

APRIL • 2021

01  
ISSUE

# CONTRO VERSIES

LAND  
*OF THE*  
FREE

STORM MAGAZINE



**1 Preface****2****2020 in Controversies**

Recap of a turbulent year by Daan and Len

**8****Quarantine Music**

To lift up your spirit in difficult times

**9****Elegy of the Death Penalty**

A thought provoking Poem by Lia

**10****Amelisweerd**

Article by Nienke

**12****Curbing the cruel cut to girls' genitalia**

Reportage by Rosana

**17****Is voting Democratic?**

Article by Lotta

**19****A thought on simulated realities and climate change**

Article by Lia

**26****Dr. Love**

Floor responds to your love problems

**27****Recommendations**

Curated by Len

**30****Vegan Mac n' Cheese**

A delicious cooking recipe by Iris

# PREFACE

**2020** was a year that was truly memorable for more than one reason. Covid-19 , global lockdowns, the killing of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter Protests, the catastrophic explosion in the port of Beirut, the US elections and the subsequent storming of the capitol by lunatic Trump supporters in January of 2021, to name just a few. Enough events for a decade, or maybe even a lifetime.

In this edition of the Storm Magazine we chose the topic of **Controversies** as an opportunity to bring some order into the chaos of the recent months and maybe also to be able to look back with a little relief - we truly made it through the hellish rollercoaster ride that was 2020.

At the same time it is probably safe to say that focusing on the same issues all the time is exhausting. Therefore, we present you with a variety of topics linked more or less to the topic of controversy - next to interesting articles on simulated realities or female genital mutilation there are also fun cooking tips, book, movie and music recommendations and love advice to spice up quarantine life.

enjoy!





# CONTROVERSIES OF 2020

## US ATTACK ON HIGH RANKING IRANIAN GENERAL - PERSIAN GULF CRISIS

# JANUARY



*January 5th: U.S. paratroopers leaving for the Middle East two days after the drone strike on Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani.*

**A** rise in political tensions between the two countries during the Trump administration, which included the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Nuclear deal with Iran in 2018, and the imposition of new sanctions against Iran. The crisis escalated in 2020 the U.S. killed an Iranian major general Soleimani,

one of the most powerful people in Iraq, with a drone strike as a reaction to earlier strikes from Iran. The U.N. considered this assassination as a likely violation of international as well as U.S. domestic law.

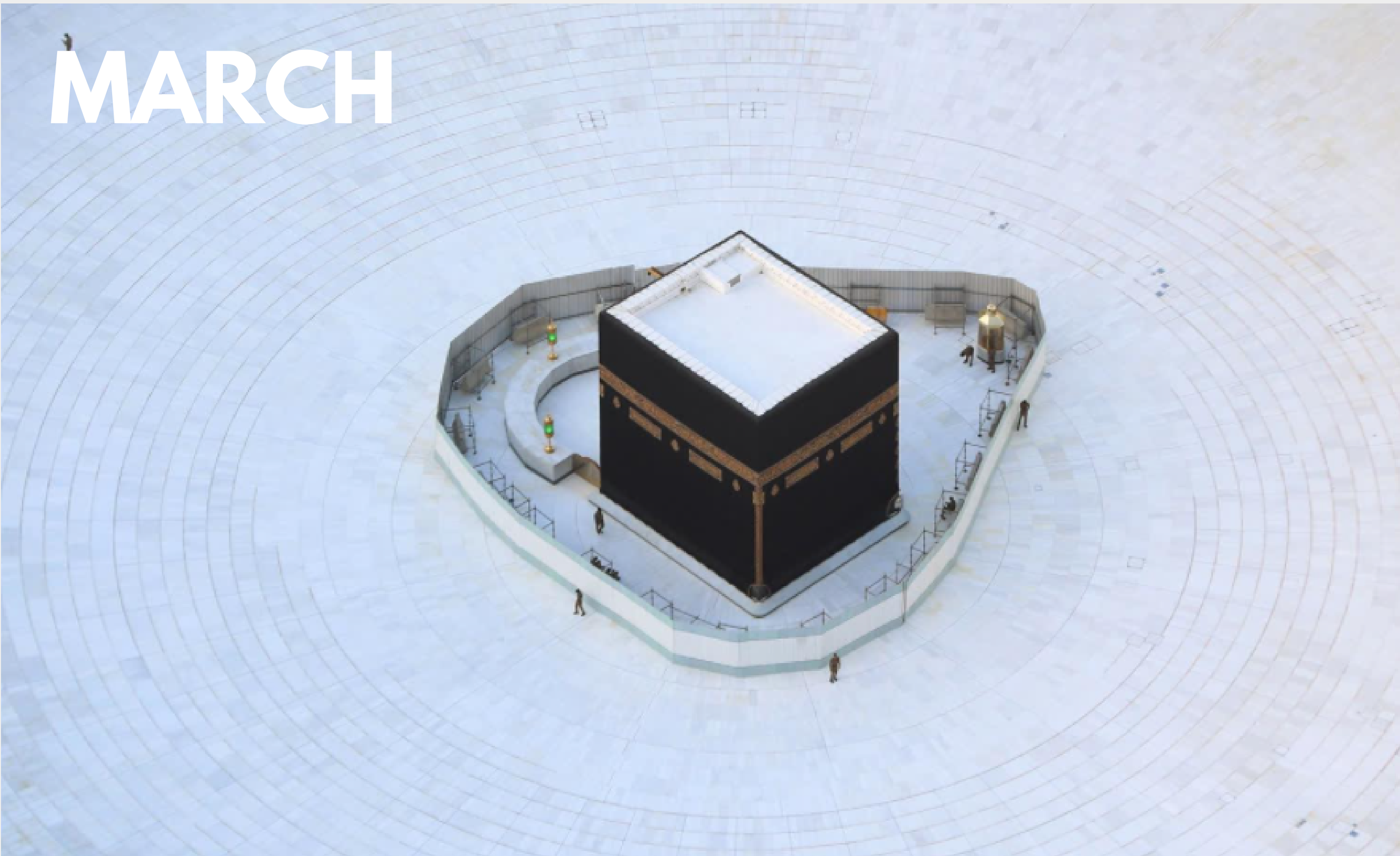
## THE BEGINNING OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN CHINA. WUHAN GOES INTO LOCKDOWN.

After the very first people got sick with the new virus. The local governments of Wuhan and Hubei were widely criticized for their delayed responses to the virus and their censorship of the related information during the initial outbreak, especially during the local parliamentary sessions.

This allowed early spread of the virus, as a massive number of Chinese people returned home for the Chinese New Year vacation from and through Wuhan, a major transportation hub.



# MARCH



*March 6th: An empty Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, due to the coronavirus pandemic.*



*March 19th: The word “Corona” can be seen to be replaced by “Chinese” in president Donald Trump’s notes as he speeches about the pandemic to press at the White House.*



# APRIL



*April 19th: A health care worker counterprotesting a rally against stay-at-home restrictions in Denver, USA.*

## PEOPLE HOARDING PRODUCTS FROM SUPERMARKETS

Many messages and photos about empty shelves in supermarkets appeared on social media. People have started hoarding because they fear shortages after the measures that the cabinet announced in

march in the fight against the coronavirus. This sparked controversy because many people could not get the products they needed because other people started hoarding.

# MAY

## DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD AND THE SPARK OF BLM.

46-year-old black man, after a convenience store employee called 911 and told the police that Mr. Floyd had bought cigarettes with a counterfeit \$20 bill. A Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on George Floyd's neck for eight minutes and 46

seconds, killing George Floyd in the process. This number together with 'I can't breathe' became a grim symbol of police brutality and sparked protests around the world.

