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Master thesis - summary

**European immigrants living in Brittany: How do they
perceive the regional identity and how does their
integration take place in this region with a strong
identity?**

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1. Introduction

Migration is at the centre of humans' history (Benmayor & Skotnes, 1994, p.5). Today, migration has become a lot easier in Europe thanks to Schengen Area, which was created in 1995 ("Schengen Area - Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission", n.d.). Migration in Brittany is a phenomenon developed recently and it is now gaining momentum (Morillon & Etiemble, 2008, p.125). The number of immigrants in comparison with the total population of the region is one of the lowest in France, but it is increasing rapidly (Economic and Social Council of Brittany, 2007, p.87, INSEE & DRJSCS, 2005, p.5 -6). The main reasons for migrating to Brittany are trade, work, shelter and interest for its landscapes (Epron & Le Coadic, 2017, 22). It is a French region with a strong identity (Kernalegenn, 2011). Brittany's cultural traditions are particularly well known by French people (Quand les sondages sont unanimes, 2019, p.44) and a tourist in Brittany can hardly escape Breton stereotypes (Le Coadic, 2012, 697).

Indeed, the strong Breton identity and the specificities of Brittany are well known in France (Quand les sondages sont unanimes, 2019, p.44) but what about the perception of European immigrants on regional identity, before and after their arrival in the region and is their integration difficult in this region with a strong identity?

The aim of this thesis is therefore to answer the research question: European immigrants living in Brittany: How do they perceive the regional identity and how does their integration take place in this region with a strong identity?

In order to answer these questions, I have conducted a qualitative research based on five semi-structured interviews. Four are interviews with European immigrants and the last one was directed with a French individual born in England. They all live now in Brittany. The French person does not correspond to my population sample defined beforehand, and I consequently chose to analyze her answers distinctly from the other four people.

My work focuses on immigrants from Europe and not from the European Union. I also focused on migration in a very specific region of Brittany, namely the western part, which historically speaks Breton, and not Gallo – Romance language historically spoken in the East – (Jones, 1998, p. 131). I studied the way European immigrants look at Brittany before leaving, their knowledge about regional identity in Brittany (identity of Brittany and Bretons' regional consciousness) and their integration in this region with a strong identity.

I chose Brittany because it has a well-known strong identity (Kernalegenn, 2011) and it is the region where I come from. My thesis was at first supposed to be about the region of Saxony in Germany since it was the area where I lived during the time I wrote it and I thought it would be better to do the interviews face to face. The region has its own dialect but it soon became clear to me that Saxon identity was not so strongly claimed. I also thought to study international immigrants at first but I instead chose to focus my study on European immigrants because I learned during my research that these population formed the highest percentage of immigrants in Brittany (Conseil économique et social de Bretagne, 2007, p.93 ; "Les immigrés en Bretagne - Insee Analyses Bretagne - 19", 2015, figure 2). Furthermore, it seemed relevant to study this population, since there is little research on European immigration in France (Lillo, 2014, p.85), let alone on immigration in Brittany.

The second part of the paper will present a literature review to define important terms, present theories and situations regarding both regional identity, migration and integration. The third part of the thesis concerns the methodology used for this qualitative research with an explanation of the choices made throughout the research process. The fourth will present the results of the interviews concerning the perception of regional identity in Brittany by the interviewees before and after their installation and their integration in the region, but also the differences between the immigrants' interviews and the one of the French born in England. Finally, the fifth part, devoted to discussion, is a critique of the methodology and an interpretation of the results thanks to a comparison with the literature quoted in the second part.

2. Literature review

2.1. Regional identity

2.1.1. Identity and regional identity

Hall and Bucholtz state that "*identity [...] is a social and cultural rather than primarily internal psychological phenomenon*" (2005, 585). The identity of a person may be perceived differently depending on the environment in which they are located (Benmayor & Skotnes, 1994, p.7).

The need to identify oneself with a community comes from the fact that humans have a need to belong. According to Maslow, this need is the first after the basic needs – which are the physiological needs and the need for protection – (Maslow, 1989). It seems that humans seek to find a balance between being like others, and not being able to stand out, and being too different, and being thus rejected (Le Coadic, 2001, p.4). Nobody has multiple identities even though we have multiple nationalities. We have one identity, mix of everything we are. (Maalouf, 1998, p.210, Benmayor & Skotnes, 1994 p.14). We can also be Breton, French and European, no need to choose (Simon, 2004, p.149).

