Making sense of Brexit: French skilled workers negotiating their migration, integration, and identification in the UK

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THESIS ABSTRACT

After years of European expansion, the UK decided in 2016 to end its membership of the European Union (EU), now commonly known as Brexit. The present thesis contributes to the growing body of literature investigating the impacts of Brexit on EU citizens, with a specific focus on migration, integration, and identification. More specifically, the thesis builds on the idea that those three processes are interrelated, impacting one another, but are also ongoing, thus promoting the dynamic nature of migrating, integrating, and identifying. Furthermore, the thesis highlights how each process can be studied from a micro or macro perspective but that a connection between the two levels of analysis is rare. The thesis' main objectives are thus (1) to explore individual migrants' perceptions of the macro context in which migration, integration, and identification are negotiated, and (2) to investigate how a personal, migrant, idiosyncratic understanding of this context influences migrants' migration, integration, and identification. To reach these two objectives, the thesis evolves around an overarching research question, namely, how do migrants' perceptions of macro changes influence their migration, integration, and identification?

To help answer this research question, the thesis adopts a processual analytical lens based on the concept of sensemaking. Sensemaking serves as a suitable tool to study the macro context from an individual perspective, and by building on the process-thinking literature, emphasis is put on the ongoing nature of sensemaking. The thesis therefore extends the application of sensemaking to migration studies to investigate the processes of migrating, integrating, and identifying in times of macro changes, from an individual perspective.

The study relies on a relativist, intersubjective approach. The strategy adopted to conduct the project is a qualitative one, built around a case study of semi-structured interviews, participant observation and conversations. The analysis is a thematic one to embrace the project's strong processual approach and to reflect how phenomena are constantly and concomitantly ongoing.

The study focuses on French skilled migrant workers residing in the UK in the time of Brexit. By investigating, on the one hand, North-West intra-EU migration of a privileged group, the focus is on individuals' migratory journey beyond economic enhancement. Brexit, on the other hand, offers a variety of macro changes directly influencing EU migrants' migration, integration, and identification. The findings first reveal how participants tried to make sense of Brexit through three main practices: (i) by becoming knowledgeable about Brexit through traditional and social media; (ii) through an emotional evaluation of the event; and (iii) through the changes they experienced in their daily lives, particularly around the economy, social relationships, and the ongoing uncertainty. Secondly, the findings expose the way participants tried to reconstruct their identities, both in terms of personal and legal identities. The data clearly show a reassertion of participants' Frenchness at the expense of the British citizenship. The data also present the uncertainty that Brexit raised in relation to belonging, the migrant/expatriate dichotomy, whiteness, as well as the practicalities of applying for the new settlement scheme. Third and last, the findings show participants' migration and integration strategies in the context of Brexit, exposing a spectrum going from a deeper integration into UK society to a complete separation from it, and everything in between.

From the data, the thesis presents individual mobility as a multifaceted process, composed of migrating, integrating, and identifying, processes that are dynamic in themselves and which continuously influence each other. The thesis also shows how migrating, integrating, and identifying are each impacted by the way changes happening at the macro level have been personally experienced and thus calls for bringing perception of macro contexts into individual mobility. Overall, the thesis presents a novel conceptualisation of mobility that is multifaceted, dynamic, and links individual experiences to personal understanding of macro context. This novel conceptualisation of migratory mobility entails linking three dynamic processes together and spanning levels of analysis through a migrant, idiosyncratic lens, and thus provides a more holistic understanding of the experience of migration.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Summer 2016

I am a MSc student working on my dissertation. I am interested in knowing how having done at least part of one's education abroad influences the decision to work abroad. I am preparing my interview questions. Outside, people and the news talk about the upcoming referendum: whether the UK population wish to still be a member of the EU. I do not worry too much. I've never met anyone who would vote to leave. Everyone knows all the benefits of the EU, the Erasmus Programme, and the Freedom of Movement, to cite only the ones I have directly experienced. I am not allowed to vote in any case. I live in the UK, but I am French: I do not have British citizenship. That may be the one right we (Europeans) do not share with the local population: voting. That's okay. I have lived in Germany before and that had never been a problem for me. Here will be the same. So, I keep working on my interview guide: why have you decided to work abroad after your overseas education, rather than returning home for your career? Yeah, that's a good one.

June 23rd

My British-Italian flatmate returns home from voting, 'for Remain of course'. He is the only one in our six-person international flat to be allowed to vote. That would be the only thing we say about the referendum on that day. Brexit won't happen. We have no TV or radio in any case, so we don't even hear about the early estimations. We are young, the weather is beautiful outside, and we get on with our lives.

June 24th

The flat is quiet. I wake up with a headache. Only my British-Italian flatmate is up. We are always the ones getting up early in this flat. His room is opposite mine, and his door is open, as usual. He hears me opening mine and asks, "have you seen?". I don't know yet what he is talking about, but his face is serious. He then adds how Leave currently has the majority. The counting is not finished yet, but it is pretty much over. The UK population has apparently

decided to vote to leave the EU. I cry. Why am I crying? It is not even my country and I never really imagined myself spending my whole life here. I had imagined I would keep moving. That, I can still do. So why am I crying? I think, before, I had the choice to leave the UK (and eventually come back). Now, I am forced out.

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This thesis is the fruit of my MSc dissertation. I ended up interviewing people after the Brexit referendum and while the relationship between overseas education and life as a migrant worker was still the core of my MSc project, Brexit and its future implications made their own place within the dissertation. A month after the results of the referendum, when interviewing migrant workers, European participants were already questioning their financial situation, but also their own selves and identities, as European citizens living in a country that had voted to leave the EU. More broadly though, "the rise of authoritarian leaders and regimes has brought about new concerns about freedom of movement for certain populations and people" (Özkazanç-Pan, 2021, p. 5) and in this context, scholars have been stressing how gaining a better "understanding of how people respond to and negotiate hostile environment is a key concern for contemporary societies and social science research" (Gawlewicz and Sotkasiira, 2020, p. 7). So, while this work is based on the experience of French migrant workers in the UK facing Brexit, it is hoped that the discussions and contributions of the thesis will also talk to scholars investigating other migrant populations, facing other macro changes and social unrest.

This thesis is therefore both about and for those migrant workers whose lives have been challenged by the results of the Brexit referendum. It is about French skilled migrant workers who had decided to live and work in the UK, for many a decision made after having done part of their education overseas, and whose lives are now being disturbed because of the results of that referendum. More specifically, it is about the way they make sense of their migration to the UK and their integration into this country, and how their experiences of migrating and integrating impact their identities. Ultimately, it is about their perception of the macro changes following that referendum and disrupting this (seemingly) natural flow of migrating, integrating, and identifying.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This thesis joins the body of literature that has been burgeoning since the Brexit referendum on the implications of such results for the lives of European migrants residing in the UK. Interestingly enough, these projects have often been conducted by European researchers residing in the UK themselves. While some of them have compared different groups of European citizens following the Brexit referendum (Lulle *et al.*, 2019; Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018), and others have researched how certain aspects of European migrants' lives would be changed (D'Angelo and Kofman, 2018; Kilkey, 2017; Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz, 2020), this thesis joins a third group of researchers who have researched single nationalities but focused on specific facets of their lives in the UK (Brahic and Lallement, 2020; Kilkey and Ryan, 2020; Zontini and Però, 2019).

Conceptually, the thesis defines migrants as people who have relocated their principal residence abroad. This definition of the term does not make any distinction between legal and illegal, voluntary and forced, or even permanent and temporary migration (King, 2002). Instead, the thesis embraces a definition that is broad enough to encompass a wide array of understandings surrounding migration and all the different forms it can take. Furthermore, the thesis considers migration as a dynamic process, often defined as fluid or liquid, with migratory trajectories evolving over time and space (Bauman, 2000; Kilkey and Ryan, 2020; Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). From there, the thesis builds upon three bodies of literature to reflect the experience of one's mobility: migration, integration, and identification. The migration literature first focuses on the act of migrating itself, i.e., moving from one country to another[1]. This body of literature highlights the reasons for individuals to migrate and the direction of their move. In particular, attention is paid to financial enhancement and career development, especially through the push/pull model, the neo-classical and the brain-drain approaches (Brettell and Hollifield, 2015; de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020; Kurekova, 2011). At the meso level, the diaspora and network theories explain migration and its perpetuation based on relationships and communities (Evergeti and Zontini, 2006; Ryan, Erel and D'Angelo, 2015; Zontini, 2004b). Finally, within the expatriate

[1] This thesis focuses on international migration, rather than national or internal migration.

literature, attention is paid to career development but also to personal satisfaction and realisation as reasons to move overseas (Dickmann *et al.*, 2008; Doherty, Dickmann and Mills, 2011).

The integration literature on the other hand complements the migration literature. It indeed exposes the challenges and opportunities once in the host country. At the individual level, this body of literature addresses the notion of home, embedding and the transnational lifestyle often adopted by migrants (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, 2016; Ryan and Mulholland, 2015; Vertovec, 2009, 2002; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004; Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019). It emphasises how integration is both a material and relational ongoing matter, with migrants' attachment to place and people evolving over time. At the institutional level, the literature highlights a clear opposition between assimilationist and multiculturalist views on the management of diversity (Alba and Nee, 2003b, 2003a; Rodríguez-García, 2010; Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010). While it is not the purpose of this thesis to advocate one over the other, it emphasises how in the last few decades a certain number of multicultural countries (including the UK) have become neo-assimilationist, i.e., promoting national unity and common values over cultural differences (Cheong *et al.*, 2007; Però, 2013; Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010).

Finally, identification is an overarching concept which is relevant in both the migration and integration literature. Building on Jenkins (2014), the thesis considers that identification is multidimensional, built from both commonalities and differences. It relies on a dynamism happening between individuals' internal selves and their external social selves. The thesis therefore encourages consideration for the plurality and dynamic nature of identification. Related to migration and integration, identification plays a central role. At the institutional level, identities are used to define communities of values, politics of belonging and politics of fear (Anderson, 2013; Wodak, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2006). At the individual level, citizenships enable legal residency but also further freedom of mobility, while other identity traits, like ethnicity, religion, or gender help (or prevent) certain forms of migration and various ways of integrating (Anderson, 2013; Evergeti and Zontini, 2006; Zontini, 2004a). All in all, the thesis points out that who one is in the (global) society defines the type of migration and integration one will experience.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTION

However, within those three bodies of literature, two main limitations were identified. The first one relates to the fact that those three bodies of literature represent and explain different aspects of the mobility experience but in a detached manner, with only few studies considering migration, integration, and identification altogether. The thesis therefore points out how a holistic approach to the experience of migration as a whole is missing. It is considered a limitation because individuals do not go through migration, integration, and identification one at a time. Instead, those aspects of their mobility often overlap. The thesis therefore calls for an approach that would consider migration, integration, and identification in relation to one another. The second limitation highlighted from those bodies of literature is how each concept can be studied at the micro or macro level but how a connection between the two is currently rare. The thesis raises the point of how individuals (especially migrants) do evolve within the limits imposed by macro forces. Focusing on individuals' perspectives independently from the broader macro context gives insight into only part of their story and experience. The thesis therefore calls for an approach that would consider individual migrants' idiosyncratic perspectives[2] of their own migration experience *in relation to* the macro context they face.

In the end, these two limitations highlighted from the literature became the thesis' aims. To address those issues and reach those aims, the thesis is guided by an overarching research question: *How do migrants' perceptions of macro changes influence their migration, integration, and identification?*

Consequently, the thesis aims at offering a holistic understanding of individual mobility through the combination of three concepts (migration, integration, and identification), and in relation to macro forces. More specifically, the literature highlighted how each process is dynamic in nature: migration is defined as fluid, integration as embedding and identity as always ongoing. Furthermore, by offering an approach that combines

[2] Migrant idiosyncratic perspective refers here to the idea that migrants are not a homogenous group, but that instead their heterogeneity is based on their own personal, individual (idiosyncratic) past and present experiences. As such, their experience of migrating is idiosyncratic to their own personal and individual history, rather than being shared.

migration, integration, and identification together, the thesis also considers that the concepts are related to, and impact, one another. Therefore, the thesis aims at offering an interpretation of individual mobility that is dynamic. This specific aspect of the thesis is addressed through the processual analytical lens and methodology.

1.4 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

By considering that migration, integration, and identification are each ongoing and related to one another, the thesis needed to adopt an approach that would reflect this dynamism happening at the individual level, without forgetting to link it to the macro context.

First, the thesis considers the concept of sensemaking to investigate individual migrants' perspective of their own migration experience in relation to macro changes. The thesis builds on the work of Weick (1995) and beyond (Bartunek *et al.*, 2006; Brown, Stacey and Nandhakumar, 2008; Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013; Mills, 2003) to examine how individual migrants make sense of the macro changes they face. Sensemaking is indeed of particular relevance as it enables the examination of how individuals not only give meanings to but furthermore enact on particular events that have interrupted their ongoing activities. Weick (1995) clearly states how an accurate perception of events is not necessary for it to have an influencing and enactive role. Sensemaking is therefore adopted in this thesis to gain a highly personal and context-specific version of an event as it embraces individuals' perspective of the macro context. Furthermore, sensemaking has been conceptualised as ongoing (Weick, 1995) and Hernes and Maitlis (2011b, p. 27) suggest how sensemaking and process are intertwined, with meaning being located in the process itself. By building on the process literature and especially the work of Langley (Cloutier and Langley, 2020; Langley, 2007), the thesis suggests that sensemaking can be used as a processual lens in order to study phenomena as ongoing. For these reasons, the thesis adopts the concept of sensemaking also for its dynamic characteristic.

In the end, sensemaking is adopted in this project as a processual analytical framework to (1) investigate how migrants' perception of macro changes influence their migration, integration, and identification and (2) reflect a processual approach to migration, integration, and identification.

Secondly, the thesis adopts methodological tools that reflect both the ongoing dynamism of the processes as well as the connection between individuals' experiences of migration and their perception of macro forces. This thesis is grounded in an approach to reality and knowledge that is constructivist/relativist (Guba, 1990) and intersubjective (Cunliffe, 2016, 2011). On that basis, the research strategy is built around a case study that is qualitative but furthermore inductive as well as strong processual. The methods adopted to collect data are individual, open-ended interviews combined with participants' observations/conversations. Interviews were of great significance when researching migrants' past experiences of migration, integration, and identification, while participant observation was relevant to consider the three concepts under the current context. The analysis of the data has been a thematic one, following the Gioia methodology and rigor (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). A thematic analysis had been adopted in order to put an emphasis on the simultaneity of the concepts, rather than on the sequence of them, and so to reflect the strong processual approach of the project. The chapter finishes on some reflexive points regarding my role as an insider researcher as well as a researcher/translator.

1.5 THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 focuses on the three bodies of literature on which this thesis is based, namely migration, integration and identification. As expressed before, this chapter highlights how each concept can be studied from a micro or macro perspective, and how each process is dynamic in nature. Chapter 3 presents the concept of sensemaking through the original work of Weick (1995) and highlights two additional aspects not particularly developed by the author, namely the cognitive and emotional aspects of the concept. The chapter then builds on the process-thinking literature (Hernes and Maitlis, 2011b; Langley, 2007) to suggest how sensemaking can be used as a processual analytical framework. The chapter finishes by presenting studies that have considered the concept of sensemaking in relation to migration and/or integration. Chapter 4 addresses the philosophical paradigms in which the thesis is grounded, and the methods adopted to both collect the data, namely a case study built from interviews and participant observation, and analyse it, namely through themes. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the context and the findings of this thesis. Chapter 5 starts by giving an overview of the context, namely intra-EU migration, integration and identification, and the unique case of Brexit. Then the chapter

presents data related to participants trying to make sense of Brexit. Chapter 6 focuses on the findings related to (re)constructing one's identities in the Brexit context while Chapter 7 addresses the migration and integration decisions made by participants following the referendum. Chapter 8 discusses the thesis findings of the three empirical chapters taken together in relation to the existing literature and presents a novel conceptualisation of migratory human mobility that is multifaceted, dynamic, and related to the macro context. Finally, Chapter 9 concludes this thesis and highlights the limitations of the project and areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF MIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND IDENTIFICATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the introductory chapter, this current chapter focuses on reviewing three bodies of literature related to the migration experience, namely migration, integration, and identification. It starts by focusing on migration (section 2.2) and defines the term 'migrant' as any person who has relocated their principal residence abroad. Building on that definition, the section presents two complementary perspectives on migration, namely a sociological approach and an organisational approach. Together, they present various reasons for individuals to relocate abroad and different directions of flow. Then the chapter focuses on integration (section 2.3), which complements the migration literature by highlighting the challenges and opportunities in the host country. In particular, the literature focuses on the notions of home, embedding and transnationalism at the individual level, and highlights the assimilationist/multiculturalist debate happening at the institutional level. Finally, the chapter considers the centrality of identification (section 2.4) in both the migration and integration experience by highlighting how identities are used to define communities of values, politics of belonging and politics of fear at the institutional level, while at the individual level, citizenship(s), ethnicity and/or gender give access to different migratory and integration experiences. Finally, section 2.5 summarises those three bodies of literature, highlights two main limitations that the thesis intends to address, and exposes the thesis' overarching research question, namely to investigate how migrants' perceptions of macro changes influence their migration, integration, and identification.

Before reviewing the various theories and approaches explaining migration, it should be highlighted at this point that in recent years, the term 'human mobility' has often been used as a synonym for migration, and while migration is indeed a form of human mobility, human mobility encompasses other forms of movement that are not necessarily migratory movements (de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020). For de Haas and his colleagues, human mobility indeed refers to all types of human movement and as such different subgroups can

be identified: migratory and non-migratory human mobility. Migratory mobility involves a change in one's principal residence, while non-migratory mobility does not involve such a change. Accordingly, migratory mobility equals migration, while non-migratory mobility refers to other movements such as commuting, tourism or business travel (de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020).

In this thesis however, the focus is on migratory mobility only (since the thesis focuses on international migration only, defined by the change of one's principal residence in the subsequent section). Furthermore, and to avoid confusion, migration is used to refer to the movement that implies a change of principal residence (e.g., reasons to move, direction of movement), while mobility is here used to refer to the overall and larger experience of migrating (including moving, but also migrants' transnational lifestyle, their notion of home and so on, as will be emphasised throughout the thesis). The subsequent section will thus focus on the movement of people, i.e., on migration, while mobility will be the topic of a later discussion (Chapter 8).

2.2. MIGRATION

2.2.1 DEFINITION, DICHOTOMIES, AND FLUIDITY

While the term 'migrant' is being used daily in media coverage, political speeches and more, there are often discrepancies between legal, diplomatic, and academic understandings about what is really understood by the term, who it should englobe and why (Anderson, 2013). The United Nations (UN) for example recognises that there is no universally accepted definition for 'migrant', but considers the term "as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence" (United Nations, no date), highlighting how migration can be national or international. This current section will therefore review a variety of literature in order to offer a definition of the term 'migrant' that shall be used for the rest of this study.

Building on the UN's definition of the term 'migrant', the first and probably most evident criterion to define migration is the notion of movement. While this definition encompasses both national and international forms of migration, this study is specifically interested in international migration and will therefore, from this point on, refer to migrant and migration in their international form, except if otherwise stated. International migration

is thus understood as a movement over a national border, namely from one's country of origin (also referred to as home country) to a country of destination (also referred to as host country). A home country is defined as the country that provided one's passport, i.e., a country of one's citizenship, while a host country can be any other country (McNulty and Brewster, 2017). While the notion of home country being associated with one's citizenship can be problematic, as some people would conceivably define home as a place of non-citizenship, this point will be addressed later on in this review, namely in section 2.3 on integration. However, a certain form of methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, 2002) is certainly recognised in these suggested definitions of home and host countries, and by extension of the definitions of migration and migrant, as they rely on the idea of nation-states as the natural order of the modern world. This methodological nationalism should however be mitigated as this study will move on to a more transnational and dynamic understanding of migration in the following sections and chapters. Nonetheless, and despite those points, it is key to keep in mind that notion of home and host countries, as well as countries of origin and destination, are very subjective concepts, socially constructed, and so by extension, the idea of 'migrant' itself falls within those socially constructed concepts. Readers are therefore invited to approach ideas of home and host countries, of countries of origin and destination and ultimately of migrant and migration with a critical eye, keeping in mind that those notions are not neutral.

Moving is therefore the first criterion associated with migration. This aspect of migration is present in various social science streams of literature, such as sociology, geography, and also organisational studies, and does not encounter any known or sensible opposition. However, with moving being such a broad notion, it covers international movers beyond migrants. To distinguish migrants from other international movers, other criteria are necessary. Several authors have suggested that a migrant is a person who is *living* abroad, especially in opposition to tourists or commuters (Andresen *et al.*, 2014; Favell, 2008a; Massey and Taylor, 2004; McNulty and Brewster, 2017). While the UN definition mentions people moving away from their habitual place of residence, it does not offer any specifications about future settlement. The notion of living abroad can be true and applicable for a certain number of migrants, however it raises the question of how living abroad can realistically be assessed, as tourists for example are likely to be living abroad during their vacations. Living

abroad should therefore be made more specific and scholars should highlight what is meant by it. Some authors have recommended to assess one's migration based on the location, or relocation, of migrants' principal residence in their host country (Andresen *et al.*, 2014). If living abroad is considered as residing abroad (i.e., in a residence) then this proposed dimension is appropriate. However, the type of places that migrants can access to settle in their host countries cannot always be described as residence. Indeed, one should not forget that migration is, more often than it should be, forced, and hence some migrants end up in camps, shelters, centres, ghettos and so on. King (2002) indeed warns about some dichotomies, which could have direct influence over the kind of settlement that migrants can access in their host countries, such as legal/illegal migration, or voluntary/forced migration. On that basis, on building on the idea that host/home countries are socially constructed, the ideas of legal/illegal and voluntary/forced migrants are also to be taken with parsimony. With status and regulations shifting, King invites us to reconsider the supposedly clear distinctions between legal/illegal and forced/voluntary migration and again to approach the terms with more nuance and fluidity (King, 2002). The residential aspect suggested by the aforementioned authors should therefore be considered with parsimony as the notion of change of principal residence is easily contestable. Yet, one should not overlook this criterion on the basis that it does not cover all types of migration. A change in principal residence has been confirmed in previous migration studies, and while this criterion has its own limitations in defining migration, it is still appropriate for a large number of migrants.

Several authors, however, have suggested other criteria to define the term 'migrant'. As proof of international relocation, instead of the residence, some authors consider the importance of working/employment in the country of destination (McNulty and Brewster, 2017). The first issue with this criterion is that it is hardly applicable to forced and/or illegal migration, as indeed migrants embarked on such migratory paths often end up working illegally in some specific systems and networks, and/or 'working' as a form of modern slavery. The second issue is that even beyond illegal or irregular migration, employment also automatically excludes some legal migrants who might not be working in their host country: children, students, pensioners, non-working spouses, people in transition periods (e.g., from university to a first job, job conversion, etc.). In addition, those few scholars relying on work to explain migration rarely define what they mean by work or employment: for example,

would voluntary and/or non-paid work be considered as a form of employment? The work/employment criterion suggested by those authors would therefore be applicable for this specific study on skilled migrant workers, but it raises a number of issues which make it even more restrictive than the residential criterion and therefore it will not be considered in this study's definition for the term 'migrant'.

