th 2008, to our tuvaluan friends

Talofa my friends,

Usually, once in Paris, I'm looking forward for a calm moment to sit down to tell you all what happened since we last met. This time, it felt strange to start this page. I don't exactly know why.... Maybe because I don't have yet the time to sit down but feel like I have to write to you personally before we start sending you some of the other documents we are working on. Also, although I've dropped my luggage home only 2 weeks ago it feels like I've left Tuvalu very very long ago. By itself, the whole trip back lasted almost 3 weeks. Time sure flies by.

Because of the plane postponement from Funafuti I had to spend a night in Nadi. This shortened by half my stay in L.A., but it allowed me to speak with Sikeli and Paul at the Sopac to make sure Sikeli could make the trip to Amatuku to check the biogas digester with Leota and Utala. Both Sikeli and Paul were ready.

L.A. was short but nice. Apart from visiting the guy who's supposed to provide 2 electric scooters, we had a phone conference with Spencer, a scientist met in Funafuti 2 years ago, who wants to help with his Genographic Fund. It was also very soothing to hear the plumbs softly fall on the grass and even more delicious to eat them.

Then New York with my son and grand son. I played grandma during the day and followed business during the night. Amongst things to follow : Sopac is ready to pay Sikeli's trip to check the biogas in Amatuku, (they rightly feel responsible for something they started) they provided Sikeli. We agreed on the system they recommended and Alofa Tuvalu supplied everything to build the operatus). However Sopac needs the ok from Sopac representative in Tuvalu, Uale Telani. We never officially met but Uale was very cheerful answering my first mail. Unfortunately Uale is traveling and did not answer the biogas issue and did not reply my 2nd message... Sikeli's trip is suspended to Uale's OK... TMTI's gas is on hold. Honestly, Tuvalu does not have much time ahead to reduce its imports of fuel and gas which cost won't stop increasing.. Thanks in advance, Uale. ☺

Many people all along the trip asked « you might be happy to get back home »... I really did not know what home was anymore. : the house in L.A., my son's apartment in New York, the Alofa house in Funafuti... I was certain the parisian apartment was not more home anymore than the others.... Seeing my friends Linda and Fanny at the airport was a treat and reminded me whom I missed while in Tuvalu but the surprise came as I entered my apartment : the warm colors in my room and the natural light in the stairs to the last office floor, told me this was home.

First week in Paris is usually busy with getting in the piles of papers received during my 3 month and ½ absence, for Alofa, ETC, myself, my son. The summer return also now coincides with National/Revolution day in France. I make a point to be back in time to organize our traditional parties on the roof, for friends to watch one of the best spectacle on earth : quality fireworks everywhere around Paris. One of the parameters I have to consider in the organization : the weight limit on the roof to avoid the 5 floors building tilting more... We also need to know who's coming which night to plan food and drinks accordingly.

This year, Panapasi and Laima were making the trip from Belgium, Sarah and her friend Nadin from the UK and Annie Wheeler (met in Tuvalu, working on a marine diversity survey from NZ Aid), was visiting Europe from New Zealand and decided to come to. I really

wanted them all to taste as many cheeses, breads, veggies and fruits as possible. We had approximately 20 varieties of cheese (on 1000 it's nothing), ½ dozen types of breads, and fruits and veggie galore.

Both nights were family like and warm although the weather was so cold the 13th that we all had to put on a sweater to avoid catching colds). (see attached photo montage Fanny did)

Most of my French friends came the 2nd night for the official national firework. A lot of them not seeing me back had planned something else for that night but more than 20 came, from all path of life but as usual a good proportion of journalists. Laure, Rachel, Monica, Bruno... 2 singers : Kent the friend who drew « Our planet under water », the comic book and Laure's boy friend, Eric. There was also Linda who translated the poem for the comic book and many other old friends : Lawyer, webmaster, doctor, teacher etc

So far so good : be with most of my closest friends enjoying the best spectacle in the skies and French food ! And Fanny and I are still enjoying the leftover, an orgy of fresh produce for weeks: 4 different varieties of peaches and nectarines, plums of all colours : purple, yellow, green, yellow and green, abricots, different melons and berries.. Amongst the raw fresh veggies : aubergine, peppers, zucchinis, mushrooms, califlower, tomatoes of all kinds, fresh young onions and carrots, basil, lettuce, cucumbers, endives, radishes, celery, fenouil and I'm sure I forget a few.. That's basically what we palagis miss the most while in Tuvalu. And I do hope more and more individual gardens will allow the islands to appreciate organic veggies. I also hope we'll be able soon to buy some from you.

