

# THE PAPER MILL

PPE ENCOUNTERS NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2022

How time goes by fast - just as Christmas is approaching rapidly, so are those exams we have come to love with all our heart.

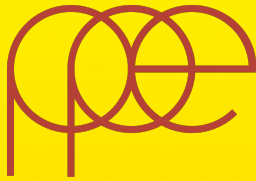
As you may have noticed, the newsletter has now been officially named The Paper Mill, honouring both the beloved John Stuart and the beautiful mills around Amsterdam.

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# DECEMBER CALENDAR



## KALLIOPPE EVENTS

**07/12: Microeconomic tutoring (4th floor)**

**08/12: Tosti Tuesday, now on Thursday's (4th floor)**

**08/12: Night at the Library (12th floor)**

**09/12: Christmas Vrijmibo (4th floor)**

Mulled wine, Christmas music & good vibes .  
Friday afternoon on the 4th floor.

**11/12: Excursions trip to Maastricht Christmas Market**

**14/12: Christmas Movie Night (4th floor)**



## GENERAL AMSTERDAM EVENTS

**01/12 - 22/01: Amsterdam Light Festival**

A bunch of cool light installations to be found around Amsterdam; can be seen walking, biking or even from a boat tour. More info at <https://amsterdamlightfestival.com/en>

**15/12-01/01: Amsterdam Winter Paradise**

Ice skating, Ferris wheel, lots of live performances and more. Tickets can and should be purchased in advance: <https://www.hetamsterdamsewinterparadijs.nl/en/>

**All December: Rialto VU - Cinema tickets & drink for €3.**

In all of December, VU students can get a cinema ticket and a drink from Bar Boele for just €3. What a great deal! Agenda and tickets found at: <https://rialtofilm.nl/nl/agenda/7/rialto-vu>

## A Strange Way Down - Israel's 2022 Elections

By Tomer Shore

On the first day of this last November, Israelis went to the polls for the fifth time in three and a half years. The makeshift coalition that formed after the 2021 elections - banding together far-right, center, and left parties for the sole purpose of ousting Netanyahu from power after a months-long, country-wide wave of public protests against his corrupt regime - had crumbled less than a year after its conception. Despite its promises of change and a fresh start, the coalition government - with far-right Naftali Bennet and soft center-Yair Lapid rotating the Prime Minister's seat - has mostly mirrored, *mutatis mutandis*, the policies of Netanyahu's governments, often eclipsing them. The 2022 state budget, considered a triumphant achievement by supporters of the government after two years without one following the political turmoil, brought with it many cuts to an already gutted public sector; the post office has been privatized; violence by Israeli citizens of illegal settlements - with the implicit - and sometimes explicit - backing of the Israeli Army - has reached unprecedented levels; and the government

has designated, without a shred of evidence, six Palestinian human-rights organizations as terror organization - in a move that drew criticism from members of the EU and the US alike. Needless to say, the coalition government has maintained Israel's year-long position of thwarting any peace process, cementing the illegal occupation of the West Bank and the blockade on Gaza - in what many scholars, experts, organizations, and activists are calling an Apartheid regime.

After a disappointing tenure from his opponents, there is little surprise that the last election cycle saw Netanyahu's right-wing block - comprised of Netanyahu's populist-right Likud party, far-right HaTzionut HaDatit ("religious Zionism") and Otzma Yehudit ("Jewish might"), and religious parties - attaining a resounding victory, with Likud gaining more than a quarter of seats in the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) - 32 out of 120. Netanyahu, who despite standing trial for three different corruption cases has become Israel's longest-serving Prime Minister (usurping the title from David Ben-Gurion, who served as Israel's first Prime Minister and is considered by many to be the nation's founder), will be looking to further solidify his grip on power. One point of policy already touted is the so-



*The Israeli Parliament; The Knesset*

called "override clause", granting the Knesset the privilege to override any judicial decision with a simple majority. The process of democratic backsliding - which experts posit has been taking place for most of Netanyahu's reign - is set to continue full force.

Another figure over which supporters of democracy in Israel lose sleep is Itamar Ben-Gvir, leader of extremist party Otzma Yehudit. An acolyte of Meir Kahana - whose movement "Kahana Chay", which was banned from competing in elections in Israel and declared a terrorist organization in the United States, still forms the core base of Ben-Gvir's party - Ben-Gvir's campaign of racism, militarism, homophobia, and anti-Arab scaremongering has apparently resonated with voters, granting his party its largest share of seats in its history. He is slated to receive the newly-established Ministry of National Security - granting him unparalleled power over Israeli Police and other apparatuses of state violence.

