

From minor to major frustrations

Quite frustrating, I find, if small daily errands don't go as smoothly as they might could go. A quick grocery visit for example after a long day, seems to be practically impossible in Paris. Because somehow *faire la queue* (stand in line) is a part of a Parisian routine and an activity I had to get used to as an Amsterdammer. Patience is a virtue.

The French moaning and discussing mentality over a simple issue can be quite exhausting as well. Riding my bicycle on the street seems to bring out the worst of taxi drivers: overreacting frustration. Also my own frustration level seems to be escalating as soon as I touch the French ground. It are these minor irritations that made me wonder: what make two countries, almost sharing a border together, not share the same level of frustration? Might it be that the term "frustration" is more associable to the French way of functioning and communicating? Maybe it is as historian Josephus once described: "*For those roads are not straight, but have several revolutions.*"

It is evident that the time of the French revolution is over, but I still believe that the rebelling and "frustrated" mentality in France has survived over the past two centuries. As much as I admire *les Français* for their eloquence, they can be extremely adamant sometimes, almost unshakeable. An answer is never a yes or a no, but a packed message that is delivered on shaky ground: likely, there seems to be a battle cleared out before the real answer becomes loud and clear. A simple *oui* hidden under the surface of a dominant *non*, and a bit of digging is necessary in order to get to the point. *Ce n'est pas possible et c'est possible* doesn't differ much, after all, it is only the willingness to argue or fight over the issue.

Remarkably, I find that the French *mode de vivre* is not only about eating croissants, smoking and drinking wine, it is their art of persuading, their hard effort and their sense of complexity they should be known for. Indeed, their rebelliousness can create frustrations, overreactions and overcomplications of simple situations. But this mentality didn't come from nowhere: their long history of absolute monarchies without contradictions, didn't bring any good to the people. In order to create the the state of today's society, they had to battle, to argue, to debate. Their profound and engaged frustrations have created the most beautiful poetries, have produced the greatest thinkers and the most powerful philosophers, who had to battle to get their voice heard. Even if there is always something to say, to complain, to argue about, maybe it is after all worth fighting for.

From time to time, my Dutch straightforwardness cannot put my finger on this fierce arena of emotions: on Saturdays for example, the roads of Paris are predominantly blocked because of demonstrations, police prevention and the sound of extreme explosions. The intensity of the capital is hard to deny, but not as a city, more importantly as the result of the individuals who characterise, develop and shape the metropolitan. All in all, the creation of frustration can lead, in my opinion, to a new French "cliche": the desire to engage. *Mettre la main à la pâte*, or: to achieve a fair and reasonable result, we must make our hands dirty. All in all, we must be patient, until even patience tires of our patience!