While so far the distinction between migrants and other international movers has been discussed based on proof of physical relocation, namely the change to one's principal residence or employment abroad, some other authors have instead focused on the temporal aspects of migration to define whether an international mover should be considered a migrant. Temporal aspects of migration are split between authors who believe that migration is achieved if a person stays abroad long-term, typically for at least one year (Baruch *et al.*, 2013), while for others, migration should be a permanent move, with no return to the home country (Cerdin and Selmer, 2014; McNulty and Brewster, 2017). This temporal aspect of migration is another dichotomy highlighted by King (2002), who discourages such drastic distinctions, especially between a temporary and a permanent move, as "often the intention (to emigrate for good, or to return sooner or later) is quite different from the outcome" (p. 93). Indeed, personal preferences, career or familial plans change over time, but also policies and conditions to stay abroad, which render it difficult to predict or assess a permanent move, as "settlement process is often accidental" (Favell, 2003, p. 19). The permanent benchmark suggested by some authors would therefore not encompass the spontaneity and liquidity of migration suggested by contemporary authors, as will be further exposed shortly (Bauman, 2000, 2007; Ryan and Mulholland, 2015; Scott, 2006). Furthermore, even if one considers only a certain amount of time spent abroad – such as one year – to define the term 'migrant', it will still not embrace migrants' transnational lifestyle (the concept will be discussed in greater details in section 2.3). Indeed, some migrants might decide or have to go back home (or to another foreign country) for family purposes, work obligations or even for medical reasons (Horsfall, 2019; Ormond and Lunt, 2019; Vertovec, 2009; Zontini, 2004a), thus briefly interrupting their stay in their host country. Overall, authors focusing on the temporal aspects of migration to define the term 'migrant' fail to address both the liquidity and transnational features of migration, which are particularly relevant in contemporary context with transport and communication improvements. For those reasons, no temporal element will be

considered in this study to define the term 'migrant'. However, attention will still be paid to the spatio-temporality of migration, with a particular focus on fluidity (addressed shortly) and transnationalism (addressed in section 2.3).

All in all, in order to define migration and who the term 'migrant' should encompass, authors have suggested to focus on spatial, physical as well as temporal aspects of migration. While there is a general agreement among scholars and beyond to consider the spatial feature of migration as the necessary foundation and criterion to be able to talk about migrants, authors focusing both on physical proofs and on temporal attributes have encountered some major limitations. However, because the temporal aspects of migration are very much one-dimensional as they do not cover the liquidity and transnational aspects of migration (i.e., failing to see migration as ongoing), and because it would be difficult to assess the exact and definitive time lapse spent abroad, this project intends to focus its attention on the physical proof of migration to define the term 'migrant', despite being aware of the limitations of such proof. Because the necessity of employment abroad has been shown to be even more restrictive than the feature of having one's principal residence relocated abroad, this study will thus solely consider the latter suggestion. Therefore, the definition retained for an international migrant in this study is the following:

A person undertaking an international relocation, which is assessed by the change of his/her principal residence

A principal residence is here understood to be a given address that people have registered to their local council, to pay taxes or to receive benefits for example, and/or have given to their potential employers or healthcare system. This suggested definition does not make any distinction between some of the dichotomies criticised by King (2002), such as voluntary versus forced, temporary versus permanent, or legal versus illegal migration. Instead, the suggested definition encompasses a wide array of understandings surrounding migration, including the different forms that it can take.

Before moving on to reviewing various theories explaining migration in contemporary context, it is essential to emphasise at this point (and as already hinted in previous paragraphs) that several authors have made the call for considering migration as dynamic, i.e., to define it as *liquid* or *fluid*. Building on the work of Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* (2000),

in which he exposes how we have now moved to a time of post-modernism characterised by infinite change with the aim of reaching improvement, migration scholars have suggested that, within this liquid modernity, migration is not exempt from this phenomenon. Ryan and Mulholland (2014), for instance, have documented the trajectories of skilled workers in the UK and have in particular challenged "the assumed linearity of migratory career trajectories" (p. 585). The authors instead suggest that migration trajectories are dynamic by highlighting how their participants' migratory trajectories changed over time, especially based on work, family decisions, as well as unforeseen circumstances. The paper therefore goes beyond the temporary/permanent dichotomy and instead suggests a continuum of emplacement. Lulle, Moroşanu and King (2018) on the other hand have clearly built on the work of Bauman (2000) to expose how migration is liquid, but furthermore on the work of Worth (2009) and the idea of forever *becoming*, rather than *be*. The authors have focused on young European citizens facing the Brexit referendum to highlight a variety of migratory trajectories that their participants were considering in response to the referendum's results, namely settling in the UK, returning home, or moving to another country. The study thus directly places emphasis on the flexibility, temporality as well as circularity of migration and particularly illustrates how plans change. In a similar context, Kilkey and Ryan (2020) have researched European citizens in the UK at three major points in time (2004 EU enlargement, 2008 economic crisis and Brexit) to highlight how time, place and social relationships influence migration trajectories. By focusing on migrants' responses to geopolitical transformative episodes, the paper puts emphasis on the fluidity of migration through a life-course lens. Finally, in his most recent paper, De Haas (2021) defines human mobility as "people's capacity (freedom) to choose where to live – including the option to stay" (p. 2) and highlights how "as long as societies change (…) people go through life stages (…) people will keep migrating – and settling" (p. 14). More specifically, de Haas considers migration in terms of migrants' aspirations and capabilities in relation to broader macro structures. Considering changes in policies, legal status, racism, or regularisation, settled migrants might be put back on the road while others might end up settling, with their aspirations and/or capabilities shifting. In the end, the paper presents migration beyond the simple act of moving from one country to another, and rather as a continuous social process, embedded in broader evolving social structures.

By accepting the idea that migration is not a one-off phenomenon but that instead it is experienced and lived in different manners across time and space, this project hopes to break the oft-considered temporary/permanent dichotomy criticised by King (2002), and furthermore to also go beyond the methodological nationalism condemned by Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002). Indeed, by considering that migration goes beyond the simple act of movement from one country to another, and that instead it is also experienced beyond this move, in a daily and continuous manner, the project emphasises that the experience and act of migrating surpass national borders. Instead, migration is seen as being contained within and enacted by individuals going through that phenomenon, and hence is dynamically evolving over time and place. This is particularly evident when considering the idea of transnationalism (developed further in section 2.3) and of the transnational lifestyle that migrants often adopt. Transnationalism indeed suggests how migrants are involved in more than one set of norms and in more than one society at a time, thus reinforcing the dynamic aspect of migration beyond national borders.

All in all, those papers have highlighted how migration is neither fixed nor a one-off phenomenon, and instead should be considered as fluid or liquid to reflect its ever-changing nature and being continuously negotiated over time and space.

Starting from this definition and dynamic understanding of migration, the chapter will now move on to expose and discuss various theories that explain international movements in contemporary society. The rest of the chapter will indeed be divided into two sections, the first focusing on sociological perspectives about migration, while the second will offer insights from organisation studies and will focus on skilled migrant workers.

2.2.2 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES: MICRO/MESO LEVELS

As informed by this section's title, its focus is the micro and meso levels of analysis of international migration. Yet to have a comprehensive picture of migration, this section starts with a brief review of macro-level theories, before moving on to theories focusing on individuals and/or groups.

Several theories have taken on the task to explain migration and flux of people from a macro perspective. The **segmented labour market approach** emphasises how the labour market is stratified, with better-paid and more secure jobs in the primary sector and lower-

paid, labour-intensive jobs in the secondary sector. While the former attracts native-born workers, these are often not interested in the latter, for which migrants are willing to work, especially if they plan to stay in the receiving country. The segmented labour market approach thus explains migration flows based on employers' need for cheap labour in sectors (and work conditions) in which natives do not want to work (Brettell and Hollifield, 2015; Massey *et al.*, 1993). This approach is thus solely based on the dynamic of the labour market, particularly economic pull factors to host countries, yet understanding the context of the labour market itself is crucial, as highlighted in the world systems theory.

The **world systems theory**, developed in the 1970s and 1980s, considers how peripheral regions have been incorporated or penetrated by 'core' (capitalist) nations. Such incorporations happened through core nations sending capital and machinery to peripheral nations, for instance to increase agricultural productivity. Through the mechanisation of the local agriculture, people living in rural areas are pushed to move to cities, hoping to find jobs, however this leads to higher urban unemployment, and ultimately pushes (young) people towards core and economically more advanced countries to find jobs (hence being related to the segmented labour market). The world systems theory relies on local disruptions leading to the dislocation of population and has often been defined as a precursor of the globalisation theory (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014; de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020; Massey *et al.*, 1993).

The **globalisation theory** can indeed be seen as a continuum of the world systems theory where globalisation has given rise to a (partial) relocation of production to low-wage economies and a new international division of labour. Migration in the globalisation theory is seen as part of the various and increasing (trade) relationships between countries. Migration is seen as having been encouraged by technological progress in transport and communication. However, the globalised context is also characterised by decreased government intervention, leading to different treatment of migrants, with the (high) skilled ones being mobile and the lower skilled ones often being denied rights to move. The globalisation context has thus often been criticised for reinforcing the power of core nations, irregular migration, and the vulnerability of migrants (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014; de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020).

Overall, those theories explain the movement of individuals from a macro perspective, especially an economic and political one, and pay attention to trade happening between countries and to the global labour market. However, all those theories consider macro forces as key elements of migration (Massey and Taylor, 2004) and do not consider individual decision-makings behind one's move (O'Reilly, 2012). Those theories consider migrants mostly as passive subjects of higher forces and do not reflect the diversity of migration flows. For these reasons, macro-level theories do not encompass the focus of this study, which is interested in an individual perspective on the experience of migration. Readers interested in macro-level theories of migration are thus invited to refer to other reviews (such as Brettell and Hollifield, 2015; Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014; Gold and Nawyn, 2019; De Haas, 2010; Kurekova, 2011; Massey et al., 1993; Massey and Taylor, 2004), while this chapter will now move on to theories of migration with a focus on individuals and/or groups.

Historically, migration was thought of in terms of the movement of people within particular territories, mostly within nation-states (Anderson, 2013). Ravenstein's laws of migration, for instance, were developed in order to explain why people in the late 19th century would move from rural to urban areas: scarce job opportunities would push people away from the countryside and better jobs would pull them towards cities, emphasising the economic incentives behind people's migration at that time (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014). Later on, Lee (1966) added a characteristic to Ravenstein's laws, namely that migration is determined by plus (e.g., demand for labour) and minus (e.g., poor economic situation) factors, which led to the **push-pull model** (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014; de Haas, 2021). This model is nowadays extensively used to explain international migration, especially in times and within the dynamics of globalisation. Globalisation has indeed reinforced the gap between poorer and richer countries and (in)famous flux of migration have now developed, such as from Latin American or Asia to the Global North, but also around certain sectors, such as the care industry (Reynolds, 2015; Zontini, 2004a). New economic migratory trajectories can also appear in times of economic recession, such as during the 2008 economic crisis where flows from Southern to Northern European countries developed (Castellani, 2020; Zontini, 2004b), but also during political and legal loosening and opening, such as the 2004 EU Enlargement where people migrated more easily from Eastern to Western Europe (Favell, 2008b; Genova, 2017; Kurekova, 2013). Overall, the push-pull model focuses on economic

factors to explain the migration of individuals or groups across borders solely based on the idea of a financial enhancement.

However, despite this model having been able to explain migration flows between different and diverse countries for over a century, several authors have recognised how it nonetheless lacks consideration of several aspects of migration. First of all, it presupposes that individuals are rational decision-makers. Cenci and de Haas for instance have criticised the simplistic view of this model, which emphasises decisions to move on the sole basis of a cost-benefit financial calculation (Cenci, 2015; de Haas, 2021). The model indeed assumes that individuals are not only rational decision-makers but also have the skills and knowledge to know how to maximize their financial gain. Furthermore, the model is also based on various assumptions about the market itself as it assumes for instance that the market is perfect and that all information about it is available to migrants (Barkan, 2006; Brettell and Hollifield, 2015; Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014). Finally, the model would be unable to explain migration between countries with similar economic structures, living standards and wages, where people do not necessarily end up financially better off. The push-pull model therefore lacks the 'human face' of international migration encouraged by several authors (Scott, 2006; Smith and Favell, 2006) and thus cannot fully explain the various trajectories that migration can take, nor the various reasons to move that migration relies on.

One way to go beyond the mere economic factors is to consider another model, namely the **neo-classical approach**. This approach still considers push and pull factors but does not only focus on economic aspects. It goes a step further by including human capitals (such as skills, occupation and experience) and human psychology (such as preferences and expectations) (Kurekova, 2011). The neo-classical approach takes into consideration human and social forces when reflecting on the costs and benefits of migrating, rather than solely economic elements (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014; de Haas, 2021). This approach is not only relevant because it considers further and broader characteristics of migration, but it most importantly includes human aspects that might explain migratory flows to destinations where migrants would not necessarily be richer. "In the extended neoclassical models, migration is [indeed] determined by *expected* rather than actual earnings" (Kurekova, 2011, p. 5). This approach thus offers one answer to the limits of the push-pull model exposed

previously, as it considers human specificities and can explain migration beyond economic enrichment.

However, even this approach bears its own limits. First of all, despite the approach taking human factors into consideration, it seems to suggest that migrants are one group of individuals sharing the same motives to migrate and therefore fails to recognise migrants as an heterogenous group, with different feelings, experiences and opinions, who would therefore take different decisions regarding their migratory trajectories (de Haas, 2021; Recchi and Favell, 2009). Furthermore, and as pointed out in a recent study conducted by Erel and Ryan (2019), focusing solely on migrants' capital seems to suggest that the approach forgets how "migrants routinely experience a mismatch between the spatial contexts where their resources were formed and the new contexts where they look to validate these as capitals" (Erel and Ryan, 2019, p. 247). The authors explain how solely focusing on migrants' capital as reasons or factors to move seems to oversimplify the role that macro-level economic and political structures impose on migration. They instead suggest considering broader structures in their multi-level analytical framework. Indeed, some examples stated above had already highlighted the importance of the legal and/or political context that could favour or hamper migratory flux, which the neo-classical approach does not consider. Specific political and legal systems have been put in place in various countries to ease or limit specific types of migration, especially in the case of countries with past-colonial ties or current migration within the EU. Neither the push-pull model nor the neo-classical approach considers the broader economic, political and/or legal contexts in which migration is happening. Talking about the case of high-skilled migration, Cenci argues how migration "cannot be separated from deeper reflections on the political, socioeconomic, policy dimensions of this phenomenon, that is, its contextual determinants and its full socioeconomic effects" (Cenci, 2015, p. 455); yet neither of the two approaches seems to offer such perspectives.

So far, the two exposed approaches to migration have mostly focused on the micro-level, namely on individual reasons to migrate, and each carries its own limitations in trying to explain migration phenomena. The following paragraphs will expose approaches that consider the role of migrant networks and communities in explaining migration flows. These

approaches are more contemporary than the two models exposed so far and rely on migrants' social as well as identity-related ties that they have with their peers in the global world.

The first approach is the **migration network theory,** which focuses on the *links* that migrants keep with their family, friends, and other migrants. Over time and taken altogether, those links, or ties, lead to the emergence of particular social networks around the globe and thus facilitate particular migratory trajectories (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014). While the neo-classical approach focuses on human capital, such as skills and experience, the network theory focuses on social capital, namely relationships, as a way to migrate to one place over another, and also to facilitate one's insertion into the destination country (Ryan, Erel and D'Angelo, 2015). Highly related to the migration network theory is the **diaspora theory**. While the term 'diaspora' is often used in the context of forced migration, it defines *communities* of migrants established abroad (de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020). Behind the diaspora theory lies the idea of a common identity and the membership of a community of value (Anderson, 2013). Diaspora communities can be built based on familial ties, and hence be related to the migration network theory, but communities can also be built based on ethnicity, language, religion or on local association.

Both the network and the diaspora theory rely on relationships to explain migratory flux. When a diaspora is established in a particular country, it eases the migration of future migrants on the same basis as the network theory: help among migrants and within the network for accommodation and/or jobs, supported by reduced psychological barriers (Evergeti and Zontini, 2006; Zontini, 2004a). The strength of those theories is that they can explain decisions to migrate to a particular place beyond personal enhancement, and hence go beyond the neo-classical approach or the push-pull model. Furthermore, the established relationships are what makes international migration self-sustainable, with people moving over time and space due to social bonds (Vertovec, 2002). Besides, the theories also explain why migratory flows are not equally spread worldwide: migration flows are based on human relationships, which are themselves linked to colonial history, past and present labour recruitment, shared language and culture or simply geographic proximity (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014; Faist, 2000). Those connections between countries are not uniformly distributed, and that is why migratory flows vary from one place to another as well. However, as much as meso level theories explain why people would go to particular countries due to

relationships and networks, the theories do not explain why migrants would leave their home country in the first place. The diaspora and network theories are thus key in indicating the directions of migratory flows but remain limited when explaining factors prompting migration in the first place (Kurekova, 2011).

The last approach to understand migration at the meso level is the **migration systems theory**, which explains how human migration is part of various flows and linkages happening around the world (Bakewell, De Haas and Kubal, 2012). "A migrant system can be defined as a 'set of places linked by flows and counter-flows of people, goods, services, and information, which tend to facilitate further exchange, including migration, between places'" (de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020, p. 68). This definition could resonate with a macro-level theory in appearance, as being about connecting countries, but "migration systems theory focuses on processes *within* migration systems" (Faist, 2000, p. 51, italic added) and is thus better conceptualised at the meso level. The migration systems theory has indeed three main components: flows of migrants from origin to destination area, an immigrant stock residing in the country of destination and a flow of migrants who return from the immigration to the emigration country (Faist, 2000, p. 52). The migration systems theory is thus about the connection between movers, former movers, and non-movers (ibid, p. 53) and at the centre of such connection is migrants' agency (both individual and collective) to challenge structural constraints (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014, p. 39). So, while the strength of the migration systems theory is to "pose the context in which movement occurs" (Faist, 2000, p. 50), by indeed considering social, political, economic, and labour market structures between countries (O'Reilly, 2012), the theory still focuses on linkages, including between people. In all, the migration systems theory focuses on linkages (at the meso level) and so is popular for considering that such linkages are embedded within broader processes (e.g., political, economic). Yet, the migration systems theory "still assume[s] migrants are free agents driven especially by a fundamental desire for economic gain" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 6) and so little thought is given to individuals' free will beyond economic enhancement. Furthermore, the theory does not explain why people would move in the first place, especially pioneer migrants, or how initial moves create subsequent systems (and how other systems never see the light) (Bakewell, De Haas and Kubal, 2012). Little thought is indeed given to individual pioneers, their reasons behind their initial move and the way they face structural constraints

without a supportive system yet in place. As is often the case with meso-level theories, the migration system theory explains the perpetuation of migration, rather than its initiation.

This section has provided a brief review of the literature explaining international migration, adopting a sociological perspective, and has exposed some theories' major principles, their own strengths and weaknesses. Macro-level theories explain migration based on macro (economic, political) forces but imply that migrants have no free will (O'Reilly, 2012); micro-level theories explain migration based on personal gains, especially in terms of financial and/or human capital; finally, meso-level theories explain migration based on social capital and focus mostly on the perpetuation of migration, rather than its initiation (for further details on migration theories refer to Brettell and Hollifield, 2015; De Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020; Kurekova, 2011).

From this review, we can note that there is a general lack of connection between the different levels of analysis. An exception to this point is the migration systems theory, that does consider migration within the wider context, particularly social and economic linkages, but still focuses mostly on migrants' financial gain. In most cases, "it is still unusual for people to fully deal with the interaction of macro, micro and meso levels" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 8), with some exceptions like Erel and Ryan (2019). Little is therefore known about how individual migrants idiosyncratically make sense of the broader context and the macro structures they face, and how they incorporate it into their individual decision-making vis-à-vis their migration.

The following section will therefore move on to another stream of literature and discuss international migration, this time from an organisational perspective. The focus will be on skilled migrant workers (as per this study's objectives), exposing the brain drain/gain approach to migration as well as the case of expatriates.

2.2.3 INSIGHTS FROM ORGANISATIONAL STUDIES: FOCUS ON SKILLED WORKERS

While in the sociological stream distinctions between theories were made based on the level of analysis, namely micro, meso or macro, in organisation studies the distinction between theories is often made at another level, namely between skilled and unskilled migration. According to this stream of literature, a skilled migrant is understood to be a person with a university degree or working in a position requiring this level of education (Cenci, 2015;

Vertovec, 2002), while unskilled (also called low-skilled) migrants represent any other migrants.

This distinction based on an academic diploma or a job position naturally bears a certain number of problems. This distinction for instance does not consider manual competencies as skills, such as those needed in the construction, service, or restaurant sectors. However, with the distinction being based on having *either* a diploma *or* working in a skilled position, the definition allows a certain flexibility when considering skilled migration. Indeed, it should be pointed out that not all skilled migrants, here understood as graduates, end up in skilled positions in their host countries. Anderson (2013) argues for instance how young and well-educated migrants often end up working in jobs for which they are over-qualified, and this is due to their early arrival in their host country and the idea of temporariness. The definition of 'skilled', focusing on either a diploma or a skilled position, thus gives the opportunity to study skilled migrants working in low-skilled (and often low-waged) jobs. This definition hence embraces the reality and challenges faced by even the most skilled migrants and also echoes the point made by Erel and Ryan (2019), namely how migrants' capitals are not always recognised in their destination countries. Nonetheless, this definition of being (un)skilled based on a university diploma (or working in a position requiring one) is still very much socially constructed, as indeed other forms of competency and aptitude (such as manual skills) are not recognised. Once again, readers are invited to approach (un)skilled migration with reflectivity, to go beyond the polarisation (and hierarchisation) of migration types (King, 2002).

In the end, adopting a definition of 'skilled' based on a university diploma or a job position requiring a certain level of education has shown to be limitative regarding what is considered as a skill. Yet it also provides enough flexibility to show how all skilled migrants do not always end up in skilled positions. While this definition is thus not perfect, it gives the fluidity required to reach the aim of this study, to understand skilled migration from an individual perspective, by embracing various forms of skilled migration, i.e., including skilled migrants working lower down in the job hierarchy.

Starting from this definition of skilled migrant, as a person with a university degree or working in a position requiring this level of education, the chapter will now move on to theories from the stream of organisation studies. Because the aim of this project is to understand skilled migration, the focus will be on theories focusing on this type of migration. The two major approaches that will therefore be discussed in this chapter are (1) the brain drain/gain approach, and (2) the case of expatriates.

The **brain drain/gain theory** of migration very much adopts a macro-level angle towards migration as it considers the perspective of nation-states. Indeed, the brain drain/gain approach explains how migration happens when skilled migrants in developing and/or poorer countries move to richer countries, where they can (supposedly) have better job opportunities and a better lifestyle. Countries of origin are hence drained of their skilled workforce, while countries of destination gain from this type of migration (de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020). This approach is very much related to the neo-classical approach since it is based on human capital as opportunities to migrate. Besides, one strength of this theory is to consider the effects of migration both on the host and home country societies, which the neo-classical approach does not do. Yet, like the neo-classical approach, the brain drain/gain very much relies on the idea that migration is unrestricted, and that migrants' skills and their various forms of human capital will be recognised in their destination countries. Indeed, several authors have documented this phenomenon and criticised the brain drain/gain approach for lacking consideration of what they called a brain waste, namely when a skilled workforce migrates to a country where their skills are not recognised and/or ends up in jobs for which they are over-qualified (de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020). At the same time, more optimistic authors also saw how countries of origin did not completely lose everything in this situation, and could also enjoy some wins. This is especially the case when migrants sent remittances home, which not only benefits the family to which it is sent but the whole country's economy in general (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014; Zontini, 2004a) and/or when migrants return to their home countries and share their knowledge and expertise acquired abroad (Potter, 2005). These authors have been talking about brain exchange (or circulation) to explain the dynamics and various exchanges happening between home and host societies when skilled migrants move abroad and potentially return home.

The brain drain/gain approach thus also encompasses brain waste and brain exchange, which offer a more dynamic view on migration than the mere movement of people from their country of origin to their country of destination. It indeed includes the various effects (both positive and negative) that migration can have on both home and host societies, and how it transforms them. However, like the neo-classical approach, the brain drain/gain approach (including waste and exchange) does not consider the contexts into which migrants' capitals have to be recognised. Furthermore, because the focus is on nation-states and their societies, the approach lacks the individual perspective that this project aims to reach.

