

There are still young people who aren't getting involved. There are still young people who aren't aware, who don't know the numbers, and you can't really blame them. But at the same time, we mustn't neglect that part of the population. We have to carry on educating people. And that's what we're trying to do with *Penser l'après* (*Thinking Beyond*).

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BNP Paribas Personal Finance invites you to discover On The Way, the podcast that explores the paths of responsible consumption. Entrepreneurs, people from the world of business and researchers, On The Way gives a voice to those who, day after day, are helping to develop more sustainable consumption. Welcome, and I hope you enjoy listening!

0 :38

Hello, my name is Stacy Algrain, I'm 24 years old, and I'm the founder of the think and do tank *Penser l'après* (*Thinking Beyond*). If I had to explain my background and where my involvement comes from, which is currently focused on the question of climate and biodiversity, I'd say it comes from where I was born. I come from a small town in the south of France called Berre l'Étang. There's a petrochemical plant there, it's the second biggest Seveso site in France. So that means that we have a fairly high number of petrochemical plants, with high industrial risks. I was always the sort of kid who loved wandering off into nature, and spending time connecting with living things.

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I remember I also used to spend some rather precious time with my dad, every week, when we used to watch Ushuaia Nature together. And as he worked so much, it was one of the only times we'd get to spend together in the week. So I'd say that it's sort of a combination of factors that led me to get interested in these subjects, but in a rather naive way, really, as I wouldn't have labelled myself as green. For me, it was normal, these were things that I liked, that I appreciated. So things gradually clicked for me, over the course of my studies. So I went to business school after my degree, which was Kedge, and I remember I had a CSR class. I think it was the course I was most interested throughout my studies.

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Because they were starting to show the link between human activities, corporate activities, and the environment. And for me, it was something, again, quite natural. But what really struck me the most was when I went on an exchange to the US. There was a course on climate justice, and we had a speaker who was a lawyer working with Mexican communities. There were a lot of Mexican immigrants where I was in San Diego, and she explained that these communities were suffering from what was called environmental injustice. Because, next to the places they lived, they had located a lot of polluting sites, petrochemical plants again, industries that were going to have an impact on health and the environment.

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And then they realised there was a reason for that. It was just because they knew that these people had very little say in the matter, they didn't know their rights, sometimes they didn't have rights, as they did not have a "regular status", as it were. And so they were singled out, on the basis that in any case, they weren't going to cause a fuss, and they could buy their silence with a few jobs. Very soon I made the connection with what had happened at my hometown in Berre l'Étang. Because it was the same thing, as I said before, there was a petrochemical plant, and also a population that was working-class, blue-collar, so people had an education level that sometimes ended at secondary school or sixth-form.

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So people weren't aware they had rights, that they could oppose the location of this type of industry. And often when you're in that sort of world, what's most important is just living pay-check to pay-check. Can you put food on the table, can you pay the rent, and so inevitably economic issues come first, before any questions of health or ecology. And then you end up retired, trying to take stock of your

life, and you end up with cancers and illnesses, and in the end you can't even enjoy what you've worked for all your life.

4 :00

So, if I had to sum up the reasons for my getting involved, it's really because of everything I came across in my studies, and then I hit a sort of breakthrough point. Because when I was nineteen, I started to suffer from a chronic inflammatory disease that affected my digestive system and all my lower body joints. It was a bit of a shock, because I'd never been sick, I'd always been this lively kid, super happy. Everything was going great. And then it hits you. I said to myself, my life's going to change, and, in fact, I knew that my life would change and that I'd have to change too. So I started wondering about the things I ate, and whether I was doing enough exercise.

4 :44

Because at the time, there were lots of ad campaigns saying "eat, get moving, and everything will be fine". Well, no, actually it doesn't work like that. You can have the cleanest way of life in the world. If the place you're living in doesn't match that, you have a huge chance of getting sick, and that's what happened in our community. As I dug around, I realised there were studies that showed that we had a cancer rate that was twice the national average, and nobody had told me about it.

5 :07

As a citizen, I didn't have access to that type of information. Even though the public authorities, nationally or locally, should have protected us, they should have put the health of their citizens first. Well, that's not how it was. With the illness I have now, I've got a problem. I saw around forty doctors, I took a year out between my bachelor's and my master's degrees to spend a lot of time in the hospital, seeing a lot of professionals and experts. And today, I still don't have a name to put to this suffering. And I'd say it's something that's quite oppressive.

