

December 2014

Notes from my stay at Science Po Paris as a guest PhD student

During September-October 2014, the Holiday period in Israel, I left my family, two kids and husband and with lots of guilty feelings followed my heart and dreams for an overseas international experience at Science Po Paris. Although being away from my family was difficult, I had a great experience personally, academically and professionally.

Of course, the trip promoted my PhD research and the field work I had to conduct in France and Europe. Alongside the academic and professional development, I think that personally, the experience I had was a "life changing" experience. This month affected who I am today, and of course, who I will be in the future. My perception of myself as an Israeli strengthened, together with a better understanding I got of the French and European culture, values and way of thinking. It might seem contradictory but I feel more Israeli and closer to Europe and France at the same time.

To give you a good perception of my experience, I invite you to read a list of notes I have written to myself, my friends and family during my stay in France.

I would like to thank my academic advisors, Prof, Nonna Mayer and Dr. Sharon Pardo, the French Embassy in Israel, Campus France, and of course Science Po Paris and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, for the opportunity and experience I was given.

- A huge attic, full of PhD students who stare at their computers in complete silence. How can they not talk with each other? In Israel we would have a party by now. Maybe they are not so social during work, but at least they take their studies seriously.
- A scientific study I have conducted here showed that the amount of computer screens showing facebook pages is getting higher as it gets darker outside. Maybe they do have a party, on facebook.
- The PhD colleagues took me with them to have lunch and showed me around, I will definitely get exposed to other cultures while staying here, even if not European, their favorite places are Chinese and Lebanese.
- Best thing so far (beside the food part, which is the best): the street markets you just find accidentally on the way to your destination.
- Just had my first Seminar in French, and I survived! "Feminism and Gender in Political Science in France" I even got most of it.
- And we got to the "European Culture exposure" part: Friday beer night!
- I am here for three weeks already and did not get a tiny moment to go and see the Eiffel Tower, is that my way of showing myself that I work hard enough to fit my expectations?
- 7:00 AM, morning jogging along the Seine, this is the right way to start the day!
- Paris metro system, we have a very special love-hate relationship. Where will it take us? Probably Catelet- Les Halles
- It is Yom Kipur evening, and I just realized that I am traveling on Yom Kipur, first time in my life. Although I am not religious, it fell strange in a very powerful way. Even in

real time I can say this feeling will stay with me and somehow strengthen my identity as an Israeli/ Jewish person.

- Went on an inter-European flight, all the crew members were males. On the way out I saw that one of the pilots was a female, and also the ground aircraft worker. And it goes on: all the buses I took from this flight to my destination had female drivers!
- Women and men of Paris and Brussels, please note: this "I just woke up in the morning" hair dress is not appropriate, not even in the subway, and the fact that you spent more than 40 hours in front of the mirror to design it, does not make it appropriate for the public eye.
- On the train to the north. With no borders and signs I have an alternative sign system to track where I am: it is 7 AM, dark, windy and rainy? A great day to take the babies on the bicycles to their nannies. I guess we are in the Netherlands already.
- So Israeli of me: bump into a colleague from my home university in middle of Paris. Oh well, in case of accident, we both have the same health insurance company.
- It has been 4 weeks and I did not gain any extra weight, although the food is soooo goood. #am\_i\_too\_busy\_to\_eat?

Thank you France, thank you French people. It has been a pleasure.