Meanwhile, the already-weakened Israeli left has taken another beating: Meretz, long considered the left-most Zionist party, crashing and burning with zero parliamentary seats, and the Labour party, erstwhile a leading party commanding mass support and winning land-slide elections, receiving

four seats - putting it just barely across the electoral threshold. The center - currently lead by former TV personality Yair Lapid and former head of the Israeli Defense Forces Benny Gantz - which proved over the years to be unable or uninterested in forming an alternative to Netanyahu's right-wing populism, has resorted to empty platitudes about civility, with nothing to offer voters except for anti-Netanyahu rhetoric. Looking to rally the beaten left and to lead the opposition the Netanyahu's policies will be Hadash-Ta'al, a union between the parliamentary branch of the Israeli Communist Party and the Arab Movement for Renewal. The only non-Zionist party remaining in Israeli parliament and a long-time stalwart advocate for peace, Hadash-Ta'al is also one of only two Arab parties in parliament. Except for them and Ra'am (Muslim fundamentalist party) - no other party features Arab MKs.

Although political turmoil was always a part of Israeli voters' lives - only one government in Israeli history has served its full term - the past four years have taught voters to take nothing for granted. And while the effects of Netanyahu's new government and its consequences for Israeli Democracy and human rights, one thing's for sure - life in Israel will continue to be hard, for Israelis and more so for Palestinians.

## A Force for Good

By Philip Conroy (3rd-year PPE student currently doing an internship in Israel)

It is perhaps the most-oft discussed topic in contemporary geopolitics. The Israel-Palestine situation has been at the forefront of conversations regarding legitimacy, sovereignty, and human rights for decades. Packed into the combined land area that was formerly Mandatory Palestine under the British, approx. 27,084 km<sup>2</sup>, live over 14 million people - a population density on par with that of the Netherlands. Unlike the Netherlands, at least for the most part, this populous is divided along racial, socio-political, and religious lines. However, there are people working to change that division.

I have been living in the State of Israel for 4 months now, working with an organisation called EcoPeace Middle East. It is a unique NGO that unites Palestinian, Jordanian & Israeli environmentalists to promote peace by creating shared solutions to common environmental problems, and create.

As such, they have officed in Amman, Ramallah & Tel-Aviv, with a high mobility of labour between each. By now, it is beyond doubt that climate change presents significant security threats to countries the world over, and in places like Israel, Palestine & Jordan, climate change exacerbates pre-existing conflict by further limiting already scarce resource.

While deliberately remaining apolitical, EcoPeace circumvents the short-sightedness characterised by so much of the rest of the establishment by working on peace building solutions - both bottom-up and top-down. Their three main departments are advocacy, education, and media outreach. Working on the advocacy team at an organisation of this calibre teaches you a lot. Anyone this day in

age who pretends to care about geopolitics is immediately confronted with the immense undertaking of knowledge that is Israel-Palestine relations, and as such I have read a great deal on the subject, however, the more you learn, the more you realise just how convoluted the entire situation is. The advocacy team works tirelessly in interacting with governments, stakeholders, and decision-making bodies, and fully exploits the legal systems in the region to challenge anything they feel as unjust, such as successfully striking down the construction of a separation wall in the Palestinian village of Battir. The education track of the organisation is equally interesting and important. They have highlighted key areas to enter and take advantage of 'low-hanging

fruit' - a popular and apt term in the industry - such obtaining certification to educate teachers in Israel, who are in need credits to progress with their careers, in areas such as water diplomacy. Coupled with its media outreach department, the education department gives hundreds of tours each year to

students, farmers, diplomats, and journalists to spread awareness of the issues in the region that may not be as flashy for world news outlets to cover as sporadic episodes of violence. One such tour I helped on was to the Jordan river with a group of 17-year-old high school students. We talked about the shared resource that is the river, with the fact that Jordan was literally 10 metres away at some points driving this point home. On another, we travelled to the border with Gaza with the Canadian Ambassador to Israel, where it was made clear to us that from where we were standing (on a hill in what appeared to be no-man's land), we were being watched fervently by both Hamas, Gaza's theocratic military dictatorship, and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF),



Israel's pool of rag-tag youths conscripted to serve the state. The talk given there by the Israeli co-director of the organisation could not have taken a differing view of the situation from these two groups: it is investment in social infrastructure, basic hygiene etc., as well as education, that would provide sufficient security; a word much cherished by both sides of the conflict.

