

# **‘Brits’ in France – a Case-Study of Intra-EU migration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

**Paper presented to the Political Studies Association 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference  
University of Bath, 11-13 April 2007**

**Helen Drake, Loughborough University, and Sue Collard, Sussex University**

[h.p.drake@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:h.p.drake@lboro.ac.uk)  
[s.p.collard@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:s.p.collard@sussex.ac.uk)

## **Abstract**

*Britons are thought to own up to 600 000 houses in France, and the numbers of permanently resident Britons in France have risen sharply since the late 1980s, apparently fuelled by access to low-cost air travel, the profits and constraints of soaring UK house prices, and UK media representations of the ‘good life’ in France. At the same time, Franco-British relations are characterised by strong cultural and political stereotypes. Thus it is likely that these newest migrants and their host communities face specific challenges of social integration, calling for flexible political responses.*

*This paper places this case study of intra-EU human migration within the wider context of an enlarging EU in which member state governments and EU institutions must make strategic policy decisions regarding the social and legal frameworks for the practice of citizenship at both national and European levels. We can surmise that the interaction between such policy solutions and the everyday, ‘bottom-up’ practices of host and migrant communities is critical to the functioning of the EU’s societies and economies, and to European integration as a process of change within national societies.*

*Our paper first briefly reviews the EU-level framework for intra-EU migration in a policy domain dominated by a discourse of immigration and asylum. Second, we depict the specifics of the Franco-British relationship in relation to our questions of human mobility, with an emphasis on the apparent clash of ‘models’ (of citizenship, of socio-economic policy; of relations with the EU) that pervade cross-Channel relations at the political level. To set the scene for our case-study, we then, third, critically review the literature of British migration, expatriation and settlement in France.. Fourth comes our in-depth case study of Britain to France migration in the Pays d’Auge area of Normandy where we set out to update data collected from and about British migrants two decades ago. Finally, we conclude our study with a summary of our findings, and an indication of our future research agendas.*

## ***A People's Europe? EU Citizens at large***

European integration has always been and remains a question of bringing people and peoples closer together, and in this paper we assess the significance of the latest examples of British migration to France from this perspective. 'Brits' have been migrating to settle in France since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so we want to ascertain what difference, if any, EU provisions for citizenship and free movement make to these migrants' stories; and how, if at all, the migrants' experiences challenge our assumptions about the human face of European integration. Favell (2005) has argued that if 'European citizenship means anything, it should also be reflected *sociologically* in the choices, experiences and behavior of those we might most think of as *prototypical* European citizens' (in relation to those he calls Eurostars – 'free moving educated and professional workers who have exercised their European citizenship and free movement rights to live and work in another member state'). We set out here to see whether the Britons continuing to leave the UK for France are part of this 'everyday' picture of EU life.

The original four freedoms of the Treaty of Rome included the freedom of movement of 'persons' as workers, and in 1992, the Maastricht Treaty on European Union went so far as to create the legally-enforceable figure of the European Citizen who is steadily accruing rights, expectations and identity. These include the right to mobility within the EU, irrespective of the citizen's level of financial support; limited political rights in the shape of the right to vote and stand for election at local and EU-level elections in the member state where they are resident; and access to social rights in the form of, for

example, welfare and education provision. In these ways, Europeans are reminded of their role as actors in the integration process, above and beyond the commodification of their functions as consumers, tourists, students, pensioners or workers.

One aspect of this people's Europe is the very nature of this movement of peoples, namely migration – the mobility of people with an intent to settle or reside, either temporarily or permanently, based on a desire for change. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century EU, this is a domain where, markedly, a discourse of immigration and asylum has come to dominate policy-making and its analysis, understandably so given the international situation that the EU's leaders perceive themselves to be operating in.<sup>1</sup> This is a policy frame focused on the world outside the EU's boundaries and on movement from that world towards the EU in the form of breaches, potential and actual, of the EU's frontiers. The emphasis within this policy frame, thus, is far more on immigrants than on migrants in the form of EU nationals, and the EU has, accordingly, produced relatively little in the way of legislation covering the 'citizenship' of EU migrants.<sup>2</sup>

Yet simultaneously, what are ostensibly far more routine and mundane processes of intra-EU migration are occurring on what appears to be a fast-rising scale. Indeed, figures suggest that immigration itself – movement into the EU from the outside – is on the decline at the same time that intra-EU

---

<sup>1</sup> Thus the UK government's 2005 policy document entitled Controlling our borders: making migration work for Britain was more accurately sub-titled Five year strategy for **asylum and immigration** (our emphasis; HM Government (2005))

<sup>2</sup> Dell'Olio (2004: 134) is instructive in this respect; for example in relation to the 1985 EC guidelines on Community migration policy.

migration is rising in absolute and relative terms, although clear figures are in fact hard to come by.<sup>3</sup>

At times these intra-EU movements have generated considerable attention, particularly where so-called economic migrants are concerned. EU enlargements are typically accompanied by transitional measures including temporary restrictions on the movement of such people. In the case of the 2004 and 2007 enlargements to the East, the treaty provisions for member states to apply such restrictions were widely taken up, with in 2004 only the UK, Sweden and Ireland opening their borders without exception; although the UK, for example, still required workers from the new EU8<sup>4</sup> to register in order to work. By 2007, following a sizeable and unpredicted – and by definition unpredictable – movement of East Europeans, especially Poles, to the UK, the British government took advantage of the available provision to apply its own restrictions on the movement of migrant labour from the Bulgaria and Romania. In Britain, such migrants are seen as the future for filling ‘low skill’ labour shortages in preference to migrants from ‘other parts of the world’ (HM Government, 2005: 13). There is evidence that some of the EU15, such as Denmark, make migrants from the EU8 ‘far less welcome than those coming from EU15 member states.’ (Guiraudon, 2000 in Mallinder, 2006: 20),

---

<sup>3</sup> Jones and Rhodes in Heywood *et al* (2006): 20 claim by way of example that the total number of immigrants received by France and Germany was lower in the 1995-2000 period than in the preceding five years; and, moreover, that the numbers of intra-EU migrants as a proportion of these totals was on the rise. Thus they argue that **‘The irony of globalization is that while travel across countries has become much easier, migration has not.’** [Our emphasis.]

<sup>4</sup> Those countries from central and East Europe which joined the EU in 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia.

meaning that not all EU migrants are equal. The EU's 2004 directive<sup>5</sup> concerning intra-EU migration is intended to 'encourage Union citizens to exercise their right to move and reside freely within the Member States' and to harmonise such matters across the EU, yet the practice could be another matter, with 'stratified social integration' (Dell'Olio, 2005: 65) as a potential result. It is certainly the case that the EU collectively has done very little to encourage in a practical sense the exercise by EU migrants of their full EU citizenship rights; doubtless because these are questions of extreme sensitivity for the member states and thus any EU citizen 'recruitment drive' would be badly received in the national capitals.