# JUNE

## CHINA IMPLEMENTS A CONTROVERSIAL LAW THAT GIVES CHINA MORE AUTHORITY IN HONGKONG.

The Chinese government 'votes' in favour of national security legislation that criminalizes foreign interference in Hong Kong; the legislation grants sweeping powers to the Chinese central government to suppress the Hong Kong democracy

movement, including banning activist groups and curtailing civil liberties. The U.S. government responds by declaring Hong Kong is "no longer autonomous" under the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act.





*June 7th : A statue of 17th-century slave trader Edward Colston is toppled during a Black Lives Matter-protest in Bristol, UK .*

## GOOGLE GETS FINED FOR \$5 BILLION DOLLARS FOR TRACKING PEOPLE IN INCOGNITO MODE.

Google has been sued in the US over claims it illegally invades the privacy of users by tracking people even when they are browsing in "private mode". The class action wants at least \$5 billion, one of the largest fines ever, from Google and parent company Alphabet. Many internet users

assume their search history isn't being tracked when they view in private mode, but Google says this isn't the case. The search engine denies this is illegal and says it is upfront about the data it collects in this mode.

## FEMKE HALSEMA DID NOT INTERVENE DURING BLM PROTESTS

In these Covid-19 times, it is expected of everybody to keep 1.5 meters distance at all times. However, the right of demonstration sometimes outweighs the rule laid down in emergency ordinances that people must keep at least five feet away during this

corona time. With this consideration in the anti-racism demonstration on Dam Square, Amsterdam mayor Femke Halsema angered many citizens and politicians on Monday.

# AUGUST

## AMAZON CEO JEFF BEZOS IS THE FIRST PERSON IN HISTORY TO HAVE A NET WORTH EXCEEDING \$200 BILLION

The world's richest person (at the time), Jeff Bezos, became wealthier than he'd ever been. He crossed a milestone previously unseen in the nearly four decades. At the time this was 90 billion more than

the second richest man, Bill Gates. The controversial part is how little most of Amazon's workers earn, often struggling to reach targets set by superiors.





August 5th: The ravaged site of the explosion in Beirut, Lebanon.

EXPLOSION IN BEIRUT WHICH KILLED 304 PEOPLE AND INJURED 7500 PEOPLE

On 4 August 2020, a large amount of ammonium nitrate stored at the port of the city of Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, exploded, causing 204 deaths and 7,500 injuries and leaving an estimated 300,000 people homeless. A large cargo of 2,750 tonnes of the substance had been stored in a warehouse without the right safety measures for

the previous six years, after having been confiscated by the Lebanese authorities from the abandoned ship MV Rhosus. After the slow response of the government, many Lebanese saw the whole situation a symbol of the failure of the government.



OCTOBER

October 16th: A protestor rests against riot police shields after being sprayed by water cannons during anti-government protests in Bangkok, Thailand.





*October 21st: French president Emmanuel Macron at the funeral of Samuel Paty, the 47-year old teacher who was beheaded after having shown caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed to his class.*

## DECEMBER

### TRUMP NOT WANTING TO LEAVE THE WHITE HOUSE AND NOT ACCEPT THE ELECTION RESULTS.

President Donald Trump told some aides that he might refuse to leave the White House on Inauguration Day, according to CNN. Few of them believe Trump would actually follow through on the threat, the CNN report added. "He's throwing a

f---ing temper tantrum," one source said. "He's going to leave. He's just lashing out." A vote by the Electoral College confirmed Joe Biden as president-elect. Trump still has refused to acknowledge Biden's victory.

## JANUARY

### STORMING OF THE CAPITOL

The world's richest person (at the time), Jeff Bezos, became wealthier than he'd ever been. He crossed a milestone previously unseen in the nearly four decades. At the time this was 90 billion more than

the second richest man, Bill Gates. The controversial part is how little most of Amazon's workers earn, often struggling to reach targets set by superiors.

### RIOTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

When the curfews were introduced in the Netherlands for the first time since World War 2, massive riots broke out. 3600 tickets were given out by police. Throughout the whole of the Netherlands riots broke out stretching multiple days. because of

the large numbers of rioters and the chaos involved, it often took a long time before police arrived. As a result of this, many stores and even a Covid testing location were destroyed.



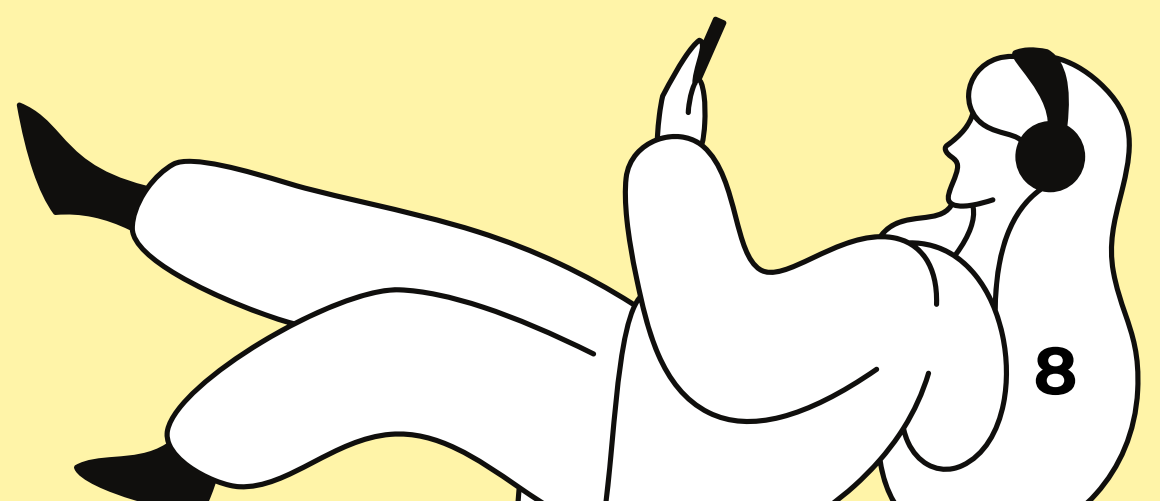
January 23rd: in Eindhoven, a demonstration against the curfew, which was imposed two days prior by the Dutch government, escalates into full-blown riots. In the background, the Eindhoven central station can be seen, which was victim to lootings, its windows being thrown in and its piano being demolished.

## HERE ARE SOME SONGS THAT YOU CAN ENJOY DURING THESE QUARANTINE TIMES! - CURATED BY FLOOR

(If you look reeeeeeaaally closely you can see that every title has something to do with the pandemic.)



Antiscocial – Ed Sheeran, Travis Scott  
 Breathin – Ariana Grande  
 Breathe – Years & Years  
 Doom days – Bastille  
 Duurt Te Lang- Davina Michelle  
 Every Breath You Take – The Police  
 Hard times – Paramore  
 Ik Was Al Binnen – Broederliefde, Frenna  
 If The World Was Ending – JP Saxe, Marian Hill, Julia Michaels  
 I Want To Break Free – Queen  
 It gets better – Rex County Orange  
 Stressed out – Rex County Orange  
 Supalonely- BENEE, Gus Dapperton  
 Wild World – Cat Stevens  
 Wish You Were Here – Pink Floyd





# ELEGY OF THE DEATH PENALTY



Capital punishment for those sentenced to death  
for the ones who committed a criminal offense  
but should the State appoint last breaths?  
Whoever shed man's blood by man shall his blood shed?

or they could be banished instead  
to gray cells and hope for nothing  
make bitter souls like buttered bread  
Would perpetual imprisonment be equally threatening?

Murderers must be murdered  
if not, murder would seem allowed  
by killing them killing is discouraged  
or so is heard from the crowd

Don't legitimize their behavior  
do not take another life  
that is counterproductive  
your lethal injections might well just be their knife

An eye for an eye  
can people repent?  
A tooth for a tooth  
can people lament?

Is revenge the same as justice?  
because the line is very blurry  
Do all transgressions deserve mercy?  
If we kill the ones who kill are we of murder the accomplice?



