

Amsterdam, 1 December 2020

Lots of times in the past seven years I've been asked how I feel about my parents living abroad. Sometimes I almost feel inclined to say that I find it hard, but I actually rarely do find it difficult. I love seeing their healthy, glowing faces in the Portuguese sun on my phone and I genuinely feel that they're at the best place they could be. They've built an inspiring, warm, vibrant home and I'm proud to see them grow. I enjoy our honest, vulnerable and interesting conversations. Our relationship is not what one would call shallow, maybe even *thanks to* the fact that we see each other for longer periods at a time and we're aware of the fact to make it count whenever we visit each other. Although since the virus came along it starts to feel like our freedom is being compromised and it's bittersweet to see my parents reading a book to their grandchild through a screen.

As I write this I'm 29, and in my early twenties I only came by for quick visits. Probably because I was mostly invested in my own ways of life, as young adults are maybe expected to be. From the point my band started to tour less, I found out it was a possibility to stay for a whole month and so I did. During that time I started worrying about the climate crisis and read a lot about sustainable living and permaculture. I felt lucky to be able to stay at the farm to slow my pace and learn more about living with, instead of (not intentionally) against nature.

We designed a food forest, which taught me that, for most of us, the main part of our diet consists of annual (seeding every year!) vegetables and fruit, while we could be eating from perennial bushes & trees, like apples, sage and sweet potatoes. Of course, the already fierce & present orange trees were our starting point to build a seven layer food forest. This required doing some research around "The Orange Guild"; so to say companion planting. The shrubs, herbs, roots and vines that complement each other in their different needs for sunlight, acidity and pollinators for instance. They take turns blooming, share space and succeed each other over generations.

I actually see a pattern evolving, that is whenever I'm not feeling too extraverted and active that I find myself pulling towards my parents and the safety of their farm. At other times, (mostly that means I'm thriving on art and culture in Amsterdam), that same space doesn't feel provocative enough for me and I find myself feeling rebellious and start to question things. For example by inserting worries about crises like inequality or other issues that take place in the world that is less off the grid. Still I'm glad we can share our thoughts in an affectionate manner and perhaps it's my duty to stir things up a bit, being the youngest child and all.

I'm looking forward to what the next "seven year fase" will bring us. I'm already super stoked about the fact that I found my envision- of our family with some kids running around eating 'Limburgse vlaai' while I was planting "my" apricot tree in the first year- coming true as little Vos was feasting on David's 'abrikozen vlaai' last summer.

This afternoon I was telling a dear friend of mine that I'm not very good at missing people, as I have a rational gift for telling myself that I'm not going to be able to see someone for a long time and being okay with that. Still, on some Sunday mornings I wish I could hop on a train to join my parents for a hot homemade farm lunch under the fig tree with vinho verde and dance and sing in the kitchen as we watch the sun set.