A way to consider skilled migration from an individual perspective within the organisation literature is to focus on the **expatriate literature**. Within this literature, there has been the emergence of two types of expatriates: the so-called assigned expatriates (AE) and the self-initiated expatriates (SIE). Inkson et al. (1997) were probably the first to make a clear distinction between the two types of expatriation. According to them, in the case of assigned expatriates "the initiative for the international experience comes primarily from a company which operates internationally" (p. 351), implying a move within a company, particularly between the headquarters and subsidiaries. On the other hand, the initiative for the international experience of self-initiated expatriates, which in the article authors name as overseas experience, comes from the individual and thus implies a greater degree of autonomy, yet also a greater degree of uncertainty.

In their article, Inkson et al. (1997) explain that the migration of both AE and SIE is motivated by career opportunities and development, either within a company or through individual actions. A more detailed and recent article by Dickmann et al. (2008), however, goes further by explaining in particular AEs' motivations to accept a relocation abroad by not only focusing on career but by also including personal and individual motives. While the actual position of the job abroad remains first in the list of AEs' individual reasons to move abroad, their spouse's willingness to move with them comes second and their children's education is fifth in the authors' classification. The article indeed shows how "all categories of location factors, job, development and career opportunities, personal and domestic considerations, and assignment offer are (…) important to individuals" (Dickmann *et al.*, 2008, p. 739). By going beyond mere work-related factors, the articles show the importance of considering the human beings behind the workers and their individual and personal reasons to migrate. In

the organisation literature, skilled AE are thus shown to be motivated by a combination of personal and domestic interests, career factors, as well as location. Yet, one should keep in mind that assigned expatriation is a very particular and unique form of migration, with companies organising expatriation packages that include not only job-related aspects but also bureaucratic aspects (e.g., visa) as well as family support (e.g., school for children). Assigned expatriation is thus very specific to the organisational world with a clear focus on the company.

The literature on SIE on the other hand has also shown how expatriates are motivated by both work-related factors, such as career development and progression, and personal and individual factors, such as adventure or exploration (Doherty, Dickmann and Mills, 2011; Froese, 2012; Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Thorn, 2009). However, while AEs' first motive to move abroad was the job position, i.e., a career-related factor (in Dickmann et al., 2008), it seems that career comes only after personal motivation and satisfaction for SIE, with several of them accepting jobs abroad for which they are over-qualified and which are often low-paid, in order to reach their personal motivations first, such as adventure, travelling or relationships. Furthermore, while SIE are not supported by any company and their migration is thus not part of a special expatriate package, the term 'expatriate' still relies on an expatriate ideal, namely skilled, white, and most likely Western (Cranston, 2017) and thus still reflects a very privileged form of migration.

According to the literature on expatriates (both AE and SIE), migration of skilled workers is thus explained by a combination of career-related aspects, individual preferences, and personal/domestic factors. Furthermore, a strength of both the AE and SIE literature is to consider return expatriation, and the challenges for individuals that this implies. While the AE literature pays a lot of attention to the implications of expatriate return for firms and employees, the SIE literature also considers the challenges of returning that go beyond the workplace (Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010). However, one major limitation within the literature on AE is that, despite this section having exposed some studies highlighting the individual perspective on assigned expatriation (see also Black and Stephens, 1989), most of the literature on AE focuses on company and organisational issues (such as Selmer and Lauring, 2012), suggesting that expatriates are powerless, only considered as company resources, as already noticed by Inkson et al. (1997) when they point out the "failure of

writers on EA [expatriate assignment] to focus on individual dynamics" (p. 354). Furthermore, apart from few exceptions (Al Ariss, 2010; Ceric and Crawford, 2016), the expatriate literature still lacks consideration for macro forces that influence or limit the expatriation of both AE and SIE. Expatriation is indeed still often portrayed as unrestricted, even for SIE who do not have the logistics of a firm supporting them. Finally, one of the major questions arising from the literature on SIE is what makes a person a SIE in comparison to a 'normal' migrant. Remember that this study considers a migrant to be a person undertaking an international relocation which is assessed by the change of his/her principal residence. A SIE is therefore a migrant according to this definition. However, not all migrants are SIE. SIE seems to imply the notion of employment that we have previously decided to leave aside. Yet Inkson et al. (1997) did not consider employment as a requisite to define SIE. While the next paragraphs will briefly address this point, further research needs to be done on the distinction between SIE and migrant, from an academic and theoretical perspective but also from the perspective of those being defined or defining themselves as such.

Migrant, migrant worker and self-initiated expatriate

Several authors both from organisation studies and sociology took on this task, namely to make (or at least try to make) a distinction between migrants and SIE, with little harmony among authors, even from within the same stream of literature.

In organisation literature, where the term 'SIE' (or 'expatriate') is predominantly used over the term 'migrant', Baruch et al. (2013) consider that all AE, SIE and migrants are long-term stayers. The main distinctions between an AE, a SIE and a migrant is that in the case of an AE, the relocation is triggered by the company rather than the individual. On the other hand, the distinction between a SIE and a migrant, according to this study, is about the legality of the stay: SIE are legal by definition, while migrants may reside and/or work illegally. Furthermore, the authors point to the cultural gap: while for expatriates (both AE and SIE) the gap is variable, subject to the destination, for migrants the cultural gap is defined as high, suggesting that migrants move from third-world countries to developed ones. In this study, the term 'migrant' thus has a negative connotation (illegality, poorer background), and it is no wonder that the term 'migrant' overlaps with the term 'asylum seeker'. Similarly, in a more recent article, McNulty and Brewster (2017) explain how expatriates (both AE and SIE) are meeting four conditions: employment, temporary stay, non-citizenship of the host country,

as well as residing and working legally. In their study, migrants only meet one criterion: employment, suggesting again the potential illegality of migrants yet at the same time the potential acquisition of local citizenship (which would automatically make them legal in their host country). Furthermore, one of the major differences is how their stay is thought to be permanent, while expatriates are expected to stay abroad only temporarily. Building on this notion of temporary versus permanent stay, Cerdin and Selmer (2014) also define SIE based on four criteria: self-relocation, employment, skilled and temporary stay. In this study as well, it is again this final criterion that migrants do not meet as their relocation is again thought to be permanent. Finally, the study to which this project is probably the closest is the one done by Andresen et al. (2014). In their study, the authors define a migrant based on a single criterion: relocation of their residence abroad. The specificity of an expatriate is to be legally employed: AEs' activity is taken by the organisation while for SIE it is taken by the individual. In this more inclusive definition, we can thus see how the authors incorporate expatriation as a specific form of migration: AE and SIE are migrants with the specificity of being employed, hence their 'expatriate' label. This way, the term 'SIE' encompasses a vast array of migrant workers, and the term 'migrant' does not necessarily convey a negative connotation.

In other social sciences, such as geography or sociology, few authors have considered the term 'expatriate', as the term 'migrant' is more often used in those streams of literature. Butcher (2010) for instance, in her study on re-placing home for transnational workers, considers that expatriates are people who have left their country of origin for over a year (p.26). On the other hand, while she uses the term 'migrant' several times, she does not provide a definition of it. According to this study, the distinction is thus solely based on the length of the stay. However, a few authors have still attempted to make a clearer distinction between migrants and expatriates. Working on the skilled British middle class living in Paris, Scott (2006) makes the distinction between expatriates and migrants based on the reasons that motivated their relocation abroad: expatriates are motivated by their career while migrants by the lifestyle and/or their relationships. Furthermore, the study suggests how expatriates' families are mono-national (i.e., partner and children from the home country) while migrants are either single or have built bi-national families (i.e., partner from the host country, bi-national children). According to Scott, motives to relocate are thus primarily what distinguishes expatriates from migrants, with further implications on the family structure.

One of the clear limitations of this study is however to think that migrants/expatiates are motivated to relocate by only a single factor (career or lifestyle or relationship) while previous studies have clearly highlighted how a relocation abroad is motivated by various factors (e.g., Dickmann et al., 2008). Finally, in a more recent study, Cranston (2017) tries to go beyond the axiomatic use of the term 'expatriate' to talk about Western migrants living abroad. Conceptually, she distinguishes a migrant from an expatriate based on the notion of return: migrants' relocation is expected to be permanent, while expatriates' relocation is expected to be temporary. The strength of Cranston's study is that she also offers an empirical response to the question as to what distinguishes a migrant from an expatriate. She indeed points out how British migrants use the term 'expatriate' to define themselves as being different from other migrants in Singapore, and this is done based on two notions: they are white, and they are skilled. Through whiteness and skill, her British participants define themselves in opposition to other migrants in Singapore but furthermore in opposition to migrants (and by extension migrant discourses) also back in their home country, the UK. The study of Cranston thus points out to the discrepancy between the academic, conceptual definitions of migrant/expatriate and the daily use of the terms by the people embodying those concepts. Furthermore, by pointing out how her participants define themselves also in opposition to discourses from back home, one can only acknowledge the role and importance of macro forces (such as discourses and policies) on the individual, an aspect too often forgotten in migration/integration studies. Overall, in geographic and sociological studies, while the term 'migrant' does not particularly endorse a negative connotation, the term 'expatriate' does carry a positive one, as 'good' migrants (Cranston, 2017), especially through the racialisation of the concepts. In the end, even in the more social sciences, there seems to be a certain hierarchy of different types of migrant, based on length of the stay, motives to relocate, skills and/or race, from both conceptual and empirical approaches.

In the end, this study had already exposed how the term 'migrant' is here to be understood as a person relocating his/her principal residence abroad. Following the study by Andresen et al. (2014), this project considers that SIE are people at the initiative of their move abroad as well as their career in their host country. The notion of legal employment is thus retained for a migrant to be considered a SIE, rather than migrants' length of stay or their skills, as suggested in various organisational studies. Based on those definitions, the term 'SIE'

is thus interchangeable with the term 'legal migrant worker'. By suggesting such a definition, the study considers that the term 'migrant' encompasses a vast array of people who do not work (e.g., children, students, non-working spouses, pensioners, etc.) yet by legally working in their host country, i.e., by being at the initiative of both their relocation and their employment, migrant workers can be defined as self-initiated expatriates. By adopting such broad definitions, the project also hopes to stay as close as possible to the way people would like to describe themselves and even be open to other self-descriptions. Rather than considering both terms as rigid, one should consider the fluidity of the terms, as indeed a person can move from being a migrant to a SIE and back several times in a lifetime, due to changes in his/her work situation and also due to macro changes, such as politics and/or policies. Ideally however, scholars should offer more empirical studies on the way people embodying those concepts define themselves, use the terms and why; an aspect that this study will pay attention to.

Overall, this chapter has so far reviewed literature on migration both from the sociological and organisational streams. Table 1 below summarises the theories discussed, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. The review has shown how those theories focus on two aspects of migration, namely the flows of migration (i.e., directions, origins, and destinations) and the reasons for people to migrate. Those theories explain migration predominantly from the Global South to the Global North, and this for financial, economic and/or career purposes, around human and/or social capital. Fewer theories explain other flows, such as from the Global North to the Global South (O'Reilly, 2012), with the expatriate literature together with meso-level theories nonetheless emphasising migration for career-related reasons, lifestyle and network. Literature on migration between two economically similar countries therefore remains rare, with Favell's Eurostars (2008a) being one of the few exceptions (as will be discussed in section 5.2).

A major limitation of those theories is however how a connection between the different levels of analysis is currently rare (with the exception of the migration systems theory which focuses on meso and macro linkages, as mentioned on page 23). When adopting an individual perspective to migration, there is a general neglect of the broader macro context in which individual migration happens and how individuals perceive and navigate the macro forces and structures restricting or encouraging their migration. The thesis thus intends to

address this point. Furthermore, both streams have shown little interest for any further migratory implications once in the destination country. For such focus, one needs to head to the literature on integration, which namely offers two perspectives: a micro-level perspective through the literature on belonging and transnationalism, and a more macro-level perspective (mostly state level) through the assimilation vs. multiculturalism literature. Literature on belonging will reveal itself adequate to understand the constant, ongoing aspect of migration and integration from an individual perspective, while transnationalism recognises the ties kept with the home country over time. The subsequent section will thus focus on the integration literature in order to understand what happens to migrants once they have moved. By doing so, the thesis suggests how migration is more than just a simple act of movement, as it also implies facing the challenges of arrival and settlement, and how migration and integration are constantly being negotiated.

Table 1: Summary of some migration theories: strengths and weaknesses

Adapted from Kurekova (2011), based on Brettell and Hollifield (2015); Castles, De Haas and Miller (2014); De Haas, Castles and Miller (2020).

THEORY	STRENGTHS	CRITIQUES
Macro-level theories: segmented labour market, world systems and globalisation	Consider migration in relation to macro-forces (economic, legal, political), especially in the context of globalisation	Consider migrants as passive subjects; do not consider the diversity of migration
Push-pull model	Economic push and pull factors	Solely based on financial enhancement
Neo-classical approach	Broader push and pull factors: incl. human capital and psychology	No consideration for the contexts into which migrants' capitals have to be validated
Migration network theory	Links between migrants and their peers (development of network)	Does not explain reasons to migrate
Diaspora theory	Role of communities, explains perpetuation of migration and why migration is unevenly distributed	No consideration for larger macro forces (e.g., institutional, structural)
Migration systems theory	Human migration as part of other flows, embedded in macro processes. Good at explaining perpetuation and direction of migration	Does not explain initial reasons to move abroad when there is no system in place; does not explain how individuals face structural constraints without systems in place; does not explain the creation of migration systems
Brain drain/gain/exchange	Consider both host- and home-country societies. Focus on human capital. Consider return migration and exchange	Focus on institutional perspective, lack of migrants' perspective. Migration supposedly unrestricted, migrants' capital supposedly always recognised abroad
Expatriates		
• Assigned expatriates	Consider repatriation/return. Focus on organisational issues	Very specific type of migration (packages). Company focused (suggests powerless expatriates, humans as resources)
• Self-initiated expatriates	Consideration for the human being beyond the worker (e.g., personal, and domestic consideration) Return of SIE	Rely on the expatriate ideal (Western, skilled, racialised approach)

2.3. INTEGRATION

Once the act of migration (i.e., the movement from one's home country to a host country) is done, migrants would automatically have to integrate or settle one way or another into their new place of residence, slowly and potentially with some difficulties at the beginning, while over time they might become naturally more embedded into and attached to their host country. Indeed, "long-term migration to liberal democracies is typically imagined in policy and research as proceeding along a trajectory of entry, temporary stay, settlement, and citizenship" (Anderson, 2013, p. 93). While a subsequent section will cover identity and citizenship in relation to migration studies, this current section will focus on the integration of migrants into their host country through the concepts of home, embedding, belonging and transnationalism. The second part of this section will focus on the integration of migrants into their host society from a state perspective and will discuss both multiculturalism and assimilationism.

2.3.1 INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: HOME, SOCIAL EMBEDDING, BELONGING AND TRANSNATIONALISM

"Scholarship on migrant settlement has looked at various aspects of how new arrivals forge a new life, ranging from practical aspects around housing, jobs, welfare and information about settlement, to issues around emotional adjustment, belonging and the formation of new friendships" (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019, p. 123). This section will start with a focus on the practical aspects of integration and will namely discuss the notion of home, before moving on to the more relational aspect of integration and focus on migrants' various forms of social capital. Both home and social capital will later be discussed in relation to the emotional, spatial, and temporal aspects of integration to ultimately lead the discussion towards belonging and transnationalism.

Going back to this study's definition of migrants as people undertaking an international relocation assessed by the change of their principal residence, the project would have had to touch at some points on what is meant by **residence**, but furthermore, what it implies for migrants' integration. Indeed, Ager and Strang point out how housing is one of the "key aspects of integrating into a new society" (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 173). Feeling 'at home' is also one of Yuval-Davis' aspects of what comprises belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

The question 'when does a place becomes home' is thus of prime importance in order to understand migrant integration and has been particularly researched among geographers who have managed to link together migration and attachment to space (Antonsich, 2010; Butcher, 2010; Miller, 2019).

Butcher (2010) for instance points out how home for skilled migrants living in Singapore has been a place defined by comfort, combining both security and familiarity. In her study, she exposes the affective side that home provides, especially in a context of cultural differences and feeling of dislocation (p. 25). It is because of that affective aspect that for some migrants, home has been in their country of origin while for some others it has been in their host country. Indeed, the author concludes how the tendency to think that migrants belong everywhere as global citizens is rather incorrect and that the need to call a place home (be it in one's home or host country) is stronger than supposedly belonging everywhere. Instead, and following Kivisto (2001), she suggests that migrants' notion of home switches over time, with their place of residence becoming more and more important after a while (p. 25). Similarly, issues related to security were also brought up in the study conducted by Ager and Strang (2008). "The difference between a house and a home is the difference between a place to stay and a place to live. A home is a place of safety, security and stability" (p. 172, quoting the Dutch Refugee Council). However, the authors also go beyond the mere material aspect of housing when they point out "the effect that housing has on refugees' overall physical and emotional well-being, as well as on their ability to feel 'at home'" (2008, p. 171).

According to both Butcher (2010) and Ager and Strang (2008), a home is thus a place of comfort, offering security and stability, especially in a context of displacement. Yet home is not solely four walls and a roof protecting an individual from the unfamiliar outside world, it is also a place that migrants develop an affective attachment to over time.

In a more recent article on lifestyle migrants in Spain, Miller considers this affective attachment when she reflects how a house (the material and practical aspects of housing) goes to become a home especially when one considers the emotional and temporal dimensions of it (Miller, 2019). She indeed builds on the idea that those three dimensions (material, emotional and temporal) are intertwined and that changes in one or the other has the power to unsettle one's perception of home as she concludes how "individuals' understandings of home are sensitive to changing contexts, emotions and social relations"

(Miller, 2019, p. 8). Similarly, in his article on belonging, Antonsich describes home as a place of familiarity, comfort and security yet also as a place of emotional attachment (Antonsich, 2010, p. 646). What is therefore to remember here is how housing is an integral part of migrant integration, not solely for the practical aspect of it, but when a house becomes a home, with an emotional attachment to it, migrants develop a stronger sense of belonging to their host country.

That emotional and affective attachment to one's home is however highly related to the social connections one makes in the home's particular emplacement. Indeed, Ager and Strang (2008) expose the importance that a home can have on migrants' social integration by pointing out "the social and cultural impacts of housing (…) [and] the significance of neighbours and neighbourhood in providing opportunities for learning from established members of the community" (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 171). Similarly, Miller's findings point out how her participants' "conceptualisation of home is deeply rooted in the social relations, materialities, economic dimension, daily practices and experiences" (Miller, 2019, p. 9). Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2016) have defined this phenomenon as the sociabilities of emplacement, namely how specific localities give both the constraints and opportunities for migrants to develop new connections and so to socially embed based on their place of residence. Glick-Schiller's sociabilities of emplacement have been developed based on the idea that migrants and local individuals socialize regardless of their differences through domains of commonality. Migrant integration is thus not limited to practical aspects, such as housing, but extends to a relational and social embedding, especially through migrants' social capital.

Speaking of **relational and social integration**, "features of social embeddedness are among the most influential factors for migrant settlement, onward movement, and return" (Korinek, Entwisle and Jampaklay, 2005, p. 794). Starting with the work of Ryan and Mulholland (2015) on the link between social capital, spatial and temporal attachment, the authors define social embedding as "a multi-layered process (…) involving different degrees of attachment and depths of trust and reciprocity between actors within various social domains. Rather than being spatially fixed (…) embeddedness may connect people in different places or shift between places over time" (Ryan and Mulholland, 2015, pp. 141–142). The key aspects that the authors point out in their study is how migrant social embeddedness spans social contexts and borders, evolves over time, and occurs at various degrees of intensity. It

is for those reasons that the authors focus on the term 'embedding' – as a verb in its continuous form, rather than embeddedness – which suggests a static form of attachment.

In terms of the variety of contexts where social embedding happens, Korinek, Entwisle and Jampaklay (2005) make the distinction between four environments, namely the household, the workplace, the neighbourhood and the wider community. This differentiation of social domains is in line with the work of Ager and Strang (2008) when they make the distinction between social bridges, bonds and links, respectively describing social connections between migrants and their family and co-national groups, with other communities and with state structures (e.g., government services). Similarly, and through the concept of sociabilities of emplacement, Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2016) explain how "encounters occur within the social spaces of residence, work or institutional activity" (p. 20). Social embedding is thus to be understood both at the micro and meso levels, where migrants integrate and belong to various places as part of individual involvements and as part of wider communities, be they co-ethnic or spatially defined. Social embedding is not limited to the local level in the destination country and a subsequent section will thus focus on the importance of transnationalism as part of migrant integration.

In terms of the variety of degrees at which social embedding can be displayed, Wessendorf and Phillimore (2019) have been the ones discussing this aspect of social embedding with more precision. They namely make the distinction between three types of social capital that migrants can develop in their host society based on the degree of their relations, be they with host country nationals or other migrants. They namely make the distinction between fleeting encounters, crucial acquaintances, and friends, all of which contribute at different points in time and to different degrees to migrants' integration and embeddedness. They finally expose how those relations have both a functional and an emotional role in migrants' settlement. Similarly, Antonsich explains how relationships are part of the factors that contribute to belonging, making a clear distinction between friends and family and weaker ties and occasional encounters (Antonsich, 2010). Finally, the idea that social embeddedness happens at different degrees has also been expressed in the organisational literature through the concept of organisation social capital, which consists of three interrelated dimensions, namely structural (the frequency of the relationships), relational (the type of relationships, with an emphasis on trust) and finally the cognitive

dimension (sharing vision and common goals). In that stream, it has been proven that (organisation) social capital increases work engagement (Andrews and Mostafa, 2019; Mostafa, 2019), organisational citizenship behaviours (Mostafa and Bottomley, 2020) and organisational identification (Yang, Gong and Huo, 2011), i.e., forms of integration, embedding and overall sense of belonging to the workplace (Mostafa *et al.*, 2019).

When discussing social embeddedness, it is thus important to make the distinction between the variety of contexts in which social embedding happens and the variety of degrees at which it happens. However, thinking that all types of social embeddedness count would be misleading, as "social capital activities within certain ethnic groups that were once viewed as positive for social integration are now perceived in a negative light" (Cheong *et al.*, 2007, p. 25). Indeed, scholars have made the distinction between social bridging (with host country nationals) and social bonding (with co-ethnic groups) and despite studies exposing how social bonding is of prime importance for migrants' emotional and practical integration (Ager and Strang, 2008), the distinction is directly echoed in public and policy discourse where "bonding social capital (…) has been interpreted as having negative effects on integration. (…) It has been contrasted with 'bridging social capital' (…) which is argued by policymakers to better support the development of language skills, social mobility and belonging" (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019, p. 126). Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz (2020) go even further by suggesting a hierarchy of embedding, where social embeddedness is one of the ties that bind migrants to their host country and society but is not one of the ties that count in the eyes of public institutions for accessing the right to remain in the UK in the Brexit context.

Overall, this section has given an overview on how migrant integration is a combination of both material aspects, such as housing, and social relationships. Through the concept of sociabilities of emplacement, this section has exposed how housing and social embeddedness relate to one another, and that is why migrant integration cannot be adequately understood solely through either a material or relational perspective but rather a combination of both. Furthermore, this section has highlighted how **emotions** are involved in both material and social perspectives on integration, with migrants developing affective attachments to both people and places, and so to their overall place of settlement (Zontini and Genova, 2022). Finally, both perspectives have emphasised how migrant integration and embeddedness evolve over **time** and over **space**.

Because migrant integration is thus emotional, spatial, and temporal, this project would like to highlight the dynamic process that migrant integration suggests, as something always ongoing, something always in construction. While Ryan and Mulholland (2015) talk about embedding, rather than embeddedness, to highlight the ongoing aspect of social integration, this study would also like extend this approach and place emphasis on migrant integrating, in order to adopt the dynamic approach that the process suggests. By adopting such an approach, the project also considers how each aspect of integrating (material, social, emotional, spatial, and temporal) is influenced and influences the other at different points in time and at different levels. Overall, this project considers that migrant integrating is a combination of material, social and emotional involvement from an individual into a new space and into a new community. Integrating varies over time and space, happens at different degrees and is therefore an ongoing and constant process that can ultimately lead to belonging.