Paasi defines regional identity as both the identity of a region, but also the regional consciousness of the people living in the region (Paasi, 2013, p.1209, Paasi, 2003). The identity of a region is formed by the cultural, natural and inhabitant characteristics of the region that are different from other regions, while the regional consciousness (or regional identity of the inhabitants) refers to the identification of inhabitants with their region (Paasi, 2002, p.140).

Raagmaa states that there are two major developments for a region: a perpetual renewal of it or its disappearance in favor of the emergence of a new region (Raagmaa, 2002, p.59-60). In *Regional Identity and Behavior*, the author Max Sugar states that when a person comes to live in a region, it is in their best interest to learn the values of the new region if they want to be accepted into the new community (Sugar, 2002, p.87 and p.89). It also demonstrates the evolution of regional identity, an idea also mentioned in *Issues of Regional Identity* (Royle, 1998, p.6).

2.1.2. Regional identity in Brittany

a. Identity of Brittany

Le Coadic asserts that the identity of Brittany is formed by both new and old aspects, but it is also a specific mixture between foreign and local aspects, and this in all areas. Bretons are seeking a balance between being too much like the French and being too different from them. While remaining French, the identity of Brittany is composed of specificities within its history, its territory, its culture, its languages and its economy (Le Coadic, 2001, p.3-5).

As of the Neolithic, the Celts, coming from Central Europe, made their arrival in Brittany, which was then called Armorica. Celtic people fought the most fervently Julius Caesar. The latter still ended up winning the peninsula that became Gallo-Roman. It was then the turn of the Bretons to arrive little by little in Armorica. These people, coming from the other side of the Channel, immigrated first as labor for the Roman Empire and then as refugees, to flee, among others, the Angles and Saxons. Newcomers integrated seamlessly into their new region and gave it its current name ("Guide de voyage Bretagne - Géo", n.d.) Brittany will maintain a certain independence, even as duchy of France, until 1532, when the region is attached to the Kingdom of France ("Guide de voyage Bretagne - Géo", n.d. ; Morillon & Etienne, 2008, p. 125). The territory of the region will be cut off from the Loire-Atlantique department – then named Loire-Inférieure – during Vichy France (Chédeville & Croix, 1996, p.116).

Brittany is located in the north-west part of France. It is a peninsula surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the Channel and the regions of Pays de la Loire and of Normandy. The Breton coasts represent a third of the French metropolitan coasts with 2730 km of coastline. The territory of the Brittany region includes four departments: Ille-et-Vilaine, Côtes d'Armor, Finistère and Morbihan ("Région_Bretagne – la Bretagne - Territoire", 2018). Brittany was historically bigger geographically than the administrative region of today, it included indeed, as mentioned before, part of the Pays de la Loire region, including the city of Nantes, where we still find the Castle of the Dukes of Brittany (Courcelle, 2003, p.144). The Breton climate is an oceanic climate, with low temperature ranges and significant rainfall - which are regular throughout the year ("Climat Bretagne: Température Bretagne, diagramme climatique pour Bretagne - Climate-Data.org", n.d.; Du-Blayo & David, 2015). Brittany enjoys a higher rate of sunshine than in the Paris

region ("Région_Bretagne – la Bretagne - Territoire", 2018). The Breton weather is often defined as changing because of its frequent winds ("Région_Bretagne – la Bretagne - Territoire", 2018; The Du-Blayo & David, 2015). Granite is an important raw material in Brittany, territory representing 5% of the French territory ("Région_Bretagne – la Bretagne - Territoire", 2018). The population of the region was about 3.3 million inhabitants in 2016. Its rate of population growth is slightly higher than the French average. This is due to the migration of French and foreigners in Brittany, its natural balance being negative ("Bilan démographique 2016 en Bretagne - Insee Analyses Bretagne", 2017).