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Because you sometimes say to yourself, "as long as I can't put a name to this illness, it might be something that's coming from me, something that's in my head, and so it's quite hard to live with on a day-to-day basis. Sometimes it feels like one day I'll wake up and everything will be better, and it'll turn out that I almost imagined the illness. Right now I've stopped seeing doctors, I think I needed to take a step back from it all, and it's not necessarily that easy. But one day I'll get back to seeing them again, and I hope I get an answer this time around.

6 :17

And as a result of that realisation, I made some important decisions that affected my life. In particular, I took a master's degree in environmental policy at Sciences Po, because I really believed that it was the politicians and the authorities who had the power to change things. I became quickly disillusioned though, as I realised that politics was a bit like a rotten apple. And sadly, once you realise there's a worm inside, you don't want to bite into that apple anymore.

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So I carried on with my studies, but once again, there was a trigger, this time one that was shared by the whole population, as it was the COVID crisis. Like a lot of students, I found myself locked in my room, with my only connection to the outside world being Zoom, as it was the tool we used to have our classes. And obviously, I still had this thirst for information that I tried to satisfy with traditional media like TV.

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And I realised that there were still a lot of problems with that media. The first was that, in the context of a pandemic, which affected absolutely everyone, affected all sectors of society, there were experts who were invited on, and who used language that was accessible to maybe just ten percent of the population. In the end, nobody understood anything. So in a situation where absolutely everyone needs

information, where everyone needs to have access to that information, why don't we work on popularising it, rather than being so picky about the vocabulary that's used.

8 :05

And second observation was that these experts focused a lot on the economic and health impacts of the crisis. What I understood was that there were millions of people who were going to lose their jobs, who were going to succumb to the effects of COVID, and at the same time I found it really sad, because the pandemic was going to create new inequalities, it was going to impact environmental policies, international relations, and absolutely nobody was talking about that. So I said to myself, I've got my little Zoom app here, I'm in my room, how can I be part of a solution for all this.

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So I started looking for experts. I sent emails to people who'd inspired me, who happened to be relevant to all of the issues I just mentioned. I invited them to participate in webinars. It wasn't something very common, and I asked them a question: What might become of the world after the COVID-19 crisis? That was the question everyone was asking, was there going to be a before and after COVID?

9 :02

So I found myself the first week talking with a Nobel Prize winner like Jean Jouzel, and a nuclear expert like Jean Marc Jancovici. It was quite surreal, I'd say, because I'd had no journalism training at all. I'd never done anything like that. I didn't have any networks, I just emailed and it worked. More and more people took interest in the initiative, and asked me what I was going to do with it, and today there are forty of us volunteers. After a year and a half of working on this project, inevitably, it feels a bit unreal. Something that was born in my bedroom, during a crisis, from a pretty dark time for the whole planet, I managed to get positive things out of it and transform my life.

9:45

If I had to explain what *Penser l'après* is about, as that's the name of the initiative that I've set up. At the beginning I was labelled a media outlet, as I was popularising information, I was transmitting information, and that's the basic role of a media outlet. It evolved very quickly. We'd already taken the step of telling ourselves that we didn't want to only talk about ecology, we wanted to deal with every issue, every type of social struggle. We talked about feminism, we talked about the links there might also be between the different systems of oppression, something called intersectionality. We launched a second series called *Penser l'après patriarcat* (*Thinking Beyond Patriarchy*), to highlight that the patriarchy absolutely has to be "abolished", as it were, we have to put an end to it because otherwise we'll have no real transition.

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And today, we present ourselves much more as a think and do tank. Because, again, when we've got this approach of informing, sometimes we come up against things which are, yes, we touched on everything that's wrong with society, we came to a conclusion that's super depressing. But so what, what should we do. We said to ourselves that we didn't just want to put everyone who was following us into a state of eco-anxiety, of depression, and that we have to support them right to the end, i.e. into action. Now, as I say, there are forty of us volunteers, students, young professionals, and our aim is really to educate, inspire, and push 18 to 35 year olds into action.

