Leeuwarden has been impressive.

College Fryslân in Leeuwarden in

Professor in Global Health at Campus

Yousefzadeh (50), assistant pro-

a lot, if not all, about Dr Sepideh

hope and gambles again.’ It says

everything, who doesn’t lose

one who gambles and loses

written in Farsi: ‘Cherish the

Persian poet Rumi. She loosely

building is a quote by famed

in her new office at the Beurs

The one truly personal touch

Yousefzadeh’s road that led to her

at a very early age, I keep his

Fryslân. ‘I fell in love with Rumi

education

Original and challenging

education

After her time at Harvard, she

worked for UNICEF, did a PhD at

the University of Maastricht with

A carpool-startup from

Sebastian Karges and

Germán Ramos p.2

Life after the

intensive care

Research by PhD student

Lise Beumeler p.3

You Don’t Have

to Save the

Whole World
to Save the

Whole World

Column of Frida Nilsson p.4

Dr. Sepideh Yousefzadeh

Global health affects

everyone

 Born and raised in Tehran, Iran, Yousefzadeh’s road that led to her teaching Global Health at University College Fryslân in Leeuwarden in Leeuwarden has been impressive.

‘I worked as a midwife in Iran, but became interested in development work. I worked for NGOs with refugees in Afghanistan and Pakistan,’ she says. ‘That sparked my desire for higher education. I landed a spot at Harvard Kennedy School, a beautiful chance to work with people from all over the world.’ Though she cherishes her time at Harvard, it also made her realize that people can have very different perspectives on things. ‘I realized I was an Iranian in a post-9/11 USA. The political reflections were so one-sided and stereotypical, it left me feeling frustrated and angry. It was intimidating.’

‘Health issues affect us all. They’re right around the corner’

I wasn’t even aware of myself, happening right here in Leeuwarden! That’s Global Health: it’s not a problem “far away in Africa”, like we were taught thirty years ago. Health issues affect us all. They’re right around the corner.

Growing up in a bubble

Growing up, Yousefzadeh had to deal with things unfathomable to people in the West. ‘I experienced war throughout all of my childhood. I ran to school when it was literally raining rockets. Staying at home just wasn’t an option. I have a beautiful daughter now, and I realize she is growing up in a bubble. It’s a bubble of prosperity, safety and security: it’s a great bubble, don’t get me wrong! But growing up the way I did made me resilient. It made me the woman I am today.’ And this goes for my students as well. Some of them were born after 9/11. And they take some things for granted, unconsciously. My aim as a teacher is to lure them out of their comfort zone. To create awareness, to make them realize other people have different views on things. But mostly to empower them, to give them the belief that they can make a change in this world.’

Lovely Leeuwarden

Leeuwarden seems like a far cry from the places where Yousefzadeh grew up and lived previously, but she unreservedly embraces it. ‘Oh, Leeuwarden is so lovely! The city and its people are so friendly and welcoming. I feel secure here. Interacting with people here is so easy, it’s beautiful. Even though my Frisian is not very good. I’m lucky people in Leeuwarden speak really good English!’
Some time ago, I took part in a so-called active bystander training session. The session posed the question of how you should conduct yourself when faced with a colleague behaving inappropriately, or how you should conduct yourself towards the victims of such behavior. How do you become an active bystander? That is, someone who intervenes, understands the context and supports the victim – instead of remaining someone who looks away, not taking any steps to uncomfortable. In a short performance, actors succeeded in having us as an audience experience this. In the end, a participant spoke about how the session had changed her approach to situations where she has witnessed inappropriate behavior, and how she now feels more comfortable with it. I hope that in a year's time, people will feel more comfortable with it.

By GERARD DE JONG

Hopon: reducing CO₂ emissions, traffic and costs

Sébastien Garsès (28) from Trier, Germany, is an alumnus of the Master’s degree program in Sustainable Entrepreneurship at Campus Fryslân. Together with fellow alumnus Germán Ramos (26, from Spain), he created the carpooling startup Hopon.

Sébastien Garsès (on the right) on German Ramos (on the left)

We’re not about occasionally sharing a ride with someone, but about implementing a carpooling structure in an organization.