The fact that EcoPeace have encountered people who vigilantly disagree with the cooperative nature of the work they are doing shows how much more there is to accomplish. However, I am given solace by (& hope you will be too) the thought that their work spreads hope in a region so desperate for it, and that working together can lay the groundwork for meaningful change to occur.

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## Mar-a-Lago as Xanadu

By Ray Polman

*2001: A space Odyssey*, *Casablanca* and *A streetcar named Desire* are some of the mid-twentieth century Hollywood movies everyone should see at least once. Even if you much prefer modern cinematographic and narratological conventions (like colour or actors who talk normal) these films still deserve a view due to their sheer impact on popular culture ('Stella!'). The film that tops this 'must-see old movies' list however, is *Citizen Kane*. Orson Welles' first feature film is widely regarded as the greatest one ever made and while that is a tenuous claim due to subjectivity (and the fact that it also has some objective flaws\*), it has definitely been the

most impactful film in history by introducing non-linear storytelling, featuring frequent changes of perspective and utilizing deep-focus shots all in an intriguing story. Now, while I have perhaps seen *Citizen Kane* only twice, with the last time some years ago, I was suddenly reminded of the film while watching the news recently.

About a week after the US midterm elections of last month, former president Donald Trump announced his reelection bid for the 2024 presidential elections. While this came as a surprise to no one and must be a bitter-sweet occasion for Trump himself as he is now legally obligated to use his copious campaign funds for actual campaigning<sup>[1]</sup>, what stood out to me was the ostensible



*Xanadu (left) & Mar-a-lago (right)*

difference between this election announcement and his former ones. The message of 'Make America great (and glorious) again' obviously has a diminished impact after we've already experienced four years of 'making America great again', but the rest of the announcement seemed a little sad and faint as well. Firstly, the announcement came after a slew of Trump-backed candidates miserably lost the midterms (get well soon dr. Oz), while Trump's likely foremost rival for the Republican nomination, governor Ron DeSantis, won comfortably in once purple Florida. And secondly some of Trump's closest companions had already jumped ship before the reelection campaign could even commence, including former secretary of state Mike Pompeo and even Trump's beloved daughter Ivanka. Even if the reelection announcement was held in a packed room in Mar-a-Lago, it felt as if Trump was all alone there in his private Florida resort, wholly abandoned by all prominent and ambitious allies with only faceless sycophants to surround him.

Which brings us back to *Citizen Kane*. The film centers around the life of billionaire Charles Foster Kane, who came from humble beginnings, was adopted by a stern banker, inherited a fortune with which he bought a newspaper, successfully changed the newspaper's business formula to focus on yellow journalism, eventually resulting in him becoming one of the most influential men in America and making him decide to run for governor of New York, a race he loses due to a scandal, after which he ends up in a vicious cycle of failures, ultimately leaving him to die all alone in his Florida mansion Xanadu. Now Trump didn't come from humble beginnings, but he did receive

a rather harsh upbringing as his father constantly fostered competition between him and his older brother, viewing neither of them as good enough, resulting in Trump wanting for nothing but his father's elusive approval. Furthermore, Trump did rise to be one of America's most wealthy and influential men, and in ways even more nefarious than indulging in tabloidism<sup>[2]</sup>. The biggest difference is that Trump did win his initial presidential race (due to an insane electoral system, but still), but looking at the 2020 and 2022 elections it looks like Trump finds himself in an electorally vicious cycle. And, as said, Trump might not be literally alone in his Florida mansion, but all his most valuable allies are abandoning him in droves.

Okay, so what if Donald Trump is like Charles Foster Kane and will sooner or later disappear from the limelight to quietly wither away in a Florida mansion (way to wither), what does that mean? It's undeniable that the Trump brand has lost prestige among voters, but Trump failing to snag the Republican nomination might not be good news after all. Political animals know that Florida governor Ron DeSantis will certainly run for the Republican presidential nomination and this may be a much worse outcome than Trump for anyone to the left of the average Republican (so basically half of the US and ninety percent of the rest of the Western world). Where Trump supports despicable policies (trickle down economics, pro-gun, anti-choice, anti-immigrant, racist, sexist, etc.) and is a massive threat to democracy as a whole, DeSantis supports these same policies while not exactly being a champion of democracy either<sup>[3]</sup>. Aside from implementing tactical shutdowns of polling



