

Saturday August 4th 2007

Talofa friends

Just over a month since I left Funafuti but not yet a month since I landed in Paris. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure I touched earth yet and although life in Paris is wonderful, I have been missing Tuvalu each day. Yes life is nice since I refused when I pushed the door of the parisian house/office to let myself totally drowned into « profesional » things and promising myself (and Fanny) to allow a few recreations such as taken advantage of some parisian sales ! Fanny and I even « wasted 3 hours » yesterday evening traveling on the other side of Paris to see a bad movie (recommanded by my favorite satirical news magazine, « le canard enchainé », the enchained duck)...!

Over the last 4 weeks, I've dropped some lines here and there, facts and feelings as usual, now pasted together. Although I've not mentioned a tenth of the facts... I know it's much too long as usual and not all that interesting.

Flash back

Wednesday July 11th : by chance the view is wonderful !

The idea of seeing again the wonderful scenery from my parisian windows was one of the rare incentives getting back to Paris. And yes.. the view is still there ! A 360 panoramic of Paris and almost a hundred kilometers around. Roofs of tens of thousands of parisian apartment buildings, eiffel tower which sparkles each hour, sacred heart cathedrale which enlightens at night, and many other great monuments and buildings just there, at the bottom of the Bergeyre Hill where our office and my appartment stand.

It makes my return in grey Paris a bit more cheerful than the grey skies, thunder storms, coldish atmosphere which have been the atmospherical background since my landing... And it's supposed to be summer !

Here I was, expecting ta smooth and slow landing, when the day after my return, we got a panicked (and panicking) phone call from Ademe which wanted corrections on the first report of our Amatuku contract, Fanny had sent a month before. Nauseous all morning... Another object of stomach turning was the planned screening of the film shot by the France 5 team who had come with me to Funafuti. They were supposed to show us the product for us to say if anything needed to be changed.. They had first sent their commentary and dialogs and what we read did not please us too much. It was not what they had offered to do and what they had put on paper before we agreed to it. Arguing about it, we got the feeling they had no intention to change anything as if their agreement was worthless.... Knowing how reasonable our requests were I was hopefull they would not be idiot enough to force us to forbiding the airing. That what I was afraid of before they came over with their dvd. The guy was surprised to see me here. « great, you can see it too » « no, I know the story, all I'm concerned with is finding a way to identify people»... « But look, you'll like it »... after 10 mn of discussing he offered to do the minimum we had asked... Now... let's see if they get their act together. The film will be aired August 22nd.

July 18th : 2 fireworks parties later

Sun gets in thru the light curtains in my bedroom.... Taking it easy after the 2 parties held Friday and Saturday nights...

Great to see everyone including Eugène and Florence, our Ambassabird atypical and so passionnate for his subjects. Also highly appreciated the diversity of fruits and cheeses my country has to offer right now... I cant get over it and finding pleasure everyday.

Some of the fruits I missed while in Tuvalu which we stuffed the table with :several types of plumbs, of apricots, of melons, cherries, figs, blackberries, fresh almonds, muscat grapes etc

Cheese : at least 10 different at each party : only 1% of all known french cheeses

We made use of the delicious organic fruits juice left over from the last « Big Top Events » Fanny organized for a week last May : mango such as in Tuvalu but also pineapple, orange, grapes, rasberry. For the ones not allergic to alcohol, we added in the mix quite a good dose of rum !

Weather was grey and rainy till the morning of Friday 13th, when the first party was to happen. We were lucky and just before sunset skies lit in blues... The first guest admired the sunset behind the sacred heart at around 10pm.. a little after the hundreds of fire works from all subburbs and Parisian areas started sparkling here or there when it got dark, around 11pm.

Yes another one of the wonderful things our hemisphere, latitude and longitude has to offer during summer : long days, from 5am to 11pm !

On TV, 2 films about Sea cucumbers : seems like depradation is going on everywhere : from Indonesia to Madagascar to Tuvalu, all for gourmet food or supposed energy/sexual benefit for Chinese market.....Many divers die here or there... Beware and careful please

The 2 small sunflowers Fanny bought gave an all different atmosphere the 2nd night

On the 14th in the morning, for the first time, I got up « early » to go and check our parisian skies. The annual ceremony to celebrate our people's revolution over our last king in 1789, was held on the Champs Elysees, the main avenue in

Paris, with many European state leaders under the hosting of our emperor Sarkozy...