# TROUBLE IN AMELISWEERD



Not that long ago, the Dutch government resigned as a result of the childcare benefit scandal. Ministers, civil servants, parliament and judges had a role in this affair, which made it impossible for parents to fight back when they were accused of fraud. The government continued as a demissionary cabinet until the elections.

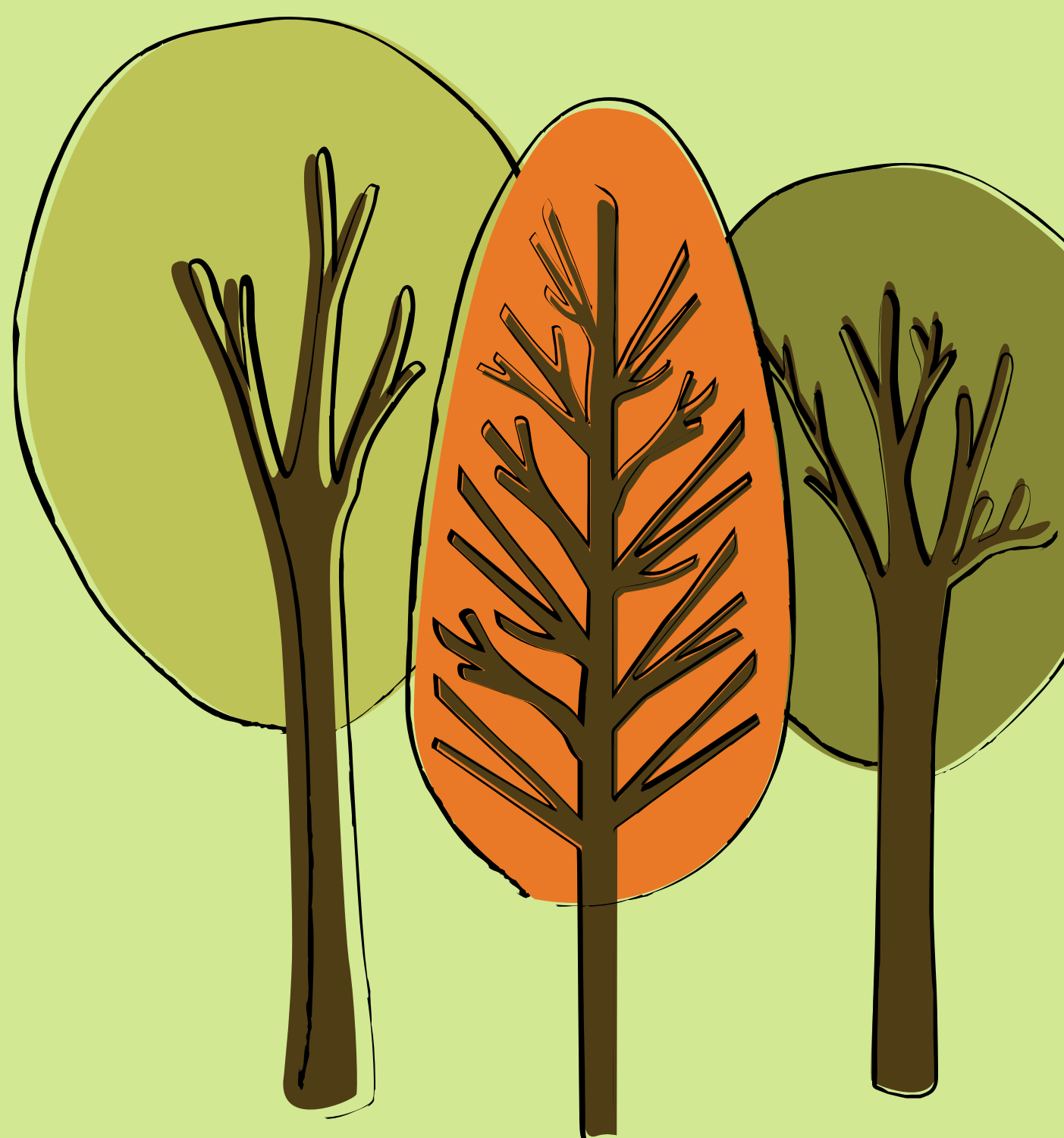
This means that they officially resigned but are still in function. The ministers and secretaries of State will finish their current affairs while the more sensitive and controversial topics will be handed over to the new cabinet. Which topics are controversial is decided by the Senate and the House of Representatives.

On the 25th of January, however, the government decided to not make a decision on the topic of broadening the highways A27/A12 (more specific: not to make a decision on a letter about the consequences of the decision). This plan already has a lot of resistance and in this article I will explain more about this topic.

To fully understand the discussion and why this topic was marked controversial, we need to know why they want to add more lanes to these highways. The area where the adjustments will be, are at the ring road of Utrecht. A lot of through traffic and regional traffic passes this roadway.

The ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management want to do this by adding extra lanes and so create a higher capacity, make separate different traffic streams and add a new road to connect the A28 and the A27. Next to this they want to improve the liveability by using more quiet asphalt and adding more nature and eco passages.

If they remove nature at a certain place, they will make sure that this is replanted at another place. They handed in a planning approval decision to the Council of State in May 2019 but this did not get approved because of wrong nitrogen measures. They changed their planning approval decision and handed in a new version last November.







3 years ago Storm adopted a tree in Amelisweerd for the Protect the forest campaign.

In this picture you see board members of the 27th Board; Juul Kappelhof, Sterre Westenbrink, Helge Giezeman and Saré Geurts, at the launch of the campaign in February 2018.

This plan might sound good at first: they are replacing nature, are working out the traffic issues and are also critical on their nitrogen calculations. However, a lot of activists still don't think it is a good idea. When carrying out the plan, they have to cut down almost 800 trees in Amelisweerd.

The places where they want to compensate for this nature can simply not capture the ecological value that this part from Amelisweerd has right now. Another reason is that more asphalt causes more pollution, and the nitrogen they pollute when they are building the roads and screen borders is not taken into account.

There are a lot of alternatives for this plan where we do not have to lose the beautiful nature in Amelisweerd. We can focus on making more bike lanes or improving our public transport.

Almost one third of the traffic in the ring road is from city traffic and this can easily be done by bike or with city transport. Another alternative can be lowering the maximum speed. If you drive slower there are less pollutants and noise pollutants. You will also see a decrease in speed differences which is better for the throughput and causes less traffic jams.

Now that this topic is marked as controversial, the new cabinet will make the final decision about it. A lot of activists think this is great because they hope that people will see how outdated this plan is and Amelisweerd can stay the same! Meanwhile there are a lot of things that you can do to save Amelisweerd!

Take a look at <https://www.stopverbreidingringutrecht.nl/> or at <https://www.beschermhetbos.nl/> for more information!



# CURBING THE CRUEL CUT TO GIRLS' GENITALIA

Imagine bringing a seven-year-old girl to a room, taking off her clothes, pinning her to the floor, spreading her legs apart and directing the hands to her genitals. Then, scrap her clitoris and labia with a sharp stone, a broken glass or an unsterilized razor blade. This is a necessary rite of passage to womanhood that ensures better marriage prospects, enhances male sexuality, prevents promiscuity and preserves virginity.

This scene could be taking place in at least 26 of the 43 African countries, among some ethnic groups in Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, as well as in parts of India, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Moreover, it could also be happening in Australia, Canada, the United States and in many European countries due to the continuation of the practice by migrants. But **female genital cutting is complex and multifactorial**, and include notions of cleanliness, religion, tradition, **control of female sexuality within patriarchy**, and **child rights** and **consent**.