stations, impeding popular ballot initiatives and selectively impeding organizations that oppose his agenda, DeSantis also supports Trump's 2020 election spiel about the 'stolen elections'<sup>[4]</sup>. Though the primary reason that DeSantis might be worse than Trump is the fact that he can actually win the general election. Whereas Trump is now so unpopular that Biden may (electoral college willing) well eke out a victory against him once again in 2024, a vital 46-year old Ron DeSantis surging on his popularity as governor and his 'reasonable Trump' image will surely trounce a frail 81-year old Joe Biden presiding over one of the economically worst presidencies in recent history. Add to that the fact that DeSantis, personally, actually is a reasonable Trump, unencumbered by daddy issues and sheer stupidity, and the US could find itself having a president with a Trumpian agenda but this time with the competence to push it through. After all, in four years as president, Trump could only pass a package of tax-cuts for the rich and pack the Supreme Court with relatively young and absolutely radical justices. DeSantis, however, has in three years as governor proven pretty productive by consistently making national headlines by first defying all national covid guidelines, then by cracking down hard on protesters following the death of George Floyd and recently by imposing strict anti-LGBT legislation on schools (the 'don't say gay' laws), while also implementing tax cuts and packing courts.

Like the great movies of last century, for anyone interested in the fate of America the upcoming Republican primaries are a must-watch. It might still be unclear which option is worse, but it's in our best interest that the occupants of Florida's governor mansion and Mar-a-Lago resort fight out an as fierce campaign as possible to raise the chances for any half-decent Democratic candidate. Though in the end two years is an eternity in politics and only time will tell which outcome will come to bloom in the flowery Sunshine State. Until then we're left staring at a rosebud.

*\*Small simple continuity, character and factual errors as well as the use of some ill-fitted stock footage. And maybe more on the subjective side, the fact the film didn't break even at the box office.*

#### **Sources**

0. *Confidence man: the making of Donald Trump and the breaking of America*, Maggie Haberman
1. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/16/politics/donald-trump-war-chest-presidential-campaign/index.html>
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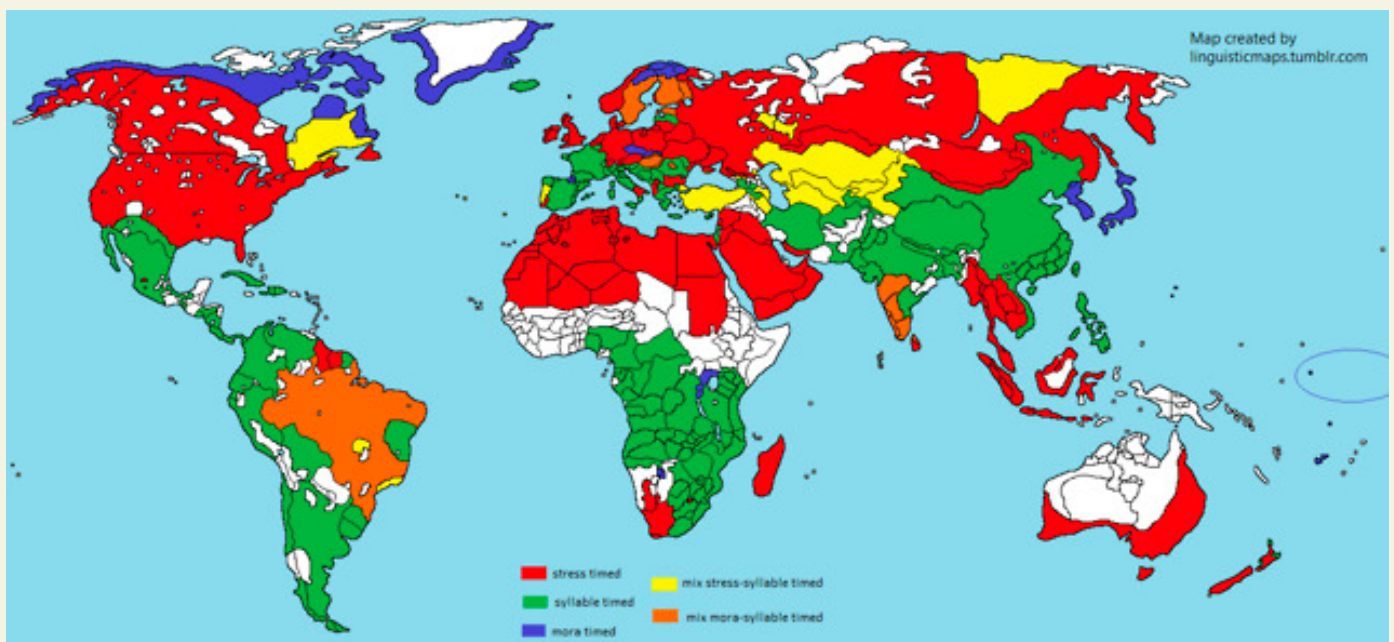
## How not to Languish in Language: Why Portuguese sounds different