The Breton flag is an important symbol of Brittany. It is called *Gwenn ha du*, which is the translation of white and black in Breton. It was created in the early 1920s by Morvan Marchal, who was a Breton nationalist (Courcelle, 2003, p.141; Aubert, 2014, p.174). The *Gwenn ha du* has nine horizontal black and white stripes – representing the nine historical dioceses – and ducal ermines. The flag is today very often present during events, whether sporting or political (Courcelle, 2003, p.141, Aubert, 2014, p.174). Aubert describes this flag as a ubiquitous symbol, it is indeed visible on the license plates of vehicles (Aubert, 2014, p.174). The ermine is in itself a symbol of Brittany – it is particularly visible on the coat of arms of numerous cities in the region – just as the triskell, a Celtic symbol very common in Brittany (Le Coadic, 2012, p.699 ; "L'Hermine, l'emblème de la Bretagne", n.d.).

There are many festivals where you can dance and hear Breton music, especially during *festoù-noz* (plural of *fest-noz*) and the Festival Interceltique de Lorient. Many *bagadoù* - *bagad* in singular form – sort of Breton musical ensemble (de Araujo Aguiar, 2018, p.49) – are present at the festival.

In terms of gastronomy, Brittany is known for its Breton cakes, its *crêpes* (Jones, 1998, p.139) but also fish products, cider, *kouign amann* (Prigent, 2016, p .116 and 118), *far* and *galettes* (Le Coadic, 2012, p.703).

The Breton names are also part of the Breton culture. Names like Maiwenn, Gwendal and Guran are common in the region (Héran, 2004, p.177). These first names are an external sign of Breton identity (Le Coadic, 2012, p.199).

In terms of Breton character traits, a study of 2014 showed that Bretons are more open than French people and the study believes that there would be lower xenophobia in

Brittany. (Bretagne Culture Diversité, 2014). In addition, some old attributes are still used to define the Breton character trait. Stereotypes want Breton people to be heavy drinkers and stubborn (Le Coadic, 2012).

According to Le Coadic, Breton language is the major symbol of Breton specificity. Still, the importance given to Breton language is, according to the author, disproportionate, because it is the language of only half of the region (Le Coadic, 2001, p.5). Unlike what many people think, besides French, the Breton language is not the only language spoken in Brittany. The Gallo, Romance language, is spoken mainly in the eastern part of Brittany - also called Upper Brittany - while Breton is rather spoken in the West - or Lower Brittany - (Jones, 1998, p.131). Breton is today not much spoken in Brittany, very few people know how to speak this language (TMO Régions & Région Bretagne, 2018) but we can still hear and see it in the media ("Région_Bretagne - la Bretagne - Langues de Bretagne", 2019 ; Calvez, 2012, p.647) and signposts are bilingual, French/Breton (Calvez, 2012, p.647).

Brittany is a little less affected by unemployment than France ("Région_Bretagne - la Bretagne - Économie", 2018). In 2003, the region of Brittany was the second most tourist region of France (Courcelle, 2003, p.146). Tourists, however, are mostly French (Prigent, 2016, p.113). Breton economy and especially Breton tourism benefit from the strong identity of Brittany. The exploitation of this Breton identity kit is very lucrative for some (Courcelle, 2003, p.146). Many products play on the image of Brittany and its stereotypes. Postcards showing these are numerous in the region and they practice humor through self-mockery (Le Coadic, 2012, p.697).

b. Regional consciousness of Bretons

Bretons have been perceived as savages for a long time. Before the First World War, Bretons did not really master French language and customs. During this war, many Bretons realized that they were French but despised by non-Breton people because of their shortcomings in French culture. It was thus during the trench war that the denial of the Breton identity began. After 1945, it accelerated: Bretons spoke less Breton language and tended to hide their identity. During the twentieth century, many Bretons left the countryside for the city and more freedom. As of the 1970s, the disillusionment of urban life and the desire of some Breton bourgeois and intellectuals to differentiate themselves by the singularity of their cultural assets led to a turnaround of the situation: positive

reevaluation of the Breton identity. Today, the Breton people, in a large majority, do not deny it any more (Le Coadic, 2001, p.3-4). Furthermore, Kernalegenn defines Brittany as a region with a strong identity (Kernalegenn, 2011). According to a study of people living in the four departments of Brittany and Loire-Atlantique, 73% of the respondents feel Breton (TMO Regions & Brittany Region, 2018). Also, 81% of the inhabitants of Brittany consider it as a region and not as a country or a nation (Bretagne Culture Diversité, 2014).

