

When I was 19, I had my first job interview. Of course, I'd had my fair share of student jobs - working in restaurants, serving coffee and pancakes - but this was the real deal, and I was nervous. I had followed an obligatory course on organisational behaviour, created my (slightly empty) curriculum vitae, written tons of motivation letters, and started applying for internships to take part in during the fifth semester of my BA International Studies. This process did not go as smoothly as I had initially hoped for. Even though I was not always immediately rejected, I was never hired in the end. In hindsight I realise I had no clue what I was looking for. I went from NGOs in children's development, to health care institutions, to political parties. My motto was "I'll take any internship I can get". My interviewers must have noticed this as well.



In the meantime, summer was passing, September was around the corner, and I had no Plan B. I had one more interview at an organisation for sustainable investments – the best talk I'd had so far – but to no avail: I was once again turned down.

Whilst still frantically applying for internships at any organisation that had something to do with women's rights, international development, or political economy, I suddenly received an email from the Leiden Institute of Environmental Sciences. That there was a spot available in their minor programme Sustainable Development, starting in two days. And whether I was interested in taking it. My parents asked me: "Sustainability, is that something you're passionate about?" I replied with: "Well, sure. We'll see!" At least I had somewhere to go in September.

Two weeks in, I knew I'd found my calling.

It was a mixture of excellent teachers who were passionate about their subjects and managed to pass that on to me and a wonderful group of classmates who were open-minded and inviting. Within this context I got to learn more than I could have imagined back in August when I was crying over my umpteenth rejection letter. I finally found a "focus": from studying everything in the world (international studies) to studying only the environmental/sustainability part of that world (how specific!).

The minor fuelled the remainder of my time at Leiden University. I decided to study Governance of Sustainability and I discovered a whole new level of nerdiness I didn't know I possessed. I joined LUGO as a columnist to share my sometimes funny, sometimes sad, but always exciting encounters with sustainability. I founded GOSSA to organise more sustainability-related events.

With my columns at LUGO, I hope to share something I discovered when I first started studying sustainability. Namely, that it's all around us, in very obvious shapes, but also in hidden forms. I once wrote "once you see it, you cannot unsee it" and I hope my columns help people see it: to show that sustainability can be really interesting, even when you are not a next-level workaholic who stays up at night reading articles about citizen involvement in the energy transition and "wind-terrorism" in the north of the Netherlands (but seriously! Why is no one talking about that!?).

I am graduating this academic year, and I will once again have to go through the terrifying process of job interviews. People keep asking me: “What’s the plan after graduation?” To be honest, I have no idea, but somehow that does not scare me as much as it did the previous time I was figuring out my future. I’ll most likely end up someplace unexpected, anyway. Until then, I hope to stay a part of the LUGO community and meet many of you in person on campus and at LUGO events. Feel free to get in touch if you ever want to have a coffee and talk about wind terrorism, or any other random sustainability topic for that matter. And who knows, our encounter may very well turn into the topic of my next LUGO column!

- Annemiek de Looze