By Ray Polman

This summer I had the pleasure of visiting sunny Portugal. Aside from laying on the beach with a glass of port wine and a plate of *bacalhao* (and *pasteix de nata* for dessert), I had also hoped to make some headway in mastering the westernmost Romance language. Armed with my Spanish proficiency, a combined decade of French and Latin classes and some Duolingo-dabbling in Italian, I was bound to conquer this Lusitanic beast. Simply swap *z* for *s*, *n* for *m* and *ñ* for *nh* from Spanish in text and add a little French nasal twang to my pronunciation and I should be good to go. Alas, while reading Portuguese posed no problem, whenever I tried to speak it the locals would respond in a, to me, wholly incomprehensible language which I could only describe as quasi-Spanish with a heavy Russian accent.

The rest of my vacation was thus spent speaking English, which virtually all Portuguese people commanded effortlessly

(often better than Spanish), and this fact proved to be a hint to the reason behind Portuguese's uniqueness. You see, Portuguese, in contrast to the other Romance languages, is a stress-timed language instead of a syllable-timed one. Being stress-timed or syllable-timed then, are the two main flavours of linguistic isochrony, or a language's rhythm. Here, syllable-timed languages are those where each syllable takes up roughly the same amount of time in speech regardless of whether the syllable is stressed or not, which has also been called machine-gun rhythm due to the constant barrage of sounds. This results in generally clear-spoken languages that are often considered to be quite beautiful to boot, with examples being Romance languages like French, Spanish, Italian and Romanian, but also Mandarin and Turkish. Stress-timed languages conversely, have syllables take up differing lengths of time in order to have the interval between stressed syllables of different words remain equal and stress-timed isochrony has also been called morse-code rhythm due to the irregular lengths of sounds. The Germanic languages as well as the Slavic languages, Arabic, Thai and notably English are all



examples of stress-timed languages. The shortening of unstressed syllables gives rise to vowel reduction, sometimes to the point where a word sounds completely different when emphasis is put on it ('*This is 'Merica!*' versus '*This is America, A-me-ri-ca*') and where longer words are pronounced much faster than shorter ones (*tasty tea* versus *tolerable tea*). Because of this, stress-timed languages often prove to be hard to master for non-native speakers even if the grammar and vocabulary are unimpressive (e.g. Dutch) as pronunciations may wildly differ from what might be expected from text.

The reason that Portuguese is so different from the other Romance languages is thus mostly due to its being stress-timed, and to a ridiculous degree at that. Compare the Portuguese '*Esse homem es importante*' to the in script similar Spanish '*Este hombre es importante*'. Where in Spanish every letter (except *h*) is pronounced, the European Portuguese pronunciation looks something like '*Esshomemimpitant*'. Add to that the fact Portuguese contains a high number of 'sh' sounds and large consonant clusters (often artificial due to vowel reduction) and it's no wonder that to people who speak neither language it seems to better resemble a Slavic language like Russian when spoken (though it actually sounds even more like Polish due to the nasal vowels and diphthongs such as *ão*).

Having learned this, it is worth pointing out that the stress-timed syllable-timed divide isn't too clear cut. For one, there also exists a third flavour called mora-timed languages, where every vowel (or consonant-vowel pair) takes up a timing unit instead of every syllable (which may consist of two combined vowels; a diphthong). Furthermore, languages may over time (and space) even change in isochrony, exemplified by the fact that Brazilian Portuguese is actually syllable-timed. And considering local dialects would complicate things even further (the *Fluminense* dialect around São Paolo is stress-timed!). General statements like 'Germanic languages are stress-timed' and 'Romance languages are syllable timed' aren't entirely true either as Icelandic is syllable-timed and Catalan (and of course Portuguese) is stress-timed. It is therefore more useful to think of being stress-timed or syllable-timed as a spectrum instead of a dichotomy. That being said, European Portuguese definitely resides at the remote stress-timed end of the spectrum. So when trying to learn Portuguese, don't forget your Spanish classes, but most of all remember to do slur your words.