Had meant to check what I could see from the terrasse since I have been living on the hill.... And after observing the more than 100 military planes fly over Paris, I promised myself to hold a breakfast party next year for my friends to see this too... While thousands of people were waiting for the planes to come along, I was scrutinizing thru skies to verify from where they would be coming... A short rain storm kept me from seeing the actual forming of the 5 jets blowing our flags colors leaving lines of smoke in the skies... I thought this was the actual spectacle when I spotted coming from the north west, flocks of other types of planes, formed in packs of 3 or 5... Fanny arrived during the exhibition and we counted almost 100 ! It would be interesting to do a carbon audit of this celebration !

July 31st 2007 I'm bored !

I've put my finger on the feeling a couple of days ago. Fanny surprised me one morning asking why I was not smiling today... Was I depressed ? No. I'm happy walking in the streets, mainly when it is sunny but « at work » I hardly can get into anything. I'm doing things automatically because they have to be done.. When I thought this over, the only thing I could think of is « I'm bored » and as July is coming to a close, as a matter of fact, it is July 31st today, after a month away from Tuvalu, it is getting to me : I'm really missing you all who make the country !

On top of it, it's coldish ! Only 20 degrees in the middle of the summer ! Wearing sock to get on the roof terrasse and watch the endless, and forever changing sunsets over Paris. Right now the sun sets behind the Sacred Heart church, built on the highest hill on Paris (our hill, is the second highest... I've written it already : 87 steps to get to the top + 50 more to get to my apartment, 17 more to get to the office and the same amount to hit the roof terrasse... It's all worth it ! For exercising and admiring the scenery.)

So no, I'm not depressed, just tired and bored having to work. A feeling, I'm sure many have experienced. Very unusual for me as I'm rarely using the word « work » for what I'm doing... 12 hours/day 7/7.... and I've not taken more than a week leave for years.

When I proudly told a friend I had discovered in which state I was, she pointed out that it was because it was not lively enough for me ! That's it ! In Tuvalu I'm in the middle of what I'm working for. Away from YOU, it's a very different thing ! I now can understand Fanny when I'm in Tuvalu saying she « dives into the blog I write to get into the heart of the subject of her daily life in Paris... » something like this. Anyway, being able to give a name to my feeling, is so pleasing that it will help me getting out of it and finding again pleasure in « work ». I guess that will happen when my lists from what was awaiting me in Paris will be shorter..

Amongst them : a handful personal files, many having to do with real estate... Buying my brother's share of my mom's house so that it wont be sold to a stranger... just with this one the paperwork involved feels overwhelming... Another formality is requested by an expartner to divide a piece of small commercial estate. Not only is it time consuming but what should have costed 2000 euros is up to 7000. I have to try to understand ! Another problem we are having to deal with : a dishonest renter who has not paid rent to my son's studio since 2 years. Court, bailliff, things I hate to do. But being taken for such a long ride does not give us other choice... The guy does not pay his rent but buys cash a car when he's using a truck leaving the car piled with tickets of heavy fines... then his salary is seized by the french government to recover the fines.. Having to pay for a plumber to fix our bad renter problem is not pleasing either... Yes... to add to the frustration, right now, a few house problems, such as potentially having to replace the ceiling of the office veranda, eat up quite a lot of our energy too... I say « our » because Fanny is much involved with these issues too !

Amongst the more cheerful news : Our report was finally accepted by the Ademe with a good mention... We also are invited to participate in the Summer thinktank meetings for the Green Party AND, this was quite a surprise, the French Union of Big Businesses I might ask Eugene to do this one? Amongst the other participants, the French Minister of Education..And again this is work to prepare the conference. Both will be held late august.

Receiving the Piggarep documents confirming Alofa Tuvalu's involvement is at the same time a great satisfaction (after 18 months) but also a headache. To start with I've incredible difficulties understanding the institutional language and cant even sort out yet what is expected of us or why. Cant even say for sure our file's project is the one funded. Good news though, a workshop is planned per country where everyone will learn what to expect with Piggarep... In November... (To prepare for this, we'll soon get back in touch with the Alofa Tuvalu Committee)