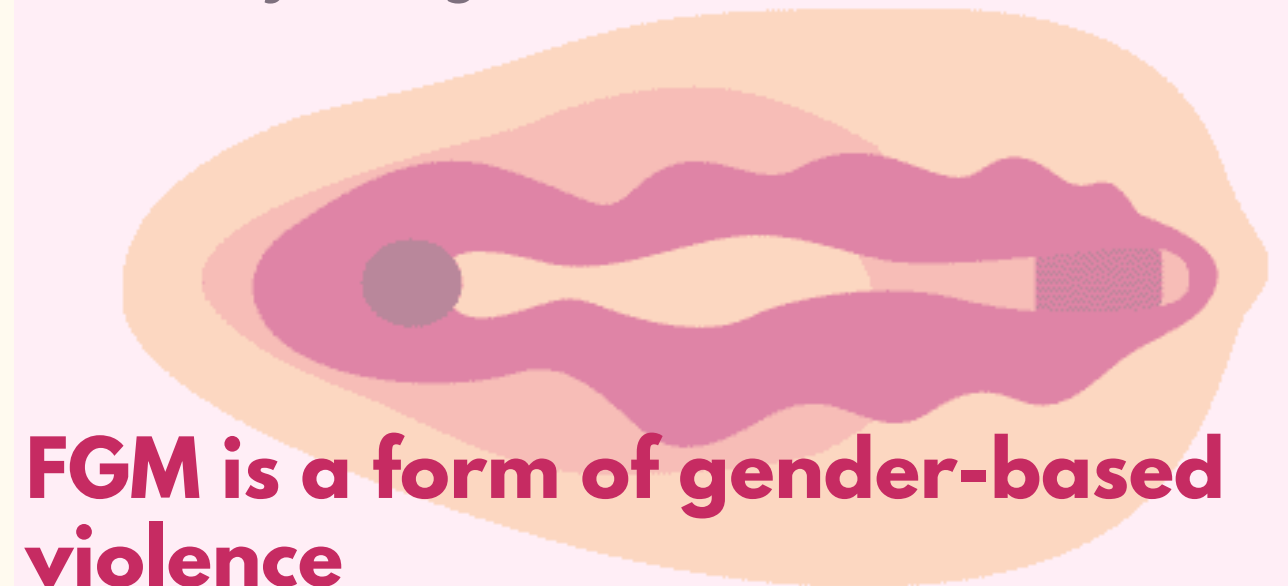
## Experts ask approaching FGM as a global issue

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is no longer a purely African and Asian problem, according to the World Health Organization and the Women Stats Project. The European Parliament Resolution of 24 March 2009 on female genital mutilation indicates that an estimated 500,000 women living in the EU have been subjected to FGM, and that 180,000 girls and women are at risk of undergoing FGM every year.

In order to draw a clear picture of this issue and highlight its global scope, Taina Bien-Aimé compares the cut to girls' genitalia to what would happen to male counterparts.

"If FGM was performed on a boy, we would go from the removal of the tip of the penis to the entire removal of the penis and the testicles [depending on the of FGM]. It would become an urgent matter that we, as a society, would have already addressed," firmly states for The Guardian the Executive Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and a founding member of Equality Now.

Leyla Hussein points out in the same direction. The Somali psychotherapist and social activist said during the Oslo Freedom Forum in May 2017, that "FGM is not just an African and Asian issue. Controlling women's body and their sexuality is a global issue."



The reasons for FGM are cultural, sociological or religious. Some ethnic communities believe that vaginas need to be cut and that women will be unhealthy, unclean or unworthy if they don't have performed a FGM as kids. These beliefs are very strong and parents believe they are doing the right thing for their daughters.

*(continued on next page)*



For other communities, female circumcision is a requirement for marriage as women are handicapped without a husband or family. The anthropologist Gruenbaum noted: “There may be limitations or barriers to access to land, cattle, grazing, rights, or cash income without a husband. There may be control of production that reinforces economic dependency. There may be a need for physical defence.” As such, parents choose to cut their daughters at a younger age before they understand the procedure or even know its significance, to ensure their daughter’s marriageability, security, and possibly even survival.

Nonetheless, as the World Health Organization informs, FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is nearly always carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of children. Virginija Langbakk, director in the European Institute for Gender Equality, stays along the same lines: “FGM is one of the most brutal human rights violations of our time, deeply rooted in gender inequalities, as well as deliberate physical and psychological dominance over girls and women.”

## The EU and a regional approach to curb FGM

European resolutions call for zero tolerance for female genital mutilation. The most fundamental EU legislation with regard to FGM is the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, as it lays out the human rights approach required to tackle this multi-faceted issue. Across EU Member States, there has been a trend to recognise FGM as a criminal act and, subsequently, to draft and enact new laws or enhance and augment existing legislation to effectively respond to FGM.

However, Moussa Fall, who has worked as an intercultural mediator helping the integration of foreigners in the Spanish region of Aragón, claims that following specific routes is key to achieve the policies’ goals. “Laws against assault and child abuse cover FGM in several countries, in Africa too. Nevertheless, stopping FGM without an specific protocol to follow is ineffective in problem-solving,” recognizes the Spanish-Senegalese Moussa Fall.

**PARENTS CHOOSE TO CUT THEIR DAUGHTERS AT A YOUNGER AGE TO ENSURE THEIR DAUGHTER’S MARRIAGEABILITY, SECURITY, AND EVEN SURVIVAL**

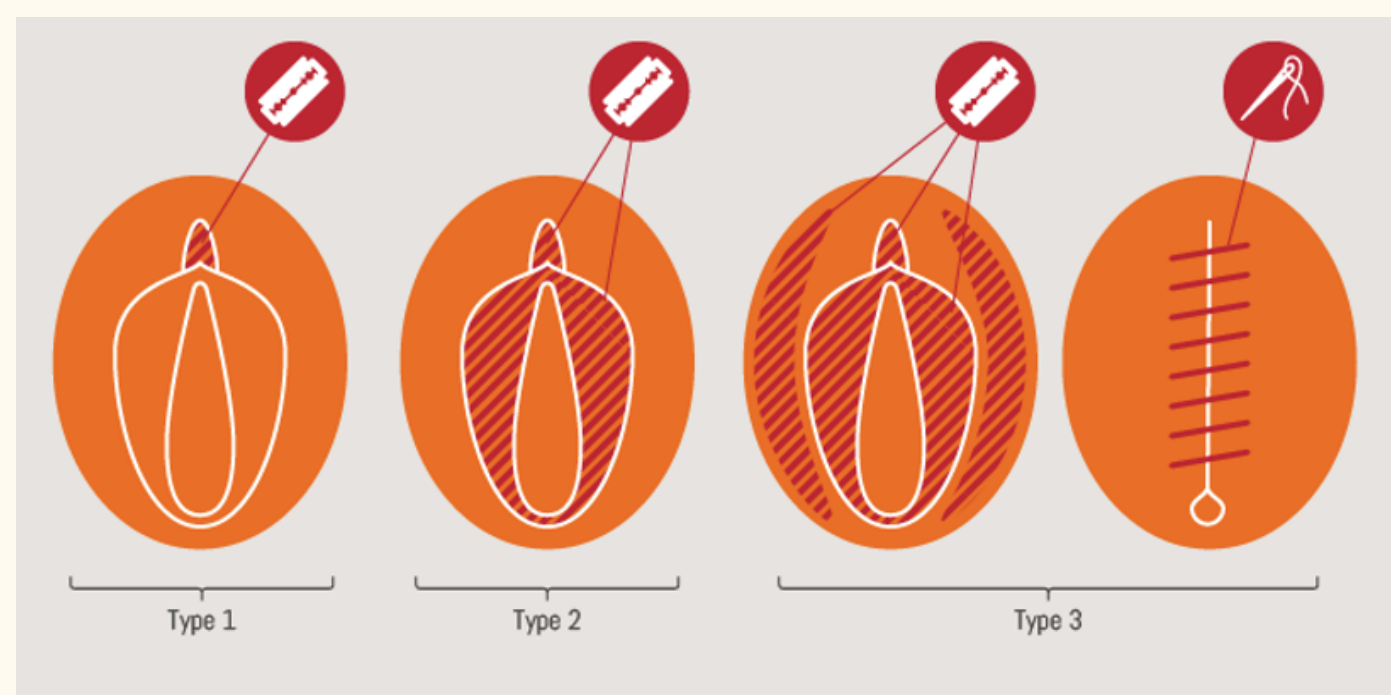




## Travelling back to the countries of origin, a risk for girls

The Spanish region where Moussa Fall works was a pioneer in devising a plan for both preventing FGM and taking action if the practise is committed. “Social workers, educators and health professionals work together following an action plan against FGM that ensures girls living in Aragón to preserve their physical, psychological and social integrity,” explains the intercultural mediator.

