

This is space, No rocket
required, in association with

Lancaster University Management
School.

We need to be pragmatic and we
need to make sure that whatever

we do is for the best for us
here on Earth, on the planet,

but specifically for every
living being, not only humans,

to be honest, and also for
plants, the animals, you know.

In this episode, I am joined by
***** Kilani and the young

principal at EBRD. *****
specialises in the green

economy, climate change and
finance. Hi, Sharon, and thank

you for having me. Maybe quickly
let me correct the name. So my

name is ***** Kalyani de Young.
I know it's a yeah, it's a it's

a a difficult name to digest.
Just I am so sorry, Sharon,

you're not the first one.

And you definitely not be the
last one, but yes, no worries.

And Speaking of names, actually,
I really love the the name of

your post podcast. Ohh. Thank
you. And you know why? Because

you know, although I love space
a lot. Yeah. I do not want to go

into any rockets to go anywhere.
Yeah. So basically I think I'm a

bit claustrophobic and a tiny
bit, you know, I have motion

sickness, so definitely I don't

wanna go. Me too *****. Right. I

get claustrophobic as well. But we could go together, right?

Because I don't know if you've listened to some of the other

podcasts.

I'm arranging a party rocket. OK, I'm in. I'm in.

So, so we could have some drinks, every will be fine. And

that was all through the claustrophobia and has been a

claustrophobic first. I mean ohh perfect. So funny you and I

recently met and we had a fantastic time at the

International Space University where we did the executive space

programme. So we have been brought together by our passion

for space. So I wonder if you could maybe share with us where

did your passion for space come from?

Yes, sure. So basically just to quickly give you also maybe an

explanation of of, you know, my name, if you don't mind, just

just to say I'm, I'm Greek, you need to know, understand I'm

Greek. So, so a lot of things, astrology, you know, the stars,

you know, looking at the, you know, the night sky on the

summer night, you know, you look a lot out, you know, to the

stars. So I think I was fascinated by space since I was

a very young, you know, very young kid, but I didn't grow up in Greece.

Actually, I grew up in Belgium, in Brussels and I was born in

Germany. I mean it's it's a big mess, but but I've been in the

UK for 25 years now. I've studied economics here and I

work, as you said at the EBRD for on the climate strategy and

delivery team. And and I've always had that passion for

space, but it was hidden, you know, I don't know, you know, I

forgot about it. Well, I didn't really forget about it. But you

know, I have two sons. Their names are Rs and Hermes in

Greek, In Greek it literally means the planet Mars and the

planet.

Mercury. Ohh. OK, Right. So you had a massive space fan.

Exactly. So I was hiding it. People were asking me, I'm

married, the Dutchman. That's why I have a very exotic

surname. But but people are asked me, ohh, why Arsene

Farmers And I kept on referring, yes, the, you know, the, you

know, mythology gods, but actually I was hiding the planet

as well in theirs. So why do you think that you were hiding your

passion for space? OK, maybe

because I do feel that sometimes
you can be misunderstood about,
you know, when you say you're
passionate about.

Space, as I said, I I've always
felt connected, you know what

with what's happening out there
and it's not scientifically

proven, but I swear that I have
really bad nights on the full

moon night I cannot sleep. So
somehow I always felt there was

a connexion with me and the
solar system. You know it sounds

a bit you know, out there, but
I, you know, I I didn't want to

talk about this. They will say,
you know, why is she talking

about the moon and the full moon
and you know how it affects her.

You know sleep. But I.

I had forgotten about the the
fascination and in all the doom

and gloom of the pandemic, it
did one good thing for me. It

allowed me to rediscover my
passion for space. Because

instead of going out, you know,
saying my friends, I was

actually watching space
documentaries or I started

reading more and more about, you
know, you know, articles about

what's happening in the space
industry. And literally the last

three years during, you know,
also the pandemic, so many

things happen. All of a sudden everybody was watching, you

know, the the Rover, you know.