2.2. Migration

2.2.1. Migration in the world

Migration is a phenomenon that is at the heart of human history. The American continent, for example, has undergone unprecedented changes due to the migration of Europeans, Africans and Asians since the 15th century (Benmayor & Skotnes, 1994, p.4-5). In Europe, the Schengen Area has greatly facilitated migration between Schengen countries ("Schengen Area - Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission", n.d.). The reasons for immigrating to France seem to be almost exclusively economic, political or ideological (Eloy, Blot, Carcassonne & Landrecies, 2003, p.36), while according to Epron and Le Coadic, the reasons of foreigners to come in Brittany are mainly trade, work, refuge and interest for its landscapes (Epron & Le Coadic, 2017, p.22). An *immigré*, one of the translation possible for the English word immigrant, is defined as a person born foreign in a foreign country and living in a new country, here France. Even after getting the new nationality, one always stays an immigrant ("Mots de l'intégration - Haut Conseil à l'Intégration", n.d. et "Définition - Immigré | Insee", 2016).

2.2.2. Migration in Brittany

Brittany began to welcome long-term foreigners as of after the Second World War, with the foreign workers rebuilding the damage caused during the conflict (Morillon & Etiemble, 2008, p.125). The percentage of the immigrant population in Brittany is today one of the lowest in France (Economic and Social Council of Brittany, 2007, p.87). In 2011, only 2.9% of the Breton population was immigrant, which makes Brittany the second region in France with the lowest rate, the national average was then 8.7%. In comparison, the highest percentage of immigrants is in the Ile de France region and stands at 17.9%. Immigration in Brittany, however, is rising sharply (INSEE & DRJSCS, 2005, p.5-6).

2.3. Integration

2.3.1. Integration in the world

Integration is « *the process of becoming an accepted part of society* » (Penninx, 2005, p.141) but it is also the policy conducted to help this process ("Les mots de l'immigration - vie-publique.fr", 2016).

Four dimensions are included when we talk about the integration of immigrants. There is the structural integration (work, education or school system), the social integration (circle of relationships, friendships), the cultural integration (new knowledge, including the language of the host country) and the emotional integration (identification of the immigrant with his host country) (Esser, 2006, p.8, Kreienbrink, 2017, 136).

Kreienbrink insists that integration can take place only if immigrants are ready to be integrated and if the welcoming population is also ready to integrate the immigrants. The author emphasizes that speaking the language used in the country of arrival is essential in order to be independent on a daily basis and to find a job, but also that national values must be shared by immigrants in order to better integrate (Kreienbrink, 2017, p.136-137). De Maizière also states that a sign of successful integration may be that an immigrant identifies with his host country (De Maizière, 2016). Some administration-related facts can have negative effects on the integration of newcomers such as the uncertainty and the wait for asylum seekers (Kreienbrink, 2017, p.138).

According to Madsen and van Naerssen, the traditional image of the integration of a migrant is that this person adapts to its new place of life and slowly forgets its homeland. However, the authors believe that this image is not currently true, and that it may never have been. Indeed, with today's globalization, transnationalism (which is here the fact that migrants are more likely to maintain a sense of belonging to their home country, while sharing the same feeling with their host country) is facilitated (Madsen & van Naerssen, 2003, p.68).

The feeling of belonging to a territory generates, according to Shamai, a feeling of attachment (Shamai, 1991 as cited in Everett & Aitchison, 2008, p.156).

2.3.2. Integration in France

In France many foreigners who want to live permanently in France have to sign the republican integration contract. The signatory commits to follow training courses to

promote his or her integration into French society. Civic training is mandatory. Language training may be prescribed depending on the level in French. This contract does not affect European immigrants and there is no mention of such training courses for Europeans. ("Qu'est-ce que le contrat d'intégration républicaine (CIR)?", 2018).

In an epilinguistic survey in the French region Hauts-de-France, the authors conclude that in this region, it seemed to be important for migrants to know the regional language or at least its basics in order to properly integrate (Eloy, Blot, Carcassonne & Landrecies, 2003, p.263).

3. Methods

3.1. The interviewees

I choose to conduct four interviews in order to answer my research question. The interviewees are from different European countries and from different ages. I knew all interviewees except the one that will be indicated as A. U stands for the person from Ukraine, A for the one from Germany, R for the one from Romania, E for the one from England and X for the French person born in England. The interview with E was not firstly planned. I interviewed her after X because during the interview of X I found out she was not English as I thought but French. Her mother was French and gave her the nationality. As she had many links with Brittany and that the first language she spoke was French, I decided to analyse her interview separate from the immigrants. That is why I interviewed E afterwards.

