

Youth in France: “a rejected citizenship” by Tom Chevalier

I defended my thesis in political science in December 2015, almost a year and a half ago. My supervisor was Bruno Palier. I defended it at Sciences Po’s Center for European Studies and LIEPP, the Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies. I studied social policies and the youth in Europe. I considered a whole range of public policies: all the educational policies; so-called employment policies; social policies in general, that is, all the policies aiming to provide public assistance to young people; student aid; unemployment benefits; minimum social benefits; family policies; and housing assistance. I took into account all of these public policies and I tried to uncover the rationales guiding them. It appears that France actually has both a selective economic citizenship – that is, one with high levels of inequality and a highly selective educational system – and a familial social citizenship wherein young people are considered as children. The combination of the two yields a socioeconomic citizenship that I refer to as “rejected”. It is prevalent in Mediterranean countries and raises many issues since it creates massive inequalities among young people and does not enable a large majority of the youth to become independent. It appears that the most efficient model in terms of access to employment, in terms of poverty and in terms of confidence exists in the Nordic countries, which have what I call an “empowering” citizenship that includes both inclusive economic citizenship and low levels of inequality in skills, therefore providing easier access to the labor market and an individualization of social citizenship.

Pursuing a PhD at Sciences Po

My thesis is a very international one that draws on the international literature and English-language literature. I had the great opportunity to interact with French and international researchers versed in this literature, and to pursue international exchanges. Sciences Po enabled a one-year visit at Oxford while I was writing my thesis, and a several-month visit at the Max Planck Institute in Cologne in Germany. Going to these other countries thanks to Sciences Po also allowed me to discover other research approaches, literatures and researchers.