Can send on Mars or, you know, the, you know, deployment of

James Webb and the telescope and all these amazing images. And

now all of a sudden we're talking about the next lunar

mission, you know, Artemis too. So everything is happening right

now. In the last three years it's booming. So my, my, you

know, passion is kind of rocketing. You know, it's. I'm

feeding that passion because I I see so, so many things are

happening or some technology developments there. So many

things are happening and we depend a lot on space and we

don't even realise it. Yeah, so do you think it's.

A combination of the the marketplace for space actually

getting to a point where more and more people are wider

audience are starting to talk about it and more players are

getting in. So that diversity within the space sector is

really kind of emerging, isn't it, when we think about it. And

then they they pandemic, the two kind of coincided, didn't they

really at the same time. So do you think that had a part to do

with it? You talked about COVID.

Giving you that space to think about your passion. But if the

marketplace, if the space sector, space economy hadn't

been developing its speed, it has, they might not have aligned

together or maybe I'm being crazy. No, no. But absolutely. I

think the timing is, is is amazing because, you know, it is

a an area and a sector that is, you know, clearly growing, you

know, rapidly right now. Yeah. And more and more players are

interested in this area, you know, not only governments. I

think before in the past it was all, you know, national security

and government. Now you've got the private sector.

From different you know industries actually using space

for their own you know purposes and I think I think it's only

growing and and clearly it's becoming more you know space for

all Yeah but we we need to be careful about that statement

that I make But it's true it's becoming more attainable and as

I said you know the picture we we received from the James you

know telescope but you know it's amazing people realise what

we're talking about. It's not abstract anymore. We actually

get pictures and we realise how small we are and you know and

where we are in in in the universe.

It's it's mind blowing. It really is, isn't it? And so

after the pandemic and that really relighting if you like

your passion for space or bringing it back to the

forefront in your mind, how did you pursue your passion after

after COVID?

Uh, well, I I.

Apart from, as I said, you know, reading about it and and

watching, you know some, you know some specific, let's say

documentaries, I didn't do anything until until and last

year.

Last year I decided I need to feed that curiosity. I need to

find out if it's just a passion for the sake of what I said

earlier, you know, about, you know, me liking them, you moon

and you know, solar system. Or is it more about what space

means to us here and now on Earth and and linked to the

economy. And there was actually a seminar I attended on my own

account. So I took a couple of days off and I went to to

Vienna. There was a space economy conference. And half of

the time during the conference they kept on talking about

climate change, green
technologies and I was, you

know, they brought me back to
Earth.

You know I expected to be
completely propelled into the

you know the universe and talk
about you know exploration and

they made me realise it's not
that far off from what I'm doing

already or things that I know
already And and they made me,

you know, I felt really welcomed
in in that space sector let's

say gathering I I'm not a I'm a
non space sector person but I

felt so welcomed and they say of
course, you know there are so

many links to to your line of
work as well and since then I

mean that that's how I ended up
also on the International Space

University.

Again because I wanted to feed
my personal curiosity but to

bring it back to what it means
also for business, for space

economy where is the future of
that kind of you know where are

the opportunities going to be
in. So yes it was you know it

was a combination of me really
getting to the point and need to

know more. So it doesn't just
remain a passion it it becomes

something more than just a
passion and like you say you can

you can see the the link between
your current job which is is

lovely. So if we can pick up on
some of the.

The hot topics in terms of space
and sustainability space is

usually got or has historically
got a bad reputation for.

Polluting the environment, isn't
it? So when we think about space

debris, we think about climate
change. I guess it's it's easy

to point to the space sector in
many ways. What do you think

about that?

That is a very good question.
Um, and to be honest, if you

want to have a sleepless night
apart from waiting, apart from

waiting for the, you know, full
moon night.

Yeah actually just go online
right now and cheque how you

know how much space debris
around you know the planet

orbiting. It's not a pretty
picture I I I'm honestly you

know I'm I'm I'm not I'm not
happy about what I saw when I

did visualise what it means.

And I think, I think we we, we
don't realise there are so many

parts, you know, so many little,
you know, debris, but also

bigger ones or or satellites
that have stopped working and

they're still orbiting the
planet.