3.2. The interviews

The interviews with U and R were conducted in French, the one with A in German and the one with E and X in English. In this way I used the mother tongues of the interviewees when I spoke it and French when not.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing me to prepare my questions but also add and change it when necessary. I changed the first question after the first interview, feeling that the question was not open enough.

List of the conducted interviews:

- interview of U on April 24, 2019 skype video call , duration 37 :23
- Interview of A on April 25, 2019 messenger video call, duration 13 :30
- Interview of X on May 10, 2019 messenger call, duration 56 :53
- Interview of E on May 12, 2019 messenger video call, duration 32 :54
- Interview of R on May 19, 2019 skype video call, duration 31 :10

3.3. Transcription and sequential analysis

The transcripts (Appendices 10-14) were made with the software FOLKER and written according to the GAT 2 convention, thanks to the Summary of the most important GAT 2 transcription convention (Gesprächsforschung, 2011, pp. 37-38, Appendix 9). I decided to write the conventions in English for all my interviews. I did the transcripts using only

the minimal transcript and the sign "-" of the basic transcript. The accents and apostrophes are used in the interviews (especially those carried out in French) as lexical and grammatical units not to disturb the reader's understanding, there are not any indications of a change of intonation of voice. Since I wanted to transcribe the interviews of U, A, E, and R almost entirely, I did the sequential analysis afterwards, which makes it very detailed, especially when the interview is not in French (that is, for A and E). For the interview of X, I did the sequential analysis first, then I transcribed the parts I was going to use for the analysis.

I did the analysis of the interviews of A, U, E and R and formed three categories and also sub-categories.

4. Results

4.1. Perception of regional identity by the interviewees before coming to Brittany

The interviews showed that the choice to come to live in Brittany is a chance. None of them had any particular knowledge of Brittany before coming to visit the region. It was because of external phenomena and not because of knowledge of the region and therefore of the image of Brittany that the interviewees had that they came to visit the area for the first time. It was as a result of these visits and because they liked Brittany's nature that some of the interviewees decided to come and live there, while others made this choice for family reasons.

4.2. Perception of regional identity in Brittany by the interviewees today

4.2.1. Perception of the identity of Brittany

The interviewees see that Brittany has kept its cultural traditions (food, activities, symbols, music and dance, Breton language, Breton personality) and has other specificities like its nature, weather and an economy, which make the most of the strong identity of the region, but that it however stays close to French culture and mentality.

4.2.2. Perception of the regional consciousness of Bretons

The interviewees are aware of the pride of Bretons to be Bretons, their attachment to their Breton culture and language and the fact that they distinguished themselves from French people. Some say also that other regions have a strong identity.

4.3. Integration of the interviewees in Brittany, region with a strong identity

A, E and R have had a successful integration on the structural, social and cultural level. E in particular is very involved in the traditional culture, being a member of a Breton dance club. They had to make some efforts to integrate at the beginning and, except two situations which seemed to show the contrary, they described Bretons as open and friendly people. It also seemed important for all of them to master French language in order to integrate, Breton was however not needed for their integration.

U is an exception here and is not yet well integrated, mainly at the structural and social level. The fact that she has never worked or studied in Brittany seemed to be one of the reasons she did not have a successful integration. Her integration process is still in progress and she had only been living there for seven months.

The emotional integration of the interviewees has shown that two interviewees feel French and Breton, one feels Breton but not French and the last one feels neither Breton nor French (but still feels like she is well integrated and she likes to say that she lives in Brittany). Through the interview of E, we observed that the look that Bretons have on her, whether she is French or not and Breton or not seemed to be important. It seems to be possible that integrate emotionally with Brittany is easier than to integrate emotionally with France, which would make integration in Brittany as a whole, easier.

4.4. Analysis of the interview of X and comparison

X has spent her holidays in Brittany since she was little, to see her family (cousins, aunts and uncles). She however did not know a lot about the regional identity in Brittany at that time. She always felt she was going to settle there and that's what she eventually did.

X has about the same opinion as the others concerning Brittany's identity but in addition, she gives a strong importance to the open-mindedness and welcoming of Bretons towards immigrants and she gives the highest importance to Breton language. She thinks regional consciousness of Bretons is low because Bretons would speak Breton if it were the case. She gives to the Breton language as much importance as French in France because for her, Brittany is a country and should acquire its independency.

