

TESS Article

Kimberly Merten

My academic journey started in 2014 with a BSc. In Earth Systems at the University of Malta. Passionately curious about environmental management and conservation, I furthered my academic studies with an MSc. in Forest and Nature Conservation at Wageningen University and Research (WUR) in The Netherlands. The degree was carried out following the award of a Tertiary Education Scholarship Scheme Scholarship. I selected the Management Specialization, one of the three tracks (ecology, policy or management) offered by the MSc, as it allowed me to undertake a variety of courses within the realms of both social and natural sciences.

The MSc. in Forest and Nature Conservation at WUR is a two-year programme; one scholastic year for courses and one year to conduct a thesis and a four-month internship. I took a variety of courses ranging from Forest Ecology and Management to Environment and Development and Communities and Conservation. My internship was with WUR's Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) in partnership with the Global Landscape Forum (GLF). I put together the theoretical foundation for a future MOOC and supported the development and facilitation of a face-to-face training course in Ghana on Securing Rights in Landscapes. Additionally, I supported WCDI and GLF in designing and carrying out a two-day 'world café' called the AsaseFest at the GLF conference in Accra, Ghana. I wrote a joint thesis with Jean Marc Pace Ricci, another TESS awardee, where we focused on synergies in agricultural and forested landscapes and we were both awarded a 9/10. Two years later, I graduated with a *cum laude* and now I am eager to start working towards the conservation of nature within environmental and development sectors.

Throughout the two years I have gained invaluable experiences and have grown significantly, both academically and personally. Therefore, I am sincerely grateful for the Tertiary Education Scholarship Scheme for supporting my education.