**Source:**

Conlen, M. (n.d.). *A Linguistic Comparison: Stress-timed and syllable-timed languages and their impact on second language acquisition*. <https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?>

## PPE Encounters Recommends

### **FILM: "Triangle of Sadness" for happier days**

By Gertrud Sparre-Ulrich

Where? In Cinemas from December 15th

About a month ago I went to a sneak preview of "Triangle of Sadness" by Swedish director Ruben Östlund. Rarely have I experienced a screening with a crowd so involved in it; laughter, surprise, disgust. The film is a social satire with society's elite as the main characters, including fashion models, a Russian oligarch, and a lovely old couple who made their fortune selling weapons. Without spoiling too much, seeing wealthy people suffer is both highly entertaining and satisfying. It has a great German catchphrase (despite 95% of the dialogue being in English), has arguably the best puking scene ever made, and has lots of peculiar side-characters. I believe this film will be enjoyed by many PPEople!. Finally, an advice: **DO NOT WATCH THE TRAILER** before watching the film as there are certain elements of surprise that would be ruined! Just trust my recommendation and the fact that it won the most prestigious price, the Palme d'Or, at the 2022 Cannes Festival.

### **FILM: "Everything Everywhere, All at Once"**

By Nele Fasshauer

Where? Available on Amazon Prime Video

„Everything, Everywhere, All at Once“ by Dan Kwan and Daniel Scheinert is a nice combination of family drama, sci-fi, and comedy. The protagonist is a middle-aged woman (already revolutionary in itself), it's super funny, really thought provoking (alternative universes, different life paths) and gives you a new outlook on life. The film is mostly in English, but you might need to turn on subtitles for the parts in Mandarin.



### **PODCAST: "Alles gesagt" (in German)**

By Nele Fasshauer

Where? Available on Spotify

For all the German speakers, I want to recommend you a podcast: „Alles gesagt“ by Zeit Online. Genuinely one of the best German podcasts there are. The concept is that they invite one prominent guest (a politician, or scientist, or musician) and talk to them for as long as the guest wants to speak. The episodes go on for three, four or sometimes even eight hours. It goes really deep into the biography of interesting people, and is worth a listen! Interesting episodes are an interview with the German YouTuber Rezo, Yuval Harari (in English) and Marina Weisband (a Ukrainian-German-Jewish politician who is the former leader of the "Piraten Partei" and is now in the parliament for the Greens). The podcast is great to listen to while going for a walk or perhaps cooking! You can just listen to part of an episode and continue it later. The long interviews sets it apart from all the other podcasts there are.



## Unsuccess Stories

### Part 1: Quitting

By Nele Fasshauer

When talking about careers, life plans and trajectories, we often talk about success. We invite politicians and academics to interviews and ask them about their story, how they got to their position and which factors in their life path were important. We then leave the conversation with a sense of empowerment, thinking „if this person could make it, I can make it“. However, obviously, only a small percentage of the population becomes as successful as those people. Most often, it's a combination of ambitions, connections and a huge amount of luck. Luck in making the right decisions, circumstantial luck in being born into the right country, time, class and family (very important) and pure dumb situational luck. In the German podcast „Alles gesagt“ (I'm a huge fan as you can see) by the German newspaper „die Zeit“, Artificial intelligence pope Richard Socher describes how his decision to not study but go to a party one night changed his whole life, because he met an employee of a company that would later get him an internship in the Silicon Valley which in turn got him into Stanford. Whether this story is inspiring or horrifying (the complete chaos of the

universe and its implication for our lives) is on your part, but I want to work a bit against the epistemic pitfall (the confirmation bias, if you're being exact) of excluding unsuccess from our perception of life and career by starting this column, unsuccess stories.

For the first part I got in touch with some of the students that quit PPE last year. As you will see, they had different reasons for quitting, maybe because it was too hard or because they did not like the program, and to equate quitting a program with failure is certainly not very applicable. After all, they might have quit because they thought another path would lead them to more success.

Anyways, quitting in itself is usually seen as a form of „giving up“. And what I want to show you with this article is that „giving up“ is not necessarily bad. It's what you do when you see that you cannot reach a goal with reasonable time, energy and monetary resources, or when your goals have changed. If you have been trying to get into art school for ten years, maybe, just maybe, that's a sign to pursue a different career? Always sticking with your decisions is a sign of obstinacy, and I think we should be more open to corrections of our goals and changes of life paths:

## **Testimonies from students who quit PPE last year**

"I quit PPE for a number of reasons that together led to my decision. I thought the programme was boring and not very challenging, I didn't feel any passion for the disciplines (except maybe philosophy) and couldn't picture myself in the field. I also didn't feel a good connection with the other students. And overall, I didn't think it was worth the extra money we had to pay."