Belonging is here to be understood as being "about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home' and (…) feeling 'safe'" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 197). Belonging is thus an emotion, a personal feeling (Antonsich, 2010), rather than being an actual physical state or even a legal status. Belonging thus happens when a house becomes a home, when fleeting encounters or acquaintances become friends and when comfort and safety overcome vulnerability and uncertainty. "Even in its most stable 'primordial' forms, however, belonging is always a dynamic process" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 199). Indeed, because of its volatile aspect (as a personal feeling rather than a legal status for instance), belonging has become part of the heated debate around migrants' rights to belong and politics of belonging run by certain countries, forcing migrants to constantly (re)negotiate their belonging. Antonsich indeed confirms how "a sense of place-belongingness [does not exist] outside the realm of power and its discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion⁄exclusion" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 649). A subsequent section (section 2.4.2) will thus approach belonging from a state perspective. In the meantime, the next section will focus on an aspect of migration and integration mentioned already several times in this review, namely transnationalism. While the articles discussed in this section have indeed focused on the local aspects of migrants integrating into their host country, most of them recognised how integrating is also a phenomenon happening across space, and in the case of international migrants, across borders (Butcher, 2010; Miller,

2019). It is for this reason that the next paragraphs will focus on transnationalism and highlight the ties that migrants keep with their country of origin, despite (or while) integrating into their country of destination.

While **transnationalism** is sometimes referred to as an approach to migration, it does not explain reasons to migrate but rather focuses on the ties that migrants constantly keep with their home country while living in their host country. Steven Vertovec has been working extensively on transnationalism and indeed defines the term as the "sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders (…) The collective attributes of such connections, their processes of formation and maintenance, and their wider implications are referred to broadly as 'transnationalism'." (Vertovec, 2009, p. 3). Transnationalism can therefore happen in social, cultural, economic, political and/or religious terms, does not limit itself to literal exchanges and movements across borders and indeed includes more figurative types of exchange, through the reproduction of social norms for instance.

While the term 'transnationalism' has a very contemporary resonance, the idea behind the concept is not new. Portes (2001) for instance clearly explains that while the concept of transnationalism is relatively new (developed in the mid-1990s), the phenomenon behind it is not, as he points to some past forms of transnationalism among Polish, Italian, and Russian migrants. Migrants have indeed been involved socially, culturally, economically and even politically in more than one country before the term 'transnationalism' had been developed, "yet, until the concept of immigrant transnationalism was coined and refined, the common character and significance of these phenomena remained obscure" (Portes, 2001, p. 184). More than recognising this phenomenon, the specificities of contemporary transnationalism reveal however the ease with which a transnational lifestyle can be adopted: with technological progress in transportation and communication, people can be involved in more than one society at a time, more easily than ever (Vertovec, 2002; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004).

Some authors would make a distinction between transnationalism from above and transnationalism from below (Portes, 2001), with the former being related to state actions and the latter to individual ones. However, this study relies on the definition given by Vertovec, which clearly states how transnationalism focuses on non-state actors. "Describing

the actions of states as transnational, [indeed], deprives the concept of analytic leverage, as it is meant to distinguish cross-border, nonstate actors *from* states and to show how the two constrain and shape one another" (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 1180). The current study is thus not making the distinction between transnationalism from above/below as it solely considers individual cross-border activities being part of transnationalism. Yet, while adopting an individual approach to transnationalism, the project intends to pay attention to the role of states, their policies, and institutions, in the way of migrants achieving a transnational lifestyle.

Because transnationalism is about ties, habits and norms kept over time and borders while migrants live their daily lives in their host countries, this project considers the transnational approach not only in line with a migratory lens but maybe more importantly with a settlement one, as it exposes a certain lifestyle that stretches across borders, rather than explains the relocation of one's principal residence. Through this aspect of a lifestyle literally and figuratively spanning across borders, transnationalism reflects the dynamic aspect of both migration and integration: migration is seen as more than a single movement from a country of origin to a country of destination and instead implies several back-and-forth movements, while integration is considered multilateral, with migrants expanding their ties between their home and host countries rather than trading their bonds and habits back home for new ones in their host country. Overall, transnationalism reflects how migrants evolve in more than one sets of norms, juggling physically and figuratively between at least two, sometimes combining both. A transnational lifestyle therefore points to how migrants are constantly negotiating both their physical movements across borders and their ways of integrating into their host country, all while staying connected with their home country. Adopting a transnational approach therefore suggests how both migration and integration are constantly being negotiated across space, time, and norms.

However, one of the challenges that transnationalism exposes is how it questions the concepts of belonging (discussed previously) and citizenship. A subsequent section will thus discuss in more detail identity and citizenship in relation to migration studies (section 2.4).

Overall, the current project adopts a transnational approach to both migration and integration in order to show how both are (1) ongoing processes, and (2) constantly renegotiated across time and space. By considering transnationalism for this project, the

author hopes to limit the methodological nationalism expressed previously and instead focus on migrants' lives and lifestyles spanning across borders. By adopting such a transnational approach to both migration and integration, the project also considers how life is possible beyond the nation-state borders that the modern world is based on, while at the same time recognising the importance of those borders in limiting, challenging and hierarchising migration. Indeed, "while international migrants and their descendants recurrently engage in concerted action across state boundaries, the use, form, and mobilization of the connections linking here and there are contingent outcomes subject to multiple *political* constraints." (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 1179).

Overall, this review has shown how individual migrant integration has practical, social, and emotional features, each influencing and being influenced by the other over time and space, and that is why this project considers integration and embedding as ongoing and dynamic phenomena, continuously being negotiated (Ryan, Kilkey, Lőrinc, and Tawodzera, 2021). Furthermore, through the notion of transnationalism, the idea that both migration and integration are ongoing phenomena has been brought to the forefront as it indeed reflects how migrants are continuously involved in more than one set of norms, both physically and figuratively. Finally, adopting a transnational approach to this project enables it to go beyond a potential methodological nationalism often present but criticised in migration studies.

However, while various authors recognise that integration is temporal and spatial, and so subject to changes based on the context (Miller, 2019), few have paid attention to how migrants consider the context into which they are integrating and how their own personal perception of that context influences their integration, and by extension their migration. Similarly, in the transnational literature, few authors recognise that migrants are not "entirely free and unfettered within transnational spaces" (Ryan, 2011, p. 87). Those authors indeed reject the idea of 'hyper-transnationalism' and instead call for situating transnationalism within particular institutional contexts (Kilkey and Merla, 2014). On that basis, there still is the need to consider macro barriers imposed on individuals in their way of living transnationally and to understand how migrants themselves perceive and respond to those barriers. Finally, while a methodological nationalism clearly limits the understanding of migration and integration as it takes for granted nation-states and their borders (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, 2002), completely overlooking the power of nation-states, their borders

and the implications that those latter ones have on migration and integration would be over-simplifying the contexts into which migration and integration happen. For those reasons, it is essential to consider the contexts into which migration and integration are happening. The next section will thus offer a macro-level perspective to integration and namely expose the way the management of diversity is considered by governments, through scrutinising the literature on assimilation and multiculturalism.

2.3.2 INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL: ASSIMILATIONISM, MULTICULTURALISM AND NEO-ASSIMILATIONISM

When arriving in their host country, migrants have to face local policies developed with the aim of managing migration and overall migrant integration. Around the globe, there is a clear distinction between countries adopting a multicultural approach to migration that is open to diversity, in opposition to countries adopting an assimilationist approach to migration that supports conformity.

Assimilation refers to the process of migrants losing their cultural distinctiveness and blending into the dominant culture (Alba and Nee, 1997; Brettell and Hollifield, 2015). Assimilation has also been "theorised as a multi-stage process where the structural mobility of immigrants and their descendants ultimately leads to established and immigrant-origin populations developing a subjective sense of social similarity with one another", pointing out both the structural (socio-economic) and the more subjective conception of assimilation (Schachter, 2016, p. 981). Countries adopt this type of migrant integration strategy believing (or at least claiming) that migrants need to blend into the mainstream culture to safeguard the nation's language, values, and religious standards. Indeed, countries adopting such an approach to migration management and migrant integration put an emphasis on the dominant culture in opposition to any other culture. It is often in the name of harmony and safety that those countries frame their assimilationist politics. Migration scholars studying assimilation have developed various measures to document whether migrants (and their descendants) assimilate into the mainstream society. Among those measures, the focus on migrants' socio-economic situation, their spatial concentration and neighbourhood integration, their linguistic skills and even the percentage of inter-marriage are considered (Schachter, 2016; Waters and Jiménez, 2005). A typical example of a country that has been encouraging assimilation is the United States. In the US, efforts are made by the state so that

migrants integrate by having to adopt the local culture, language and overall standards and values. The way it is achieved is often through education, media, social services, and overall public spending on learning English and on promoting American (Christian) values. These are also often replicated within the mainstream population through banal nationalism and unwaved flags (Billig, 1995). In the particular case of the US, one can also find the terms 'Americanisation' or 'melting-pot' that would also describe this phenomenon of Anglo-conformity. Past migration flows to the US were mostly from Europe, while current ones are from Latin America and Asia, adding a racial aspect to current migrant integration. However, assimilationism can also be found in various other countries, such as France for example, especially in respect to migrants having arrived post-decolonisation and its current Muslim communities (Rodríguez-García, 2010).

While some authors have documented the success of assimilationism towards the incorporation of migrants into the mainstream society (Waters and Jiménez, 2005), assimilationism naturally bears its own limitations. The study of Schachter (2016) for instance clearly highlights that a positive structural/socio-economic mobility does not necessarily equal a symbolic belonging (i.e., a symbolic acceptance) in the eyes of the mainstream society, thus suggesting a more tainted version of assimilationism. Similarly, Telles and Ortiz (2008) suggest how discrimination both at the individual and institutional levels hinders migrants' integration, even for future generations. Alba and Nee also warn us about segmented assimilation (or downward assimilation) which points to the segmented labour market and namely how migrant descendants "are likely to remain in their parents' status at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy and are then tempted to drop out of school and join the inner-city underclass" (Alba and Nee, 2003b, p. 8). Overall, even in the case of migrants accomplishing a positive socio-economic mobility, the constant marginalisation and racialisation of migrant populations prevent them from fully assimilating as they can never blend to a point of reaching equal chances and (symbolic) status as the mainstream population since "they are not regarded as having the same right to belong fully to the civil society or to the nation and they are not granted full privileges" (Rodríguez-García, 2010, p. 265).

Often defined and studied in opposition to assimilationism and its Anglo-conformity, **multiculturalism** can be defined as "a broad set of mutually reinforcing approaches or

methodologies concerning the incorporation and participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities" (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p. 4). Like assimilationism, multiculturalism can be manifested through education, social services, public materials, law, media, and overall public spending to ensure that migrants can access services in their own language, practise their own religion, and so on. Again, the aim of such measures is to reach social cohesion and harmony, but this time embracing cultural diversity, rather than trying to suppress it. The aim is thus still to blend migrant populations into the mainstream one, but this time by encouraging the co-habitation of different modes of culture. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the UK developed policies that would make it renowned as having become a multicultural country, for promoting tolerance, openness, plurality and ethnic diversity (Cheong *et al.*, 2007). It was believed that since forcing people to assimilate did not work, giving people the opportunity to express their own culture, language and religion would ensure that they would take part in the mainstream society, reducing discrimination, racism, and social altercations (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010). "Overall, the British multicultural policy [consisted] of multiple public programs and regulations that emphasize the recognition of newcomers as ethnic and racial minorities, for which the state arranges specific treatment, allowing immigrants to fully and fairly exercise their rights as British citizens without any discrimination" (Mathieu, 2018, pp. 46–47).

At the turn of the millennium however, the limits of multiculturalism arose: discrimination and racism were still persistent, issues of funding multicultural activities arose, socio-economic inequalities did not disappear, and so multicultural policies started being questioned (Back *et al.*, 2002; Però, 2013). Those setbacks also put into question whether multiculturalism was really encouraging harmony or whether it was suggesting separatism (Mathieu, 2018). It should however be pointed out that "the reasons for the apparent failure of the social incorporation of certain immigrant groups and for patterns of inequality between majority and minority groups are largely because of pervasive institutional discrimination and persistent racism rather than because of the inability of different ethno-cultural groups to live together" (Rodríguez-García, 2010, pp. 256–257), thus echoing the marginalisation of (certain) migrant groups already expressed as a limitation of assimilationism. In any case, the new millennium marked a turning point for the UK as a multicultural society, which by that

point was highly criticised, however traditional assimilation was not supported either (Alba and Nee, 2003a; Grillo, 2007; Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010).

The new-millennial trend rather reflects an intermediate form of incorporation, often depicted as 'cohesion'. Cohesion seems to be the new term to express a form of **neo-assimilationism**, promoting national unity and common values over cultural differences (Cheong *et al.*, 2007; Però, 2013; Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010). In his essay on the fuzziness of the concepts of 'multiculturalism', 'integration', 'diversity' and 'difference', Grillo (2007) indeed points out how in "contemporary rhetoric and policy in Britain (…) diversity is good; difference – interpreted as diversity institutionally embodied through multiculturalism – definitely bad" (p. 987) with "common values, a more inclusive (if elusive), civic, notion of Britishness, [being] the themes which policy has emphasized" (p. 991). Indeed, various authors have also documented this shift happening within (supposedly) cultural pluralistic societies. Rodríguez-García (2010) for instance exposes how "in the past few years, particularly in European countries, there has been a backlash against multiculturalism both at the level of policy and public discourse" (p. 256) and therefore calls for a "model of socio-cultural incorporation that reconciles cultural diversity with social cohesion" (p. 251). Going further into the analysis, Però (2013) has discussed the representations of migrants in relation to class, national identity and British society within public debates on diversity and social cohesion. He exposes how "there has been a public and institutional distancing from the appreciation of ethno-cultural diversity" (p. 1245) and "how the state's management of diversity and cohesion in contemporary Britain has [now] been actively centred around and defined against migration and ethnicity" (p. 1248). Overall, there is now this growing feeling that differences and multiculturalism are still in opposition to and prevent national unity, social cohesion and solidarity (Cheong *et al.*, 2007) but that classical assimilationism is not the answer. The idea of adhering to and sharing common values has been put to the forefront to promote migrant integration and diversity management policies around Britishness, the British language, and British values (Grillo, 2007), and therefore comes directly in opposition to migrant heterogenous cultures.

Overall, both multiculturalism and assimilationism refer to political, social, and economic debates on migrant integration, adaptation, and the management of diversity around notions of (national) identity and values, in the name of harmony. While

multiculturalism focuses on diversity, assimilationism focuses on conformity. Both have their own limitation as "it is clear that there is not, nor can there be, a single model of integration or accommodation that is valid for all cases" (Rodríguez-García, 2010, p. 252), especially when keeping in mind the inherent marginalisation faced by migrants. A tendency that has however been noticed in the last few decades is how various multicultural countries (such as the UK) went through a transformation of rejecting cultural plurality and instead promoted (national) cohesion, a tendency often described as a form of neo-assimilationism. This shift has direct implications for migrant integration, adaptation, and their inclusion/exclusion within states.

Indeed, going along with the aspiration of preserving national cohesion, neo-assimilationist countries, rather than promoting diversity, now see it as a threat to that cohesion. Migrants are thus depicted negatively in public discourses and in the media (Grillo, 2007; Però, 2013), the conditions for migrants to become citizens in those countries are made more difficult (as will be discussed in section 2.4.2) and migration is overall considered as temporary, circular, even exploitative, rather than permanent.

This second section of the review has focused on integration, and has highlighted that the concept can be studied both at the individual and the state level. At the individual level, the notions of home, social embedding and belonging have been discussed while at the same time exposing the transnational aspect that migration implies. At the state level, both classic assimilationism and multiculturalism have been exposed, while pointing out the emergence of a recent trend, namely neo-assimilationism, often framed as a quest for cohesion.

Within those two streams of literature, however, two limitations arise. The first one is the lack of connection between the individual and state perspective on integration and namely the lack of consideration for how migrants perceive and adapt to public discourses and policies that directly define their stay. While some studies have documented whether and how migrants feel integrated (especially in the American context (Lee and Bean, 2010; Massey and Magaly, 2010)) and while quantitative studies have documented the role policies have on migrant integration (for a review with a European focus see Laurentsyeva and Venturini, 2017), we still lack evidence on how migrants personally understand and face the discourses and policies of which they are the centre of attention. There is thus the need to investigate migrants' perceptions of national discourses and policies and see how their own understandings of the national context influence their migration and integration. Secondly,

the role and significance of one's identity has come up on various occasions within this section, be it in terms of ethnicity, legal citizenship or other facets of one's identity; yet a strong connection between identity and integration has not yet been suggested. The subsequent section will thus get on with this task as to first define identity as a pluralistic and dynamic process, before linking it to migration and integration studies.

2.4. IDENTIFICATION

While briefly touched upon in the two previous sections, identity seems to have made its way into both the migration and integration literature and that is why this current section will finally give it the space it deserves. Starting from the work of Jenkins (2014) to define identity and namely how the process implies a constant dynamism and a plurality between the individual and the collective, the section will then move on to discuss the particularities of identity in the context of migration and integration and will especially discuss the notions of belonging as well as citizenship. Overall, the section will highlight how identification is understood as being socially constructed and being continuously "a matter of external categorisation as much as internal self-identification" (Jenkins, 2014, p. xi).

2.4.1 DEFINITION: IDENTIFICATION RATHER THAN IDENTITY

Starting with the work of Jenkins and his book *Social Identity* (Jenkins, 2014), which he himself recognises as being redundant as identity always has something social, he first exposes how the process of identity, or rather identification, should be understood as dynamic, constantly being (re)constructed. He indeed explains how identity "is a process – identification – not a 'thing'; it is not something that one can have, or not, it is something that one does" (p. 6) and so "instead of 'identity', we should only talk about ongoing and open-ended processes of 'identification'" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 10). This first approach to the concept of identity/identification sets the tone for any further study on identity as Jenkins suggests that identity scholars should constantly keep this in mind in order to avoid any simplification, or worse, reification of the concept.

To strengthen the idea of identification as a dynamic process, Jenkins further points to the interactive aspect of identification. Indeed, whether identification is thought of individually or collectively, it always has an aspect of interaction. This is especially clear when the author points to the internal-external dialectic happening within individuals when they

try to describe themselves. This is also probably best understood when thinking about Goffman's presentation of the self, Mead's distinction between the 'I' and the 'me', as well as Cooley's looking-glass self (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Jenkins, 2014). All of those authors, Goffman, Mead, Cooley and by extension Jenkins explain how identifications, even the individual, more personal ones, are a matter of how one sees herself, including through the eyes of others, and is thus interactive. The interactional aspect of identification becomes even more obvious when Jenkins talks about the labelling perspective (too often forgotten in identity studies, according to him) and namely how people react – whether positively or negatively, to the identity assigned to them by others – through internalisation or resistance. Butler also offers a similar approach in her book *Giving an Account of Oneself* when she argues that "the 'I' has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation – or set of relations" (Butler, 2005, p. 8).

Overall, through Mead, Cooley as well as Goffman, Jenkins suggests how identity is about dynamic processes of identification. This dynamism happens both simultaneously within individuals, through an internal-external dialectic, and between individuals and/or groups, through interaction.

Jenkins then defines identification based on four main elements: similarity, difference, classification, and association. He first makes the call on how similarity and difference cannot be logically thought of without one another, as focusing solely on differences does not spell out commonalities on which identification relies; yet focusing solely on similarity would make the world one big community as it would not take into consideration differences. This is also established by Bauman when he explains how "identity battles cannot do their job of identification without dividing as much as, or more than, they unite. Their inclusive intentions mingle with (or rather are complemented by) intentions to segregate, exempt and exclude" (Bauman, 2004, p. 79). Based on this idea that identification relies both on similarity and difference, Jenkins then argues that identification then necessarily involves processes of classification (Jenkins, 2014, p. 24). Indeed, by pointing out similarities and differences, I am able to classify or categorise people (including myself). These categories necessarily involve a degree of hierarchies, preferences, or some sort of scale. Ultimately, the categorisation leads to a process of association. Overall, "categorisation is as much a part of our subject matter as self-identification" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 13) and that is why "identification makes no sense

outside of relationships" (ibid, p. 7), even for individual self-identification, which goes back to the idea of identification always being social and interactive.

Overall, and in order to adequately grasp who's who, Jenkins thus understands identification as a multidimensional classification, relying on both commonality and difference, and this at different levels: individual, community and institutional.

Building on this final point, an aspect of identification that is not particularly developed in Jenkins' *Social Identity* (though still touched upon) is the notion of plurality. Butler (1990) (who focuses a lot on identity differences, rather than on similarities) develops this aspect by explaining how identity categories (such as gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity and more) intersect with each other and so rather than talking about identity or identification, one should rather see the plurality of the terms, namely identities and identifications. In a world where "we live in municipalities, work in factories or bureaucracies, come home to families, send our children to school, present our spirituality in a vast array of churches, share our troubles in support groups, and convalesce in nursing homes" (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p. 13), it would be more accurate to see the "network of connections" (Bauman, 2004, p. 31) the self is called upon. Identities are indeed built based on deep personal reservoirs as well as more open, collective, even institutionalised resources, which often smoothly overlap though sometimes conflict with one another (examples in Andersson, 2010; Gibson, Dunlop and Raghav, 2020). Holstein and Gubrium (2000, building on Butler, 1990) summarise this approach by pointing out how "the question of identity is moving away from traditional queries into *who* am I to progressively become questions of *when*, *where* and *how* am I" (p. 105), as "who or what we are on one occasion may not come off in the same way on a different occasion" (p. 107). The authors thus directly expose not only the plurality of identification but furthermore the importance of context and how identifications evolve based on different contexts and based on interactions with different people.

This idea of changing identities, or at least changing the identity one (consciously or unconsciously) projects, based on the interactions one faces, has also been studied in the organisation literature. The call for understanding identity dynamics had indeed been raised at least two decades ago by Albert, Ashforth and Dutton (2000, p. 14) and had been further reiterated by various authors later on (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Brown, 2015; Mostafa *et al.*, 2019). It is as a potential response to this call that the concept of *identity work* had been

developed within the organisation literature, and namely referring to “people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165). Considering the more external interactive aspect of identifications, Watson further argues that “identity work involves the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives” (Watson, 2008, p. 129). While the literature on identity in organisation studies has mostly focused on occupational and organisational identification and their ascribed identity work (Andersson, 2010; Brown, 2015), the management, regulation or control of those identities (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), as well as the power of identities as organisational processes and their political origins (Brown, 2019; Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Mostafa, 2018; Mostafa *et al.*, 2019), some scholars have still attempted to consider the more private, personal or individual identities such as ethnicity and/or gender (Eräranta and Moisander, 2011; Essers and Benschop, 2007; Ramarajan and Reid, 2013) (refer to Brown 2019 p. 11 for more examples). In the end, Brown points out how identity is context-specific (Brown, 2019, p. 10), hence people engage in identity work, by giving the example from Essers and Benschop's study (2007) on Moroccan and Turkish female entrepreneurs “(shifting) their identities (and) constructing their selves at the intersections between gender, ethnic and entrepreneurial identities” (Brown, 2019, p. 11).

At last, identity work, the plurality and shifting aspects of identifications, confirms how identification is about dynamic processes of juggling within and between contexts and people. Identification is about manoeuvring facets of our selves, be they individual or collective. This directly comes to echo Levi-Strauss’ notion of *bricolage*, of building a self from what is available at a given time, an analogy already mentioned by both Holstein and Gubrium (2000) and Bauman (2004), as well as in organisation studies by Brown (2015). From those points, we understand Holstein and Gubrium’s approach to the self as “an object we actively construct and live by (…) it is a social construction that we both assemble and live out as we take up or resist the varied demands of everyday life” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p. 10).

Overall, this project considers identity as processes of identification, or identifying, as interactive simultaneously internally and externally, which rely on similarity, difference, categorisation, and association. Because of this interactive and multidimensional aspect, identification is plural, with projections of one's identities evolving based on contexts and interactions with various people. For those reasons, it is essential to relate identification to the context in which it is researched, namely in this study to the context of migration.