I think that that is a big issue, especially on

sustainability and needs to be resolved. So yes, space is

definitely not 100% environmentally friendly right

now and I'm, I'm hoping things are, you know, changing. I mean

I do think they need to come come up with some proper

regulations, you know, international standards for

everyone to follow. But I don't think we're there yet. I think

there are some standards of course and rules especially on

on how to, you know, to remove debris, but of course a lot.

A lot needs to be done there and and if you you know the reality

cheque is that there are more satellites being launched today

than ever before exactly so that Leo, you know, just to use

abbreviations. I learned that university.

Exactly So Leo, you know for low Earth orbit.

I'm showing off my, you know, my knowledge. So there are so many

satellites right now orbiting there. It's getting crowded. So

of course you know collisions will happen and hopefully not

big ones because that will be you know catastrophic. But I

think, I think we need to to be careful and I want to be

positive because I'm I'm known
to be a positive person. So I

will not just say the the
horrible scenarios, but I do

think that I mean I've read some
solutions are being found you

know using AI on how to remove
some of these debris also I

think they are.

Doing some you know manoeuvres
to to make sure that some

reenter the Earth's atmosphere
and burn up without you know

creating any issues. So these
are solutions hopefully that you

know are sustainable and can be
managed. But but absolutely I'm

I'm, I'm with you on that one. I
I think more needs to be done

and it needs to be done in a
coordinated manner which means

that everyone around the globe
needs to agree which is not an

easy easy task as we know for
many other things including

climate change. You know
Speaking of the other big

passion. So yes I think I think
you know.

Raised debris is a major
challenge that needs to be

addressed sooner rather than
later. And I think I heard this

week that there was calls from
industry experts for a legally

binding global treaty to tackle
this space debris issues. So

exactly what you've just said
they are. So maybe you could get

involved in that, if any. I
would support you 100% with your

passion to be in there to help,
you know, get some, get get some

sort of treaty together. Yeah,
you're great. I think we need a

lawyer.

But I think we met a space
lawyer at university. We can

bring him in. We met some
fantastic people, didn't we? I

know, I know. And and I guess
and another thing really is

that, yeah, when we think about
space, space debris, we think

about the satellites already up
and lowered orbit there. I'm

showing off with you. But also
we need to start thinking about

the supply chain, don't we? We
need to think about the

components that are going in to
making the satellites and making

some of the tech that is being
deployed. So like you say,

there's a lot of opportunities.

There for entrepreneurs that
have got some creative thinking

to think about businesses to
help clean space. But I would

vote for ***** for the Global
Treaty on space Space Debris.

Like he says, funny. You are
probably one of the cheeriest,

happiest, optimistic, fun person
that I have met. And an awful

long time you just read it.
Happiness in the room. So

likewise. So, so let's turn it
to something that is positive.

So although space has
historically had this kind of

negative reputation in terms of
climate change, you and I both

know that space actually helps
contribute to helping address

some of the global challenges in
terms of climate change.

Sustainability. So any of these
can have projects that have

caught your eye or anything in
terms of yeah anything that

caught your eye recently that
you think it's really cool. I

think I think for me I mean this
is the exciting part because as

I said you know I would love to
mix my, you know my personal

passion for space and and
climate you know combating the

the climate challenge two in
one. But there there are so many

climate solutions right now, you
know that that are linked to

space based technologies and I
think the more we use it.

The better we are and the better
prepared we will be to address,

you know, the environmental, I'd
say, in the climate challenges

we're facing. But you know, only
with the Earth observation for

example, or the satellites, you
know, now, you know, having all

these important data, I think many companies and actually

governments, they can already now benefit from several

applications, right, using space data and translate that data

into greener practises, Yeah, OK. Also cost reductions because

it's important as you know, increase their efficiency, but

it's a no.

Rayner if if they can acquire data that will make them more

sustainable and more efficient and you know obviously spend

less money which you know a lot of companies are trying to

minimise costs exactly. It's it's a no brainer that they

should use such you know space based technology in the earth

observation I think, I think especially the the ones you know

the the satellites that monitor weather patterns, sea level

rises.