**- Anonymous**

"I left because, while I thought it was a very interesting topic, I found that it was very rushed and I wasn't really learning much other than memorizing for exams. Additionally, my mental health wasn't great during online school and I had some family issues at home so I came back to my home country. However, I realized that I really enjoyed the topic and am pursuing it now in a university in the UK, where I personally have found that it is a lot more in depth and can also lead to better opportunities in the workplace later on." **- Anonymous**

"I dropped out from PPE because I couldn't picture myself working in the field of politics or economics. I realized that something creative and perhaps technical would be more suitable for me. That's why I study architecture at Politecnico di Torino at the moment"

**- Nina, Poland**

"I left PPE because I wasn't ready to be studying due to my immaturity in terms of time management and discipline. The disorganization of the course did not help, however, I cannot blame my failure on anything other than myself. I'm currently on a gap year starting a 4 month stretch volunteering program in Arusha, Tanzania. Here I am working at a school helping with teaching and other projects." **- Linus, UK/Germany**

"I engaged in a lot of social activities rather than studying. This led to problems in my academic life, which I realize is completely my responsibility. When you fail too many classes, there is no point in retaking all of them. That's where I understood it was done for me. But part of the responsibility is also on PPE. It was promised that the distribution between the subjects would be equal, but economics was half of the course, which was not what I was expecting. I was not too good at maths, which made it really hard. Now I am studying Political Science at the University of Amsterdam, which is a better option for me."

**- Ahmet, Turkey**

"I stopped PPE because on one side Amsterdam (I lived in Sloterveer) was not really worth living and on the other side the Uni, especially its organization, wore me out."

**- Jarmo, Germany**

"I quit because I felt like the workload was too much, and too crammed into a month, like learning statistics in 2-3 weeks is just not an efficient way of learning because you forget all about it a day after the exam, second reason is (but I think that is not PPE specific but pretty usual in all study programs) that I felt like it was too theoretical and we just learned the basic stuff and not really the interdisciplinary approach that the program promotes, like why do I learn about history of philosophy, why would that be important and how would I use it in contemporary jobs? That would have interested me. Those are the reasons why I quit PPE specifically, why I left the VU was because this Uni is just not very inclusive for internationals, no committees or initiatives, students have no say in any decisions that the Uni takes, complaining never works and the bureaucracy is super complicated. Now I am studying economics in Germany"

**- Vivien, Germany**

*"Due to my mother being very sick (breast cancer), I lost motivation and lacked the energy to study. Therefore, I decided to quit halfway through the year because it was taking too much from me at that moment. Right now I'm doing political science" - Lester, Netherlands*

*"Well I got depressed and it was no longer a vibe. I had to move on with my life and get better. Amsterdam was depressing, and PPE was deeply stress inducing. I'm happy I made the choice, but I also miss all the awesome friends I made. They were what kept me in PPE for as long as I did. I'm studying Planning, Public Policy, and Management at the University of Oregon now." - Chris, USA*

*"I studied PPE last year and at first I was very excited about it. I was less excited when I found out that PPE is very conservative in their calculator policies for methods, stats and economics. Coming from the international baccalaureate where I only did mathematics with graphic calculators (like the advanced ones), I had great difficulty adapting to using simple calculators. PPE was misadvertised, miscommunicated and simply not modern enough for me :). Now I study culture, politics and society at the Central European University which is way more creative, modern and contains more applicable knowledge than PPE." - Vincens, Austria*

So, for some students PPE was not the right thing, for others, Amsterdam or the VU were not what they had hoped for. I hope that the administration takes note of these remarks to improve the course in the future.

What all of them have in common is that they learned from their bad experience and adjusted their studying habits, or their field of study. They did not take quitting badly, but instead used it as an opportunity to try something better next time.

Some people find a path in life directly, and some need some time to figure it out. Ursula von der Leyen studied Archeology for a year, then Economics for three years in Münster and at the LSE, then, at 22, she finally decided on medicine, which she finished seven years later. She got her Doctorate, two kids, stopped her residency program, and got a Master of Public Health instead. She only joined the CDU at 32 years of age, became a minister of the German cabinet and is now President of the European commission. She had quite a bit of figuring out going on, and

her story can be seen as motivating, only mitigated by the fact that her father Ernst Albrecht used to be the prime minister of the German state Niedersachsen (a little nepotism never hurt nobody). But still, she sometimes quit.