Her integration was very easy, partly due to her link to Brittany. She feels European and Breton but not French.

5. Discussion

5.1. Reflexions about the methodology

The choice to do semi-structured interviews was appropriate because it allowed me to direct the interviews as I wanted in order to obtain interesting data to analyze, which I could not have done during another type of interview (structured, narrative, etc.). My questions were also open and encouraged interviewees to develop and talk about topics I had not considered. All interviews went well but not as much as I would have liked it. It was indeed only the second time I did interviews to collect data for qualitative research.

At the level of language problems, mentioned in the methodology part, I encountered small difficulties of understanding during interviews with for example the word *übereinstimmt* (Appendix 11, [00:03:54]) and *signpost* (Appendix 12, [00:15:38]) but these did not create any problems for the interview analysis. Conducting the interviews in English and German was important so that the interviewees could express themselves in their mother tongue and therefore more freely. The fact that not all interviews are in the same language makes it however possible to have small differences between my questions in French, English and German. I also allowed myself to move away from the questionnaire to be more natural in French, which I did not do in other languages.

My questions about the identity of Brittany were mainly oriented towards Breton culture, especially language and music. I could have asked more questions about the history and economy of Brittany.

If I let X ask me personal questions during our interview, it was because I found the interview interesting and that I did not want to interrupt its dynamics. I also thought that I might not be able to use the interview (X being French) and it is true that, while continuing to ask the prepared questions, the interview tended to a discussion because I answered her questions that means I left my role as an interviewer several times.

Finally, as mentioned in the methodology section, there were some technical problems during the interviews. Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to do face-to-face interviews because I did not live in France during the semester and the interviewees were in Brittany.

5.2. Comparison between the theoretical part and the analysis of the interviews

5.2.1. Perception of regional identity by the interviewees before coming to Brittany

I thought that some immigrants came to live in Brittany because they had heard about its peculiarities and its strong identity in their country of origin, but it seems that this was not the case for any of the interviewees. It is after visits, of which they had not chosen the destination at the beginning, that half chose to remain in Brittany, because they liked nature. The others did it for personal reasons. This first hypothesis is therefore not proved and I have not found any literature about the fact that Brittany's regional identity is known internationally or at the European level. It is during visits that immigrants learn about Brittany. Half speak about the fact that nature drove them to stay. We have seen that foreigners' reasons for coming to Brittany are mainly trade, work, refuge and interest for its landscapes (Epron & Le Coadic, 2017, p.27). In the case of the people interviewed during this master thesis, this would be mainly the taste for the landscapes. However, Epron and Le Coadic talk about the reasons of all foreigners migrating to Brittany, whereas the interviewees were only European. European countries have a better economic and political situation than the world average, thus, it is normal that work and refuge are less popular reasons for Europeans to migrate to Brittany.

5.2.2. Perception of regional identity in Brittany by the interviewees today

The identity of Brittany and the regional identity of the Bretons of U, A, E and R correspond to what we read in the literature section. One can see in the interviews that Bretons know how to keep some traditions while sharing the French culture. The Breton's mentality and daily life remain close to that of the French, even though Brittany has specificities just like Le Coadic mentioned it (Le Coadic, 2001, p.3-5). The interviewees evoked Breton culture with its symbols, Breton festivals with the dance, the music, the gastronomy, Breton names and personality of the Bretons. Most of the time, they are described as welcoming and open with the interviewees, which tends to confirm what the Bretagne Culture Diversité study points out when talking about a lower xenophobia rate and a bigger openness to the world in Brittany (Bretagne Culture Diversité, 2014). U, A, E and R also speak, in agreement with the literature, of the situation of Breton language in Brittany, of the Breton territory to the increasing demography as well as of Brittany's

economy. Indeed, A mentions the over-promotion of traditional Breton products. The regional identity of Brittany seems indeed to encourage the consumption of products "produced in Brittany" and products referring to the image of Brittany. The exploitation of this Breton identity kit is then probably very lucrative for some, as said Courcelle (Courcelle, 2003, p.146). As for the Breton regional consciousness, the interviewees observed the attachment and pride that many Bretons feel for their region and their culture but also the feeling of this group to distinguish themselves from other French, ideas that Jones and Le Coadic evoked (Jones, 1998, p.139-140 & Le Coadic, 2001, p.3-4).