Hopon is aimed at large companies and organizations. We’ve created an app for colleagues or coworkers to easily arrange carpooling appointments. It takes away the hassle of messaging back and forth to make a date. We’re looking to turn the idea into a test-drive app. It works for someone in the city; it will work locally as well.

What makes us unique in that we’re not about occasionally sharing a ride with someone, but about implementing a carpooling structure in an organization. Our whole business model is based on reduction: reduction of congestion, CO₂ and costs. Shifting a ride saves money for everyone involved.

Right now, Germán and I both have side jobs to pay the rent, but Hopon will make the whole project sustainable. Hopon helps us to see if there is a need for this type of solution in Leeuwarden as well. Hopon is like we have a kind of a ‘test market’ for the idea in Leeuwarden. Our hope is that in a year from now, some companies will be using Hopon and we’re optimistic that at all our organizations may do well, even if they are dependent on a car. We’re sharing a taxi instead of causing the traffic and the inconvenience to the other people involved.

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Favourite spot(s) in Leeuwarden

The number of students that are enrolled in a bachelor degree or master degree programme in Leeuwarden is about 23,000. Find out what they like about Leeuwarden and what their favourite places are! This time, we asked four students.

Marc Flessa - BSc Global Responsibility & Leadership

"The Harmonie is one of my favourite places to go to with my friends. They have a whole range of classical concerts, opera and many more events. The reception area is very pleasant with some beautiful designs. Sometimes there is breakdancing prior to a concert which was very nice because it was different and you wouldn’t expect it. Good view from all areas which is unusual from classical concerts. Every now and again you may get a free drink at the break." 

Pieter Polhuis - LLM in Law and Governance in Digital Society

“I love to go to Cafe de Toeter. If you finish your beer, look left, look right and suddenly it’s full again, meaning they have very fast service. There is a different board games you can play too! Perfect for bonding with some strangers.”

Baldar Weening - BSc Law

“The Markies is an alternative place where you can get many unusual types of beer. It’s in the centre of the city, close to the bus station which is very useful. Sometimes they have a live band playing and the place is always packed full of people but one can usually manage to get a spot. Only disadvantage, it can be a little expensive. However, they do have loads of different board games you can play too! Perfect for bonding with some classmates.”

You don’t have to save the whole world to save the whole world.

I am growing up in a world that is the current epitome of human prosperity yet simultaneously a world of crisis on a scale that has never before been felt. Humanity as we know it is under a severe existential threat that has landed us in a climate crisis as a result of our own actions. Actualizing change on a global scale has never been as important as it is now: but how can you contribute to any solution when you are still trying to figure out who you are?

I think many of us fear our actions will play no role in the bigger picture. I know I do. Being merely 20 years old in such a vast world, rich in people and culture, it is so easy to feel small. To me, this is present all the time, like when I’m walking to university every morning, with strangers passing by me in cars, buses, on bikes and foot. They have no idea who I am, much like I have no idea who they are. Many of them will never knowingly meet and talk to, yet all of us are puzzle pieces essential to solve the challenges we face on a global scale. Sadly, many of us do not ever come to this realization. But, why?

Maybe we feel it is useless to even make an attempt. There are billions of other people out there, why can’t just one of them take the leadership seat? With privilege comes laziness. Unless problems affects us directly, we feel comfortable leaning back in our shiny chair, drinking a mojito waiting for someone else to take responsibility. This way of thinking is exactly what is stopping progress, this is the thinking we have to unlearn. If not you, then who? If not now, then when?

Being an uncertain student in an uncertain world is terrifying, but uncertainty, fear and vulnerability is should be our biggest strengths in this fight, not our weaknesses. What I have learnt over the past year of protesting, speaking, reading and studying for what I believe is right, is that you can never progress if you do not forgive yourself and others on the way. You have to accept the idea that you will never be able to please the whole world, solve every problem and be happy, because that is simply impossible. But that’s also okay.

Believe me when I say, as long as you fight with optimism and with the hope of a better and improved world, you will positively impact many more people both close and far, without ever really being aware. Yes, you have to try, but you do not have to save the whole world, to save the whole world.

This text is a part of Frida’s speech. The full speech can be found on the ‘Campus Fryslân’ channel within the University of Groningen’s Youtube account.