

I am a Chinese student in Amsterdam. The shock of the pandemic started to be strongly felt by Europe when the quarantine began in Mid-March, but for me, and the Chinese community in Europe this was the second wave of impact. We probably had the most desolated Chinese New Year in recent years when the lockdown in China started during the most important family-gathering festival in February. A lot of my Chinese friends here in Amsterdam had to cancel their plans of going back for a family reunion. Though staying in Europe at that time was a wiser choice to secure my physical health, it did not ease my worries and anxiety about the health of my family and friends. News about numbers of the infected and the dead and the heart-broken featured stories fighting against the virus got on my nerves. I felt strengthless. There is nothing I can do for my family or friends apart from hoping for the best and asking them to stay home and abide by the health regulations.

Then I started to feel confused. The strategies of confronting the pandemic in Europe and China are so different and to some extent, almost contradictory. For example, in China people are strongly recommended to wear masks while here in Europe, masks are regarded as not helpful in containing the virus. All of a sudden, to wear or not to wear masks seems to be a controversial topic. What suggestion should I follow? As a matter of fact, masks are not easy to get here even in normal days (most of the shops do not sell masks), not to mention in a critical time like this. And more importantly, in our Chinese students' community, people expressed that they got unwelcome attention from other people when wearing masks. I am fortunate that I do not have to struggle with this matter too much for the reason that I only have one course a week in a relatively small class, which is the only occasion that I have to gather with people. However, I do experience the confusion like this that compound with cultural differences, identities and politics, which still lingers in my mind.

But love and hope keep me alive. I am new in Amsterdam. I am alone in my studio. I am depressed and anxious from time to time. But this is also the time when I realized the power of sharing and caring. My neighbors sent me flowers and shared food with me. I had more time to talk to my friends and family during the quarantine. Some cats visit my balcony from time to time and I could pet them, feed them and enjoy the sunshine with them. My teachers and workmates are always ready to help when needed. Although Amsterdam is still in quarantine by the time I write this, I am calmer and more optimistic about the situation. Life is still beautiful as Amsterdam's summertime is coming and we will get through these difficult times.