2.4.2 IDENTIFICATION AND MIGRATION/INTEGRATION STUDIES

When focusing on the context of migration, various aspects of identification appear to be particularly relevant, such as the importance of *difference* and *classification*, which a lot of migration public discourses as well as research focuses adopt. Indeed, with maybe the exception of Glick-Schiller and Çağlar's sociabilities of emplacement (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, 2016), who explicitly decided to focus on commonality, the rest of the time, migration is mostly discussed and so researched through lenses of difference (also framed as 'diversity' (Berg and Sigona, 2013)), classification, and eventually hierarchy. This is especially true in two particular domains: at the macro level around communities of value and the right to belong, and at the micro level, around one's citizenships, origins, and gender.

Macro perspective: community of value, right to belong, politics of belonging, politics of fear

Starting with the macro perspective on migration, identities play a peculiar role as to be (or rather to have become over the years) the main line of argument to make borders stronger, controls tighter and deportation easier (Wodak, 2015). Indeed, in the last few decades, there has been around the globe a resurgence of national pride, of authoritarianism, of right-wing populism, that still goes on. Typical examples would include but are not limited to the Brexit referendum shortly followed by the Trump election in 2016, the rise of nationalist parties and the seats their leaders have gained over the years in Italy, Austria, Hungary, Brazil and more recently in Poland. Behind that national pride lie discourses of national values, including ethical, racial, political, even sexual standards, and the development of *communities of value*, "composed of people who share common ideals and (exemplary) patterns of behaviour expressed through ethnicity, religion, culture, or language (…). The community of value is one of the ways states claim legitimacy, and in this way it often overlaps with ideas of nation" (Anderson, 2013, pp. 2–3). Anything not fitting in those values, anything not fitting in those

national standards, anything *different* is thus *categorised* as other, using the rhetoric of identity. And other is not good. Other is external to the impermeability of the community and thus leads to discourses of 'Us', within the community of value, and 'Them', outside of it. This leads to building boundaries, becoming always tighter, to preserve 'Us' from 'Them', as indeed, 'Them' are treated as a threat to the community (Anderson, 2013; Billig, 1995; Wodak, 2015).

Naturally, those communities of value are as imagined as nations are. "The notion of 'community' facilitates a seamless switch between scales, between the imagined national community and the imagined local community" (Anderson, 2013, p. 3). Combining the notions of nation-states as imagined communities on one hand (Anderson, 2006; Wodak, 2015) and of identity as socially constructed on the other (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000), nation-states, communities of value and national identities rely on each other as they are as imagined as one another. Referring to the notions of 'Us', 'We' and 'Community', Jenkins reminds us that while "these notions are imagined (…) they are, however, capable of being extremely powerful imaginings, in terms of which people act. They are anything but imaginary, in that they are enormously consequential" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 24). Communities of values are thus social constructions, embodying imagined nation-states, something also socially constructed in itself, and yet, regardless of that construction, politics are developed based on that imagined order.

The 'Us' versus 'Them' discourse and 'Them' being a threat to 'Us' leads to the question of who belongs to 'Us', who has the right to belong (Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz, 2020) and thus a politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Focusing on the first question and namely who belongs to 'Us', the bond linking nation-state to its people is the citizenship. Citizenship has both a formal aspect as well as a more substantive characteristic, linking both the legal aspect and the community of value together under the umbrella of the nation-state (Anderson, 2013). People who have acquired the citizenship of the nation-state by birth (be it as *jus soli* but especially as *jus sanguinis*) thus belong to it and to the community of value. Keeping in mind "the 'naturalness' of the assumption that 'belonging-through-birth' [means], automatically and unequivocally, belonging to a *nation* [is] a laboriously construed convention" (Bauman, 2004, p. 23), and yet, citizenship in this context still unifies people.

Things get complicated when one recognises that "there has never been a complete overlap between the boundaries of the national community and the boundaries of the population that lives in a particular state" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 207), which leads to the second question, namely who has the right to belong to 'Us'. The right to belong, i.e., the right to be granted citizenship and to naturalise has again two components: the legal and the substantial. In the British context, Anderson (2013) exposes how the legal aspect used to play a predominant role until recent decades, when naturalisation could be granted after having (legally) spent a certain number of years in the UK. In the last few decades however, one could notice a shift from the legal aspect of citizenship to the substantial aspect of it by noticing how "naturalisation procedures became the ground for asking and answering the question like, what is Britishness and what are British values? (…) [together with] a test for language and the understanding of British society" (Anderson, 2013, p. 104), suggesting a (re)nationalisation of language and culture as prerequisites of belonging (Wodak, 2015, p. 93). Adopting such a shift from a focus on legality to a focus on values makes it more difficult for migrants to naturalise as indeed the criteria for assessing belonging, being so subjective, give more power to 'Us' to deny naturalisation to 'Them'. It is thus in the name of values that boundaries between 'Us' and 'Them' are made tighter. Citizenship in this context rather focuses on separation than on unification as "when it comes to immigration, 'citizenship stands not for universalism but for closure' (Bosniak 2006: 31)" (Anderson, 2013, pp. 97–98).

Similarly, and in the context of Brexit, Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz (2020) make a clear distinction between the ties that bind (to the nation-state and the community of value) and the ties that count (in acquiring the right to remain in the UK and British citizenship). "Access to the right to remain needs to be 'deserved' (…) the ties that bind (…) are not viewed as enough. What matters is the ability to establish the ties that count in the eyes of society, as well as public institutions, which effectively handle their bid for the right to remain" (Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz, 2020, pp. 10–11). Ties that bind would mostly be relational and emotional, while ties that count would mostly be economic, demonstrating financial participation and contributions to the national society, suggesting "a widening gap between the rights of the most precarious and the most privileged" (Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz, 2020, p. 13). Citizenship in this context thus not only separates 'Us' from 'Them', but even within 'Them' there is a clear distinction between "the brightest and the best" (Anderson, 2013) and

Others, with Others again standing outside of the national standards and, as a result, supposedly not deserving to be part of the national community of value.

Overall, investigating the question as to who has the right to belong leads us to the third point of this line of argument for linking together identity with migration and integration studies: understanding what Yuval-Davis defines as the politics of belonging and namely the power that 'Us' has on granting or denying citizenship to 'Them'. Understood as the "dirty work of boundaries maintenance" (Crowley, 1999 in Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204), the politics of belonging make sure to separate 'Us' from 'Them' by developing "specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities (…). In different projects of the politics of belonging, the different levels of belonging (…) can become the requisites of belonging" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.197 and p.209). In relation to migration studies, place of birth, origin, race or religion are typical essential requirements to belong, making it extremely difficult for migrants to reach formal belonging (Antonsich, 2010), to access citizenship and to naturalise. Indeed, "national identity painstakingly construed by the state and its agencies (…) [aims] at the monopolistic right to draw the boundary between 'us' and 'them'" (Bauman, 2004, p. 22).

It should be pointed out that the politics of belonging is also highly related to what Bauman (2007) defines as the politics of fear, elaborated further in a book with the same title by Wodak (2015). Wodak indeed points out to the normalisation of exclusion that has been happening in the last few decades in Europe and beyond. Right-wing populist parties in particular seem to have managed to gain more and more seats over the years in both national and European elections, through a strategy comprising two main components: constructing fear and proposing scapegoats for current problems. On the one hand, fear is constructed through the suggestion and repetition of perceived and alleged dangers, going from change, globalisation, loss of welfare, climate change and more (Wodak, 2015, p. x), especially when those dangers come from outside the nation-state (a threat to 'Us'). On the other hand, scapegoats (the imagined enemy 'They') "are foreigners, defined by 'race', religion and language" (Wodak, 2015, p. 9). 'They' are to blame for damaging 'our' (Western) societies. 'They' embody the fear that populist, but also some mainstream parties play upon to allegedly provide safety and legitimate strong borders and tight controls, as indeed, "'in an age when all the grand ideas have lost credibility, fear of a phantom enemy is all the politicians have left

to maintain their power'" (Curtis, 2004 in Bauman, 2007, p. 16). The politics of fear thus relies on the same logic as identity and identification (namely similarity, difference, categorisation and association), with populist parties pushing the strategy to its extreme, through fallacy of sameness ('Us'), of difference ('Them'), of singularisation ('Us' as unique) and of comparison ('Us' as superior) (for more details on the use of fallacies by right-wing populist parties, refer to Wodak, 2015, p. 54). The politics of fear is thus based on (national) *identity* and on the identity rhetoric, namely built in opposition to others. In the end, through a simplistic presentation of positive self and negative (even dangerous) other, the politics of fear is a politics of exclusion (Wodak, 2015), relying on identities and identification, linking back to the politics of belonging and to the preservation of boundaries.

Finally, in the (extraordinary) case of a migrant being granted naturalisation and the citizenship to the nation-state, the substantial aspect of belonging is however far from being obtained. Indeed, one should make clear that citizenship, in its legal form, is far from automatically granting belonging to the community of value as indeed "even when political belonging is granted, this might still not be enough to generate a sense of place-belongingness" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 650). Yuval-Davis (2006) for instance points out how "entitlements and belonging do not always automatically constitute features of citizenship" (p. 207). A finding also found in Schachter's quantitative study on native-American perspective on migrants' integration when she summarises how "even groups treated as viable neighbours and friends are viewed as deeply dissimilar, and speaking fluent English, calling oneself American, and other positive characteristics (…) cannot overcome the symbolic boundaries that reinforce white individuals' perceptions of dissimilarity with others" (Schachter, 2016, p. 1007). Similarly, Anderson (2013) argues for making a distinction between people who have acquired a nation-state's citizenship through birth, and people who have acquired it through naturalisation as she draws attention to how "citizenship, as formal, legal status, is premised on equality before the law, but (…) formal membership of the state does not equate to membership in the community (…). The distinction, not valid in law, between naturalised citizens and those who have natural-born citizenship, is increasingly creeping into the rhetoric of policy" (p.110). Wodak confirms the nativist (i.e., blood-related) and ethno-nationalistic view on belonging when she claims that "belonging to a nation is frequently defined through ethnic and even racist categories (rather than, e.g., legal

citizenship)" (Wodak, 2015, p. 70). In the end, "although the naturalised citizen is required to be the embodiment of the 'Good Citizen', the guardian of citizenship, serving as proof of the state's commitment to rights, in practice, she will be constantly reminded of her tolerated status" (Anderson, 2013, p. 114).

Concluding this section on the links between identification, migration and integration at the macro level, national citizenships are used by governments to define who belongs, who has the right to belong and to run politics of fear and belonging. Identities and identification in relation to migration and integration studies are thus tools used by higher institutions to define alleged national boundaries and values, and to reject anyone who does not fit the national standards.

Individual perspective: citizenship, origins, and gendered migration

To understand how identity, migration and integration are related to one another at the macro level, the next questions that arise would thus be: how do migrants, at their own individual level, navigate within or between such communities of values, politics of fear and belonging? Do they, on their own, take control of the power of values and/or (legal) citizenship? And thus, how do identity, migration and integration relate to each other at the more micro level?

Starting with probably the most straightforward approach to identity, namely the citizenship in its legal form, long-term migration is often believed in both the public and academic spheres to aspire to a final, almost essential aim: the acquisition of the local citizenship (Anderson, 2013, p. 93). Whether the acquisition of citizenship is indeed the ultimate goal of one's migration goes beyond the scope of this project, but one could try to understand at least the personal reasons and idiosyncratic logic for applying for citizenship to one's host country.

Some would see in this application process the possibility for rightfully residing in one's host country forever, without running the risk of being expelled from it. Citizenship indeed provides the legal documentation and thus permission that enables whoever is in possession of it, and regardless of the way the citizenship had been acquired (i.e., *jus soli*, *jus sanguinis* or through naturalisation), to legally reside but also work and more in that country. For migrants in particular (i.e., people who entered the country without the citizenship but

who have acquired it over time), having their host country's citizenship would usually enable them to access more rights than what a simple visa would grant them, at least at the individual level, such as voting or accessing welfare benefits for instance. However, in some cases, being granted one's host country's citizenship can also mean losing, or at least having more restricted rights, as exposed by Kilkey in her comparisons of family reunification and care-giving arrangements for UK citizens, EU citizens and non-EU citizens living in the UK (Kilkey, 2017; Kilkey and Merla, 2014). In the end, acquiring the citizenship of one's host country enables individual migrants to make their migration and integration more stable and safer in respect to the law, and most of the time provides them with more rights, at least individually, (and so more freedom) in their country of residence. By acquiring their country of residence's citizenship, migrants make sure to have the legal tools in hand to face the normalisation of exclusion happening in certain countries, such as the UK (Wodak, 2015). Citizenship in this case is thus to be understood as the ultimate accomplishment in one's settlement.

On the other hand, however, citizenship could also be seen as giving the opportunity for further mobility. Indeed, "as much as it is associated with belonging and statis, citizenship is also about being mobile" (Anderson, 2013, p. 112), as the acquisition of a new citizenship enables people in possession of that additional citizenship the freedom to travel more easily, especially when one acquires a citizenship higher up in the global citizenship hierarchy (Castles, 2005; Harpaz, 2019). This hierarchy typically suggests that within the global system, there are top-class and lower-class citizenships, with the former being provided by Western countries (Spiro, 2019). Indeed, with their economic assets, their political stability and more generally their influence and power around the globe, developed Western countries provide citizenships that not only enable whoever is in possession of them to safely reside, work and more on their territory but furthermore enable them to avoid certain travel restrictions (e.g., visa) in certain regions of the world. Migrants who manage to acquire a first-class citizenship can enjoy not only more security and individual rights in their country of residence but also a broader freedom of mobility as their new citizenship is associated with a higher social status, which ultimately makes them more welcome than people with a lower-class citizenship (Bauman, 1998; Harpaz and Mateos, 2019). The acquisition of an additional citizenship in this context is thus to be understood as the occasion for further mobility, a greater freedom of

movement on an international scale and thus an improved transnational lifestyle, rather than being solely related to settlement and rootedness in one's country of residence.

Overall, by acquiring their country of residence's citizenship, migrants gain a greater control over their own individual freedom both in their country of residence and on an international scale: they can enjoy more individual rights, higher security, a greater freedom of movement and an overall greater social status.

However, identification in migration and integration studies also goes beyond the mere legal aspect of citizenship. Indeed, identities (such as ethnicity, race, religion, gender, but also status such as that of a spouse, parent, carer, etc.) have the power to unite people who share a common identity or identities. In the first and second sections of this literature review, the role of identity in relation to migration and integration has indeed been evoked beyond the mere legal aspect of citizenship.

In section 2.2.2 (Migration, sociological perspectives), the migration network theory and the diaspora theory exposed how ethnic, racial, religious and/or gendered identities favour certain flows of migration around the globe. In their introduction to the *Ethnic and Racial Studies'* special issue, Evergeti and Zontini (2006) for instance point out the "importance of inter-ethnic relations and the processes through which ethnic and diasporic communities utilize their transnational familial networks in maintaining ethnic identities, reproducing or changing ethnic values and rituals and negotiating caring responsibilities across borders" (p. 1028). Furthermore, a number of (often female) scholars now expose how migration, which was once thought of as a male phenomenon, is increasingly becoming a female phenomenon, with studies exposing women migrating mostly from poorer to richer countries to work in the care industry, often as nannies or maids (Giorguli and Angoa, 2016; Nawyn, 2019; O'Reilly, 2012). Zontini (2004a) for instance exposes the gendered aspect of migration, with Moroccan and especially Filipino women migrating on the basis of their role as carer. Carer is here to be understood both in terms of job position (domestic services to local families in their host country) and in terms of familial status (caring for their own family at home by sending remittances). Their particular skills combined with their gender and familial status are what makes their migration to Spain in this case more feasible, in comparison to men for instance. In Zontini's study, but also more broadly in migration studies focusing on gender, several aspects of migrants' identities are thus put forward to explain

migration: their gender, skills, and status. Yet, caring for one's family has also been investigated in relation to migrant men, especially around the (im)mobility of caregivers and receivers and of migrant men's fathering transnational experiences and so the idea of care being solely related to gender and especially women is to be nuanced (Kilkey and Merla, 2014; Kilkey, Plomien and Perrons, 2014). On the other hand, and within the expatriate literature, we can often notice the prevalence of male employees being sent abroad by their company while women are underrepresented in international assignments (Salamin and Davoine, 2015), suggesting again a certain gendered form of migration. The fact that migration is a gendered process is naturally related to the gendered job market, with men accessing more executive positions with international responsibilities (Ceric and Crawford, 2016), while women are often more numerous in the caring sector (Giorguli and Angoa, 2016; O'Reilly, 2012).

Similarly, in section 2.3.1 (Integration, individual level), the social embedding approach to integration has showed how again ethnic, racial, and religious identities, but also identities related to one's status (e.g., parenthood, job positions or skills), helped migrants to integrate into their new place of residence, to find a house or a job. Focusing on similarities, Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2016) for instance revealed how a shared language helped an unauthorised Columbian migrant to retain his job and to develop workplace sociabilities with a native-born US citizen of Puerto Rican origin. Their common Hispanic identity was the basis for their ties and assisted the Colombian migrant's integration into his new place of residence. Furthermore, Evergeti and Zontini (2006) highlight how "people modified the complex elements of their ethnic identities in order not only to cross social boundaries but also to fit into the multi-ethnic settings within which they found themselves" (p. 1027).

Overall, both in terms of migration and integration, various facets of identity can be used by migrants to support their transition from their home to their host country, through networks and diasporas but also through individual relationships, by putting forward aspects of their identities that they share (but not always) with other migrants or with the local population. This confirms how various locations can be defined as diasporic: the domestic, the public, the urban space but also the transitional one. Whether those identities lead to so-called migrant networks, diasporas or even to a job, the point is that the way migrants identify does play a role in their migration and integration at their own individual level. While at the

macro level their differences in terms of identity (or their supposed lack of commonalities) with the mainstream local population was framed into being a problem (or even a danger), their commonalities with other migrants or with the local population can lead to facilitated migration and integration.

Going back to this section's initial questioning, migrants thus do also, at their own individual level, take control of the power of values (their own) and of their citizenship (both in its legal and substantial forms). This confirms how identification, migration and integration at the micro level are related to each other in a way that can also be useful to migrants themselves, facilitating their move and settlement abroad. However, one of the major questions that still remains is how migrants navigate within politics of fear and belonging, within or in between communities and values that are claimed as not being theirs. How do individual migrants personally understand states' macro management of migration and diversity, and how do their own understandings of the macro context influence the way they identify? The thesis intends thus to address this point, with a unique emphasis on migrants' idiosyncratic perceptions.

2.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed three bodies of literature reflecting the experience of individual mobility: migration, integration, and identification. The migration literature focuses on the act of migrating, i.e., moving from one country to another, which has been defined as fluid, or liquid, to reflect its ongoing aspect, and also focuses on how motives to move overseas evolve over time. The push/pull model, the neo-classical approach and the brain-drain approach emphasise economic enhancement, career development and overall personal gain as reasons to move overseas, especially from the Global South to the Global North. The expatriate literature pays more attention to migration happening also from the Global North to the Global South, especially for career progression and personal realisation. The migration systems, diaspora, and network theories explain migration and its perpetuation based on relationships and linkages between people and between places. Secondly, the integration literature has come to complement the migration literature by exposing the opportunities and challenges once migrants are in their host country. In particular, the review has revealed how people become attached to both places and people over time, through the notions of

home, embedding and transnationalism. At the same time, the review has exposed how at the institutional level, the management of diversity is caught within a debate of opposing multiculturalist and assimilationist views, with a fairly recent trend promoting a form of neo-assimilationism. Thirdly, identification, understood as a dynamic multifaceted process, has been brought to those bodies of literature as it appeared to be central in both the migration and integration experience. At the institutional level, identities are indeed used to define communities of values, politics of belonging and politics of fear. At the individual level citizenships serve to provide legal residency and further freedom of mobility, while ethnicity, religion and/or gender have been delimiting certain experiences of migration and/or integration. The review therefore ends on the note that who one is in the (global) society defines the type of migration and integration one will experience. Finally, those three bodies of literature have shown to share two commonalities. First, the chapter has exposed how each concept could be studied at the individual or institutional level. Second, each process had been defined as dynamic: migration has been defined as fluid, integration as embedding and identification as ongoing.

However, within those three bodies of literature two main limitations arise. The first one relates to the fact that those three concepts represent separated elements of the migration experience and therefore a holistic approach to individual mobility is currently missing (only a few studies have combined different elements of the migration experience, such as Adamson, Triadafilopoulos and Zolberg, 2011; Delanty, Wodak and Jones, 2008; Ferbrache and Yarwood, 2015; King et al., 2006). They will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8). Individual migrants indeed do not go through the experience of migrating, integrating, and identifying separately or even consecutively. Instead, those experiences often overlap and sometimes even repeat themselves. The thesis therefore aims at addressing this limitation by considering the elements of migration, integration, and identification in relation to one another. More specifically, the review has revealed how each process is dynamic. The interpretation that the thesis aims at proposing will therefore also be dynamic in nature.

The second limitation coming from the three bodies of literature exposed in this chapter is related to how each concept could be studied from an individual or institutional perspective, yet a connection between the two is currently missing. The migration systems

theory does bring closer the meso and macro levels, yet it still leaves individual perspectives mostly aside. On various occasions the chapter has indeed questioned how individual migrants perceive and respond to the barriers put in place by macro forces in their way of achieving a transnational lifestyle, belonging to their country of residence, and being considered part of the local community. This is particularly relevant as individual migrants do evolve within the limits imposed by macro forces, both at the national and international level. Studying migration at the individual level should therefore also consider how individuals personally face those macro forces and how those ultimately impact their migration experience. The thesis therefore aims at addressing this second limitation by investigating individual migrant experience in relation to macro changes.

Finally, while this review has approached migration, integration and identification in a linear way due to the limits imposed by a writing style, each section has highlighted its connection to the two others: migrating is about a movement from a home to a host country, but it is also about integrating in a new country (be it an assimilationist one, or a multicultural one), which is mostly done through navigating between the host country context (belonging) and the life and habits from back home (transnationalism lifestyle). All those steps are influenced by the identities one carries, be it legal identity (citizenship) or more personal self-identities (gender, ethnicity, skills and more), as who one is will define the type of migration (legality, aspirations) and integration (welcomed, rejected, belonging to a diaspora) one will experience. Those identities, however, also evolve as one goes through those migratory steps, the challenges and opportunities of moving and settling, in order to fit in or on the other hand distinguish oneself and might ultimately provoke new migratory journeys. All in all, migration, integration, and identification are each individual dynamic processes that are however also related to one another in a continuous manner, fuelling one another. Migration, integration, and identification thus are continuously updating themselves while at the same time determining each other. Diagram 1 below summarises in a dynamic conceptual model the insights from the literature on migration, integration, and identification.