A final piece of this jigsaw of intra-EU mobility and migration potentially adds yet more contradiction into the mix; namely the distinct trend across the EU to raise the bar ever higher for migrants and would-be migrants: the criteria for national citizenship but also for settlement are becoming distinctly tougher, if ambiguous. The discourses of loyalty, allegiance, skills, human and social capital, ability and willingness to integrate (for example through linguistic competence) make for policy that is open to subjective interpretation and misguided implementation. To quote HM Government itself (2005: 22): 'We now require much more from those who wish to become citizens (...). We will bring the criteria for settlement nearer to those for citizenship (...)' We raise this here because while such measures are directed at non-EU immigrants as part of national-level immigration policy, it is not inconceivable that such norms could well trickle down or be 'learned' by policy-makers over time in

---

<sup>5</sup> European Parliament and Council Directive 2004/38/EC of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l33152.htm>

relation to intra-EU migrants themselves. After all, British migrants to France, as we show below, do not necessarily constitute 'visible minorities' in the way that France's Muslims do, but they are mostly audible, since the majority of them experience linguistic difficulties in relation to French, which could well be on a par, or worse, than those experienced by migrants from outside the EU.

In both 2004 and 2007, the implications of the EU's enlargement for the migration of its own peoples for the first time attracted considerable attention from the media, much of it negative. The background music to this was the noise of the fear of outside influences, such as globalisation – or 'terror' – over which national governments are deemed to have little or no influence. In the case of the 2004 EU enlargement, the noise became a significant nuisance for the French government in its doomed battle to persuade the French population to ratify the EU's Constitutional Treaty. An unexpected figure emerged mid-way through the referendum debates; namely, the 'Polish plumber', a fictional character later held partly responsible for the sinking of the Treaty.

In the highly specific context of the then imminent liberalisation of the EU's market in services via the Bolkestein Directive, the spectre of the Polish plumber arriving from Poland to undermine French servicemen and women by his cheap labour and sub-standard workmanship was manipulated by opponents of the treaty to symbolise all that was deemed wrong with it, and in particular its provisions for economic and social policy. As Jones and Rhodes argue (2006: 20): '...though in very small numbers, these migrant workers became a rhetorical focal point for the French opposition to the European Constitution in 2005.' France, let us not forget, was amongst the large

majority of EU member states who took advantage of the right temporarily to restrict the entry of migrant labour from the central and east European EU member states in both 2004 and 2007.<sup>6</sup>

***France: the citizenship triptych (immigration, integration, identity)***

In this coincidence between its rejection of the constitutional treaty and the rising trend of the migrant EU worker, France suggests itself as an interesting case study of the significance of intra-EU migration. French politics is marked by a distinct rhetoric of citizenship which rests on a triptych of immigration, integration and identity. France has long been a country of net immigration, which for the greater part it has engineered and welcomed for reasons of economic growth and historical coherence. For at least one hundred years open borders have been contingent on very specific notions of integration and identity. Simply put, immigrants have been expected and explicitly so to integrate into French society and to assume a common identity – that of the French citizen. Mechanisms of socialisation traditionally speaking were the school and army, and the influence of the ambient culture of ‘Frenchness’ as conveyed by the symbols of the Republic – the tricolour flag, the language, the daily commitment to freedom, equality and fraternity.

French immigration policy has noticeably hardened in recent years, culminating in 2006 in high-profile deportations of the children of illegal

---

<sup>6</sup> In its 2005 report, the French Department for Population and Migrations reported that it was using the 5-year transitional period from 1 May 2004 to work on its relations with the EU8. At the March 2006 ‘+2’ decision point, the French fell into the category of those EU15 member states planning gradually to lift the transitional measures over the following 3-year period in specific relation to sectors suffering labour shortages; the same measures were applied in the case of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.

immigrants in France (and to an equally notable civic backlash), and in a shift of discourse towards the notion of selective immigration on the grounds of the immigrants' usefulness, a development representative of the drift we noted above towards contractual types of criteria for would-be residents.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover policy failures litter the real-life existence of France's immigrants.

Running parallel to immigration policy *per se* is the case of the European citizen on French soil. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty's provision for the creation of the European citizen was a significant step towards the 'Europeanisation' of French citizenship and identity which could not fail but to muddy the waters of the immigration-integration-identity formula for French citizenship. EU nationals, as seen above, and with very few restrictions, can move, settle and reside as they wish in the now 26 other member states. Once there, they are free to exercise the provisions of their EU citizenship should they so wish, including the right to vote (at local and EP elections) and to stand in these elections; and also to work, seek health care and other welfare benefits, and so on. Key dimensions of citizenship are thus divorced from nationality, and for some opponents of the nearly-defeated 1992 Maastricht Treaty in France, this was a threat to national sovereignty. By the time of the 2005 referendum (a clear defeat for the President and government), debates regarding citizenship had shifted conclusively to questions of everyday life, notably employment, the fear of unemployment and behind that the fear of globalisation, Anglo-Saxon style, as President Chirac saw it.

---

<sup>7</sup> The law of 24 July 2006 introduced the notion of *l'immigration choisie* as the preferred alternative to *l'immigration subie* – immigration over which the state has no control. Héran sees the 2006 law as an exercise in restoring state sovereignty in the matter of the quality as well as quantity of its immigrants (2007: 5). The law concerns skilled workers, foreign students, family reunification, and citizenship criteria. A good overview can be found in Murphy (2006).

The focus in 2005 on the intra-EU migrant as a symbol of the changes associated with 'Europe' thus brought a hitherto ill-defined dimension of French citizenship into the limelight. To date there has been relatively little discussion, political or otherwise of the costs and benefits of intra-EU migration to the citizenship mix in France, and this paper aims to address this gap with its specific emphasis on the Franco-British dimension of this situation.

### ***The Franco-British Relationship on the Move?***

One of the more benign novelties of the 2007 French presidential campaign was the brief appearance of presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy in London in late January 2007. This was his first mass rally, and the first of his campaign visits overseas. All charm and bonhomie, his mission was apparently to coax his fellow Frenchmen home, or at least to invite them to think about it. Favell identifies London as a 'Eurocity', home to hundreds and thousands of 'Eurostars', including from France (2005).<sup>8</sup> Sarkozy's charm offensive was very specific in character; under his 'the value of work' banner, he concerned himself with the opportunity cost for the French economy of the brain and train-drain, the exodus of dynamic young hopefuls to London, courtesy of Eurostar. Sarkozy urged these fellow French men and women to return: 'to all those who have gone abroad and are unhappy about the situation in France and having left it, I want to say "Come back!". Come back and

---

<sup>8</sup> The Guardian 30/03/07, p. 14 reported between 200,000 and 300,000 French people living in Britain: 'With an average age of 29 most are part of a brain drain from France's universities and many work in the City.' Yet if anecdotal and observational evidence is anything to go by, considerable numbers of them are also in the sort of McJobs apparently reviled in France.

you will see that with a little energy, courage and will our old country can again do great things.' These expatriates were also, of course, potential voters and supporters of his campaign for the presidency.

Even allowing for the hype of this particular media stunt, Sarkozy's initiative is instructive for our study of migration between Britain and France. It alludes in relatively explicit terms to the commonplace notion that France and Britain are polar opposites in relation to so-called 'models' of capitalism. The terminology of the so-called 'Anglo-Saxon' free market economy is commonplace in French political discourse and while it overstates the extent of the contrast between the French and the UK economies, it functions as useful shorthand for this contrast, and can be spun positively – as did Sarkozy in the above case – as well as negatively in the political game. In so far as migrants and expatriates collectively hold up a mirror to the society they have left, Sarkozy's address to the London-based French functioned for the candidate as a platform for his mild critique of his homeland in comparison to the dynamism of the London scene. We will be interested below to see whether this aspect of the Franco-British relationship has any bearing on migrants' everyday lives.