Afforestation anything that can help us basically understand and

manage all these effects of climate change is, is a big

plus. And it's happening. It's it's already there. It's it's

already available. OK, so some can be less attainable for some

companies. But I do think that this is a future if we want to

build a more sustainable future

for our planet, we definitely
need space. I I'm, I'm 100% sure
now that this is the best way to
do it and OK space imagery as I
said you know, is being used
but.

I don't know. I I feel that they
are becoming the doctor, right.

They are. They are taking
literally the pulse of our

planets, you know, health. Yes.
And shouldn't we care or be

interested in in what types, you
know, of, you know, if they are

ethical, if they are well
respected, if they are, let's

say, the best doctors around. I
mean, just to use the analogy,

analogy, yeah. So I I see them
as our doctors and I just wanna,

I just want us to, you know, to
make sure we do the right thing

there as well.

So yes, space, I think space can
be an enabler to address, you

know, the climate challenges
also to to build smarter cities.

So there are so many things we
could do together on this. Yes,

I I think I'm, you know, I'm,
I'm positive. But you know, my

favourite movie unfortunately is
Interstellar, which is, you

know, I don't know if you've
watched that movie, it's quite

amazing, but but it it makes you
realise that what if we end up,

you know, with with an Earth
that is inhabitable, right. And

obviously they're trying to find
new worlds.

OK that's not now hopefully
never. But but literally it

makes me think that we should be
very, very careful of that

fragile beautiful planet we have
and and if space can be one of

the answers and can be the
solution to make us realise what

we're doing to it. I mean we
need all the help we can get and

space is right now giving us
really important data that we

need to to pay attention to.
Yeah, perfect. Can I? So picking

up on that point, you've already
mentioned your children earlier

on.

So how do we possibly take your
passion? Yeah, take your passion

and help instil that in our
young people so that we are

creating future responsible
space advocates and responsible

space entrepreneurs. Yes, I mean
both the boy, I mean my boys are

OK. There are four and six are
they're big young. They're

definitely want to become
astronauts. That's clear. OK,

Dinosaurs, remember? Yeah,
exactly. I have to say, my 6

year old sometimes says I want
to be, I don't know, Kung Fu.

Asked there as well, I mean

completely unrelated, but no, I

mean just to refer to Rs again.
He he told me quite recently

that made me think and I was a
bit sad because he said can you

tell the astronauts, I mean he
thinks I talked to them about

ohh kill mum. Exactly. Can you
please tell the astronauts not

to throw their rubbish outside
of their rockets, not to pollute

space like we are polluting
earth. Ohh wonderful. And I was

like Oh my God my 6 year old,
you know, literally just

summarise what we are trying to
do here, yeah?

You know, not to, you know
replicate the mistakes we've

done here on Earth up up in
space with all these, you know,

developments with the space
industry. And yes, so definitely

I think they are ready to be
advocates for both and you know,

have high hopes for their, you
know, their way of thinking.

Because he, he was spot on when
he said that I was like, yes, I

will tell the arsenal not to
throw the rubbish outside. We

should definitely listen to
children more. I think we live

in an adult world don't we? We
we often disregard children's

views but.

Your children sound a bit like
mine, that they're far more

intelligent than me often and
they they can they can just

summarise things so well, how
old are they share Just to make

my 3 year old is far more
intelligent than me I have to

say. My youngest has been
educating me for for many years

but it's now 14. In my other one
it's my older one is 23 this

weekend. Well, can I also ask
you what's your children's

favourite astronaut? Just we'll
have a wee shout out.

Oh my God, you know I failed to
give them a Greek or Dutch one.

So they are you know currently
they're trying to you know, I I,

I admit I haven't promoted any
specific one. They just like

them all OK and yes. So we
looked at the the announcement

of the Artemis too and they
liked them all. Perfect answer,

*****. Perfect answer.

OK, so we both had an amazing
time with International Space

University, didn't we? Amazing.
I mean, I mean, honestly for me

that course was a a proper game
changer. You know, as I said it,

it made me realise that this is
not only, you know, you know, a

passion that has no connexion to
our, you know, day-to-day and

our reality. I mean it was quite
intense. We had like 25, I think

25 modules, you know, we, you know, space economy financing,

you know, satellites, you know, telecoms space.