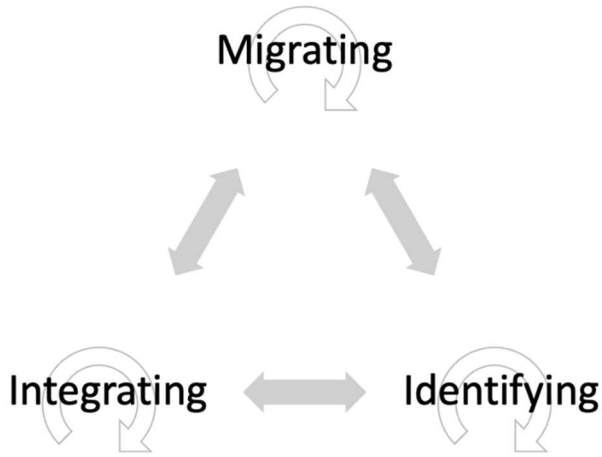

Diagram 1: Migrating, integrating, and identifying as dynamic processes influencing one another

Following this review, the thesis aims at two main objectives: (1) to explore migrants' own perception of macro contexts and forces in their host country, and (2) to investigate how a personal, migrant idiosyncratic understanding of those forces influence migrants' migration, integration, and identification. To reach those two objectives, the thesis' overarching research question is thus: *how do migrants' perceptions of macro changes influence their migration, integration, and identity?*

At this point, it should be highlighted that by taking an individual, migrant idiosyncratic perspective to explain the experience of migration, integration and identification in times of macro changes, the project could be criticised for methodological individualism (Bakewell, 2010), understood as the explanation of a social phenomenon through subjective individual motivations and agencies, instead of considering group or network dynamics. However, I do not claim generalisability or transferability. The thesis indeed does not assert to explain *all* types of migration and that migration is necessarily experienced the way the thesis describes it. Instead, the thesis' uniqueness is to provide a very subjective, migrant idiosyncratic perspective on migration, integration, and identification in times of macro changes. Drawing from this unique case, the thesis refines theories but does not claim that the approach and knowledge gained from it are applicable everywhere. Instead, the thesis contributes to theories by offering *an* explanation or perspective on migration, integration, and identification in times of macro changes. Further (subjective) explanations are encouraged to gain a better and more refined picture of how migrants themselves experience migration,

integration, and identification in times of macro changes. It will be by combining the experiences and perceptions of various groups of migrants facing various and different macro changes that theories will gain sophistication.

So, while the thesis indeed suggests that individual motivation and perception can explain social phenomena (such as migration, integration, and identification), the thesis is also clear (as one of its initial aims) that social (meso) and structural (macro) dynamics play their role *as well*. The core of the thesis is to purposefully adopt an individual, migrant idiosyncratic approach to the experience of migration, in order to bring a new perspective. This perspective should not be considered as the unique explanation for migration, but instead informs on one of the possible explanations for migration, in relation to other forces, at other levels of analysis. On that basis, the thesis is an advocate of the weaker form of methodological individualism, as namely considering that a social phenomenon can be explained in terms of individuals and their motivations *in combination with* social institutions and social structures (Udehn, 2002). The goal of the thesis has always been to link levels of analysis, yet the lens adopted is an individual approach.

Furthermore, in this study, macro changes are understood very broadly, including but not limited to legal, political, cultural, institutional and governing structures and policies, echoed in discursive and social practices (Bakewell, 2010; O'Reilly, 2012; Shore and Wright, 2011) and thus the study reflects a generally large macro context and broad macro forces. By focusing on 'change', the project recognises that macro contexts are malleable (O'Reilly, 2012) and so in a continuous evolution and realisation, with policies, laws and regulation being updated and/or created, with ruling parties and leaders taking turns, with discourses shifting focus, and so on.

Beyond offering a connection between micro and macro understandings of individual mobility from a migrant idiosyncratic and subjective perspective, the specificity of this study will furthermore be to embrace an approach to migration, integration and identification that is ongoing and dynamic (as much as the writing style will enable it) to reflect the diagram exposed above. For this reason, the thesis adopts a processual lens to migration, integration and identification that is further elaborated in the subsequent chapter on sensemaking.

CHAPTER 3: SENSEMAKING AND THE ANALYSIS OF MIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND IDENTIFICATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the concept of sensemaking is presented as originally developed by Weick (1995). Weick indeed conceptualised sensemaking based on seven characteristics, namely being grounded in identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on and by extracted cues, and finally driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (Weick, 1995). Since Weick, a number of scholars have been improving the understanding of sensemaking, and this chapter pays particular attention to two contemporary aspects of the concept, namely the role of emotion and cognition. From there, the chapter suggests that sensemaking can be used as an analytical framework. More specifically, beyond linking individual experiences to macro events, and by building on the process-thinking literature, the chapter presents how sensemaking can be used as a processual analytical framework to study phenomena as ongoing and dynamic. The chapter finishes by presenting several studies that have used sensemaking in migration and integration literature to highlight that better understanding of migration, integration and identification can be gained through sensemaking as a processual analytical framework.

3.2. SENSEMAKING

Sensemaking is a concept that has gained prominence in organisation studies thanks to the work of Karl Weick. The concept enables the understanding of macro contexts and changes from an individual perspective, i.e., with its flaws and errors. The concept consists of seven features and has mostly been used in relation to organising. This section will thus examine the concept as it had originally been developed by Weick, before exposing work going beyond Weick and suggesting contemporary studies and uses of the concept.

3.2.1 NATURE OF SENSEMAKING, NOTION OF CHANGE

Before jumping to what constitutes sensemaking, in which domains it is applied and why it matters, let us focus first on the nature itself of sensemaking and how it made its way into this project on migration, integration and identification.

According to Weick, sensemaking enables active agents to "structure the unknown" (Waterman, 1990, p. 41, in Weick, 1995, p. 4). More generally, sensemaking is triggered by the interruption of an ongoing activity, when something that ought to happen did not happen, when expectations are not met (Weick, 1995, p. 5). While this section will highlight later on the retrospective aspect of sensemaking, it is first essential to understand what is meant by this interruption, as it is the basis for sensemaking to set off. In this study, an interruption is understood as a discontinuation within an ongoing activity that is otherwise done unconsciously. This discontinuation can consist of the complete interruption (in the sense of stoppage) of that activity, or the modification of that recurring activity, whether it leads to positive or negative outcomes. Because the term 'interruption' carries a certain negative connotation, the preferred term to talk about and emphasise that discontinuation in the ongoing activity will be 'change'. Through the term 'change', both interruption and positive/negative modifications of an ongoing activity can be captured, regardless of the outcome of that change.

Sensemaking is thus by nature provoked by a change in an activity. Yet while changes occur daily, even multiple times a day, persistently interrupting our routines, this does not mean that we are constantly involved in sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). Indeed, as will be pointed out later on, sensemaking requires active agents and is enactive in itself. We are thus not constantly (unconsciously) making sense of all the changes we face daily (Colville, Brown and Pye, 2012). The change that triggers sensemaking has to be unsettling enough to go beyond unconscious adaptations to daily changes. The change has to put us in a situation uncomfortable enough to prevent us from (unconsciously) finding a solution and acting. It has to prevent us from going on with our daily routine and put us out of our comfort zone. It has thus to push us to actively and consciously question ourselves, with 'how did I end up here?' and 'what's next?' (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005).

3.2.2 WEICK'S PROPERTIES

Setting the tone of the nature itself of sensemaking, as coming into play when a change occurs to our ongoing activities that cannot spontaneously be faced, this section will now move on to describe the seven features that compose sensemaking as Weick originally developed the concept: grounded in identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on and by extracted cues and finally driven by plausibility rather than accuracy.

In *Sensemaking in Organizations*, (Weick, 1995) explicitly indicates that while sensemaking is triggered by a change (an 'interruption'), one of its necessary features is that "sensemaking begins with a sensemaker" (Weick, 1995, p. 18). Going back to the thesis' section on identification, we remember how individual identities are always in construction, as identification is a dynamic process between internal and external interactions (Jenkins, 2014). Sensemakers are thus continually involved in the processes of their own identification and on that basis, and following Mead's approach to the self, Weick explains how sensemaking is thus grounded in identity construction, namely through the sensemaker.

While this aspect of sensemaking is often well remembered, another aspect that Weick does mention – though which is often forgotten – is how the situation itself, the context in which the change happened, also defines which self sensemakers use to start making sense. Because we have various selves that are not always 'active', the situation in which sensemaking is required also defines which self will be in use. Sensemaking is thus grounded in identity construction and sensemakers' identities influence the way a change is made sense of. However, the reciprocal dynamism is also true: the situation in which the change happens influences which facets of the sensemakers' identities will be active in making sense (Mills, 2003). The dynamism happening between identity construction and sensemaking is thus reciprocal, with both sides mutually and continuously influencing each other. Diagram 2 below summarises this circular, *ongoing process* of influences between sensemaking and identity construction.

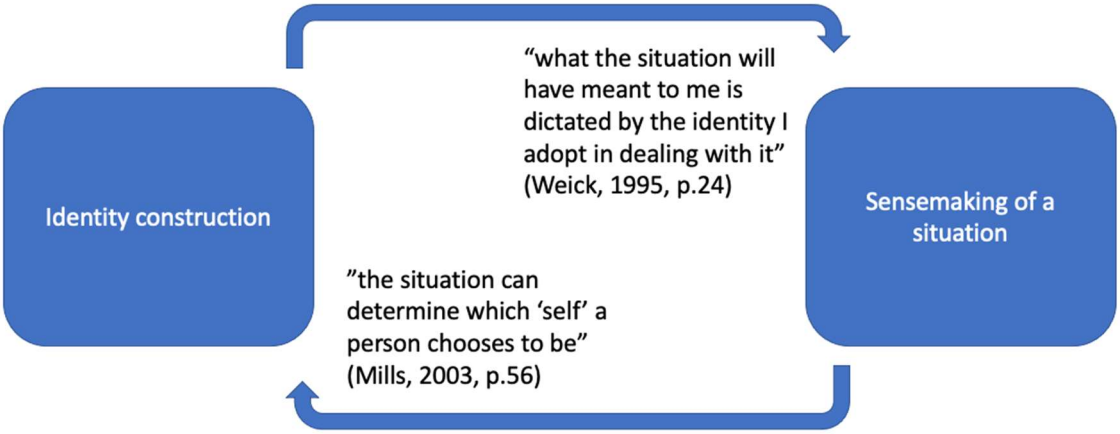

Diagram 2: Reciprocal dynamism between sensemaking and identity construction

The second feature that Weick advocates is how sensemaking is retrospective by synthesizing how "an action can become an object of attention only after it has occurred" (Weick, 1995, p. 26). Indeed, since sensemaking is triggered by a change, we cannot start the process of making sense of that change before that change actually happens. The making sense of that change is thus retrospective. While this feature of sensemaking, once exposed, is pretty straightforward, it has however several implications.

Indeed, "because the attention is directed backward from a specific point in time (a specific here and now), whatever is occurring at the moment will influence what is discovered when people glance backward" (Weick, 1995, p. 26). The senses developed in respect to the change follow then two rules: first, they are influenced by the current context in which sensemakers find themselves, and second, since sensemaking is retrospective and time has elapsed, the change which triggered sensemaking can only be a memory, and "anything that affects remembering will affect the sense that is made of those memories" (Weick, 1995, p. 26). Both the senses developed around, and the memory of, that change are thus influenced by the context sensemakers find themselves in. Furthermore, the context can influence both memory and senses developed in multiple ways and that is why "retrospective sensemaking is an activity in which many possible meanings may need to be synthesised because many different projects are under way at the time reflection takes place" (Weick, 1995, p. 27).

In summary, the fact that sensemaking is retrospective implies that the memory and senses of the change are influenced by the context in which sensemakers find themselves while doing the activity of sensemaking. Sensemaking is thus about making sense of a past event with elements from the present.

The third feature of sensemaking that Weick advocates is that it is enactive of sensible environments. The previous feature suggested how the situation sensemakers find themselves in influences the sensemaking. Yet, Weick also suggests that sensemakers influence the situations they find themselves in, as "there is not some kind of monolithic, singular, fixed environment that exists detached from and external to these people (…) people are very much a part of their own environments. They act, and in doing so create the materials that become the constraints and opportunities they face" (p. 31). There is thus a co-determination between sensemakers and environment, yet Weick warns us against the idea that an action is necessarily a behaviour as "the act that never gets done, gets done too late, gets dropped too soon, or for which the time never seems right is seldom a senseless act" (Weick, 1995, p. 37). This aspect of sensemaking as an enactive process thus implies that both actions as well as inactions generate meanings.

Then, Weick explains how sensemaking is social. This feature is pretty straightforward when one remembers how sensemaking is grounded in identity construction and how identification is social (Jenkins, 2014). This also goes in line with the fact that there is a continuous play of influence between sensemaking and the environments sensemakers find themselves in, which are in themselves social as well. Weick indeed confirms how "people actively shape each other's meanings and sensemaking processes" (Weick, 1995, p. 41) by building on Mead and the balance between the internal and external (social) self.

However, an important point to highlight is that despite some debates about individual versus collective sensemaking (Brown, Colville and Pye, 2015), it is not because sensemaking is social that meanings are necessarily shared. Indeed, people "are familiar with different domains, which means they have different interpretations of common events" (Weick, 1995, p. 53). What is shared is thus not the meanings developed but the (collective) action that will result from each personal sensemaking (Weick, 1995).

The fifth feature of sensemaking that is also highly related to sensemaking being grounded in identity construction is that the process is ongoing. Identity is about constant processes of identification, evolving based on contexts and interactions. Since sensemaking is grounded in identity construction, it is also evolving, constantly (re)constructing itself based on the contexts sensemakers find themselves in. Furthermore, the fact that sensemaking is ongoing is also in line with how the concept is retrospective and enactive of environments: the ongoing co-determination between sensemaker and environment implies that "the moment will influence what is discovered" (Weick, 1995, p. 26), while people *simultaneously* "create the materials that become the constraints and opportunities they face" (Weick, 1995, p. 31). This ongoing, simultaneous co-determination between sensemakers and environments, thus suggests how sensemaking is ongoing, continuously (re)building itself while sensemakers and environments affect each other.

Yet, it is important to reiterate here that people are not constantly making sense, as the nature itself of sensemaking is to be triggered by a change. "'If events are noticed, people make sense of them; and if events are not noticed, they are not available for sensemaking' (Starbuck and Milliken, 1988, p.60)" (Weick, 1995, p. 52).

The sixth feature of sensemaking that Weick advocates is that sensemaking is focused on and focused by extracted cues. "Extracted cues are simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring" (Weick, 1995, p. 50). Sensemaking (or rather sensemakers) thus focus *on* cues to make sense of perceived changes. From those cues (i.e., from specific aspects of the context) sensemakers then try to draw an understanding of the more general context. "Specific observation becomes linked with a more general form or idea in the interest of sensemaking, which then clarifies the meanings of the particular, which then alters slightly the general, and so on" (Weick, 1995, p. 51). It is on that basis that sensemaking is also focused *by* extracted cues, i.e., that the senses developed about the general context are formulated within the understandings of the particular cues. Sensemakers pay attention to particular cues to explain the general (*focused on*) and yet the general is understood through and limited to the cues extracted (*focused by*). That is why sensemaking is thus focused on and focused by extracted cues.

Finally, the seventh feature advocated by Weick is how sensemaking is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. This last feature also summarises most of the features

exposed so far. First, sensemaking is grounded in identity construction, which itself implies "the need for self-consistency, which is the desire to sense and experience coherence and continuity" (Erez and Earley, 1993, p. 26 in Weick, 1995, p. 20). It is thus in the nature of people to seek coherence, plausibility, in order to be in accordance with their own selves. Secondly, because sensemaking is retrospective and the change can only be a memory, this very memory cannot be remembered with full accuracy, but rather with what ought to be plausible. Then, the fact that sensemaking is social means that meanings are not necessarily shared, implying that various meanings exist for a single change. All meanings cannot be accurate, but all can be plausible. Finally, because sensemaking is focused on and by extracted cues (i.e., that the particular defines the general and vice versa), one cannot accurately make sense of the situation but has to limit themselves to what is plausible.

However, the fact that sensemaking is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy should not be considered an issue. Weick indeed confirms that "sensemaking is about plausibility, pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, creation, invention and instrumentality (…) the criterion of accuracy is secondary in any analysis of sensemaking" (Weick, 1995, p. 57). Accuracy is not necessary to understand how people make sense of a change, as whether their understanding of that event is correct or not, it does not prevent them from taking actions. In the end, "accuracy is nice but not necessary" (Weick, 1995, p. 56).

By trying to answer the questions about what the story is, and what comes next (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005), Weick shows how sensemaking is about making sense of a past event, with tools and context from the present, to take actions for the future. Sensemaking finds its roots within human beings, through identity construction and sociability, and by relying on plausibility it does not reject human interpretations, misconceptions, or even flaws but rather embraces them. Sensemaking has thus two main qualities for this current project: (1) offering an approach that is ongoing, with various processes continuously being at play and (2) gaining an understanding of macro changes from an individual perspective.

3.2.3 WEICK AND BEYOND

Since Weick's *Sensemaking in Organisations* (1995), various authors went beyond his seven features such as embodiment in sensemaking (Meziani and Cabantous, 2020), temporal

aspects (Hernes and Maitlis, 2011b; Patriotta and Gruber, 2015), different types of sensemaking (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020), individual, social or discrepant sensemaking (Brown and Humphreys, 2003; Brown, Stacey and Nandhakumar, 2008) and narrative and discursive practices in sensemaking (Brown, Stacey and Nandhakumar, 2008; Colville, Brown and Pye, 2012; Maclean, Harvey and Chia, 2012; Näslund and Pemer, 2012). This section pays particular attention to two further aspects of sensemaking, namely the cognitive and emotional aspects, and highlights how together with Weick's seven properties they enable the development of an analytical approach grounded in processes.

While not considered in his seven properties, Weick does expose cognition when highlighting how "sensemaking involves taking whatever is clearer, whether it be a belief or an action, and linking it with that which is less clear" (Weick, 1995, p. 135). His argument evolves around the fact that "beliefs can affect themselves through the mediation of action and (…) actions can affect themselves through the mediation of beliefs" (ibid, pp. 155–156). Said in other words, "expectations pave the way behaviourally to their own confirmation (…) [while] actions pave the way cognitively to their own confirmation" (ibid, p. 156). Weick therefore not only confirms that sensemaking is made both of enactment and cognition but furthermore confirms how both are interrelated.

This point is reiterated by Glynn and Watkiss (2020), who "track the evolution of Weick's theorizing regarding organizing and sensemaking" over the last 50 years (p. 2). One of their findings is how Weick originally focused on organising only, before moving on to sensemaking *in* organising – where the role of meaning as a cognitive aspect became prominent – to then focus on sensemaking *as* organising – with an equal emphasis on action and meaning. This study thus highlights that Weick developed the concept of sensemaking as we know it today by grounding it in the cognitive aspect of meaning development before linking it to enactment. By offering such an approach to the evolution of the concept of sensemaking, the authors make it clear that "meaning and action cannot be decoupled" (p. 10). The study thus confirms the balance on which sensemaking relies, namely as an interlacing between meaning and action, i.e., between cognition and enactment.

The cognitive aspect of sensemaking has also been developed in studies using, though also going beyond, Weick. In their paper on learning from errors, Catino and Patriotta (2013) define cognition as "the mental processes involved in gaining knowledge and comprehension,

including aspects such as awareness, perception, reasoning, memory, and judgment" (p. 439). They highlight how "cognition becomes particularly salient when individuals face unexpected circumstances and thereby need to switch from routine processing to conscious awareness" (pp. 460–461). The authors thus bring cognition to the forefront of sensemaking by highlighting how learning from an error is done through sensemaking processes of cognitively responding to a change in an activity. Furthermore, the paper highlights how cognition and emotions are interrelated processes, influencing each other, rather than antithetic concepts, as "cognitive appraisal of the situation (e.g., deviations from the expected) affects emotional states (timing, valence, and intensity), which, in turn, activates forms of information processing (automatic, mindful)" (p. 461). The paper thus highlights how sensemaking is triggered by an interruption in the activity (an error) and calls for repair. The reparation is possible through the acquisition of knowledge (learning), which is itself grounded in the connection between cognition, emotions, as well as safety culture. Cognition and emotions are thus interrelated processes of sensemaking, that can ultimately lead to learning from errors.

Building on this study, the second aspect important for sensemaking is the role of emotions. Weick touches on emotions when he suggests that sensemaking is ongoing: "an interruption to a flow typically induces an emotional response, which then paves the way for emotion to influence sensemaking. It is precisely because ongoing flows are subject to interruption that sensemaking is infused with feeling" (Weick, 1995, p. 45). Yet emotions are not considered to be part of Weick's properties of sensemaking but are rather seen as derivatives, as a side-effect of a change in an ongoing activity. Weick does not grasp (yet) that emotions, rather than simply being the result of a change, might participate to triggering and stimulating sensemaking. A decade after his book however, Weick with Sutcliffe and Obstfeld recognises that "the most important lost opportunity in the 1995 book *Sensemaking in Organisations* was fuller development of a theory of organisational sentiments" (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005, p. 418) and thus confirms that "further exploration of emotion and sensemaking is crucial" (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005, p. 419).

In the following year, Bartunek et al. (2006) developed a paper on an organisational change implemented on individual nurses. In their article, the authors not only investigate a macro change from a micro perspective, but furthermore pay attention to the nurses'

emotional responses. One of their findings is that within nurses' units, "there appears to have been a kind of emotional contagion", influencing the group behaviours (Bartunek *et al.*, 2006, p. 202). This finding enables the authors to suggest that "affect might be related to understandings of the change" (Bartunek *et al.*, 2006, p. 202) and to call for the development of "more adequate understanding of the roles that recipients' sensemaking and affect play in change initiatives" (Bartunek *et al.*, 2006, p. 203).

Answering this call, Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence published a paper on "Sensemaking and emotion in organisations" (2013). In their article, the authors explore the role of emotions at three different stages of sensemaking, namely when sensemaking is triggered, when meanings are developed and finally when sensemaking is to be concluded. The authors suggest that it is "the emotional reaction to a triggering event [that] provides individuals with the energy to engage in sensemaking" (Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013, p. 237). The authors thus go beyond Weick by incorporating emotions as part of the triggering process of sensemaking, rather than seeing them as mere reactions to an interruption. Furthermore, the authors also pay particular attention to both the valence and the intensity of those emotions. They argue that "different emotions will have very different impacts on sensemaking processes" (Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013, p. 238), thus affecting both the meanings developed and the closing of sensemaking. In the end, the authors conclude that emotions do play a role "in triggering, shaping and concluding sensemaking", confirming the "deeply interconnected nature of sensemaking and emotion" and thus call for "much more sensitive analysis of the role of emotion in understanding how sensemaking processes vary across sensemaker and sensemaking context" (Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013, pp. 236–238).

Finally, a more recent study by Mikkelsen, Gray and Petersen (2020) points out the effects of unconscious emotions in dysfunctional organisational dynamics. The authors indeed combine Weick's approach to organising with systems psychodynamics and highlight how "unconscious emotions, sensemaking and reactive behaviour occur in a persistent self-sustained pattern" (p. 23). The strength of the paper is to highlight how those unconscious dynamics happen across different levels, offering a cycle from the individuals, to groups, organisations and even society, and back again.

Cognition and emotions in sensemaking have thus been of interest for the last decade. All those studies have extended the work of Weick by bringing cognition and emotions to the

forefront of sensemaking. It is important to reiterate here that emotions are not considered to be in opposition to the cognitive aspect of sensemaking but that both rather influence each other. For this reason, this project considers that the sensing of sensemaking has both a cognitive and emotional aspect, rather than focusing on one over the other, and agrees with Fernando and Patriotta (2020) when they state that "sense is made both cognitively and emotionally" (p. 10). Furthermore, cognition and emotion continuously influence each other in an attempt at developing senses, thus reinforcing the idea that sensemaking is an ongoing practice.

However, it is important to point out that there still remains a number of sensemaking aspects about which scholars have not come to an agreement. In particular, "there is no consensus on whether sensemaking is best regarded primarily as sets of individual-cognitive (e.g., schemata, mental maps), collective-social (interactions between people) or specifically discursive (linguistic/ communicative) processes (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). Second, while some scholars regard sensemaking as occurring on a daily or even moment-to-moment basis, and relevant to every mundane interaction and event (Patriotta & Brown, 2011), for others it is triggered by much rarer cues that occur most notably in times of crisis or puzzlement (Weick et al., 2005). Third, although most researchers, in deference to Weick (1995), have highlighted the retrospective nature of sensemaking, yet there is a strand of theorizing and empirical research that insists sensemaking may be future-oriented and can occur prospectively (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Gioia, 2006; Ybema, 2010)" (Brown, Colville and Pye, 2015, pp. 267–268). Within those debates, the project focuses on the individual-cognitive processes of sensemaking, with emotions as influencing this cognitive process. Furthermore, and as reiterated on various occasions, the project considers that sensemaking is not a mundane process but is instead the result of an interrupted activity of which one cannot spontaneously make sense and/or enact to resume the activity, but rather needs to cognitively assess the interruption. Finally, and as will be exposed further through the data, the project considers the importance of past, present as well as future in the chronology of sensemaking. On those bases, the chapter will now sum up the qualities of sensemaking and the value in using the concept as an analytical framework to namely approach migration, integration, and identification from a processual lens.