Some observers have commented upon this aspect of the Franco-British relationship, mostly in jest (cf. Stephen Clarke's novels where the fictional Paul West (the author, thinly-disguised) discovers through the workplace, Paris café and street life, romance and love just how different the French 'models' can be); others more seriously (the Cercle d'Outre Manche London-based business club); yet others somewhere in

between (Poirier, 2006). *Entente cordiale*, friend, foe, 'sweet enemy' (Tombs, 2006): terms abound in attempts to capture the essence of a centuries' old great power rivalry based on mutual need and repulsion, nuances (Mayne 2007) and 'false friends'.

Amongst all of the European Union's member states, thus, Britain and France are particularly rich in image and stereotype, as are the relations between them. Perceptions of the other have been formed by hundreds of years of history, which is still taught in subtly different versions on either side of the Channel. Diplomatic and political ties have established peace and friendship between the two countries, and fruitful commercial links have been fostered by the opportunities of European union.

Tombs (2006: 654) notes that 'residence, not tourism, is the real novelty' of the 'unprecedented cross-Channel migration' that took place in the 1990s. In the case of Britain to France migration it is not, Tombs reminds us, the first time that rural France had been 'the recipient of a unique devotion going well beyond considerations of price, convenience and weather', a trend he associates with the nineteenth century (656). The difference in the 1990s migratory experience was the rush to purchase property, where previous occupants had rented, and that 'modern British settlers, unlike their forerunners, yearned to be accepted by the locals.' (657) We explore precisely this aspect of the 'new' Britons in France in our case study below.

This is indeed fertile terrain for observation and research of a systematic kind. Interestingly, the subject of the 'Brits abroad', i.e. the question of emigration from a British perspective (the reverse image of Sarko's

London French workers) has in the mid-2000s suggested itself as a focus public policy research. The interest here is in the opportunity cost of the exodus of Brits to migrate elsewhere in the world. The study published in 2006 by the UK's Institute for Public Policy Research (Sriskandarajah and Drew, 2006) noted the rising numbers of Brits leaving the UK every year and qualified the 'scale of emigration from the UK in recent years' as nothing short of 'staggering' (viii). Spain and Australia are identified as the first and second most highly sought after destinations by the British expatriates, with France in eighth position (but first amongst the non-English speaking countries, with the exception of Spain).

Drawing on the findings of the IPPR study, we can expect a 'small but significant minority' of Britons to find the experience of migration very challenging, particularly since 'Often these Britons come up against linguistic and cultural barriers that they have not prepared for, and have, in response, clustered together away from the host society.' (ix) Moreover, the work previously carried out on the case of British migrants to Spain (which is still the top destination for emigration from the UK) (Crawford, 2007; King, 2002; O'Reilly, 2002) has given us memorable typologies of migrants – from the 'little Britons' who seek in their 'sunset lives' (King, 2002) explicitly to colonise rather than integrate; to the multilingual, multi-skilled younger Britons whose skills in turn are tempting multinational corporations to follow (Crawford, 2007).

Given that Franco-British relations are characterised by the strong political and cultural stereotypes outlined above, and given the political

capital that can and is made of such differences, we might expect British migrants to France to face just such specific challenges of social integration, calling moreover for flexible political responses on the part of the host society. In what follows we narrow down the existing research on contemporary Britain-France migration and on this basis allow ourselves to contemplate a number of working hypotheses regarding the integration or otherwise of the Brits abroad *chez* our closest neighbour. This sets the scene for the case study that follows, of the British population living in the *Pays d’Auge* in Normandy for almost two decades, where we relate these scenarios to our specific interest in the practice – or not – of EU citizenship.

### ***Keeping up with the migrants: a time-line of discovery***

In keeping with existing research seeking to dissect the lives of ‘Brits’ in France, our approach here has been to generate a sequence of three analytical steps that follow the contours of the migratory experience itself. The steps in reality are not discrete, but overlap in varying combinations and intensity; nevertheless they allow us to develop a structured approach to our subject.

First come the migrants’ initial motivations and intentions, which include what Gervais-Aguer-Aguer (2004; 2006) calls, in the case of the would-be (as opposed to actual) migrants, the ‘migratory imagination’ – the idealisation of the host country; this is a category which focuses on the agency of the **migrant** and the **determinants** (Gervais-Aguer-Aguer 2004, 2006) of their decision-making, which we categorise as ‘push’ or ‘pull’ factors. Second, we

find analysis of **migration** itself as an act, asking what form migration takes, and what **integration** processes occur, according to the type of migration concerned; do models, types or patterns of migration emerge, as a function of who is moving, why, where and how? Third, and closely related to the second category are what we might term the **effects** (Gervais-Aguer 2004, 2006) of the migrants/migration mix on host community; this notion allows us in particular to investigate the responses and reactions of the host communities at a variety of levels of interaction: social, economic, cultural and political, including those responsible for public policy. This step of the analysis takes us back most precisely to our over-arching questions of the practice and experience of citizenship on what we might assume to be a European – intra-EU - scale.

### **Motivations and intentions: from would-be to actual migrants**

Much of the research on the 'Brits' in France has focused on the motivations and intentions of the migrants themselves, in the form of decisions taken at the level of the individual (or individual household), determined by many factors relating to the identity of the migrant him/herself, such as age, sex, profession and so on. These studies express caution regarding the numbers involved: counting migrants is notoriously difficult, given the lack of sanctions and incentives for non-registration (a comment itself on the realities of EU citizenship), and the by definition transitory existence of migration, particularly when it fails and the migrants return.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Gervais-Aguer-Aguer (2006), citing the provisional results of the 2004 census, gives the number of permanently resident Britons in France as around 130,000, with a new increase in flows since 1999. Labie (2004 2) offers figures for 1990 which put the total number of British residents in France at 0.10% of the total population, including those Britons having taken

More concrete, paradoxically, are the findings regarding motivations, intentions and expectations. Gervais-Aguer (2004; 2007) demonstrates that in the case of both would-be and actual migrants, the pull of the new lifestyle, imagined or real, dominates all other factors behind the decision to migrate; these migrants are what Crawford (2007), in the Spanish example, dubs the 'lifestyle exiles.' The decision to migrate is by and large driven by 'hedonic' considerations relating to the anticipated quality of life in France; these considerations may relate more or less specifically to expectations regarding 'amenities like the climate, the physical and social environment and any public goods and services at agents' disposition locally (Gervais-Aguer, 2006: 8); or to 'a site's attractiveness' in terms of the quality and quantity of work on offer. Here the distinction between rural and the urban lives is important. The clear majority of the research on Britons in France relates to the strong pull of the French rural life specifically conceived of as an escape from the urban congestion of Britain; Barou and Prado (1995) offer a particularly rich analysis of the comparative meanings and significance of 'the rural' in France and the UK as the foundation for their study of 'The English in our Countryside'; estimated by Gervais-Aguer to constitute 62.5% of the Brits in the *Aquitaine* (still the top destination for British migrants to France), and by Labie (2004: 5) to account for up to 10% of the population of certain rural *cantons* in Poitou-Charentes. Similarly, Benson (2007) offers insights into how British migrants to the *Lot* in France conceive of the 'authenticity' of their new, rural lives in comparison to what they had before.

---

French nationality. By 1999, this figure had risen moderately to 0.13%, but in absolute terms the numbers had increased by 50.8%, from 25,440 to 75,546 British people. The preferred destinations of these additional UK migrants had, moreover, continued to concentrate in the south west of France, but also showed an interest in settling in Brittany and Normandy.