Médicos del Mundo (World Doctors), an independent association, contributed to the design of the action plan against FGM in Aragón. The group specially highlighted in the protocol that the major risk happens when girls travel back to Africa. “Many African families established here [Spain] go back to their countries of origin for a summer holiday. It is during that specific moment when girls are at stake,” Moussa Fall points out.



Different types of female genital mutilation  
Source: End FGM EU

**“I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT EDUCATION HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD,” MUSSA FALL**

## KEY CONCEPTS

### What Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is?

UNICEF defines Female Genital Mutilation as all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

### Types of FGM

There are different types of FGM that range from the partial removal of the clitoris to the closing of the whole vagina to a point where the girl is left with a small opening and not even a matchstick can get through it. This impedes the women’s ability to urinate, menstruate, have intercourse and give birth with normality. The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies FGM into four major categories: clitoridectomy, excision, infibulation and a fourth type that includes all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes like pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area.

### Consequences

FGM can lead to severe bleeding, pain, complete loss of sensitivity, complications during childbirth, infertility, severe pain during sex, recurring infections and urine retention. And, in some cases, it is lethal.



The action plan requires girls to visit the pediatrician just before leaving the country and immediately afterwards. The Spanish-Senegalese adds: “moreover, the figure of the intercultural mediator helps parents to understand and sign an agreement through which they declare being aware of the illegality of FGM as well as the commitment to protect their children.”

## **RIISING AWARENESS IN BOTH GIRLS AND BOYS WHO ARE RAISED IN THESE CULTURES IS A BULLET POINT FOR DEFINITELY ADDRESSING FGM**

“Apart from this protocol, raising awareness in both girls and boys who are raised in these cultures is a bullet point for addressing FGM definitely,” states Moussa Fall. “I firmly believe that education has the power to change the world.”



*The protocol includes a visit to the pediatrician that certifies the integrity of the girl both before the departure and immediately after the arrival. Parents sign a health agreement.*



*Pictures: Asier Alcorta Hernández/  
Médicos del Mundo*



**SOCIAL WORKERS, EDUCATORS AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WORK TOGETHER FOLLOWING AN ACTION PLAN AGAINST FGM THAT ENSURES GIRLS TO PRESERVE THEIR PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL INTEGRITY IN SOME EUROPEAN REGIONS**



*The preventive documents are part of the trip preparations.*



*Workshop hold to raise awareness in the communities with high prevalence.*

*Source: Asier Alcorta Hernández/ Médicos del Mundo*





ARTICLE BY LOTTA

# IS VOTING DEMOCRATIC?

**“Nothing is going to change until the main source of power in our society, our seat of government, is populated by people who are genuinely representative of the society at large”**

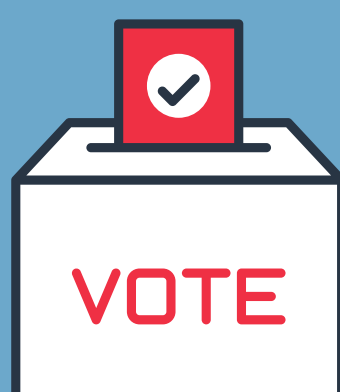
Representative democracies have been the go-to political system in the west for many years and seem to be uncontested when it comes to increasing overall well-being and prosperity. But are they truly representative of the interests of the people?

An article in The Guardian, written by Tim Dunlop, proposes a radically new way of structuring democratic governments. The author, based in Australia, proposed to replace the senate with a ‘People’s House’ which consists of randomly selected members of different groups from civil society. This sounds like a very alien idea to many people for sure. After all, it does seem very risky to randomly select people who might have no idea of how to run a country, who might not be interested in politics or might have very unpopular opinions.

In order to assess this idea in more detail, however, it might be necessary to take a closer look at our current election systems and to assess their suitability to select a representative share from society as a whole.

After all, our current democratic leaders seem to consist mostly of older, middle-class, white men, which calls into question how representative of society they truly are. Being able to freely choose any person for a government seat is a great concept. The freedom of choice, however, gets diminished when there already is an inherent bias built into society.

When teaching algorithms to select candidates for job interviews, for example, they often tended to prefer men when comparing applicants which were equally suitable for a job. Since these algorithms learn by analysing data collected from real-life human behaviour, they take over the unconscious prejudices that are built into society.

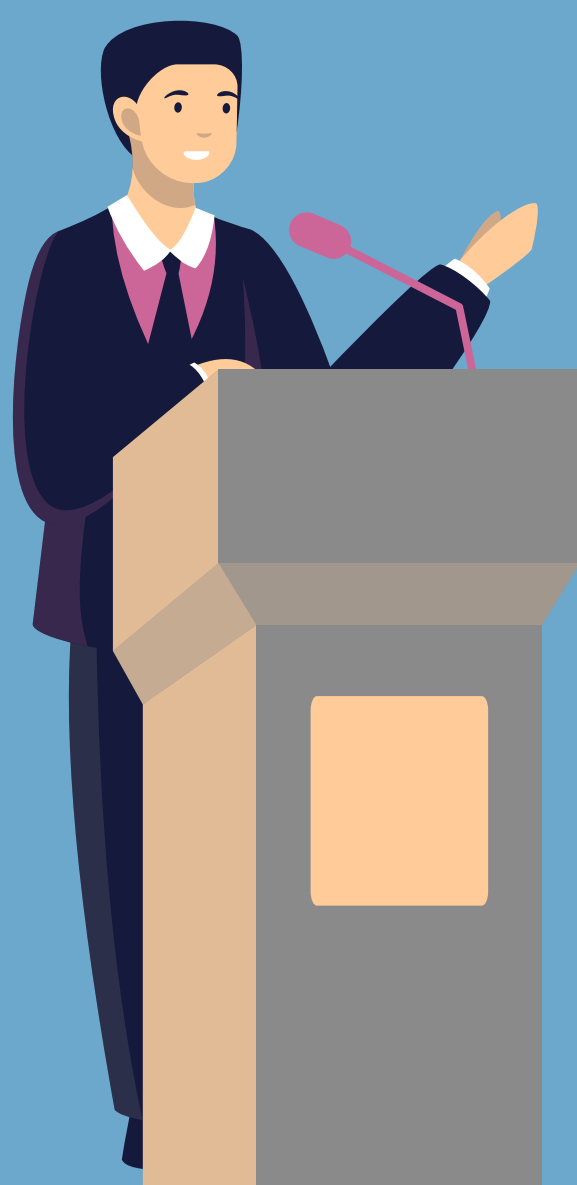




The same is true for electing representatives. Nowadays, most people would not openly state that women are not suitable to be the head of a nation. When looking around, however, we discover that, even though equally present in society, there are hardly any women in high governmental positions. When acknowledging these biases, we cannot but start to question how fair and representative democratic elections truly are. In the end, they don't represent society accurately and obviously favour those with the most resources such as education, time and money and a certain talent for self-portrayal.

When randomly selecting people, of course, the lack of political experience remains. Dunlop therefore does not propose to entirely remove political experts from the government, but to form a government consisting of lay people and experts. He especially stresses the conversation between these groups, which seldomly interact. This model would have the advantage of forcing politicians to listen to the needs of the 'ordinary citizens' more closely, as well as giving citizens a platform where their voices can be heard, connecting them more with national politics again.