3.3. SENSEMAKING AS A PROCESSUAL ANALYTICAL LENS

Overall, the previous section has presented the concept of sensemaking through the seven features developed by Weick (1995). The section has also exposed more contemporary approaches to sensemaking and has highlighted in particular two features, namely the cognitive and emotional aspects of the concept. From this short review, this project considers sensemaking as a prismatic lens (Naidu, 2016) through which the data will be gathered and analysed. In particular, sensemaking will be used as an analytical lens to study migrants' own perception of changes in terms of their migration, integration, and identification, and this, from a processual perspective. In this section, I indeed build on how sensemaking can be used as a processual analytical framework, by bringing closer sensemaking and process-thinking literature.

It must first be stated that sensemaking as a processual lens has already been suggested by Hernes and Maitlis (2011b). In a book dedicated to *Process, Sensemaking and Organising*, they highlight on the very first page of their introduction how "meaning is located in the process itself; it is made in an ongoing present in which past experience is projected upon possible futures. Meaning is thus not received from stable concepts outside the process (…) but rather is made within the process itself. This is what makes sensemaking central to processes and the making of meaning an ongoing activity central to understanding organisation from a process perspective" (Hernes and Maitlis, 2011a, p. 27). However, rather than considering sensemaking and process thinking in the world of organising, I suggest extending it beyond the workplace and using and adapting it to the coordination between migration, integration, and identification.

More specifically, and according to Langley (2007), "process thinking involves considering phenomena dynamically – in terms of movement, activity, events, change and temporal evolution. (…) process thinking may involve consideration of how and why things – people, organizations, strategies, environments – change, act and evolve over time (…) or, adopting a more radical process ontology, how such 'things' come to be constituted, reproduced, adapted and defined through ongoing processes" (p. 271). For this project on using sensemaking as an analytical processual lens, two aspects of process thinking are particularly central: first, thinking in terms of verbs and gerunds instead of nouns, and second,

as hinted in Langley's definition, thinking in terms of recursive or even conjunctive approaches rather than linearity. Through those two aspects of process thinking, I argue how sensemaking can be used as a processual analytical framework to study (from an individual perspective) phenomena as ongoing.

A classic example for grasping process research is when turning nouns into verbs or gerunds. This aspect has also been encouraged in the sensemaking literature, linking sensemaking to process thinking. Building on the review on sensemaking presented in the previous section, several authors indeed highlighted the importance of considering gerunds rather than (static) nouns in order to embrace phenomena's continual temporal dimension (Colville, Brown and Pye, 2012). Maclean, Harvey and Chia for instance "searched for evidence of processes that might be expressed in the form of gerunds, asking ourselves, what processes were our interviewees spontaneously enacting in recounting their life-history narratives?" (2012, p. 25), while Mikkelsen, Gray and Petersen focused on "the adoption of a process-oriented language emphasizing verbs and gerunds" (2020, p. 3) to illustrate the continual dynamism happening between the two sets of care system under scrutiny. In both studies, sensemaking is used as an approach to embrace processes and temporal continuity through an emphasis on gerunds and verbs, rather than on nouns. In the process literature, Langley (2007) made a similar point when exposing how thinking processually involves "turning nouns into verbs" (p. 275), herself building on the work of Weick (1995). This point was reiterated in a more recent article by Cloutier and Langley (2020), who also recommend "thinking of phenomena in terms of gerunds or verbs instead of nouns" (2020, p. 20) in their article dedicated to process theoretical contribution to highlight the sequences of events underlying process thinking. All in all, sensemaking and process thinking have this commonality that they both encourage to research and encapsulate the dynamic aspects of phenomena. Sensemaking and process thinking thus go hand in hand and that is why sensemaking can be an effective tool as a processual analytical lens.

Besides, the sensemaking literature has emphasised the ongoing aspect of sensemaking itself, but also the context, and thus the events (or changes) under study (Weick, 1995). Yet, the process literature goes a step further and comes thus to complement the sensemaking literature by suggesting that processes can take different forms. In particular, in the process literature, distinctions are made between linear and more circular forms of

processes. Cloutier and Langley (2020) develop a typology of four different styles: linear, parallel, recursive, and conjunctive. While linear and parallel forms resonate very much with the ongoing aspect of sensemaking in the sense that they highlight how phenomena are composed of phases happening one after the other in a linear, or sequential, way, the recursive and conjunctive forms go a step further by highlighting how phases can be more circular, or fluid, and so repeat themselves over time. Bansal, Smith and Vaara (2018) confirm how "early process studies considered how entities changed from one time period to the next (Mintzberg, 1978; Pettigrew; 1990). Starting in the late 1990s, however, scholars argued for a 'strong' process approach that diminishes entities altogether and explores phenomena as always changing" (p. 1190). To distinguish linear from circular processes, scholars have started to use the terms 'weak' for linear and 'strong' for circular processes (Bansal, Smith and Vaara, 2018; Cloutier and Langley, 2020). Building on the process literature, sensemaking as a concept but also as an analytical framework can make gains with its emphasis on dynamic events by not only considering weak forms of processes, but by furthermore embracing a stronger processual approach to dynamic events. Sensemaking and processual thinking thus again go hand in hand in their interest in processes, yet the process literature allows a more refined (and stronger) processual approach to events. Yet, one should not forget that the uniqueness of sensemaking is to investigate macro changes from an individual perspective. In this study, sensemaking will thus be used to study macro changes from a migrant perspective, yet building on the process literature, attention will be paid to strong processes to enhance the understanding of migrating, integrating, and identifying.

Overall, "'sensemaking' is an enormously influential perspective (…) associated strongly with research that is interpretive, social constructionist*, processual* and phenomenological" (Brown, Colville and Pye, 2015, p. 266, italic added). The use of sensemaking as a processual analytical lens for this project on migrants' perception of macro changes will offer:

- A highly personal and context-specific version of an event, thus embracing migrant identity and an idiosyncratic perspective of the macro context.
- An emotional approach to migration, integration, and identification.
- A strong processual approach to migration, integration and identification, as constantly ongoing phenomena.

Furthermore, the context of the study, namely Brexit, as a macro turbulence in which individuals need to navigate, also calls for a processual approach as "Brexit can be understood as both a moment and a *process* of disruption (…) this disruption (…) raises questions for migrants about their rights as residents of another country, about elements of their identity, about their sense of belonging in a place or community, and about their home as something that continues to be experienced and developed" (Miller, 2019, p. 8, italic added). The context of this study will be discussed in more detail in section 5.2.

Before moving on to the methodology chapter of the thesis, the next section will briefly outline the few studies that have combined sensemaking with migration and/or integration. It will be interesting to point out that while sensemaking has been considered, a processual lens has not necessarily been put forward.

3.4. SENSEMAKING AND MIGRATION STUDIES

When focusing on sensemaking applied to migration and/or integration research, one might be surprised to notice the scarcity of papers getting on with this task. Yet, in the last decade, a few authors have started paying attention to sensemaking in this context. Keeping the structure of macro, micro and organisational perspectives, this section will now present the few studies relating sensemaking to migration and integration before concluding this section on the further need to bring those two streams of literature together, especially through a processual lens.

Starting from the macro perspective on migration, Geddes and Hadj-Abdou (2018) recently applied sensemaking to EU migration governance by analysing how European policy elites were making sense of the migration flows happening in the Mediterranean region. "Rather than detailing the 'outputs' or 'outcomes' of European migration governance systems – such as laws and policy approaches – this paper adopts a different approach by exploring the underlying perceptions and understandings of migration held by actors within migration governance systems" (Geddes and Hadj-Abdou, 2018, p. 143). The authors indeed apply the concept of sensemaking to the European elites (and actors) who then develop the policies framing migration to the EU. The strength of the paper is that it links elite actors' sensemaking of migration to how these perceptions then shape migration governance, thus clearly highlighting the sensing and the making of those actors. Yet, the paper clearly highlights how

the “understandings among EU policy elites have developed through interaction with other major destination countries” (p. 158), thus missing out on the chance to build a connection between elites responsible for (macro) policies and individual migrants. Because of its focus on migration governance, the paper does not offer a migrant idiosyncratic perspective on this governance, i.e., from the eyes and understanding of the individuals going through the migration process and having to face the policies developed around them. Sensemaking in this study is thus mostly used for its (basic) purpose, making sense, rather than as an analytical framework, where dynamic connection between micro and macro contexts and actors could have been gained.

At the more micro level, four studies stand out as to have applied sensemaking to migration/integration research, and this from a migrant perspective. The first study by Macías Gómez-Estern and de la Mata Benítez (2013) focuses on internal migrants’ and non-migrants’ identity development in Spain. The authors combine narrative and sensemaking to highlight how their participants try to create coherence around their migration experience and identity construction. The strength of the paper is that it focuses on narratives as an enactive and cognitive tool for senses to be developed. Indeed, the authors consider “narrative both as a discourse mode (a way of speaking about experience) and as a way of organising experience (a way of thinking)” (Macías Gómez-Estern and de la Mata Benítez, 2013, p. 351). It is thus through narratives that the authors link sensemaking together with migration experience and identity construction. Furthermore, the authors pay attention to the structure and content of those narratives and highlight the emotional evaluation of migration. However, the narratives of migration experience very much focused on personal, individual experiences, with little information on how the macro context (e.g., policies, discursive practices) influenced those personal experiences of migration and identity construction. Once again, the chance to link individual actors to the macro context is missed, despite the use of sensemaking. Furthermore, while attention is paid to identity construction, which we can understand as dynamic and ongoing, no particular attention is paid to the processual element of it.

Similarly, the second paper bringing together sensemaking and migration at the micro level is also about “narrative as sense-making tool in the construction of migrants’ identities” (Macías Gómez-Estern, 2015). The specificity of this paper in comparison to the previous one is that it focuses on space and place as *dynamic* concepts for identity construction,

sensemaking and also enactment, thus jumping on the missed processual opportunity of the previous two papers. Yet, a connection between individual experience and macro context is still not strongly established, missing out on the uniqueness of sensemaking as an analytical framework. However, a strength of those two papers (Macías Gómez-Estern, 2015; Macías Gómez-Estern and de la Mata Benítez, 2013) is to consider sensemaking in relation to migration and also identity (re)construction, which goes in line with the aim of this present project, reinforcing the centrality of identification in migration experiences as well as in sensemaking.

The third paper bringing together sensemaking and migration/integration at the micro level is a bit different, as it focuses on the context of forced internal migration (Naidu, 2016). In her paper, the author indeed focuses on the senses made and actions undertaken by people in Zimbabwe who have been forced to leave their home to end up in a ghetto-like camp. The focus on the paper is thus on how those forced migrants reconstruct their displaced lives, with a special interest in space, place, and home. The first strength of the paper is that rather than considering sensemaking simply as a result of narrative practices, the author considers how "narrative itself can function as a sense-making tool" (Naidu, 2016, p. 226). Sensemaking in this paper is clearly outlined to be used as a framework, a "prismatic" lens (Naidu, 2016, p. 221) to understand migrants' displaced lives. Furthermore, and because she considers sensemaking in its whole, the author also considers the enactive aspect of sensemaking within a particular context. She argues that "both the physical as well as the discursive actions of the displaced migrants (participants in this study), their enactments *in the context* of living in [camp], unveil how they assemble sense out of the chaos and disorder set in motion by being forcibly relocated" (Naidu, 2016, p. 227, italic added). Overall, this paper on sensemaking applied to forced migration confirms how "sense-making is about (…) [being] able to navigate in and amidst the ongoing complexity of the world. However, it is also about rendering that complexity into action" (Naidu, 2016, p. 233). The limitation of this paper is however to have highlighted how those displaced migrants have been forced to move following a macro-level political decision (namely to clear various precarious areas by categorising the housing, buildings, and overall activities as illegal), yet not apply sensemaking to how migrants perceive this macro change, but solely to how they perceive the effects of this change on their lives, i.e., their relocation. So, while the (local displaced) context is

included, it would have been interesting to analyse migrants' own understandings of the (macro) policy put in place, which subsequently implied being forced to move, and thus to have made a link between a macro-level decision and individual lives by exposing migrants' own understanding of macro forces.

Finally, the most recent paper considering sensemaking in the context of migration/integration at the micro level is the study by Herrero-Arias, Hollekim and Haukanes (2020) on southern European parent migrants in Norway. The focus of this study is on the legitimation of parents from southern EU countries to move to Norway around the idea of family projects. Through narratives, the study exposes both the satisfaction and disillusionment of the parents by focusing on their aspirations to build a family in a more child-friendly country. The paper thus combines sensemaking, narratives and legitimation applied to the context of migration. The strength of the paper is to have managed to position individual reasons to migrate and individual legitimation within a broader context, namely within the Norwegian discourses on family and parenthood. Indeed, "inspired by the lens of sense-making and storytelling (Maclean et al., 2012), [the authors] discuss that the parents tried to make sense of their migration experiences and to legitimate themselves as parents and citizens through their storytelling and family aspirations *in particular contexts and discourses*" (Herrero-Arias, Hollekim and Haukanes, 2020, p. 8, italic added). The strength of the paper in relation to sensemaking is thus to bring the (macro) context (into which sensemaking is happening) into the understanding of the narratives proposed by the participants. Contrary to the studies discussed so far, this paper puts the narratives of the participants *in relation to* broader macro forces and national discourses. The emphasis is thus not solely on the narratives offered by participants but furthermore on how the national discourses influence those narratives and hence influence the participants' sensemaking (and legitimation). The narratives are thus understood within particular contexts and hegemonic discourses that the authors recognise and take on board in the analysis of their participants' narratives. In this paper, sensemaking is thus clearly used to link micro and macro phenomena.

Finally, the last approach bringing together sensemaking and migration can be found in the organisational literature. In particular, two studies stand out, with the first one by Glanz, Williams and Hoeksema (2001) applying sensemaking to expatriates in a theoretical

paper, while in the second study Fernando and Patriotta (2020) apply it to skilled migrant workers from Sri Lanka.

In their conceptual paper, Glanz, Williams and Hoeksema (2001) consider the concept of sensemaking in the context of expatriation (including assigned expatriates, their families, freelancers and more), particularly in relation to expatriates' adjustment and integration in their host country. They start by pointing out how expatriation often fails due to a mismatch between expatriates' expectations and the reality of the expatriation, thus triggering sensemaking. The strength of the paper is that the authors develop a conceptual model in which they combine elements of sensemaking, including the individuals' past experience, their general personal characteristics, the local interpretation schemes and finally the influence of others to help determine the type of response that expatriates demonstrate in terms of acculturation. Through this model, the authors argue that "the emphasis in the management of expatriation [is] placed on preparation and arrival, while (…) the sensemaking theory would tend to suggest "anticipatory adjustment" is unlikely to be possible, as it is in the nature of the sensemaking process to be retrospective. Reflection is required to bestow meaning. Helping expatriates develop realistic expectations may well be helpful. One aspect should be guarded against, though, and that is to suggest to prospective expatriates themselves that "culture shock" can be avoided" (Glanz, Williams and Hoeksema, 2001, p. 116). In the end, the paper suggests that sensemaking in the context of expatriation is more relevant once the expatriation has started rather than before, i.e., when expatriates are in the middle of developing meanings and actions in regard to their move and new assignments. The authors do recognise that empirical data would be required to confirm this conceptual model and encourage future research to focus on sensemaking and various other aspects of expatriation. In this study though, while confirming that sensemaking can be a useful tool once expatriation has taken place, the concept is not used as an analytical framework to either connect micro/macro contexts or study processes.

More recently, Fernando and Patriotta (2020) published a paper on sensemaking in the context of skilled migrants experiencing occupational downgrading. In their article, the authors highlight how their participants produced three different narratives in respect to their migrant status and their occupational downgrading, namely 'disregard', 'opportunity', and 'fit'. "These narratives were grounded in identification with the Asian ethnic collective, and

took the form of a pervasive 'them versus us' pattern" (Fernando and Patriotta, 2020, p. 6). The authors thus offer here a link between sensemaking and identification in the context of migration studies, as per the suggestion of this current project. Furthermore, the authors focused both on the cognitive and discursive aspects of sensemaking by highlighting how each narrative had been built based on perceptions (cognition) and felt experience (emotions). Overall, the paper concludes that despite facing occupational downgrading, skilled migrants made sense of the situation through the creation of a positive (Asian) identity by namely distancing themselves from their (Western) managerial team. The strengths of the paper are first to have brought together sensemaking, identity, emotion, and cognition in the context of migration studies; furthermore, the authors have applied sensemaking to migrant workers, i.e., not solely migrants in their private sphere or workers in their organisational settings. Instead, the authors have managed to bring migrant idiosyncratic identity into the workplace and have highlighted the influence of that specific migrant identity on an organisational issue. Sensemaking in this study is thus applied to an organisational setting and takes into consideration the importance of migrant workers' backgrounds, perceptions, and experiences. Sensemaking is here used to connect individual migrant experience and organisational context, in thus a nice attempt to span levels of analysis.

Overall, what is to remember from those studies that have applied sensemaking to the migration/integration literature is the importance of emotions, cognition, narration, and identity construction. In particular, the study by Fernando and Patriotta (2020) has brought to the forefront the importance of considering migrant idiosyncratic identity in the context of organisational study, thus confirming the importance of the relationship between migration, (migrant) identification, and sensemaking. However, most of those studies did not use sensemaking to its full capacity as an analytical framework. While most studies recognise that the context matters and that sensemaking should be understood within particular contexts and hegemonic discourses, few have actually analysed sensemaking in relation to the broader context (with the exception of Herrero-Arias, Hollekim and Haukanes, 2020), thus missing out on the opportunity to relate individual experiences to a macro context. Furthermore, none of the studies explicitly considered sensemaking as a processual lens, a way to study migration, integration and/or identification as ongoing phenomena.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the concept of sensemaking as originally developed by Weick (1995) as well as through more contemporary approaches, especially around the role and importance of emotions and cognition. The chapter has further highlighted how sensemaking could be used as a processual analytical framework by building on the process-thinking literature. As a processual analytical framework, sensemaking allows us to study macro changes from an individual perspective and to consider phenomena as constantly ongoing, especially through a strong processual lens. In the end, the chapter presented a number of studies that have used sensemaking in migration or integration studies and exposed how the concept has never fully been used as a processual analytical framework.

In this study, sensemaking will thus be used both for its original purpose (i.e., individual understanding of macro changes) and as a processual lens. Through sensemaking, this project proposes to advance the understanding of migration, integration, and identification by focusing on migrants' sensemaking of a macro change and namely embracing their own perceptions, emotions, and experiences of that change. By paying particular attention to the processual aspect of sensemaking, the project will go beyond the studies so far combining sensemaking and migration studies.

One risk of using a sensemaking lens for investigating migration, integration and identification is privileging individual perspectives (over group dynamics for instance) and so be criticised for methodological individualism (Bakewell, 2010). As expressed previously (in section 2.5), the thesis is an advocate of the weaker form of methodological individualism and considers that social phenomenon such as migration, integration and identification can be investigated through an individual lens *in combination with* other lenses, such as social structures (Udehn, 2002). By using a sensemaking lens for the investigation of migration, integration and identification, the thesis does recognise its potential limitations but nonetheless proposes that this novel approach will be valuable as a *processual* lens for the investigation of those concepts. The next chapter will therefore introduce the methodology adopted to carry out this project, exposing how migrant idiosyncratic perception of macro change as well as the dynamic nature of events are central to this project.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter exposes the methodology adopted to carry out this project on migration, integration, and identification as ongoing and related processes, in a context of macro changes from an individual perspective. This chapter is built following Guba's understanding of paradigms (Guba, 1990) as well as Denzin and Lincoln's research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 18). According to Guba, paradigms are "a basic set of beliefs that guides action" (1990, p. 17), which in the case of research comprises three elements: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Together, those three elements represent the nature of reality and knowledge, the nature of the relationship between the research and the researched, and finally the way the researcher should go about finding knowledge (Guba, 1990, p. 18). Denzin and Lincoln's research process (2018) on the other hand comprises five phases: the first two phases encompass the researcher as a multicultural subject and the philosophical paradigms already suggested by Guba. This chapter engages with those points in Philosophical Paradigms (section 4.2). The third phase of the research process addresses research strategies with a particular focus on design and analysis, which this chapter covers in Research Strategies (section 4.3). The fourth phase is about methods of data collection and analysis which are respectively discussed in Methods of Data Collection (section 4.4) and Method of Data Analysis (section 4.5). Finally, the fifth phase of the research process is about interpretation and evaluation, highlighting how "behind these terms stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 16). To address this final point, the chapter finishes on some Reflexive comments (section 4.6) about the role and position of the researcher.

4.2. PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGMS

4.2.1 A RELATIVIST APPROACH TO SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Starting from the first element of Guba's understanding of paradigms, to namely address what the nature of the 'knowledgeable' or 'reality' is (Guba, 1990, p. 18), this thesis adopts

an approach to reality and knowledge that can broadly be defined as constructivist. Indeed, by seeking to explore how individuals' perceptions of macro changes influence their migration, integration and identification, the focus is on individuals' personal realities, yet without undermining the role of the researcher.

To understand this philosophical stance, it is first essential to understand its historical roots, as the stance will form the basis of this thesis' overall research paradigms. Constructivism came from interpretivism, which itself was born out of the wish and need to break out from traditional positivist stances that suggest a realistic approach to reality and knowledge, and an objective position of the researcher. Interpretivists, on the other hand, believe that inquiries into human science are unique and therefore cannot take the positive stance of the natural sciences. Instead, they "celebrate the permanence and priority of the real world of first-person, subjective experience" (Schwandt, 1998, p. 223). It is important here to highlight that according to Schwandt (1998), constructivism falls within this paradigm, as to namely adopt a subjectivist approach to reality and knowledge. However, constructivism goes a step further than interpretivism. "Constructivists are deeply committed to the contrary view that what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective" (Schwandt, 1998, p. 236). For interpretivists, reality is subjective, yet it is also unique and needs to be interpreted. For constructivists, reality is constructed and therefore plural. Schwandt thus highlights interpretivism's paradox of "how to develop an objective interpretive science of subjective human experience" (1998, p. 224), which constructivists address by acknowledging the existence of multiple realities. Thus, for constructivists, knowledge is only the results of the interaction between the researcher and the subject of inquiry (Guba, 1990), i.e., knowledge is socially constructed. The implication of such a difference is particularly salient around the role of the researcher, as will be addressed in section 4.6.

In respect to this project, the literature on migration and integration has suggested how these are individual processes, with personal motivations to move and personal experiences to settle abroad. It was further emphasised that the reality of migrating and integrating depended upon who one is in the society, i.e., suggesting that this reality was dependent upon one's identities. If we consider that one's identities give access to certain experiences and hence to a certain form of reality, then reality can only be idiosyncratic,

relative to individuals' particular characteristics. Accepting that realities are idiosyncratic thus suggests that realities are multiple, and that they "exist in the form of multiple mental constructions" (Guba, 1990, p. 27). Secondly, the concept of sensemaking suggests how for a single event, a variety of sensemaking exists (Brown, Stacey and Nandhakumar, 2008) as the concept is itself grounded in identity construction, with individuals developing senses to promulgate self-esteem and cohesion (Weick, 1995). Using sensemaking as an analytical lens in this project therefore pre-supposes an understanding that there is no such thing as a single 'true' reality, but that instead knowledge and reality rely on individuals' personal traits and experiences, be they internal (self, cognition) or external (social interactions). As such, sensemaking suggests that "we construct knowledge through our lived experiences and through our interactions with other members of society" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 103). Finally, by adopting a processual lens to migration, integration and identification, this project suggests that things are always in movement and evolving. People's experiences evolve, both in terms of action and cognition. Their realities are thus also continuously recreating themselves and that is why realities are relative to those personal evolutions. Realities are therefore "socially and experimentally based, local and specific, dependant for their form and content on the persons who hold them" (Guba, 1990, p. 27).