So I mean everything, right. So we had a lot packed in one week

but I think for me it was yeah it it is a game changer it it

made me realise especially on on you know the links of of what

I'm doing now as well. But I think it it made me also meet

people incredible people like yourself. Ohh. Thank you.

And others, you know we were from so many different countries

backgrounds you know level of understanding of the of the

industry and we're just you know the sheer camaraderie I mean I

think where everybody is sharing that passion and I do think we

came together quite close and and hopefully we became friends.

Ohh definitely. I feel, I I feel like I found my tribe. I feel

like I found the people that I had always been looking for but

didn't really know that I'd be looking for you. So yeah it was

wonderful. So what do you think was one of the if if I can ask.

Is was there any takeaways from that course that you think are

really will help you can infuse together your passion for

climate change and sustainability and space?

It definitely made me realise that, and I think someone

mentioned that to me recently as well, that we should.

I mean, we shouldn't not look at space as as if it's a separate

sector.

It's ultimately just a place where many you know businesses

are operating and more will you know and more will start

operating from there. So it's becoming just a a new place but

not a new sector. You know, I mean we have the telecoms, we

have you know, manufacturing services, we've got earth

observation. Everybody actually now is somehow linked to space

without realising it. So I think for me it's you know also

connectivity issues, you know, we want you know to be

inclusive. So we want to make sure that we are able to connect

to you know different.

Parts of the world we know, societies feel also included, so

I think for me it made me realise it's not a separate

sector, it's something we use already and we will use

increasingly so it's better to understand it.

And for my personal passion, I was also so happy. I'm not going

to do too much publicity about that, but there is that first

global space conference
happening on climate change in

May. I mean for me that that
basically summarises why I am

excited because there is a link
and it's now becoming, you know,

it's becoming the topic in one
of these global space

conferences of how space can be
used for, you know, to address

climate change. So for me the
time is is perfect to know more

about this. You should be on the
key speaker.

At the end of the grand opening,
yeah, you know, you'd be hard

pushed to find someone as
charismatic and passionate and

articulate on the subject. And
the fact that you can pull your

passion from space and and from
your current job. I think you

know you should be there. You
should be on.

Tell them tell them to call me.
I'll be your agent.

Appreciate. So I've got it
through you. A kind of question,

left field, right? So if you
could, if you had all the

opportunities in the world and
money was not an issue and

neither was time.

What do you, what would you
develop as a business idea to

address some of the climate you
can't address at all? So what

part of the the space climate
area would you like to address

and how do you think you could
address that?

That's a tough one. It really is
because you want me now to think

like an entrepreneur and you're
you're trying to you know, to

click on that. So I, you know,
again I admit I'm not one, but I

I do. I do find it fascinating
when when, you know you come up

with an idea and you, you know
and and you do your best to

achieve this. But for me again,
I will refer to my children. I

do want, you know, our planet to
be better for them. Right. So

I'm thinking about the next
generation and and of course I,

you know, the fact that I'm
passionate about.

Place doesn't mean that I don't
see you know the issues and I

don't realise you know the short
you know comings as as you

mentioned earlier the debris. So
I do think that we need somehow

to make sure everyone and when I
mean everyone as you said

international, you know
recognition of of these issues

and we you know dialogue from
international cooperation is a

must. And and perhaps because of
my background the fact that I'm

Greek from Belgium you know born
in Germany, raised you know have

been here for 25 years in the UK, I feel like instead of

feeling.

You know that I'm not from anywhere. I actually choose the

opposite. I feel at home everywhere.

And I want that basically to be to be my driver of where whoever

I talked to basically this is it. This is our planet. It's

not, you know I don't see borders. I know I should. You

know, it's not politically correct to say that, but we are

ultimately, you know, we are on one, you know, we are on one

planet, right. So we should take care of it in a, in a, you know,

in a coordinated manner. We should all care about it. It's

our home. So yes, sounds very cheesy, but it's true. You know

it's it's just so you isn't it.