Deliberative democracy, which is explicitly striving for including as many perspectives as possible and creating mutual understanding, is already being applied with regard to select political issues.



In Utrecht, an energy and climate plan was drafted in 2015 by means of direct citizen involvement. Citizens were randomly selected and brought together for discussion, while financial compensation was offered in order to encourage diverse participation. The participants received detailed information on the matter beforehand and had experts at their disposition. This process greatly contributed to the understanding between all involved stakeholders and received very positive feedback from all sides, showing that citizen participation can be an important element when handling complex decisions.

In contrast, our current political systems, even in 'developed' countries, have not been able to deal with environmental challenges adequately, while many citizens remain dissatisfied. Bottom-up approaches, however, have been thought to be an important driver for sustainable change. Since a government consisting of elites will also favour the interests of those elites, it might truly be time to truly involve 'ordinary' citizens in decision-making again.

This could be achieved through a quite radical approach such as the 'People's House' proposed by Dunlop or through deliberative processes on critical matters, such as has been shown by the Utrecht climate plan. In the end, our governmental systems have yet to adapt to highly uncertain futures involving a rapidly changing environment. Bringing politics back to the people might well be part of the solution.





# A THOUGHT ON SIMULATED REALITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

*We might be living in a simulation.*

Ancient Greek philosopher Plato represented his own version of the previous statement by narrating a tale in which a man who had spent all his life chained inside a cave staring at shadows in one of the cave's walls thinking those shadows were the real objects is suddenly freed. Once he is outside he sees that what he had considered real inside the cave were just shadows.



Plato's allegory of the cave shows how we can never know with absolute certainty that our experiences are real, however real they may seem. This same idea is explored by Zhuangzi, a Chinese philosopher who in the third century developed a thought experiment about a man who vividly dreamed he was a butterfly. When he woke up he was not sure if he was a man dreaming he was a butterfly or if he really was a butterfly dreaming to be a man. There is no way of figuring out whether our reality is in fact a simulation just like Plato's chained man thought those shadows were all there was and

Zhuang Zhou doubted his true form of existence.

The idea of living inside a simulation is famously portrayed in the movie *The Matrix*, where the main character is told the truth, that what he knows to be his life is merely an artificial dream and that his real body is being kept under in this state by other beings. Even though this could be thought as only fiction, modern philosopher Nick Bostrom and famous engineer Elon Musk disagree and have addressed the theory as a possible situation. For them, there are three possible scenarios.



The first one is that humanity ends before we have enough computer capacity to develop simulations. The second one is that humanity gets to a point where we can develop simulations but we decide not to. The third one is that humanity can simulate conscious beings and they do.

The last scenario then has two possible ways of thinking about it. Whether we are the first generation, the “original humans” and will at some point build these simulations or we are not the “original humans” but one of the simulation. Given that humanity has the power to simulate consciousness it is likely that they would simulate multiple civilizations, not just one, increasing the likeliness of us being one of those. We have no way of knowing which scenario we live in. Houman Owhadi, a computational mathematician working at the California Institute of Technology has said that, “If the simulation has infinite computing power, there is no way you’re going to see that you’re living in a virtual reality, because it could compute whatever you want to the degree of realism you want”. A recent achievement has also supported this theory, researches have now successfully managed to simulate a single nucleus of helium. A single nucleus may seem like a minimal accomplishment but if we look at the evolution of video games in the last fifty years going from a very simple ping-pong game to virtual reality worlds, we can expect a similar evolution. We may be able to simulate whole atoms or molecules in a few years which would open the door to the possibility of simulating living organisms.

However, the goal of this hypothetical simulation is not frequently discussed. The ongoing climate crisis could be connected to the simulation theory in two possible ways. This reality could either be working as a sort of research programme to help our creators come up with the solution for climate change or we could be living in a sort of “practice run” to show us how serious the problem we face really is.

More developed organisms and civilizations with enough computer power to simulate other civilizations could be facing the same climate crisis we are and decided to use that simulating capacity to come up with a solution faster. If more advanced civilizations exist in this universe it is probable that they too have had problems managing the resources of the planet or planets they inhabit and so they could have built and modeled simulated civilizations with similar obstacles as the theirs and let them run until one of them find a viable solution for their own planet as well.

The latter explanation, where the simulation serves as a kind of training would be based on the idea that direct experiences have a stronger influence on people’s behavior than indirect experiences since the necessary action towards a sustainable future is not yet to be seen.



Even though we are staring right at the eye of the greatest crisis humanity has ever faced stakeholders and individuals are still not taking the amount of action that is needed. The information is there, scientists have published the data, activists have demanded for the specifically things that are destroying our planet to be stopped like oil extraction and greenhouse gas emissions. People in power still do not take the climate issue as seriously as it should, individuals are still living extreme consumerists lives. Assuming that educating people about environmental issues would automatically result in more pro-environmental behavior was a mistake. Still, governments and NGO's base a huge deal of their campaigns on education. Still, only a few percentage of the world's population live an environment friendly lifestyle (carrying their reusable bags, reusable water bottles, recycling, plastic-free, no fast fashion, vegan). There is a huge gap between knowing what is the right thing to do and actually doing it. There is also a huge gap between having a certain attitude about something and acting on it.

Direct experience leads to a more coherent relationship between attitude and behavior as seen in Regan and Fazio's 1977 Puzzle Experiment. In this experiment a group of college students were divided in two groups. One group was presented with five different set of puzzles and were shown how to solve them by looking at previously solved examples (indirect experience) while the other group was presented with the same set of puzzles but instead were given the opportunity to work on the puzzles themselves (direct experience).



Then, both groups were asked to rate the interest they had on each type of puzzle. Next they were given a 15 minute free play period in which they could interact and try to solve any type of puzzle they wanted to. The experimenters were there measuring the order in which the participants chose to solve the puzzles as well as the proportion of puzzles of each type attempted to solve. Then, the experimenters measured the correlation between the interest rating of the puzzles with the order of election as well as with the proportion of puzzles attempted. With this data the experimenters could see how consistent their attitude regarding the puzzles were with their behavior. As predicted the direct experience group had much higher consistency rates between what puzzles had interested them with the ones they attempted to solve. Both groups had similar interest ratings but the direct experience group matched this interest the most with their following behavior.

A higher civilization could be trying to help us improve our attitude-behavior consistency by allowing us to first experience what could happen just like the experimenters gave the second group of students the opportunity to first work on the puzzles themselves. It sure feels like a puzzle sometimes.





ARTICLE BY LIA

It can also be thought as if we are in a virtual reality video game, but made by this higher civilization. Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab has recently found that by immersing an individual in a virtual reality setting in which they cut down a tree the individual consumes less paper. The subjects see, hear and feel the same as if though they were really cutting a tree in a real forest, wearing huge VR goggles, hearing birds and receiving touch feedback which all come together to create a convincing reality. After cutting the simulated tree individuals changed their behavior and conserved more paper showing how direct experiences on a fake world can change human's actions in the "real" one, "You're going to need more than an instructional video or a pamphlet to explain something that requires a change in behavior. You need to make people feel like they're literally engaged" said Jeremy Bailenson the professor who led the experiment.

In this experiment however, there were two groups of subjects. Both were asked to read information about non-recycled paper and deforestation.

One group then went to read a detailed account of what happens when you cut a tree and the other group was introduced to the VR world. Just like in the puzzle experiment, both groups expressed strong feelings against deforestation but only the second group cut their paper use.

Both experiments clearly show how useful direct experience is to inspire people to take action. This could help humanity save the environment and explain why we are in a simulation if we are in one. Nevertheless, none of this could be tested or proved and remains solely as a crazy, science-fiction like hypothesis.