Indeed, an analysis of the push factors behind Britons' decisions to migrate are particularly instructive in respect of notions of the rural life. In so far as migrants collectively hold up a mirror to the society they have left behind, Labie (2004), in her study of the British in the *Poitou-Charentes* region of France tells us that the quality of life – or lack thereof – is what drove most of her respondents away from the UK, especially the congested South East, above and beyond family, financial, political or economic reasons. These lifestyle contrasts, real or imagined, will of course be familiar to those of us au fait with UK media representations of the 'good life' in France, the media being a second, significant push factor (Labie, 2004; Barou & Prado, 1995: 30).

We can link the push of the broadcast media back to the so-called Mayle effect – the fall out on Provence from the publication in 1989 of Peter Mayle's idealised 'Year in Provence' which spawned both actual migration and an accompanying industry of services designed to facilitate the migrant at every step of the migration process; thus, the movement of Brits to France has been accompanied by the movement, virtual and real, of solicitors, tax advisors, property managers, estate agents; plus more general magazines and other offerings. These are developments certainly fuelled and facilitated by the Internet and telecommunications technologies; in contrast, the incentive of low-cost flights came surprisingly low down the list of priorities for Gervais-Aguer' sample of would-be migrants (2006), but were mentioned by Labie's subjects as one reason for the attraction of the *Poitou Charentes* region of France.

Push and pull forces can repel as well as attract, and Labie discerned in 2004 that rising property prices in the regions favoured by the British, such as the Dordogne were beginning to dispel Britons to neighbouring areas; nevertheless at the same time, concentrations of British movers were occurring around existing clusters of 'Brits'. This points to a particular aspect of the British settlers in France, namely the self-perpetuating dimension of the phenomenon, particularly in relation to the difficulties of social integration.

### **Models of integration: migration as an act of (EU) citizenship?**

If the most significant aspect of (im)migration is integration, then these are findings which should cast strong light on the successes and failures, potential and real, of the migrant experience. At this point we bear in mind Gervais-Aguer' critique of the term 'integration' itself, which she deems to bear colonialist connotations of forced movement, where the migrant has little choice; and where the changes wrought by the migration will be of the highest order of magnitude. 'Integration' could thus for a researcher be an undesirable source of normative bias; nevertheless, it seems valid to enquire into the extent to which the British incorporate and involve themselves in the lives of their host countries. Indeed, the research to date places considerable emphasis on this aspect of the experience.

In the case of skilled urban movers, for example, Scott (2006) develops precisely the notion of the increasingly significant 'human face' of the migration experience, which a more narrowly-based economic-level analysis would miss; and Benson's interest (2007) in the quest for the 'authentic' life accentuates the importance for the migrants of the *Lot* of their distinction from

mere tourists.<sup>10</sup> Tindall (2004: 277) raises the possibility that settlement, as opposed to tourism may well despoil the rural idyll sought by the migrant in the first place. This is in strong contrast to the Spanish case where Crawford (2007) observes how many British migrants to the Mediterranean coast of Spain prefer to see themselves as 'upmarket tourists' as opposed to residents. We can assume that if most Britons are in France for the authentic, rural experience, this tourist mentality is less likely to travel across the Pyrenées; this is an question for future research.

Integration, however we define it, figures amongst the motivations, in some cases unconscious, of important numbers of UK migrants. The 20 or so semi-structured interviews that substantiated her 2004 study led Gervais-Aguer to refine her analysis and postulate the existence of three types of UK migrant defined by their level of integration, as they perceived it. The **integrated** Brits were usually – unsurprisingly – Franco-British couples who worked in a French environment; others were **poorly-integrated** (as in **peu** – not very), having given up or never sought to integrate, but satisfied with their new lives; finally those who were **non-integrated** but who wished to be so; they were formed a minority of frustrated cases who generally would at some point return to Britain on a strong note of failure.

Labie (2004) focuses her investigation into levels of integration in the *Poitou Charentes* region by means of very specific criteria, to which we return in our case study below. She counted those migrants who had registered on

---

<sup>10</sup> It is the case that British settlement in France, certainly the 'wave' of the late 1980s, tends to begin with tourism, on the basis of which second homes are purchased, which subsequently may lead to to plans for more permanent residence. This certainly was the pattern for the Dordogne region of France. (Gervais-Aguer, 2004; Barou & Prado, 1995).

electoral lists (a rise of 11% in absolute terms between 1999 and 2001, when 12,428 British residents registered in the whole of France); and the number of residency permits (*cartes de séjour*) issued, a measure which mainly demonstrated to her the drift of the later British arrivals to the north of the region.<sup>11</sup>

If we concur with Labie and Favell that real – authentic? – integration lies beyond the ballot box every much as in the precious political right to vote, then Labie (2004: 6) offers interesting observations: *viz*, a sore lack of formal opportunities for the interaction of the French and the British where French is the dominant language; her research indicating that language was a most significant factor in the integration process. In particular, she attributed the colonising, ‘little Briton’ phenomenon associated with the Spanish example to the self-perpetuating and defeatist cycle by which British migrants acknowledge that they are poor at French, that they can get by without it, and that they can therefore live amongst themselves. In some cases this can lead to a sort of internal market amongst the British, ranging from education to building work. Fralon (2006) bases his supposedly humorous notion of the ‘invasion’ of the British on precisely this aspect of the British migrants’ lives. Sriskandarajah and Drew (2006: 44), based on their excellent study of the Brits abroad, come to the conclusion that the ‘major barrier to integration in another country seems to be language’; their and others’ studies (eg. as cited by Crawford, 2007) also make the ominous observation that on this score,

---

<sup>11</sup> But we note here that the *carte de séjour* criterion is of severely limited use as a measure of intra-EU migrant numbers, simply because the practice of requesting and demanding it has largely fallen into disuse.

British migrants are particularly poorly-equipped in comparison to other EU migrants.

Labie's recommendations regarding the need for greater contact between the French and the British could, however, be taken to imply that integration can be orchestrated or organised by a third party (other than the migrants) for the sake, perhaps, of social cohesion or, more mundanely, for reasons of public revenue and expenditure (Crawford 2007). To what extent do we find French public authorities responding deliberately to British migration, and what might be their reasons for doing so, in the context of the highly-charged questions of citizenship explored above?

### **Hosting migrants: a critique of EU citizenship**

Integration is not a linear process, and does not proceed at an equal pace at all times; like other cultural shocks, migrants will experience ups, downs and plateaus in their attempts to live their new lives. There may well be incentives on the part of the host authorities, however, to intervene in the process for a variety of reasons. Crawford (2007) gives an excellent example from the Spanish case of how it was in the local authority's interest, in Estapona, to encourage British residents to register in order to facilitate the transfer of sufficient federal tax euros to enable adequate refuse collection. The ability to accurately gauge the size and mix of the populations of a given district would seem to be a likely factor driving intervention. Fralon (2006) refers to the role of French public authorities in encouraging low cost airlines to the south-west of France in order to accelerate the economic benefits that the British migrants would and did bring to the region; and in *le Monde* (2005) we read of

how the council one of the villages in the Dordogne where 'Brits' are most heavily concentrated appointed a bilingual 'Brit' to assist and innovate in the integration process.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, Barou and Prado (1995: 147) note how French locals generally do not expect or even want British residents to integrate, but see their efforts positively when they do.

The EU overall strives for 'social cohesion', and in the French case it is certainly the declared aim of government to achieve such harmony in specific respect to what are nowadays called the more 'visible minorities', meaning those whose ethnic origins make them look different from their French counterparts. By this criteria it is likely that British migrants will be invisible, but very unlikely that they will be inaudible due to the language barrier raised by Labie (2004) above.