11:07

We're young, we use channels like Facebook and Instagram. Our target is young people; obviously we also want to reach out to other targets, as what we want to say is that climate change affects absolutely everyone. And that, of course, the problem was created before we were born, but today we're all here on this earth, so we're not going to solve the problem with thirty percent of the population. I think that's one of the problems that people had in the past, it's that people wanted to change the world as a minority, and today you can see where that's led us. So we try to get out of that mindset, and include as many people as possible.

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So with this adventure that's *Penser l'après*, I've had the good fortune of meeting a lot of people, inspiring people, especially at the beginning, when there was really that euphoria of the launch. I found myself talking to people I usually saw on TV. I'd say that there are two people who have really made an impact on me, along with all the others. The first is Laurence Tubiana, because she was someone who motivated me to do my master's degree in environmental policy, and I knew she had taught there. It turns out that she was the architect behind COP21, she was the one working in the background who made it possible to reach the agreement.

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And what was pretty amazing was that she got to see all the cogs, all the workings, who was in the background, all the things that could make someone believe in the system more. And the fact that we're able to change things with processes like the COP agreement, and yet she continues to be stay involved. What she's saying is that there's currently no other place than the COP summits that brings together all the world leaders, almost all the leaders, as there are some who aren't represented, and get them talking about the climate, an issue that affects the whole planet, and to shake things up. She also says that yes, sometimes it takes too long, sometimes there are power games going on in the background that make you want to give up.

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And yet she's still there. She's still getting involved. I think this is proof of a resilience that should really inspire people. And the second example I'd like to give is Gaël Giraud, who's an absolutely brilliant economist, who worked at the head of the French Development Agency, the guy's incredible. He speaks five languages, I could list all the things that make this man brilliant. But what's even more brilliant is that he manages to get on the same level as absolutely everyone else. I asked him questions as a student, he knew that the audience were students, were young, weren't necessarily educated on the subjects we were going to discuss, and he used language that's so accessible, that's so much within our reach.

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You'd almost forget that Gaël Giraud was an economist who'd inspired the entire world. And that's what's lacking today in all spheres, managing to put yourself on other people's level, not thinking that just because you're well educated, because you've had important positions, that you can look down on other people and say "it's up to them to make the effort to understand, otherwise too bad." That's what I admired about him.

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There's a generational aspect there in fact, because in our society, we like to put people into boxes, into categories. Today, you get the feeling that on the one hand there's the climate generation, who are destined to save the world, and on the other there's the Boomers who are the cause of all the ills of the planet. What people want to say when they use the word Boomers, basically, it defines a category of people who were born in the Baby Boom.

15 :09

Today, it's used it with a negative connotation, because it refers to something that's a reality. It's that power is held by a small handful of people, who are often white males over the age of fifty. So what we want to tell them is yes, you're responsible for this crisis, because at some point you decided to close your eyes. You're called a Boomer, because you behave like Boomers, like people who have had absolutely everything for a time, and now refuse to give it up. And at the same time, when people talk about the climate generation, what bothers me is that I don't get the feeling that there's a climate generation.

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We're definitely a generation born with climate change pervading our lives. We're the first generation to see the causes of climate change on a daily basis. But when you look at the overall population, there's only a minority of people who are aware of these questions. In fact, if you look at here in Paris, if you look at all the circles of activists, you get the feeling that we're a youth that's hyper engaged, hyper aware, that climate change is spinning out of control. But when I go home to the south, and I talk about it with my high school friends, I realise that it's not always something that they've been made aware of, that it's not a subject that's so present in their minds.

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So what I'd say about these terms is that we've got to stop using them, because sometimes it makes people think that the work's already done, that we don't need to educate young people anymore because it's fine, they're the climate generation, they all know about it. No, there are still young people who aren't getting involved. There are still young people who aren't aware, who don't know the numbers, and you can't blame them. But at the same time, we mustn't neglect that part of the population. We have to carry on educating people. That's what we're trying to do with *Penser l'après*. About the division with the Boomers, what I'd also like to say is that we're aware that we didn't invent activism, we aren't the first generation to talk about ecology, there were others before us.

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We're sort of "the successors", as it were, and there have always been people getting involved, in other battles, in other struggles, of course, but this isn't something that's specific to our generation. What makes us different are the tools we use. Because today, many generations are categorised according to the tools that allowed them to express themselves, or that gave them an advantage over the previous generation, once upon a time it was TV, once it was radio... We're the post internet generation, meaning social media. And that's the tool we use so much now to get involved, to campaign.