**DISCOVER MORE AT:**

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# DOCTOR LOVE



Dear Dr. Love,

I have the biggest problem and I'm desperate for your advice.. I've been dating this amazing, dreamy guy that literally has everything you could want in a guy: good sense of humour, smart, cute, etc. Even thinking about him gives me butterflies!! <3. However, something is really bothering me. He isn't a GSS-student and it shows. Yes, I had to dramatically underline that to make my point very clear. He always brings his sandwiches in disposable plastic bags that he tosses away, he takes steaming hot showers for more than an hour every day, buys loads of fast fashion clothes every week and eats meat and dairy nonstop. He should be my ultimate nightmare, yet he's my prince Charming. I try to put the GSS lectures on as loud as I can hoping he picks something up when he's in the same room as me and I try to sneak in vegan food as much as I can. It's starting to look like I can't change him and his habits though. I don't know if I should put my principles and values above everything and dump him or keep trying since I do really like him. I'm so confused, pleaseeeee help me out here.

Xxxx a desperate anonymous GSS-girl

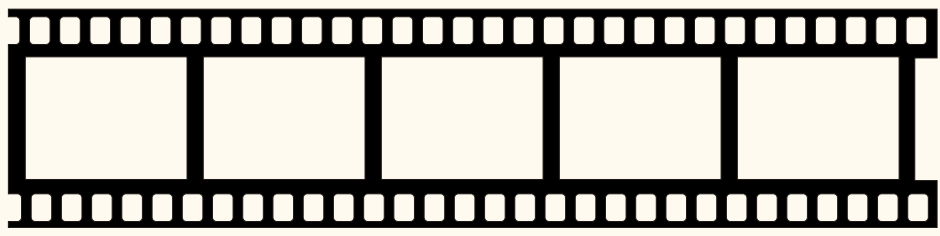


Heyy desperate, anonymous GSS girl,

Wowww, hold up with the breaking-up stuff maybe! I can tell you are a very passionate person and have strict morals. This is a good thing and I respect that. Howeverrrrrrrrr... What can seem like little changes such as eating more vegan, can be huge changes for some people. Not everyone possesses the knowledge that you have about environmental problems and even if they do, you can't automatically assume that they'll change their habits. What I recommend is that you have a talk with him and tell him about how you've been feeling. I do want to stress that you shouldn't force him to live like you, just tell him how you feel. Maybe ask the Social Sciences teachers for some tips on behavioural change as a back-up... And if all of this doesn't work out and you're really not seeing this relationship going anywhere: there are plenty more fish in the sea. There are probably loads of cute GSS boys that would love to eat a vegan pizza with you. I wish you all of my luck!

Yours sincerely, Dr. Love <3

# RECOMMENDATIONS



CURATED BY LEN

## The Prestige

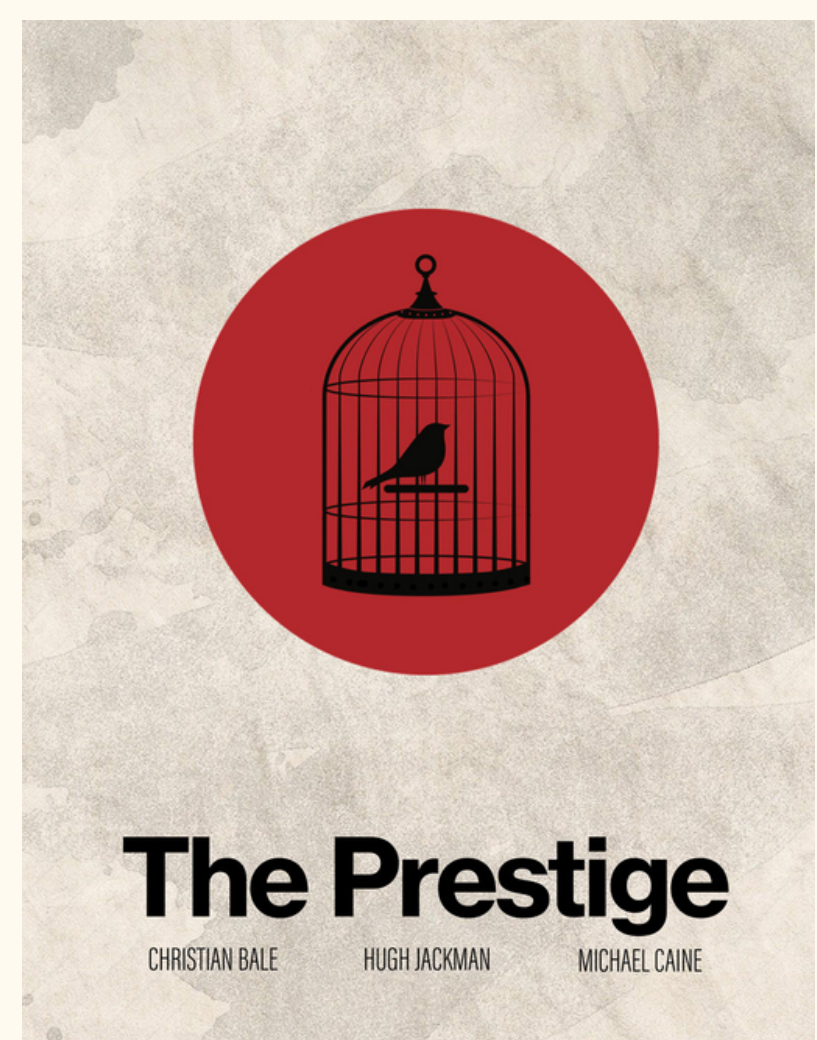
The Prestige (2006) is an unexplored film of the director and producer Cristopher Nolan (Interstellar, Inception, Tenet). The story follows the rivalry between two magicians in Victorian England (telling you a bit more than this would already spoil most of the movie). Based on Christopher Priest's 1995 novel, uniformly named, the movie does not only discover this rivalry between colleagues, but also goes into deeper themes like obsession and sacrifice, with Nolan scattering multiple small side-plots and interesting notions throughout the film. These usage of sometimes seemingly abruptly ending sub-plots combined with a non-linear way of storytelling can make the film seem quite chaotic at times, but it is however also what makes the movie so attention-grabbing and captivating in my opinion, as you're on the edge of your seat the entire time.

In classic Nolan fashion, reality also isn't always what it seems in *The Prestige*, making a rewatch (or even third rewatch) even more fun than the initial viewing, as you're constantly discovering new easter eggs and subtle hints that you had missed before. Just as with other films of Nolan like *Inception* and *Interstellar*, this movie isn't a great fit if you're in the mood to relax on the couch and watch a simple movie due to the complicated plot and unusual structure. But if you're in the mood for a mysterious thriller with lots of twists, this is the movie for you. Watching *The Prestige*, you're constantly wondering if something is real, or if it's simply magic.

The actors also don't disappoint: with a star-studded roster featuring the likes of Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale and Scarlett Johansson (not to forget a surprisingly fresh performance by the late David Bowie), Nolan's adaption of the story is portrayed convincingly. This emotion is even further amplified by Hans Zimmer's amazing soundtrack, who has always managed to create some of the most beautiful cinematic music ever composed.



It seems odd to me that this movie has been under so many people's radar for so long (including mine), especially because it has been on Dutch Netflix for quite a while now. Ever since I discovered it, however, it has been one of my favourite movies of all time.

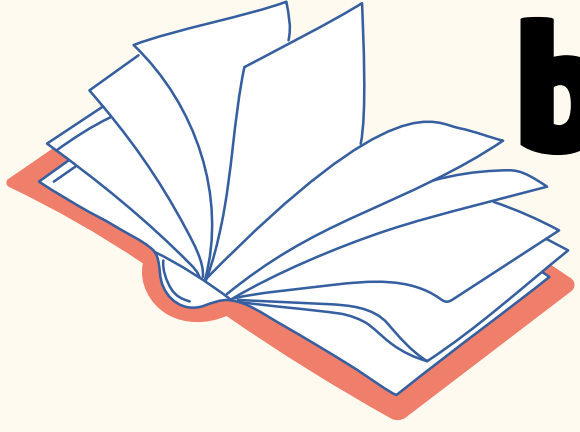




# RECOMMENDATIONS

CURATED BY LEN

## Human Kind: A Hopeful History by Rutger Bregman



In these modern times, where controversy after controversy seems to follow one another, it is sometimes hard to remain optimistic about our future and humanity as a whole. Look at the recent attack on the US Capitol for example, or the refugees on Lesbos that are seemingly ignored; humanity must be inherently bad for these things to take place, right? This is a common assumption which is almost seen as an indisputable and obvious truth in modern Western society, substantiated by its prevalent use in books, movies, and even politics and law-making: the idea of humans being selfish in their core, only caring about their own interests or survival in dire situations, is everywhere.