We saw earlier how in the broader context of immigration policy, the firm trend in France – and elsewhere (Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, the UK) is towards a contractual notion of citizenship whereby the would-be citizen – or settler, even, as we also saw – is obligated to demonstrate the ability to integrate into national life, and this includes a grasp of the host language.

While such measures are undoubtedly targeted, again, at the 'visible minorities' whose cultural and ethnic backgrounds are taken to be notably different from that of the French, this is a set of developments which raise questions in relation to all migrants, including the British. It is not unreasonable to question whether social harmony in a small rural canton, for example, is as dependent on the integration of the sizeable British minority as is the peace in a Paris suburb with a big multi-ethnic population. Our

---

<sup>12</sup> This position, we are told, was part-financed by the EU's Leader Plus regional fund.



Vimoutiers and Livarot. The area is reputed for its cider-making, its cheese (Livarot, Pont l'Evêque, Camembert), its studs, and its gently rolling countryside studded with distinctive timber-framed houses and cider apple trees. This is the stuff of picture post-cards.



Barou's selection of this area was informed partly by its proximity to the South of England, and by the fact that there was no history of settlement by the British here, unlike in the Dordogne for example; the development of tourism was only recent, the local population was ageing, mainly engaged in dairy farming, more recently forced to diversify, struggling to survive, and over past decades had suffered depopulation, with little exposure to foreigners except of the Parisian kind with second homes. The response to new residents was thus deemed to be of particular interest..

Barou presents the British arrivals as being on the one hand potential saviours of the countryside, by the restoration of the old buildings allowed to fall into ruin by their French owners, by the boost to the coffers of the impoverished communes through the arrival of new local tax payers, and by the potential economic revitalisation of the area through new custom for local traders and artisans. On the other hand, they could also be seen as harbingers of the demise of the peasants' world, the old order that the local

population was no longer able to maintain, the precursor of an invasion and the opening of France's borders facilitated by the EU (restrictions on milk quotas etc), largely resisted in this area in the referendum vote on the Maastricht Treaty. The earlier influx of Parisian 'second homers' and *néo-ruraux* had in Barou's experience revealed a certain prejudice against outsiders, often seen as arrogant and scornful of the local population. How then would the British be received? But first, what had brought them here?

### **The Migrants**

The sample taken by Barou involved fifteen couples, almost all of whom had settled here during the period 1989 -1991: this type of migration clearly does not attract single people. The literature reviewed above all emphasised what Prado (2000) has called 'le rêve de village'. He describes the yearning and nostalgia for times past, and presents a picture of urban exiles, trying to recreate in the unspoilt French countryside the rural idyll that eludes them back home where urbanisation has won the day. Barou also describes the British in Normandy as being drawn by what they see as the survival of a rural world and local authenticity (space, local produce, local *fêtes* etc).

Our findings contradict this picture somewhat. A majority of respondents were in fact already living in rural areas in the UK, and only one, somewhat atypical couple, would really have fitted this typology. The main reasons for coming to France were the fact that low property and land prices made it possible to envisage setting up the sort of enterprise that was prohibitively expensive in Britain. For two couples this meant being able to buy a farm (one for sheep, the other for cider apples): both these couples would have stayed in England

had they been able to afford to do so. A third farming couple were moved into the area as tenants of a *Farmer's Weekly* operation, and quite astonishingly, had been given no choice in the decision, and only a few weeks to prepare to leave their previous farm tenancy in Scotland.<sup>14</sup> One other couple came because the wife wanted to set up a dog-grooming business and could not afford the property prices in her home town on the South Coast. Another saw the opportunity of cheap property prices to buy a run-down farm in need of restoration, in order to create a business running *gîtes* and B & B.

None of them had any previous connections to the area and bought their property through chance more than design, often rather quickly and in some cases impulsively.<sup>15</sup> Of those that did not have a specific business idea in mind, but came either for retirement, or for personal reasons, all said that land and property prices had been the main factor in making their decision.. For a significant number, personal circumstances (including divorce, redundancy & retirement) initiated the desire to move, but other destinations had also been considered: Australia, Canada, Greece. This was also true of the only couple who came to this area because of friends who had recently settled here.

Thus if we look at possible 'push' factors, we can see that high property and land prices in England (nearly all the respondents are English and were living in England) was the most significant. Only one person cited 'the escape from Thatcher's Britain' as relevant to them, and none spoke of the need to escape

---

<sup>14</sup> The question of British farmers moving to France around this time is one which merits further investigation: the *Farmer's Weekly* enterprise is a fascinating story which deserves a case study all of its own.

<sup>15</sup> The role of French estate agents advertising in British outlets was clearly instrumental here, and should be borne in mind in the context of discussions about the British unsolicited 'invasion' of France.

the urban jungle and the rat-race. Nor is the push of the broadcast media pertinent for this group of migrants, although based on anecdotal, we expect this to have been a significant push factor for migrants leaving the UK from around 2000 onwards, in which case we will be able to talk of distinct 'waves' of migration to this area, with this second wave of British migrants arriving post 2000 apparently strongly influenced by the media hype referred to above, the self-help literature, and the cheap flight syndrome (although this did not have such a strong effect in Normandy, due to proximity and ferry access).

The proximity of France and the comparatively low prices of land and property there thus acted as a strong 'pull' factor for the late-1980s migrants, and for a significant majority of respondents in the sample surveyed here, the move to France enabled property and land acquisition to become a reality for the first time. In the Pays d'Auge, it was possible to find a handsome timber-framed manor house with outbuildings in a state of disrepair for the price of a small house in the South of England. The aesthetics of the actual houses bought was clearly a strong factor for some of those interviewed, but by no means for all: many bought the first property they were taken to by the agent. Indeed, the psychology of such transactions is another subject that would benefit from further analysis: given that in the UK no house purchase goes ahead without a survey, it is quite extraordinary that a significant number of buyers in France were happy to go ahead and sign contracts with no such security. One interviewee in the sample bought without seeing the inside of the house, and consequently had to persuade the *notaire* to allow him to sign the contract. Another signed for the purchase of a shop when over on a day trip, having not looked at any others. Another was not aware of the cost of legal fees, and

realised at the final purchase point that a further 20% of the house price was required for this purpose.<sup>16</sup>



'(France) for Sale – Ring England' (The Dordogne, 2000, © Helen Drake)

## Integration – Language

Language was seen as a central problem for all of the sample: only three of the interviewees had any practical command of French before moving, the rest said their French was either minimal or 'zero'.<sup>17</sup> None of them however was prepared to let this problem act as an obstacle to their ambition, and all of

---

<sup>16</sup> Whilst this is not the place to pursue this enquiry, it is relevant to speculate here that, notwithstanding the exhilarating sense of 'getting a bargain' that put into a different perspective the usual respect for caution and procedure, one other element of explanation might be the inability to speak French at the time of purchase: those who were able to communicate all looked around before making their purchase choices. At a time before the current wealth of information available to prospective house buyers in France had started to appear, it would seem that the purchase constituted a sort of leap of faith into a new adventure, and only one of the respondents sought any formal advice about the legal or fiscal implications of their decision. We can only speculate at this stage as to how the French receiving population (estate agents, *notaires*, vendors) must have reacted to this influx of 'easy' money. The question of the reception of British migrants by the local population will be the subject of a further study.