Just such a kid and thoughtful lady, you really are. But you've

still not answered my question. The entrepreneur thing. Yeah, I

will create massing, you know, massive hoovers that will clean

up all the debris. I don't know. No, just we've got some. We've

got some really innovative ideas though, haven't we? Because

there's the, the mirrors that there's been talking about about

actually reflecting the heat back rather than. And I don't, I

don't even think that I could go any further than that. I'm not

an engineer. I don't want to.

Anything incorrect, but there's there's things initially you

think that sounds maybe a bit random or a bit kind of out

there, but when you you, you unpick it, you can see how it

could work. So OK, I'll let you off the hook this time but but

I, I, I don't, I don't believe you when you say that you're not

an entrepreneur, you've not got that entrepreneurial spirit. I

think it comes out in in bucket loads from you *****. So I think

you're underselling yourself. They are.

Food. Food for thought. So if I can ask the question from a

different perspective there, what's next for you? How do you

take this fantastic energy that you've got and passion for

space? How do you take this forward?

I think, you know, I will keep talking about it. I think that's

what I do best. I I just, I just want to make sure that I don't

need to justify my passion. But I would like it to be

understood. As I said, I do not want to be an astronaut. I am,

you know, I've got motion sickness. I do not want to be,

you know, orbiting, but I do. I do want, you know.

People that do have power to do things you know differently and

and better, to understand also different points of views. And I

think, I think my sheer passion hopefully will, you know, will

resonate with with some some of my, you know, counterparts and

and colleagues and friends and family. And maybe they will stop

calling me an astronaut or something like that.

Yeah, we could come up with a really cool name for. Yeah, it's

a bit it's a bit of your proper name at the beginning. My

apologies. The the the climate space guru. I don't know. I'm

kidding. I don't know let's find something I will think about

that while you're thinking about your entrepreneurial endeavours

moving forward. So. So I normally ask people that come on

this podcast if they could go to space, would they. But I think I

already know the answer. But would you go to space if you

could.

Um, only if we go together on that party. Yeah, Rocket, you

promise deals only on that one?

Say this, power. Fact, right. We'll definitely do that. Hold

you to that. Now, I always aim to have a week quote that I read

out the guests on the podcast.
So this one, this time I have

found this quote for you that I
thought was rather kind of

beautiful. So it was from Alan
Shepard and he said that when I

first looked back at Earth
standing on the moon, I cried.

What do you think that means for
you?

OK, uh, I am a very emotional
person with the moon. As I said,

I have a very I have a deep
connexion with the moon, so I

sometimes it does take my breath
away when I look at it. So I

can't even imagine how the sight
of planet Earth would look like

from the moon. But if he cried
back then, I mean I would

definitely cry now, especially
if I see all the debris,

unfortunately. So I think I
think if I see how populated it

gets and and if we don't see
that nice blue ball, the blue,

you know?

Marble I I don't know. I think
it makes me feel that yes, I am

someone who's very, very
emotional. But the same time we

need to be pragmatic and we need
to make sure that whatever we do

is for the best for us here on
Earth, on the planet. But

specifically for for every
living being, not only humans,

to be honest or also for for
for, you know, the plans for the

animals. You know, I'm I'm not.
I don't want to be called a tree

hugger. But we, you know, we are
all connected. You know, I'm

getting a bit philosophical
here.

But I do think we have to stop
thinking about the greed and

everything, you know,
materialistic. I think

ultimately we, you know, we have
to go back down to basics,

meaning what? What? What matters
to us, right? It's it's people.

It's it's our planet, it's
nature. And and that that makes

me want to do more in that area
because of that.

That's a beautiful answer.

OK. Thank you, honey. I have to
say it's been an absolute

pleasure having you on the
podcast. You're a charismatic,

fun, lively, intelligent women.
And it was amazing to meet you,

Sharon. And I hope to see you in
person very, very soon. We're on

the same, you know, part of the
world. We most definitely are.

And hopefully we'll catch up
soon. Thank you so much. Take

care. Thanks, Sharon.