X sees Brittany as a country and is for its independency. However, it is an exception and most of Bretons are not for independency. Only 17% of Breton consider Brittany as a country or nation (Bretagne Culture Diversité, 2014).

5.2.3. Integration of the interviewees in Brittany, region with a strong identity

The interviewees had already become French nationality when they arrived in Brittany or they were European citizens. This has undoubtedly facilitated their integration in the region, as uncertainty and waiting for a residence permit can have negative effects on integration (Kreinbrick, 2017, p.136). This may be part of the reason why less effort is required from European citizen immigrants. Indeed, the Republican integration contract applies only to immigrants coming from outside the European Union, who will be more likely to have to wait for residence permits but who are also more likely to face greater cultural differences.

It seems that these integrations have also been facilitated by the openness and the fact that Breton are nice with the interviewees. The interviews bring up almost all at least one of these two criteria. The population seems therefore inclined to integrate new and newcomers and this seems indeed important for the integration of the interviewees, as Kreienbrink said. We can see that the interviewees are ready to be integrated because they have provided some integration efforts, which is also in line with Kreinbrick's comment that immigrants should also be inclined to integrate (Kreinbrick, 2017, p.136).

Kreinbrick also wrote that it is essential to know the language of the new country in order to integrate (Kreinbrick, 2017, p. 136). All the interviewees speak French well today but none speak Breton. This can be explained by the fact that Breton is not widely spoken in Brittany and therefore it is not necessary to know the regional language in order to be

accepted by society, unlike the French region Hauts-de-France, where it is recommended to speak at least the basics of Picard (Eloy, Blot, Carcassonne & Landrecies, 2003, p.263).

The notion of transnationalism is visible for U, E and R, who feel that they are French and/or Breton, but who also feel they still belong to their country of origin. It is obvious that their identity is a mix between their home country and their country and/or host region. Thus, this confirms what the authors said about this topic in section 2.1.1. (Maalouf, 1998, p.210, Benmayor & Skotnes, 1994 p.14).

A does not identify herself as a Breton nor as a French and yet she claims to have had a successful integration, while U begins to feel Breton when we cannot describe her integration as successful at the moment. De Maizière actually said that feeling part of one's host country can be a sign of successful integration, as this feature is not mandatory (De Maizière, 2016). In view of the interviews of this master thesis, it seems that this theory can also be applied at the level of the regions because this sign is there for a majority of interviewees (E, R and X).

Finally, the interviews raise the fact that it seems to be easier to integrate in Brittany than in France.

6. Conclusion

The interviews conducted during this qualitative research about the perception of regional identity by European immigrants and their integration in this region with a strong identity, allow us to make a few hypotheses about this population as a whole.

It has indeed emerged that the immigrants questioned do not hear about Brittany and its regional identity, in their native country. On the contrary, they visited Brittany, without having specially chosen the region and come to settle there for its natural landscapes, or for family and personal reasons.

In addition, respondents tend to have a perception of the identity of Brittany and of Bretons regional consciousness that are compatible with the literature. Brittany is seen as modern and French, but keeps some traditional specificities. Bretons are very proud of their region, very attached to it and its culture and they also stand out from the French. Unexpectedly, the interview of the French born in England presents an interesting perspective on the issue of independence in Brittany.

Finally, the interviewees seem to have well integrated within this region with a strong identity. This is due to the fact that for the vast majority of respondents, Bretons are open to the world and welcoming toward them. The interviews also raise the hypothesis that it would be easier to be integrated in this part of Brittany – region with a strong identity but open – than in France.

This qualitative research cannot be used to assert generalities about the perception and situation of all European immigrants in Brittany, but proposes hypotheses for future researches. The thesis is limited to a population of European immigrants and the Breton part of the Brittany region.

It would be interesting to deepen the work on the hypotheses highlighted through the interviews, that is to say if the regional identity in Brittany has a European resonance, if the European immigrants capture this identity once living there and if Bretons are really open to the integration of European immigrants. A future field of study would be to widen the sample of interviewees to international immigrants living all over Brittany in order to observe the behavior of Bretons in terms of reception throughout the region and if it is the same when immigrants come from non-European countries.