

LETTER OF VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE

meaningful expressions and understandings from different cultures on how to deal with the crisis



✉ An Opportunity for The Permaculture

Hours before the lockdown took effect, Parisians rushed in large numbers to train stations or took to the roads to escape the capital. It was a bit different for me, as I moved from Paris to Caen (Normandy) a couple years ago. From the capital to a rather average city of 100 000 inhabitants, closer to both the sea and the countryside. When I heard of a lockdown, I wasn't even in my apartment in Caen, I was actually in my country house surrounded by 8 hectares of land. Together with my boyfriend we decided to stay there.

Why there? Well, because I have had a growing interest in the **permaculture** philosophy for years and I started to implement this "design system for creating sustainable human environments" (Bill Mollison) in this place. I want to learn from nature. I like to imagine this country house could become a place that is ecologically-sound and economically viable, which provides for its own needs, does not exploit or pollute, and is therefore sustainable in the long term. Suddenly, with the crisis, it made even more sense to be there full time instead of part-time.

We were told that the lockdown would last a least two weeks, but we guessed it would be a month or more! This country house (called *La Fresnaye*) really felt like a nice bubble where the virus did not change our habits much. We are used to being isolated there, surrounded by meadows and cows. The only time we would feel anxious every week was when we had to go grocery shopping in the closest town. It was crazy how wearing masks and respecting distances from one another in the supermarket made us feel instantly cold and suspicious. We were losing human contact under the neon lights. On the opposite side of town there was a small shop with only locally grown vegetables and other farm products. That shop felt so good! You could guess a smile from the salesman's eyes above the mask as

he put a glowing zucchini in your bag. Also, knowing that money from this shop would go straight to the pockets of local producers felt even better, it gave meaning to our choice. When a virus spreads so fast, you want to make sure you stay as healthy as you can, and for me eating organic local food is one of the best ways to achieve this goal.

Soon after lockdown was announced, we faced an internet failure that lasted 2 whole weeks. It took me some time to adapt as this was the only mean we had to stay connected to our friends and family, and also my clients (I work as a graphic designer). This outage made us go back to basics. Back to the essential. This combined with days spent outside doing physical work led us to go to sleep earlier than usual. We experienced a “slow life” that did not feel slow at all, but less dependent on power or internet. We would play card games after dinner instead of watching a show on our computer. Days went by so fast, and I enjoyed doing things that could be seen, apprehended, things that felt real.

In the end, the lockdown brought me to realize how dependent we are on food, and how I really enjoyed watching vegetables or trees grow from my own garden. How following the pace of nature made me feel relaxed, connected to myself and the environment. How permaculture principles made sense. The beauty of it is that they work everywhere, in every climate and on every scale. They can be applied to whole villages or housing estates. Back in the city, I am more motivated than ever to start sowing seeds of resilience.

By Clara Lemarchand

From France
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