This year though, for the first time, the gathering inflicted more work afterward. And I'm not speaking of cleaning up. Usually, the week after the celebration of our French revolution is usually a good time to get back into files and plan the weeks ahead... This year around, everyone wanted to help, had ideas. Rachel spoke of the international pogo programme concerning biodiversity, Monica wants to put us in contact with the Osram funding for a solar hub, Bruno offered a chapter in his upcoming book and of course with Annie we discussed a partnership on our 2 marine biodiversity projects. She came back for lunch before leaving for Polland and back to New Zealand on her way to Tuvalu again. Everything needs follow up...

Among those who could not make it : Cyril our general secretary who have been of great help when Panapasi and Laima had to cope only flamish and french documents and he offered an office at his lightening company. Too far from Brussels, but anyway...

Our trainee Emilie could not attend either. She's been pretty helpful and is discrete enough to allow Fanny and I go through what happened the last months and what's next on both side of the earth. She is leaving next week but will visit Tuvalu in april 2009 to finish her thesis.

Although he did not come to the party either Pierre Radanne, the climate change specialist who did Alofa Tuvalu's energy study with Sarah, offered to add Tuvalu in a UNDP/UNEP guidebook on strategy of adaptation and mitigation. Although the guide is only around regions (state/department size) Pierre convinced his partners that because of its small size they should consider Tuvalu as well. He's thinking it might help securing future funding. Now it's up to Tuvalu to decide if they want to be included and the project was sent to Tavau and all concerned officials as well as to Alofa Tuvalu's officers and committee.

All this was very nice and positive but it also participated into making my second week in Paris a bit overwhelming...when our main focus was to set up appointments and meetings with funders and some media, to finalize our reports to Ademe for the past mission on biomass.. and to help Gilles finalizing his mission report. We are also concentrating on several press releases, some over due... Just posted the Earth Day press release, due in May.. At last, it is now on their main internet network to over 150 countries.

We'll be sending all of you most of the documents when they are ready to be sent. One of them is attached here : the press release for Panapasi's new post in Brussels. It is being sent to a few thousands names in France, Belgium, Europe and elsewhere : mainly institutions, media, supports and members

On a more personal level, a few things did not go as fast as expected or rather have been standing still during my absence. I sadly realized that my son's purchase of my mom's house, had been canceled the day before signature early may because the bank made a mistake. Since then nothing moved ...I was so upset that I yelled and screamed at the banker responsible for the delay and the continuous lies... It worked and we now should be signing soon.

Blockers are everywhere.. The worst one right now is the squatter who has been living in a small apartment owned by my son and Chris without paying his rent for now 3 years. In France it is very difficult to evict someone even if he does not pay and I'm very much in agreement to protect some poor renters from shark owners. But this is not the case. The guy has a job, gets satellite television, takes leaves and we have to pay the loan and cant sell the place. We won in court 2 years ago but nothing happened. The good news of the week : the police is coming to evict him and change the locks this month. Anyway, these are concerns of privileged people and if I consider this squatter like a crook, I still feel better off than him.

OK I'll keep this shortish... I dont want to overwhelm you with reading... Some of you have already received a first document, the UNDP one and we'll keep sending most of you the press releases and some updates on projects we are presently working on.

Being busy probably helps feeling that time has flown by but it did not keep me from missing my friends in Tuvalu and looking forward for the next trip, attemptively in september...

Warm regards from a cold summer in Paris

Fetaui

Gilliane

PS : Update : It took us a while to send this, the latest blocking parameter was mycomputer blowing out and all my data being lost. It will take quite a while for me to reconstruct my desktop as it was but I take it just as another life lesson. The 2 great news which happened the same day as the bad one : it is now nicely warm in Paris and our squatter was finally evicted by the police and the locks of the studio changed by a justice representant.