August 4th... Saturday :I'm back. Opening one file when I get bored with the other... Basically not letting myself get bored and it all feels very nice... more productive than some of this week days... Starting with a very colorful stroll to the Saturday outside market.... We are preparing a dinner for Monday night... with Yves from the Ademe Agency, one of our funders, Kent, our friend singer who drew « our planet under water », Line who worked on the colors and a few other Alofa Tuvalu members. As we will be busy most of the day while Fanny decided to start cooking this week end... I'm chosing to catch up with a mix of stuff.. From preparing next week meetings for one of the real estate issues. To thanking Brian from Tuvalulands for his very nice presentation of the Amatuku biogas... To slowly trying to empty my file « mails to answer », some of them dating from before my trip early 2007.. to changing curtains which got torn to shreds over a year ago... with one of the sale items purchased during my parisian excursions. The summer sales last for a month and closed today. I did not « do the sales » as we say in french but made sure I did not miss a good deal when I walked the streets... Another purchase : some pots for the roof terrasse. Some of the plants have died because of the poverty of the soil. Composting and replanting activity is planned for the week of August 15th, to celebrate Pat's (our friend who worked with me for 15 years and who passed away last august) in doing one thing she loved : gardening !

These activities have not helped much Fanny's restlessness. She put her finger a couple of days ago on the feeling she's felt growing over the last months : She has to see something else than great parisian skies. How understandable ! Since her last trip to Tuvalu a year ago, apart from a few trips representing Alofa here and there in France and Belgium, she's been in the office (and house when I travel) daily... week ends included

As for me, coming back from the 3 months trip for only 3 months home, my wish is to move as little from Paris, from the hill and the views ! Only in Tuvalu do I have as nice a sunset !

I dont know when you'll finally get these few news from Paris. Whenever... I hope you all are in great spirits and health !

Fetaui

Hi, it's Fanny... when gilliane gave this letter for me to read it, she said « I've the feeling I did not say much of what we actually did ».... It's true, so I'll add a bit to it before sending it... But when she wrote « dont know when » she did not know how much elements would delay the process.... Yes a severe storm also hit our connexions systems, but only in our office ! A mystery leak, only in the cabinet where the phone lines get in and only on the 2 small shelves where modems, other filters and routers are installed.. No more line phone or speed connections. We are taking this with the tuvaluan philosophy... No frustration. She keeps saying « It's like in Tuvalu ! »

A few more things I can think about of what happened since Gilliane came back :

- On the biogas field, Anare (Sopac) and Sikeli had sent us Sikeli's report for Gilliane to densify it and feed into it the information she had.

Exchanges with them and John and Eti about Sikeli's next trip. For the moment Sikeli is supposed to go with pigs for the Agriculture Department on the next Manu Folau probably late august. He'll then put the gaz into distribution in Amatuku. The start of the 2nd digester will happen around a month after.

- BD – exchanging with Yogita from Sopac for printing of tuvaluan version and with David, a portugese architect met in Tuvalu who's preparing a exhibition in Portugal and wants to distribute a portugese version of « our planet under water » Still concerning the Comic Book, we are finalizing a technical guide to avoid differences in colours or format on future printings..

- Contacts with many institutions (sprep, USP, French Embassy etc On behalf of the French Agency for Development who's currently sheltering a large waste management initiative in the Pacific, we drew closer to USP and SPREP and discussed possible ways to collaborate. The exchange by email is quite intensive

- About Total which we yet have to get to : I met for a whole afternoon with our contact there. The Foundation confirmed the financing for 2 people to be trained on solar pv in their affiliate company in New Caledonia. While he also confirmed its interest on the biodiversity's project we worked on with Semese and gave them a very long while ago, they send us back one more time to our papers to be rewritten... And this, we have not gotten to it yet...

- Setting in contacts for next Big Top Event. 3 more are already partially financed.

- Gilliane exchanged with Loia and Leonie about a GEF funding request on IWP, sanitation and provided a letter for the file.

- Finalizing 2 or 3 of our own funding requests and writing reports for our current funders.

- In the media world, we've been happy to realize than slowly but surely we are entering the international press (first phone interview for a californian magazine). And that interest from French and european media is still very well alive. After a 10mn subject in one of the most popular TV magazine in May, the 52 mn documentary shot in April in Tuvalu (quite good if we close our hears on mistakes they said about your country and refused to have corrected) will air late august and Trouble in Paradise will air again in October... Tuvalu will be on TV monthly in France !!! We have radio shows planned too!

- And this is before we sent the press release you probably received a few days ago. With our connexion down and the listings is getting longer and longer with correspondants all over the world it is not such a simple task. Quite time consuming... mainly when we consider we have several personal notes to go with it and get back in touch with our friends and other contacts.

- And of course, last but not least, we are slowly planning the coming months and are setting dates with Gilles Vaitilingom, Alofa's biodiesel specialist, for our next trips, late 2007.

I think that's basically it but for as a summer holiday activities, when 99% of the French people are heading away for a month leave, all considered, it's not too bad...

Fetaui

Fanny