<sup>17</sup> This is consistent with Sriskandarajah & Drew's conclusion referred to above that the 'major barrier to integration in another country seems to be the language'.

them took very seriously the need to learn French, though they went about it in very diverse ways: only one couple took formal lessons, the rest simply 'muddled through', for a combination of reasons: time, cost, and availability. All of them had accepted the fact that language was the key to integration, and unlike more recent migrants in the area, they all, apart from one couple, were determined to be accepted by local people and integrate with them, thus unconsciously abiding by the rules of French model of integration rather than importing the norms of the British multi-cultural model, scorned by the French as 'communitarian', which seems to characterise the more recent wave of British migration to this area. In telling their stories, it was clear that all the respondents took for granted the idea that integration was the appropriate model of behaviour, and indeed they measured their own degree of 'success' by what they perceived as their own level of integration.

### **Integration – Economic Transactions**

The most important factor governing integration was employment: we saw above how a significant majority had moved to France in order to set up businesses of various kinds, so this was critical to their ultimate survival. Within this category we can broadly distinguish two main types of activity: farming and services of various types. The **farming** group is particularly interesting in ways which go beyond the scope of this paper<sup>18</sup>, but it is also significant because according to Barou's conclusions (1995; 2000), these people were the most successfully integrated because they have implicitly

---

<sup>18</sup> The Common Agricultural Policy has been a constant bone of contention between British and French farmers. The experience of these British farmers migrating to France is therefore instructive, particularly in the context of the Farmer's Weekly enterprise, and will be the subject of a further specific study in intra-EU migration.

entered into the world of those who constitute the back-bone of the local communities, and have taken on their own concerns regarding the future of farming and the countryside. The couple moved in by *Farmer's Weekly* were the second couple in the sample to arrive, in 1985, and their story attracted considerable interest locally; consequently, they were already quite well integrated by the time of Barou's study, when compared to others who had arrived much more recently.

Theirs is a fascinating and inspiring story of intra-EU migration at its most positive, though in some ways atypical: as tenant farmers for *Farmer's Weekly*, they had not themselves initiated the move (or even been consulted), and were literally parachuted into the area with three young children and a dog, in the middle of a school term, with only O Level French. Now, twenty-two years on, with *Farmer's Weekly* having withdrawn from the venture in 1987, they are tenants in their own right, he has become a *conseiller municipal*, she teaches English, and the three children have all gone very successfully through the French education system.<sup>19</sup>

The other couple who set up a cider farm have also settled and integrated well, as have their six children, and although they would have initially preferred to stay in the UK if they had been able to finance their venture there, they now see their life in France as infinitely better than what it would have been in the UK, and would not contemplate returning. For the two other couples in this category of Barou's sample, farming was only intended as a part-time activity, and their experience of integration is only partly reflected by this part of their activity.

---

<sup>19</sup> Another specific follow-up study will focus on the children of this wave of migration.

A second category under the heading of employment brings together various activities defined as the provision of **services**: renting of gîtes and B & B for (mainly British) tourists, the teaching of English in local schools or to adults (a growing market in previous years but one which offers no security and relatively low rates of pay), a dog-grooming salon, and various trades people: three carpenters and one general builder specialising in the restoration of old properties for the British property owners. Although some of these activities depended to some degree on British 'consumers' (tourists and second-home owners), it is not appropriate in this case to speak of the kind of 'internal market' that has developed elsewhere and possibly in this area amongst the more recent arrivals.

The initial stages of setting up the legal basis for these activities was described by all those doing it independently as 'horrendous', 'a nightmare'. All of the respondents clearly wanted to do everything 'by the book', and were frustrated by the seemingly arcane demands of French bureaucracy, though a few were able to enlist the help of an agent to take care of the paperwork for them. It is perhaps worth remembering here and reflecting upon Barou's reference to the entrepreneurial mentality of the British migrants in reaction to the reputed *immobilisme* of the '*univers paysan*'... In those days there was little ready-made literature in English to guide these 'pioneers', and they all in some ways had to learn the hard way, with consequences which were more or less penalising in the long-term according to individual circumstances.

It is clear that with better language skills some of these situations could have been avoided, but the complexity of French tax laws and legislation for small businesses and artisans still represents a challenge to new arrivals even

when well prepared and informed, which the vast majority of our first wave settlers were not. A critical factor in whether or not a venture turned out to be economically viable or not seems to have been the ownership of capital in some form or other, usually produced by the difference between the sale of a property in the UK and the purchase of the property in France. All the businesses ventured into involved considerable investment of both capital and labour which would take several years to start producing income and it was therefore essential to have capital to live off. Those few who did not, fared distinctly less well.

Another significant factor was the condition of the property purchased: those who bought properties that were habitable, were able to spend more time on income-generating activities, whereas those who bought properties in a bad state of disrepair had to juggle this with time and money spent on restoration work. It is probably fair to say that all of these people underestimated both the amount of time this would involve and the cost of materials.

The experience of the economic activity of the interviewees was significant in two main ways: first, in relation to the level of integration achieved, and second, in determining whether or not the new life was financially viable. In terms of integration, a successful employment situation could bring about dramatically increased language skills, with a particular emphasis at least initially on the specific occupational vocabularies. Contact with French people in the workplace was also a vital ingredient in facilitating social relations. But although the level of integration was not always closely related to the degree of success of the employment situation, the latter nevertheless had a critical impact on the economic sustainability of the lives of those concerned:

although all but one of them are, perhaps surprisingly, still there, some are living in what the French describe as a 'situation de précarité', with no obvious way out of their predicaments. The youngest of the couples interviewed, one of the first to move there in 1985, have recently decided to sell their property and return to the UK, where they will be living with family, since there is little prospect of being able to re-enter the British property market. One other, quite atypical couple who have lived essentially off capital since their arrival in 1978, describe themselves as 'economic refugees' for this very reason. Because all the people surveyed were in couples, they have managed to diversify their sources of income, giving them greater chances of economic survival: none of the activities described above, including farming, generates sufficient income on its own. Even those few who have recently found salaried employment are on low wages that are the norm in the current economic climate dogged by unemployment.

Thus all of our sample have a lifestyle that is at best relatively modest, especially when they compare themselves to family and friends back in the UK, or to their own previous living standards. However, they mainly own properties whose equivalents in the UK would be prohibitively expensive. Besides, they almost unanimously claim not to envy the lifestyle that goes with this higher level of income that has become commonplace in the UK, indeed most expressed strong feelings of rejection of the way of life that has evolved in the UK since their departure, citing avarice, job culture, the cost of living, traffic levels and the state of health care as reasons for not wanting to return.

## Integration – Social Life

If we move on to social interactions as a measure of integration, the most striking aspect to emerge from the interviewees was their attitude: all but one of the couples were determined to integrate socially, and adopted various different strategies to this end. Those who had children were able to take advantage of the contact with other parents and teachers, and by inviting other children to their houses got to speak more French with them. Some emphasised the importance of accepting every opportunity offered by the local commune to participate in events such as the local fête, and even attending all the funerals, and quite a few were consequently invited to join the *comité de fêtes*. Others found no such activities in their local commune, and thus found it harder to establish relations in their immediate vicinity. Some ended up running local activities such as a running club, a dog-training club, and a choir; one retired couple felt greatly honoured in being asked to join the local *Confrerie de Fromages de Livarot*, and the husband was made the President of the local branch of *Anciens Combattants*.