It influences how we behave towards and view other people, and facilitates damaging behaviour like xenophobia or arrogance, as it is an easy way to not take accountability for your own actions; after all, it's just "human nature" to act that way. Even though not all people see the worst in their fellow humans, many of those optimists are left without substantial arguments when faced with the facts: all over history, from the two World Wars to the Stanford prison experiment, the true nature of humankind is in full display.



In his book 'Human Kind, A Hopeful History', Rutger Bregman (a Dutch historian and writer) tries to debunk this seemingly impenetrable perspective on human nature by using the same history that facilitates that argument, as a weapon against it. The Stanford experiment, the horrific actions of regular people during World War 1 or on the Easter island, all these parts of history that were used as arguments for the idea that humans are intrinsically bad are taken down, undermining the fundamentals the idea has been built upon. Of course, there have been many horrible actions done throughout history by horrible people, but that isn't the point Bregman is trying to make: his point is that even though people can do horrible things, most people are not fundamentally 'bad'.

Using other arguments related to evolution and way too many historical anecdotes and examples to mention here, Bregman spends most of his book (357 of 452 pages) trying to convince the reader of this controversial idea. The last part, arguably the meat and potatoes of this book, is where Bregman gives his opinion on the implications of this new insight and perspective; how it should be (or could be) implemented into the policy-making process and jurisdiction, how it could be used to combat racism and prejudices and what effects it could have on our daily life.



Bregman's accessible writing style and constant use of interesting historical anecdotes and facts, intertwined with philosophical analyses on the implication of those facts, keeps you interested throughout its entire run. I would recommend this book to GSS'ers specifically, as being constantly confronted by all of the crimes humanity is committing towards our planet and other people can really make you lose hope in, and darken your perspective of, our fellow humans.

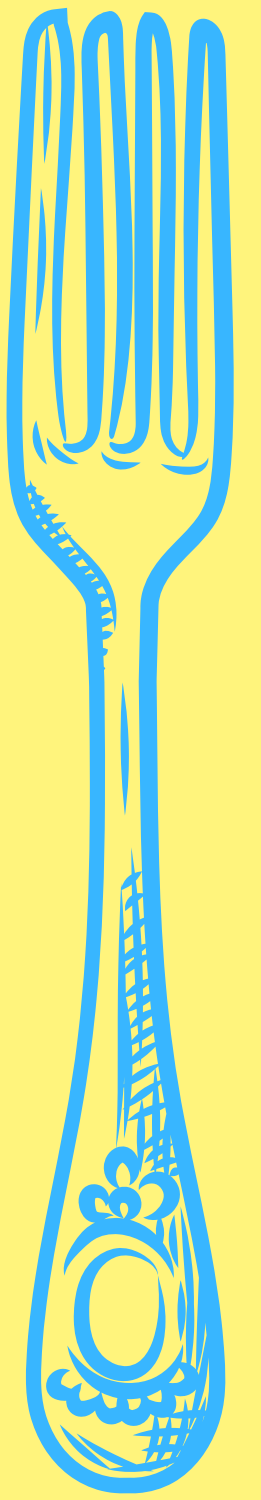
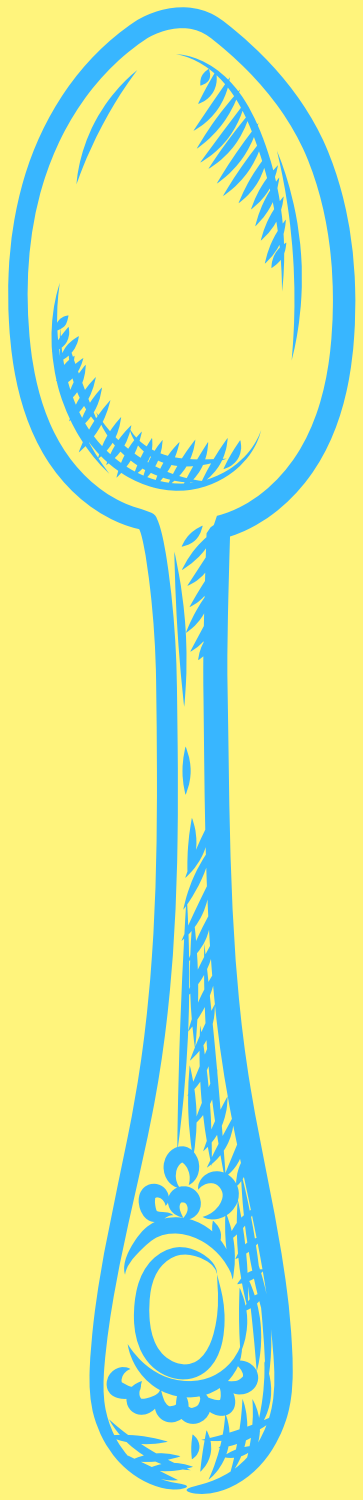
He ends with ten 'precepts', inspired by his research and findings, in which he gives his opinion on how we as people, and society as a whole, can become (or strive to be) better with this new knowledge in mind: the knowledge, that most people are good. Even though this book is incredibly long (a whopping 452 pages as mentioned before), which can make reading it feel like quite a daunting task beforehand, it was easy and smooth to read through.

**After all; how are we going to save this planet collectively as a species, if we don't even have faith in one another?**





# VEGAN MAC N'CHEESE



## WHAT YOU NEED

4,5 litres water  
 1 tablespoon sea salt  
 225 gram macaroni  
 4 slices of bread,  
 torn into large pieces  
 2 tablespoons + 75 grams  
 vegan butter  
 2 tablespoons shallots,  
 peeled and chopped  
 170 gram red or yellow  
 potatoes, peeled and chopped  
 25 gram carrots,  
 peeled and chopped  
 40 gram onion,  
 peeled and chopped  
 240 gram water  
 37 gram raw cashews  
 2 teaspoons sea salt  
 1/4 teaspoon garlic, minced  
 1/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
 1 tablespoon lemon juice,  
 freshly squeezed  
 1/4 black pepper  
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne  
 1/4 teaspoon paprika

## WHAT TO DO

1. In a large pot, bring the water (4,5 litres) and salt to a boil. Add macaroni and cook until al dente. In a colander, drain pasta and rinse with cold water. Set aside.



2. In a food processor, make breadcrumbs by pulverizing the bread and 2 tablespoons vegan butter to a medium-fine texture. Set aside.

3. Preheat oven to 300 degrees. In a saucepan, add shallots, potatoes, carrots, onion, and water, and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and simmer for 15 minutes, or until vegetables are very soft.

4. In a blender, process the cashews, salt, garlic, 75 gram of vegan butter, mustard, lemon juice, black pepper and cayenne. Add softened vegetables and boiling water to the blender and process until perfectly smooth.

5. In a large bowl, toss the cooked pasta and blended cheese sauce until completely coated. Spread mixture into a 9 x 12 casserole dish, sprinkle with prepared breadcrumbs, and dust with paprika. Bake for 30 minutes or until the cheese sauce is bubbling and the top has turned golden brown.

Bon appetit!



# SOURCES AND CONTRIBUTORS



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<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/oct/14/voting-undermines-the-will-of-the-people-its-time-to-replace-it-with-sortition>

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