When I don't like a book, I stop reading it. Even though that leaves me with "unfinished business". I think we should be more open to adjustments, even if that means that our original choice (of reading this particular book or studying this particular thing) might have been wrong. But hey, at least we learned something in our life, and gathered experience, and I feel like a life full of change and troubles is much more interesting than the polished CV of people that went straight to Uni, finished as the youngest of their cohort and went straight to getting a shiny impressive job and climbing the career ladder. No front if that's your plan. But for the rest of us: *don't be afraid of a little bit of unsuccess.*

# The Housemate

*By Kees van der Veek*

A borderline blackout drinking binge is kind of like having a double personality disorder. As the clock strikes one we are collectively turned into a buzzing beehive of militant idiocy, failing to make any intelligent decisions and incapable of having bad ideas. You will wake up without any knowledge of whatever mischievous acts you overindulged in the night before and how well you succeeded in erasing your tracks. Gazing upon my living room this morning I monumentally failed in the latter, I can tell you. PPE borrels tend to light the fuse that leads to an absolute bombshell of a Techno Tuesday braindead festivity. About as dangerous a combination as ten tons of cocaine and a grizzly bear, which is exactly what it looks like inhabited my home last night. I woke up in total panic, a banging headache that felt like a steel needle had been rammed through my frontal lobe and my face swollen like a constipated tomato that underwent a disastrous botox treatment. The sheer sour-stomach fear surrounded by the haze of what if's and did I's raced through my mind. Did I lock my bike? Did I really text a long forgotten Tinder date in unbridled horniness? Did I really overshare childhood trauma with strangers in Melkweg's bathroom stall?

Being drunk is like having a terminally messy housemate who's never home but you still have to be accountable for. Why do I make a point of this now? Well upon discovering my carpet was littered with baby spinach, tabasco sriracha and frozen seafood, that I vaguely remember barfing out in prevention of a total fallout of my vital organs, and the dead Romanian prostitute in my laundry room I came to the conclusion that I definitely need to start living by myself.

My fragmented memory leaves me with not much. I sat at my desk in my underpants attempting to reconstruct what had happened. Instantaneously I swore to never drink again. Like everyone always does since liars take so little time to decide on their saunter. This type of promise of holy allures is as susceptible to corruption as elections in Donetsk and solely undermines our beautiful, rational, free-thinking spirit, now does it? My vow was hollow and shouldn't be made anyways. No matter if out of the thick mist of intoxication and self-destruction rises very little besides a feeling of calvinistic guilt and bones itching for self-betterment. No, we ought to ask ourselves the question why we live with this housemate in the first place? Because midnight's siren will never fail in blindfolding him for moral repercussions.

We had a memorable but mostly labour-intensive night at the Saloon given the mechanicalness with which we manoeuvred a way between the wild waves that flowed from the bar tap. What is it with this violent treatment of our body? Why do we derive pleasure from masochism? Is it the same kick of resisting gravity and seeing where our fairytale starts climbing a mountain too steep? I don't think so. It is finding the comfort of the automatic pilot and enjoying the privilege called confidence that the cat will always land on its feet. Numbing the human condition. Kicking the can down the road for a well-deserved rest after all that breathing. In essential, it is not-living. Because you abstract yourself from any necessity to need anything.

I stepped unto my balcony, felt the crisp winter air tickling my testicles. Standing there, fighting the manly urge to pee over the edge, I said to myself "What did I gain? What's the point of mounting a meaningless offensive

against this habit that crumbles by nightfall? Why color in the lines when everything is painted black? What is this fermented smell in my nostrils, this terrible ringing in my ear? Am I already in a state of dissolution before dying or has that always been the case?"

It is as fine a time as any to deduce that we need to radically change our course of action. Picture how you would describe yourself during this period when you have kids. I don't know how I would. But step by step I'm beginning to believe that by the time we cross that bridge I will be half demented, bald and being figuratively, and literally as well by the way, milked by feminist amazon-women who want to exploit my semen specimen since I am by definition the best possible man to fit in their ideal world. You

see, I avoid flirtatious physical contact with unacquainted women out of an irrationally large fear for legal consequences, and because of my submissive traits - take it upon you to interpret this as an invitation to blow my asshole to pieces, you know where to find me.

But all this is besides the point. Got a little enthusiastic there. What I guess I'm trying to say is that I now stand at the high-water mark where the wave broke down. Our invincible streak has turned onto its final straight. The waves we so gracefully rode during yesteryears disintegrated. Its idle tide's remainders meander regretfully and flushed with shame back to beyond the horizon's silver lining. How relentless the housing market may be, I'm moving out.

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*That was it for now. Thank you to everyone who contributed with their work & merry Christmas!*

**Questions, comments, or suggestions on how to improve the newsletter?**

Contact us on [ppeencounters@gmail.com](mailto:ppeencounters@gmail.com) or Instagram @ppe\_encounters

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*December 2022*