Many however felt that due to pressures of work and sometimes also home restoration, they had not had sufficient time to devote to social life. Others felt that there were insufficient activities available of interest to them, and those from urban origins bemoaned the fact that it was so far to the nearest cinema or theatre: here were the timid signs of acknowledgement of the myth of the rural idyll referred to by Barou. Likewise, with respect to the French media as a window onto French life and culture, most had started off only watching French TV, but the poor quality of programmes, and the increasing availability of access to British TV were given as reasons for almost exclusively in most

cases preferring the latter. Many depend heavily on Radio 4 to entertain and keep them in touch with news, not only in the UK but also in France: indeed few were well informed about French current affairs..

In terms of friendships established, nearly all the respondents said they had many French friends, and often commented on how, in this rural area, the family unit is the focal point of social gatherings. For some, particularly the younger ones, this had its limits in terms of making genuine friendships, and there was a sense in which it was hard for them to find people of like minds, particularly when they had come from a previous urban life. All were keen to point out that although they knew all of the other English people who had arrived around the same time as them, they did not specifically seek the company of their fellow countrymen and women.

In this context, most of them also compared themselves to the more recent British arrivals, who they claimed were uninterested in getting to know French people, and who had gravitated into what was called a 'clique', organising local activities in English such as regular 'curry nights' and a quiz night in a local café referred to as the 'pub'. There was clearly much resentment towards these new incomers, perceived as scorning the French, and displaying all the features of today's Britain that deterred them from contemplating returning to the UK. This confirms the reality of a second wave of British migrants to the area post 2000, which was, it seems, in no small way engineered by a particular individual who, in order to make her own move economically sustainable, set up an agency in one of the local towns to service the British population of both residents and second home owners. Having negotiated commission arrangements with all the local estate-agents

and *notaires*, she seems to have pretty much monopolised the market by her aggressive marketing strategy, and started a club which proposed to its subscribers to take care of all their problems such as building work, translation and legal work, phone and electricity problems etc. Having accumulated several of her own properties in the process, it seems she was then denounced to the tax office and her agency was closed down because she was found to be operating somewhat illegally. This story echoes other more recent reports across France of illegal operations of British would-be builders and decorators, well documented on the Internet and sometimes illustrated in the French press. The 'first wavers' feel they are let down by this sort of attitude, which can give the British in general a bad name, exacerbated by their refusal to learn French, thereby contributing to the identification of a very 'audible' minority.

Indeed, in all of these social interactions, the desire to improve language skills was certainly initially a determining factor, and as those skills improved, there was less stringent self-inflicted compulsion to pursue these strategies. One of the most commonly recounted ways in which respondents were forced into learning French was through the various bureaucratic hurdles through which they had to jump: the acquisition of a *carte de séjour* and a French driving licence (now abandoned for EU citizens), sorting out medical insurance, child allowance, pension transfers etc. Thus the general 'immersion' method seems to have had positive results for many in terms of communicative ability, and the fact that few are able to write correct French is not experienced by them as a hindrance.

## **Integration – Politics**

All our 'Brits' were aware of their rights to vote in EU and municipal elections, but only about half had actually exercised this right. A series of quite simple questions regarding the political system and election campaign revealed relatively poor knowledge and understanding, even in the cases of two people who in 2001 had become *conseillers municipaux*. Those who had distinctly better knowledge were the few that still watch French TV. Thus it emerged that there was no strong correlation between interest in national politics and active local participation. This was justified by those concerned (rather defensively) on the grounds that they were less concerned because they could not vote at national level. For some, this was an important issue and they felt that they should be able to vote nationally in the country of their fiscal residence, rather than according to nationality. While most did not seem concerned, one couple felt very strongly that they had been disenfranchised, since British citizens can only retain a postal vote for 15 years, and they did not feel that the right to vote in European and local elections was sufficient compensation.

### ***Conclusions: New Britons in a new France?***

If Favell is right, and Europeans are becoming more mobile but still reluctant to settle ('one immediately thinks of Erasmus students, retirement migrants in Spain, cross-border commuting or shopping' (1994: 1), then contemporary British migration to France will be a self-limiting phenomenon, as earlier waves of North Europeans migrating to France have been. It may be circumscribed by the fact that, in Favell's words, 'For these prototypical

European citizens, the formal legal and political barriers might be down, but **other cultural and practical constraints seem to discourage wholesale relocation**' (2004: 1; our emphasis). Furthermore, as we note, the impact and longevity of the phenomenon will also depend on the choices that the current migrants' children will make between mobility and migration.

Nevertheless, our study has found significant evidence of 'Brits' settling in France in permanent homes, raising families, investing in long-term business undertakings, and integrating to the best of their ability on social, cultural, political and economic levels. Our case-study portrayed a refreshingly positive example of how French and British citizens co-exist and even integrate harmoniously, despite a wider context that could be seen as militating against this. Furthermore, not only are the British emigrating to France, they are emigrating full stop.

Our study has in fact taken us – and consciously so – in a number of different directions, each of which suggest further avenues of interesting research into the question of human migration within the EU. Taking our findings above in reverse order we have learned, first, about why the British move to France, how many of them there are, and why they do what they do when they get there; this is our interest in what others describe as a 'sociology' of European citizenship, with an emphasis on both agency – the individual migrant – and structure – migration as a factor of social change. We saw from the IPPR (2007) study that scores of thousands of 'Brits' are moving away from Britain every year and that France is only one of the top ten destinations. Of those that go to France, what seems to count most is the brand 'France' as it appears to them in their 'migratory imagination' (Gervais-Aguer, 2006). Barou

and Prado (1995) narrow down this 'representation' of France to the opportunities that it offers for a different relationship with the countryside; these Brits are France's latest 'neo-rurals' demonstrating that there is life on the land after the decline of traditional agricultural life. This perhaps could in turn lead to the remaking of new forms of rural communities where what matters most is not nationality but attitudes to work, the land, and one's neighbour.

Our closer look at the Normandy example suggests that migrants' imaginations are not quite as they seem. Prosaic considerations such as property prices and business opportunities coexist with any nostalgic or fanciful notions of a return to an imagined, idyllic past, especially where mobility (tourism; second homes) becomes migration (settlement). British migrants may well be seeking escape routes from the urban density of the UK, but only in so far as this impacts on their capacity to buy property and exercise their profession; this perhaps the realm of social psychology which might be better equipped to excavate unconscious reasoning and urges experienced by individual migrants.

We should also remember that we expect the latest arrivals from Britain to France, dating from the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to differ from their predecessors as they in turn did from their forerunners. The latest 'wave' of Britons in France appear to be younger still, more professionally active, and to retain tighter links with the UK, even to the point of drawing their salary in the UK and effectively commuting to their home in France – a new model of

'downsizing', perhaps.<sup>20</sup> These perhaps are the 'Brits' of Channel Four's *Place in the Sun* generation; those featured in the BBC's 2007 horror stories of the British *Selling Homes Abroad*. Alternatively, the newest arrivals in the south-west of France, say, may be seeking the Spanish experience – the 'med life crisis'-fuelled dream (Crawford, 2007) of a 'place in the sun'.

Yet again, they might turn out to resemble more closely Favell's 'Eurostars' than rural dreamers or sun-seekers: those EU citizens plying their skills in dynamic cities outside their country of residence in the manner of the French in London's city jobs. Perhaps the notional conflict between Anglo-Saxon and French models of economic management is being stealthily emptied of meaning by migrants' experiences and contributions on the ground? Barou and Prado (1995) and our own case study both demonstrated how in most cases of British to France migration, a key criterion of successful integration was the migrants' grasp of professional ethics shared with their host – expertise, competence, hard graft and so on, alongside a willingness to participate in the life and rituals of the host community, however ham-fistedly.

