

PhD Researcher at the University of Leeds

- Which academic career did you imagine when you started to study this Sustainable Development Master's Program?

Not really an academic career; more a political one or perhaps at an NGO.

- Where are you currently working and what is your scope of activity?

PhD researcher at the University of Leeds working on climate change adaptation and big data.

- How is your job linked to sustainable development?

Climate change is arguably the biggest sustainability issue of our age.

- Did the study program help you getting the job, and does it help you doing the job?

Yes, I think so, in that it is a fairly broad basis from which to approach climate change. I think having international experience is also generally seen as a positive and since I was able to integrate an internship at the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat into my masters, that helped me both understand the political processes in practice and opened quite a few doors.

- How did you find your job and how long did it take you to reach your current position? (e.g. Did you do internships (unpaid or poorly paid) beforehand?)

I applied for the PhD within a few weeks of graduating, got an interview a few weeks after that, and then had to wait for half a year before I could start, which I spent working and travelling.

- Would you call your work varied and interdisciplinary?

Interdisciplinary yes, but a PhD is not super varied typically and mine is no exception.

- 3 tips you would like to pass on to future Sustainer graduates how to tackle their first job hunt?

1. It takes time. Don't expect you can just send out three applications in an afternoon and be done for the week. Even if you already have a good idea of where you want to go, you will want to spend a few days searching and then at least half a day per application to really write a good cover letter and relevant CV. Applying for 6 jobs can easily take a week in this way.
2. Relatedly, it is perfectly fine to have a job to sustain you while you are doing applications, but make sure that you do not get home so tired that you cannot send out those applications anymore.
3. Talk, talk, talk to everyone who wants to listen.

- Any other advice you would like to share?

Be in charge of your own studies. Pick modules not because they are easy, but because they are at the very least interesting and preferably also relevant to where you want to go. Maintaining international friendships takes effort. Check in on the international friends you make, even if it feels like it has been too long.

- Anne Sietsma