17 :59

And you can see it, there are more and more online campaigns for informing people, profile photos set as blue or black squares. *Penser l'après*, is also an initiative that was born on social media. We started on Facebook with webinars. Without the internet, without social media, none of this would have been possible. You also have to remember that the internet and social media have a very important role in disseminating models. Because right now I'm in France, but I can see everything that's going on all around the world. You can see the struggles that are emerging. You can also see the different forms of action that people are taking, get inspired by them, interact with young people or even with Boomers who are trying to get active overseas and build bridges.

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Today we realise that we're isolated, that by trying to act by ourselves, we don't have the impact that we'd like to have. So we have to build bridges. We have to use the tools available to us.

19 :00

Consumers undergoing changes, to start with I don't really like the term consumers. I think that words have a crucial role today, and when you use the term "consumers", you immediately think of an image that's very individualistic, oriented on personal choice. But I much prefer the term citizens, which is much more oriented towards the community, towards collective engagement. There's an initiative called food citizenship, they carried out a little test, they took various people and they proposed two situations to them.

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In the first situation, where they're consumers, there's a well in the community, and they're told there that in a few days there will be no more water. As a consumer, what do you do? Straight away, the answer is "I'll get some jerry-cans and fill them all up as much as I can as I'm afraid that others will take

too much, and I'll end up with none." In the second situation, this time you're members of the community, so you know your neighbours, you're all there together, and again, you learn that there will be no more water in that well, what do you do? The answer is "we're going to get together and make sure we manage the resource together, so that as a group we can be resilient and make this resource last as long as possible."

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So that's why I think today we have to get out of this mentality of consumers, that makes us all individualistic. And the only impact you can make is buying things, whereas when you're a citizen you can go out and lobby, you can go talk to your elected officials, you can also go and talk to companies, so straight away your scope of action is much wider, and that's where it's powerful.

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Food citizenship is a crucial concept, because, as I mentioned, once again it's about changing your perspective, changing your vision about your day-to-day choices, especially as food is still a choice we make three times a day. We tend to overlook it, but as citizens, it's still one of the things we do that emits the most CO₂. If you eat meat, you'll have a significant impact on the environment. Starting to understand your decisions in your daily life that have the most impact is the first step to take as a citizen, as an individual.

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Saying to yourself "how do I, Stacy, who's just a student, who goes out campaigning, can I really have an impact on the system?" Well, yes: if I go to the supermarket, I can make a difference by choosing to consume better, to make choices that are more eco-friendly, that have a lower impact, and food citizenship allows you to internalise all that. Saying to yourself that yes, I can make this choice with my credit card, but that afterwards I can also try and speak with people who have more power than me, elected officials, people who are at the head of companies, and other citizens too, to create collectives and try to get involved around issues.

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I'd say that eco-friendly consumption is pretty much compatible with a small budget. As a student with a grant, I think I know something about that, because eco-friendly consumption also means consuming less. It also means buying less things that you don't need day to day, for example clothes. Things we tend to do, it's the same every season, we pressure ourselves by saying we absolutely need that latest pair of shoes, that latest trendy coat, but it costs money, it often costs a lot of money.

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Whereas if I go to second-hand clothes shops, for example, I can update my wardrobe for less money, and I can resell things I've got in my wardrobe that I don't wear anymore and give them a new life. So you have an eco-friendly approach, and at the same time you save cash. Things can sometimes be trickier in terms of food. Eating in an eco-friendly way, people often think about organic food, about locally produced food, which is, well, isn't always that easy, because you can have local food that isn't eco-friendly, and organic that isn't eco-friendly.

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And then it also depends a lot on what there is close to where you live. Me, for example, I'm lucky enough to have a market near my home where small local producers come to sell their produce. But if you go to other towns, to other suburbs, it's not always the same. So there's also this factor of your scope of options, understanding that we don't all have the same options on offer to us on a day to day basis. And yet, you have to bear in mind that we should get rid of all of obligations of consumption that they're trying to impose on us. That's a step that I've tried to take as well. Asking yourself, what's genuinely coming from me? And what's just a construct? And that, I really realised when I came back from my internship in India. When I was there, I didn't go shopping for six months, and I was fine, I was great, I didn't have any particular problems. I wasn't short of clothes, I wasn't short of shoes.