Whatever the motivation, we can expect both the new 'wave' and the next generation of 'old' British migrants in France to tell us something about the phenomenon of intra-EU migration *per se*, particularly if we intensify our search for meaning, patterns and factors of success and extend our survey to include more if not all EU member states. Our findings so far have suggested that social cohesion and harmony is well within the reach of the new 'Franco-British' *communes* of rural France; it certainly is amongst the *jeunes cadres*

---

<sup>20</sup> We thank Christian Lequesne for this observation.

*dynamiques* of London town; and we have seen that local authorities can and do get enthusiastically involved.

Is this because France and the UK have, despite it all, a special relationship? Are the criteria for integration more complex when, say, the migrant in question is less invisible? This where the broader context of national immigration policy, citizenship requirements and residency rules come into play. We found contrasting evidence of how host communities have received the Brits of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century: on the one hand, tacit assumptions that they are 'integrate-able'; on the other, expectations that there are significant cultural and social gaps between the two national mentalities that preclude all but the most superficial levels of integration. How will the distinction between non-EU and EU migrants play out across the EU27 if mobility accelerates, as East-West movements to date suggests it will?

Further comparative work therefore is needed on the migrant – the individual – and migration – the collective impact and significance for sending and host societies; these are the aspects that will offer a mirror to the 'human face' of the EU migrant; yet 'it is rarely asked whether real individuals, with everyday family lives and human relationships, could actually live out the lives predicted for them' (Favell, 2004: 9); nor whether the EU integration process, filtered through the nation state, is equipped or eligible to do so.

### ***References and further reading***

- Barou, J., Prado, P. (1995) Les Anglais dans nos campagnes (l'Harmattan).  
Benson, M. (2007) ' « There's more to life » : why the British migrate to rural France', paper delivered at ASA conference 2007 (London Metropolitan University).  
Crawford, L. (2007) 'Med-Life Crisis', FT magazine, March 24/25: 19-23.

- Dell'Olio, F. (2005) The Europeanization of Citizenship: Between the Ideology of Nationality, Immigration and European Identity (Ashgate)
- Direction de la population et des migrations (2007) Rapport annuel (synthèse) de la DPM. Immigration et présence étrangère en France en 2005 (12 January) [www.social.gouv.fr](http://www.social.gouv.fr)
- Gervais-Aguer, M. – M. (2004) 'Les fondements de l'attractivité territoriale résidentielle, les enseignements d'une recherche portant sur les résidents britanniques en Aquitaine', Cahiers du GRES, 25-2004. Available at <http://econpapers.repec.org/paper/grswpegrs/>
- Gervais-Aguer, M. – M (2006) 'Prospective analysis: residential choice and territorial attractiveness.' Cahiers du GRES 30-2006. Available in English at <http://econpapers.repec.org/paper/grswpegrs/> and in French at [http://beagle.u-bordeaux4.fr/portailgres/article.php3?id\\_article=1323](http://beagle.u-bordeaux4.fr/portailgres/article.php3?id_article=1323)
- Favell, A. (2004), 'Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Moving Professionals and the Promise of European Integration', European Studies Newsletter (Council for European Studies), vol. VI, nr.3-4, Jan. 2004.
- Favell, A. (2005) 'European Citizenship in Three Eurocities', EUSA, Austin, Texas 2005.
- Favell, A. (2005) 'Review Article. Europe's Identity Problem', West European Politics, vol 28, no. 5: 1109-1116.
- Favell, A. (1998), Philosophies of Integration. Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain (Macmillan).
- Fralon, J. – A. (2006) Au secours, les Anglais nous envahissent! (Editions Michalon)
- Héran, F. (2007) Le Temps des Immigrés (Seuil).
- HM Government (2005) Controlling our borders : Making migration work for Britain. Five Year Strategy for asylum and immigration (Home Office Cm6472, February).
- Horne, A. (2004) Friend or Foe? An Anglo-Saxon History of France (Weidenfeld & Nicolson).
- Jones, E. and M. Rhodes (2006) in P. Heywood *et al*, Developments in European Politics (Palgrave).
- Joppke, C. (2007) 'Beyond National Models: Civic Integration Policies for Immigrants in Western Europe', West European Politics vol. 30, No. 1, 1-22.
- Keiger, J. (2001) France and the World since 1870 (Arnold).
- King, R. (2000) Sunset Lives: British Retirement Migration to the Mediterranean (Berg).
- King, T. 'France profonde' (2006) Prospect January: 35.
- Labie, M. (2004) 'L'installation de Britanniques en Poitou-Charentes', Synthèse basée sur le mémoire de DEA Immigratin britannique en Poitou-Charentes, IAAT (Institut Atlantique d'Aménagement des Territoires)
- Le Monde (23/6/05) 'Nos Villages à l'heure anglaise'.
- Mayne, R. (2006) Nuances (Franco-British Council, London).
- Mayne, R. *et al* (eds.), 2004, Cross-Channel Currents. 100 years of the Entente cordiale (Routledge, in association with the Franco-British Council).

- Mallinder, L. (2006), 'Spain bucks trend to lead by example....and accident', European Voice, 9-15 March: 20.
- Mulé, R. Galassi, (2003) 'The Shape of Politics to Come ? Intra-European and F. Migration in a Rural French Community', French Politics, vol. 1, no. 3, 279-303.
- Murphy, K. (2006) France's New Law: Control Immigration Flows, Court the Highly Skilled (mPi, Migration Policy Institute) available at [http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Backgrounder2\\_France.php](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Backgrounder2_France.php) [accessed 23/3/07].
- O'Reilly, K. (2002) 'Britain in Europe/the British in Spain: Exploring Britain's Changing Relationship to the Other through the Attitudes of its Emigrants', Nations and Nationalism Vol. 8, no. 2: 179-93.
- Poirier, A. C. (2006) Le modèle anglais. Une illusion française (Alvik Editions)
- Prado, P. (2000) 'Le rêve de village anglais en France', Campagnes de tous nos désirs (Mission Ethnologie de la France), Cahier 16 : 153-170.
- Sriskandarajah, D., C. Drew, (2006) Brits Abroad. Mapping the Scale and Nature of British Emigration (IPPR).
- Rostek, K. and G. Davies (2006) 'The Impact of Union citizenship on national citizenship policies', European Integration online papers (EioP), vol. 10, no. 5 [ <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2006-005a.htm> ]
- Scott, S. (2006) 'The Social Morphology of Skilled Migration: The Case of the British Middle Class in Paris' Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies Vol. 32, no. 7: 1105-29.
- Scott, S. (forthcoming) "The Everyday Spaces of Migrant Social Capital: Examining and Explaining the Changing Place of Community amongst the British Middle-Classes of Paris (France), Geoforum.
- Smith, A. (2006) 'The Government of the European Union and a Changing France' in P. Culpepper *et al* (eds.) Changing France. The Politics that Markets Make (Palgrave).
- Thomas, E. (2006) 'Immigration and Changing Definitions of National Citizenship in France, Germany and Britain', French Politics 4: 237-265.
- Tindall, G. (2004), 'Tourist into Resident' in R. Mayne *et al* (eds.), Cross-Channel Currents. 100 years of the Entente cordiale (Routledge, in association with the Franco-British Council), pp. 275-77.
- Tombs, R., I. Tombs (2006) That Sweet Enemy. The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present (William Heinemann)