

The Small Victories Of Intergration

Last week, I discovered I was fully integrated.

I've been writing for [Dutch News](#) about my experiences of going through the naturalization process. Late last year, I passed the final inburgering exam. I submitted an application for permanent residency. According to the Dutch government, I was officially integrated.

I am pretty integrated. I bike to work. I like to complain about the NS. I eat hagelslag. I'm writing this column while on a "wintersport" holiday in France with my in laws. I had pindakaas for breakfast. It was from Albert Heijn.

But I am not really integrated. My Dutch skills leave a lot (nearly everything) to be desired. I don't watch Dutch TV. I rely on my Dutch boyfriend to deal with the utilities. I still can't fix a flat tire on my bike.

Or so I thought. Then last week, something miraculous happened. I had dinner with a group of Dutch friends and afterwards, we were headed to a bar for a drink. As we left the restaurant, we discovered that one member of the group had walked, while the rest had come by bike. Instead, I suggested to another friend that he let her ride on the back of his bike. He was willing to bike her but said his bike rack was too unstable to carry her.

A few years ago, I would have volunteered to walk with her to the bar. This evening, however, I immediately suggested that we swap bikes, as my rack was plenty stable. Within minutes we were off.

There's something immensely satisfying about mastering a skill. But even more so, there's something truly rewarding about mastering a skill that allows you to fit in better with the place you've chosen to live.

Now. If only I could learn to ride with now hands.