So sometimes you have to do some work on putting everything into perspective, and ask yourself whether it's really something that's going to define me? Is this really something that's going to make me happy? I like this concept of happy sobriety, because when we talk about transition, we have to rethink certain privileges we have as citizens: take fewer planes, eat less meat. People get the impression that it's a step backwards, that will take away some of our happiness, that will almost rob us of something we've have fought for. And in fact it's not like that, it's almost like finding a new happiness that you've never really had.

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This is true for my generation, which is more based around sobriety, around the satisfaction of spending time with people you appreciate, going outside to stretch your legs rather than going out to buy yet another pair of shoes. We've been talking about eco-friendly consumption, about the choices that we can make on a daily basis as individuals. That said, there are still some limits. That's your scope of possibilities, the number of possibilities open to us. And today, we have this question of social justice, meaning that we explain to the entire population that we're going to have to make some efforts if we want to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and quite simply have a planet that's liveable.

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But if we don't take this step of saying that right now we have households that don't have a lot of money on a daily basis, but they too will have to adopt more eco-friendly consumer habits. We have to think about how, as well as having ranges that are more economical in supermarkets, that are accessible on a day-to-day basis, we need to make sure that it's accessible to these people. For me, the government and a lot of companies sometimes make the mistake of thinking that because it's there on the market, then it's up to consumers to choose, and that if they don't buy the most sustainable option, the most eco-friendly, then by definition it's because they've decided that they don't want to get involved.

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When you can see that certain eco-friendly products cost three times as much as versions that pollute. As citizen consumers, at some point we'll inevitably have to put all this into perspective with the budgets people have on an everyday basis. So we have to take that extra step of saying that it's an option, that's great, accessibility is much better, so that makes the link between the climate and social justice.

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If I had one piece of advice for listeners for moving towards more eco-friendly consumption, it's not to put too much pressure on yourself to be perfect and follow models that seem unattainable to you, notably today's zero-waste ambassadors. But rather look for what in their daily lives has the most impact in terms of CO₂ emissions. To do that, there are some super useful, super simple tools that let you calculate your carbon footprint and really help to "highlight", as it were, what has an impact in your daily life. The first one that I really like is a tool that was invented by *Avenir climatique (Climate Future)*, called *Inventons nos vies bas carbone (Inventing Our Low Carbon Lives)*. Using cards, they show us that certain food emits so much CO₂, and our transport this amount of CO₂.

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And with these cards, which are in different sizes depending on the CO₂ emissions, you can visualise much better what in your daily life might have an impact. You can also visualise what has an impact in terms of being a citizen. Food, of course, is one of the first things we can do something about, because right now in France we have a diet that's very meat-heavy. We know that this has an impact on the environment through emissions from livestock farming and the entire production chain. There's also the question of transport. How many times do you fly every year?

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And after that, sometimes there are elements which you don't necessarily have much control over. Typically if I'm a tenant, and I see that my home isn't well insulated, that has an impact. But it's not necessarily me who can do anything about that issue. So you also have to strike a balance between the elements that produce the most emissions in our daily lives that you should try and focus on first, and then what is or isn't your responsibility. Really make the connection between these two things, using tools to calculate them. Once you have the numbers, you can get a much clearer picture of your impact. And try to reach out to other people, because when you've got down from 12 tonnes of emissions per year to 4 tonnes, you realise it's increasingly difficult to chip away at those emissions.

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So if you start to transition the people around you, you can also get rid of tonnes of CO₂ from them too, and then you'll have supported the ecological transition.

An example of a small gesture that's eco-friendly and good for your mood, for me, was switching from public transport to cycling. Obviously it's cheaper for a start, and also the metro isn't a very nice environment. You get to spend time outdoors, you're exercising, and sometimes it's actually even faster. Cycling: it does you good, it does your wallet, your health and the environment good too.

31 :50

If I had one dream to share, it would be for people to stop beating each other up, whether in real life or on social media, because we're living in a society that's increasingly violent. People tend to lash out a bit at others, so we have to stop all that. In the end, we don't necessarily have the same vision about the right ways of doing things, the things that need doing, but if there's one thing we should all agree on, it's that if the planet's no longer liveable, then there will be no more humanity. And one last message to the listeners, maybe there are things that were really depressing in my message, and yet I'm counting on them to roll up their sleeves and join us in the transition, as that makes you happy too!

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