In the end, this project adopts an approach to knowledge and reality that can broadly be defined as *constructivist* (Guba, 1990) as it is understood that realities exist in people's minds (including the researcher's) rather than being set in stone, 'out there'. The main argument in relation to this project's literature is how realities rely on people's characteristics and identities and are therefore multiple. More specifically, the ontological stance of this project is *relativist* (Guba, 1990), with realities varying among and within individuals, their experiences and personal traits. This particular stance derives from the literature, the analytical framework as well as the researcher's own position. A subsequent section will offer reflexive comments as to highlight the role and position of the researcher in this project (section 4.6).

4.2.2 BEYOND SUBJECTIVISM: INTERSUBJECTIVISM

Guba suggests that by adopting a constructivist approach to knowledge and reality, the notions of ontology and epistemology become obsolete (Guba, 1990, p. 26). Indeed, by accepting that realities are multiple and that knowledge is constructed by the interaction

between the researchers and the researched, Guba suggests that "what can be known and the individual who comes to know it are fused into a coherent whole" (Guba, 1990, p. 26). If realities are multiple, idiosyncratic to people, then researchers are not exempt from this phenomenon. Accordingly, within a constructivist approach, Guba advocates that subjectivism, i.e., the subjective interaction between researchers and topics of inquiry, is the only way to present the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched.

However, at the turn of the millennium some authors argued that the incompatibility and the incommensurability theses that had up until then made a clear distinction between quantitative and qualitative research ought to be rejected (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 6). Instead of seeing paradigm differences (or even contradiction), those authors argued for the complementarity of paradigms and hence put aside the idea of single theoretical paradigms. In the current state of affairs, i.e., where it is now accepted that multiple paradigms can be used, it is essential to spell out which epistemological stance this project adopts, complementary to its constructivist position.

Starting from a constructivist, relativist approach to knowledge and reality, i.e., accepting that realities are multiple, mentally constructed, and idiosyncratic to individuals, suggests that becoming knowledgeable about those realities is also subjective to individuals. Indeed, by rejecting positivism, constructivists suggest that human science and natural science cannot and should not be researched the same way, but most importantly that objectivity cannot be reached, as the researcher necessarily has a role to play in the collection and analysis of the data. The subjectivist epistemology has been suggested by Guba (1990) as the one to go within a constructivist paradigm. Guba indeed explains how subjectivism "is the only means of unlocking the construction held by individuals. If realities exist only in respondents' mind, subjective interaction seems to be the only way to access them" (Guba, 1990, p. 26).

Going beyond Guba however, and building on the literature of this project, all three concepts of migration, integration, and identification not only suggested that they are individual, personal processes, they also suggested how they are social processes: identities are built internally and externally based on social interactions (Jenkins, 2014), while migration and integration opportunities (as well as limitations) depends on social relationships (such as

in diasporas, networks, and sociabilities of emplacement (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, 2016; Ryan, Erel and D'Angelo, 2015)). Sensemaking on the other hand has also been defined as social (Weick, 1995), even raising a question about its collective attribute (Brown, Stacey and Nandhakumar, 2008). All in all, rather than focusing solely on the interactions between researchers and their respondents as a way to access knowledge and truths, it is essential to consider that respondents (as well as researchers) are part of bigger social networks and that their one-on-one interactions are themselves affected by other social interactions.

Beyond subjectivism, this project thus adopts an approach that could be described as intersubjective: "a way of thinking about who we are in the world that is based on the belief that we are not separate individuals (entities) but we are always in relation with others" (Cunliffe, 2016, p. 742). Cunliffe indeed develops this approach based on Ricoeur's notion of the self being always in relation to others, which directly echoes this project's consideration for plural and external identities, namely through Jenkin's *Social Identity* (Jenkins, 2014). More specifically though, Cunliffe explains how "intersubjectivity is construed as cognitive (commonsense understandings), interactional (social and/or conversational practices), and theorized as a process of sensemaking at an individual or community level" (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 657). Not only does an intersubjective approach thus coincide with the three concepts of this project on migration, integration, and identification, but furthermore it enables and recognises the construction of knowledge through a processual lens, of meanings and senses being developed both cognitively and socially.

However, while an intersubjectivist approach is adopted for this project, it is important to reiterate here that the focus of this project is still on individual perspective. While relationships and networks will be recognised as being part of individual migrants making sense of their experience, it is believed that reality and the knowledge about that reality are anchored into the individual actors that went through the experience of migrating. Their networks and various social encounters will be taken into consideration as being part of their migration, integration, identification, and sensemaking, but the focus will not be on those networks. Instead of a meso-level analysis, the project adopts a micro-level analysis, while recognising the influences of networks on individuals. The reasoning behind this position goes back to the ontological stance of this project, with "the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. This goal is

variously spoken of as an abiding concern for the life world, for the *emic* point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping *the actor*'s definition of a situation" (Schwandt, 1998, p. 221, italic added).

Going back to Guba's understanding of paradigm, this project adopts an approach that is closely related to his appreciation for constructivism (Guba, 1990). Indeed, the project embraces an ontological stance that is relativist, but goes a step further in its epistemological stance by supporting intersubjectivism (building on Cunliffe, 2011, 2016) over subjectivism, as originally advocated by Guba (1990). Both ontological and epistemological stances derive from the literature of this project, its analytical lens as well as the researcher's own position vis-à-vis reality, knowledge and the relationship between researchers and researched. The last element of Guba's understanding of paradigm is methodology, which is addressed in the subsequent sections. Methodology will encompass Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) research process phase 3, as to namely consider the research strategies, and phase 4, the methods of data collection and analysis.

4.3. RESEARCH STRATEGIES

Starting from the philosophical paradigms of this project, it is important to reiterate here that interpretivism, and by extension constructivism, as well as subjectivism and intersubjectivism, were born out of the wish to break out from traditional positivist and objectivist approaches to research, particularly around the belief that natural and social sciences could not be undertaken in the same way. From those debates, qualitative research gained ground over the years and is now recognised as a research strategy on its own. Bell, Bryman and Harley explain how "quantitative and qualitative research represent different research strategies and that each carries with it striking differences in terms of the role of theory, epistemological issues, and ontological concerns" (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019, p. 36). In particular, they define qualitative research as being typically constructionist and interpretivist, while recognising that not all qualitative projects necessarily adopt those paradigms (ibid, p.35). With this project being constructionist, a qualitative strategy resonates the most with the adopted philosophical paradigms.

More precisely, "the choice between quantitative and qualitative methods cannot be made in the abstract, but must be related to the particular research problem and research

object" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000, p. 4). Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that when research projects evolve around a principal research question, rather than objectives or hypotheses, then a qualitative strategy should be favoured. This project clearly revolves around a principal research question as to namely investigate *how migrants' perceptions of macro changes influence their migration, integration, and identification*. More specifically, the problem explored here is migrant idiosyncratic perceptions of macro changes in relation to their migration, integration, and identification. The research objects are migrant workers, yet more precisely, it is their perceptions, i.e., the meanings they make of macro changes and the sensemaking they develop. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) advocate that a qualitative strategy is better suited for projects that want to emphasise words, especially in opposition to quantification.

Furthermore, this project has the particularity to adopt a processual lens to migration, integration, and identification and to study macro changes through the concept of sensemaking. It is essential to highlight here that by adopting a processual analytical lens, an emphasis is put "on a dynamic, relational, and antidualistic ontology. This ontology describes a world that is in constant flux, where individuals and environments are mutually constitutive" (Bansal, Smith and Vaara, 2018, p. 1191). In particular, Bansal and her colleagues make a distinction between two approaches to qualitative process research. The first one focuses on sequences of events and considers a chronology of events happening one after the other. The second one focuses on the ever-changing nature of events, including events happening simultaneously (Bansal, Smith and Vaara, 2018). Building from the literature, the study considers that migration, integration, and identification continuously influence one another and so suggests that the analysis of the influence of macro forces on the three processes will also be conducted through a strong processual approach, i.e., embracing the ever-changing nature of phenomena.

The final point to raise in relation to this project's research strategy has to do with the relationship between theories and empirical data. Broadly defined, three approaches can be identified: the deductive reasoning (where hypotheses are deduced from theories and then tested against the data), the inductive reasoning (where theories are generated out of the data) and the abductive reasoning (where elements from both are used at different stages of the research process) (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019).

This project will adopt an inductive approach to data and theory for three principal reasons. First, the investigation of this project focuses on how migrants' perceptions of macro changes influence their migration, integration, and identification, and therefore has not generated any particular hypotheses, models, or theories to be tested. The investigation is instead characterised by its open-ended aspect, as to namely *explore* phenomena happening between subjective understandings of macro changes and individual migration, integration, and identification. Secondly, the call to embrace migrant idiosyncratic understanding of macro changes through the concept of sensemaking puts individual actors at the centre of the research project, which is best achieved through an inductive reasoning. Furthermore, the recent events brought up by the Brexit context and the currently scarce (yet growing) body of literature investigating its various effects also calls for an approach that would let us see what this specific context has to offer in relation to existing theories. An inductive, open-ended reasoning allows to put into light the novelty also generated by the context under scrutiny. Finally, in an inductive reasoning, the role of the researcher is not obscured, but instead it is recognised that "researcher infers the implications of his or her findings for the theory that prompted the whole exercise" (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019, p. 20). An inductive approach thus goes hand in hand with the philosophical paradigms underpinning this research project as to namely actively consider the implications that researchers have on the data gathered and analysed, and on feeding back to theories, especially through their own interpretations. Naturally, an indicative approach bears its own limitations as some knowledge of the literature was acquired before collecting data. Yet, it should be pointed out that the aim of this project is not to test the conceptual model developed from the literature but instead to put it in relation to macro factors from an individual perspective, reflecting thus a more exploratory project.

In order to reach this aim, the project adopts a strategy based on a case study. Case study is here understood as "a research strategy that examines, through the use of a variety of data sources, a phenomenon in its naturalistic context, with the purpose of 'confronting' theory with the empirical world. This confrontation can take the form of (…) searching for a holistic explanation of how processes and causes 'fit together' in each individual case" (Piekkari, Welch and Paavilainen, 2009, p. 569). In this thesis, a case-study design is indeed used to investigate how individual migrants make sense of macro changes and how such

perceptions influence their migration, integration, and identification. The thesis aims at giving a holistic explanation of the experience of mobility by combining migration, integration, and identification and by relating individual experiences to their understanding of macro changes. The case study is indeed ideal to investigate migrant idiosyncratic perception of macro changes as with a case study the emphasis tends to be upon an intensive examination of the setting (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). It is from this intensive examination that it will be possible to enhance and refine existing theories. Yet, as is often the case in projects designed around case studies, generalisability or transferability are not the aim or even claimed to be reachable. Instead, the focus is on an intensive evaluation of a unique case, which through its deep analysis of multiple data sources will still enable us to refine existing theories. With that line, the thesis invites scholars to develop their own unique case studies to refine further the relationship between migration, integration, and identification from a migrant idiosyncratic perspective related to macro changes. The specific case on which the thesis focuses is the case of French skilled migrant workers living in the UK and facing Brexit as an event reflecting macro changes, which will be exposed in more details in section 5.2.

All in all, this project adopts a strategy that is defined as qualitative, strong processual, and inductive because of its philosophical paradigms, its analytical lens, and the problem investigated, as well as the context and subjects under review. This strategy takes the form of a case study in which social individual actors are at the centre of the project without undermining the role and implication of the researcher.

4.4. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The subsequent aspect of Denzin and Lincoln's research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018) is to consider the methods of data collection and data analysis. This current section will focus on data collection, exposing the methods adopted as well as the fieldwork strategy, while the next section will focus on data analysis (section 4.5).

When adopting a qualitative, inductive research strategy, a variety of options are available to the researcher, including but not limited to individual or group interviews, ethnography, and case study. "The researcher chooses a qualitative methodology based on the project's purpose; its schedule, including the speed with which insights are needed; its budget; the issue(s) or topics(s) being studied; the types of participants needed; and the

researcher's skill, personality, and preferences" (Cooper and Schindler, 2014, p. 151). The following sections will highlight the reasons behind the adoption of a methodology based on two complementary methods of data collection, namely individual interviews and participant observation, as part of the thesis' case study strategy.

Individual, semi-structured, open-ended interviews

The aim of this project is to understand how migrants' idiosyncratic perceptions of macro changes influences their migration, integration, and identification. According to Brinkmann, "interviewers are normally seeking descriptions of *how* interviewees experience their world, its episode and events, rather than thoughts about *why* they have certain experiences" (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 580, italic in original text). The second point to make in relation to this project's methodology is that the project itself does not focus on any particular company, sector or even city, but is spread to the national or even international level. "Researchers often choose qualitative interviews over ethnographic methods when their topics of interest do not centre on particular settings but their concern is with establishing common patterns or themes between particular types of respondents" (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001, p. 85). Accordingly, the interview was chosen as the primary method to collect data for this project, which resonates within a qualitative strategy where the "interview has become one of the most common ways of producing knowledge in the human and social sciences" (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 577). More specifically however, this project has opted for *individual* interviews based on three main factors: its overall aims, its literature review, and its philosophical paradigms. Indeed, the overall aim of this project is to understand migrants' migration, integration, and identification in relation to macro changes from an individual, migrant idiosyncratic, perspective. Because the focus is neither on macro nor meso levels, but instead focuses on the micro, individual aspects of phenomena, individual interviews go hand in hand with the aims of this project. Furthermore, the literature review and the constructivist approach have highlighted how migration, integration, and identification are considered as individual processes and phenomena (without undermining their social aspect, by emphasising an intersubjectivist approach). Because those phenomena are considered primarily as individual experiences, individual interviews resonate as the most suited approach to getting knowledge about them.

Furthermore, those interviews will be designed as semi-structured and open-ended. Understood as "a series of questions that are in the general form of an *interview guide* [where] the sequence of questions [vary]" (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019, p. 596), semi-structured interviews suit this project for two main reasons. First, because of the project's exploratory feature as to namely discover new phenomena happening between perceptions of macro changes and individual migration, integration, and identification, interviews should not be set in stone but instead remain open to unexpected answers and the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. On a similar note, the questions are open-ended in order to not only let participants speak freely about their experience, but more specifically to once again have the opportunity to gather unexpected answers. The idea of trying to gather unexpected answers and letting participants speak of their own experience freely (rather than being strictly guided by a structured, eventually close-ended interview guide) also goes in line with the fact that this project has an inductive strategy, i.e., that the data will speak for themselves before being put back in relation to theories. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews therefore resonate with the general aims of the project as well within the inductive strategy adopted. Overall, the advantages of semi-structured interviews are that they provide the interviewer "much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee" yet also "the interviewer has a greater say in focusing the conversation on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research project" (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 579). Semi-structured interviews thus enable the exploration of particular phenomena, while also keeping on track with the topic under scrutiny. It enables exploring nuances among participants' answers while having a broad agenda for relative comparison.

The interview guide for this project has been developed based on the three main topics of the project: migration, integration, and identification. Each topic covers various sub-topics (e.g., work, social life, family). Each topic is also put into relation to the other two to reflect how migration, integration, and identification are related to one another and emphasise the notion of transnationalism. More specifically though, the interview guide is built in two parts: the first half of the interview guide focuses on past experiences and addresses migration, integration, and identification before macro changes, i.e., in a pre-Brexit context, and the second half of the interview guide addresses those same topics but under macro changes. By doing this, it was possible to see how participants had experienced the

changes they had faced and/or felt, and how their own understanding of such changes had influenced their migration, integration, and identity. Questions were designed as open-ended to explore migrants' individual experiences and the potential divergence among experiences (exploratory, inductive aspect of the project). On a regular basis, prompts were introduced to gain deeper knowledge about the information shared by participants. Typically, this would involve asking participants 'why so?', and asking for examples. A certain number of questions focused on the relationship participants had with their acquaintances, including with host-country nationals, migrant communities, their work circle, and their family circle (including family in their home country and in-laws). This aspect was of prime importance as while considering migration, integration, and identification as individual processes, they each had a social aspect that needed to be considered to gain full knowledge of participants' migration, integration, and identification. This also helped gain knowledge on the various contexts under which individuals migrated (including the home country and host country contexts) thus deepening the understanding of migrants' migration, integration, and identification. The interview guide of the study can be found in Appendix 1.

Participant observation and conversation

The second method used to collect data as part of the thesis' case study is participant observation. Participant observation is here understood as when researchers immerse themselves "in a social setting for an extended period of time, observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and with the fieldworker, and asking questions" (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019, p. 594). Because participant observation involves here both listening and asking questions, it is considered here that participant observation includes a form of conversation, in which the researcher participates (section 4.6 will focus on the role of the researcher in more detail). The reason behind complementing interviews with participant observation was based on the idea that migration, integration, and identification as ongoing phenomena could not be captured solely during interviews, which are artificial settings. While interviews would be very useful to capture information about past events such as participants' migration and integration experiences when they arrived in their host country, their experience and perception of macro context and changes on their migration, integration and identity could be enriched by also considering the processes in participants' natural settings. Gubrium and Holstein confirm how combining interviews and

participant observation is key especially when "both settings and individuals are available, and are mutually pertinent, researchers often combine ethnographic data with interview data, illuminating both the culture and the biographical particulars of members' worlds" (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001, p. 85).

More specifically, participant observation is about gaining knowledge "based upon direct contact between the researcher and the social objects of interest" (Brannan and Oultram, 2013, p. 296). In the particular case of this study, participant observation was not only used by the researcher to be in direct relation with participants, but furthermore to be immersed in the context and in the macro changes that were happening while observing participants. It was therefore not only about observing participants in their natural settings but furthermore to see "the connection between the actions and utterances of people in social settings with the cultures, discourses, narratives, and social, economic, and political structures within which those actions and utterances occur'" (Watson, 2011, p. 213 in Brannan and Oultram, 2013, p. 301). Participant observation thus allows us to observe action and the development of meanings as the macro context (incl. macro changes) evolve.

Furthermore, by complementing interviews with participant observation, new opportunities emerged to ask participants follow-up questions, based on what had been observed but also based on time passing and events happening. Focusing on the macro context while it was happening (i.e., while a Brexit deal was being negotiated between the UK and the EU and new regulations were being suggested) meant that events and changes were happening on a regular basis, with participants adapting to the changes as they happened. Participant observation was thus a unique opportunity to address the strong processual approach that this project adopted. Participant observation (and conversation) thus enabled me to gain knowledge on events *as they were happening*.

Overall, participant observation and conversation allow the study of migration, integration, and identification as ongoing phenomena, i.e., to consider those processes on their day-to-day aspect, thus embracing the processual approach of this project. It further allows the placing of those three processes in relation to their natural settings, i.e., in relation to the macro context, which is a principal objective of this project. Combining interviews with participant observation thus enabled me to gain knowledge about participants' past experiences of migration, integration, and identification, as well as to gain knowledge about

the three processes in current times, and in relation to macro changes. The following section will briefly highlight some strategies adopted in the field to collect data before moving on to the next section on method of data analysis.

4.4.1 DATA COLLECTION: FIELDWORK STRATEGIES

One of the limitations that had been highlighted in Chapter 2 was how migration theories focus on flows mostly from the Global South to the Global North (such as most macro-level migration theories, but also the brain-drain, neo-classical, and network and diaspora approaches). Literature on expatriates on the other hand has highlighted some flows from the Global North to the Global South, especially around career-related factors and personal realisation. It was therefore concluded that literature on migration between two economically similar countries is rare. This project therefore aims at going beyond economic and/or career migration by focusing on flows between countries that can broadly be defined as economically similar. The decision to focus on the UK and France emanates from two main reasons. Firstly, by focusing on these two countries, the project also focuses on intra-EU migration, which (as will be highlighted in section 5.2) has its own body of literature. The main particularity of intra-EU migration is the freedom of movement (and settlement) that European citizens can enjoy in any EU country. While the reality of freedom of movement is more complex than that, with for example differentiated social and welfare rights for EU nationals coming from older versus newer member states and for EU nationals with different status (e.g., workers, students, accompanying family members etc.) (Bruzelius, Chase and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2016; Kilkey, Plomien and Perrons, 2014), French workers in the UK can enjoy some of the most open form of migration and settlement. Focusing on such type of migration (i.e., French workers in the UK) therefore enables the study of migration, integration and identification in a context that is *a priori* unrestricted, where migrants are free to move, work, settle and move again without any legal limitation. The focus can therefore really be on the migratory journey, without the restrictions of visa and work permits. Secondly, in order to reach this project's aims as to namely understand migrants' perception of macro forces, the UK having voted to exit the EU provides a unique chance to study macro forces with direct impacts on a certain type of migrants, namely EU citizens residing in the UK.

On the other hand, the wish to focus on skilled migrants in particular is related to two main factors. The first one is that it directly completes the "need for more research on the

middling group" (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014, p. 585), namely neither the lower-skilled nor the elites. It documents the middle-class professionals, often invisible in both public and academic focus. France being among the EU countries with the highest population having a tertiary education (OECD, 2019), the French population (including those who migrate) can provide such a focus, on skilled yet not necessarily elite individuals. Secondly, by focusing on this middle group, of skilled middle-class professionals, the focus can once again be really on their migratory mobility (migration, integration, identification) rather than focusing on potential economic limitation imposed to lower social classes/lower-skilled migrants.

The sample criteria for participating in this project, and on which participants were recruited, were therefore the following ones:

- being French (i.e., possessing the French citizenship)
- being skilled (i.e., having a university degree or working in a position requiring this level of education)
- living in the UK for at least six months before the Brexit referendum (i.e., having one's principal residence in the UK).

The reason behind asking participants to have lived in the UK at least six months before the Brexit referendum was related to the fact that the impacts of Brexit on one's migration, integration, and identification would be better captured if people had experienced the UK before and after the referendum. As it turned out, all participants had arrived in the UK at least 12 months before the Brexit referendum, thus ensuring that they had experienced living in the UK before and after the Brexit vote.

The fieldwork took place between September 2018 and August 2019. In September 2018, Brexit day was scheduled for March 2019. The initial strategy of this project was to interview the same people before and after Brexit day. However, because Brexit day kept being postponed (ultimately to 1st January 2021), I had to develop a new strategy as to namely interview more people along the development of the Brexit context. With participant observation it was however possible to keep in touch with participants already interviewed and ask follow-up questions as the Brexit context and changes were evolving, ending up with a mix of one-off interviews and 2nd or 3rd meetings with participants. In the end, the new strategy enriched the processual approach of this project.

In relation to British politics, during most of the fieldwork Theresa May was Prime Minister, until July 2019 when Boris Johnson took over. At the beginning of the fieldwork, the Settled Status had not yet been developed and was only in its trial phases. At the time only certain people could access it (including university academics) before it was open to everyone. The Settled Status used to have a fee of £65, which was removed during the time of the fieldwork. These small pieces of information give an overview of how, within a year, changes were easily noticeable in relation to the Brexit context directly impacting migrants living in the UK. During the fieldwork, the interview guide was updated as changes related to Brexit were put in place. Similarly, follow-up questioning was added and focused on aspects of the Brexit context that were new and potentially challenging to participants.

The first question that arises when going into the field is related to accessing participants. As being a French migrant living in the UK myself, I already had access to a network of potential participants (through various university networks, exchange programmes and overall social acquaintances). I therefore started my fieldwork by contacting a few people within my own circle. However, in order to have a diversity in terms of participants' demographic background (especially regarding age, time spent in the UK, profession, and family structure) I used the snowball strategy to ask people from my own circle to refer me to other French skilled migrants they knew (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). This was especially useful when initial participants worked within French companies or when I had been put in contact with someone working for the French consulate. Furthermore, I gained access to further French networks by joining French groups on social media (including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Meetup). This particularly enabled me to reach French participants in more remote areas (e.g., countryside) and thus gave me access to how Brexit had been experienced beyond big cities such as London or Manchester.

The second question that arises when going into the field is how many interviews will be sufficient. While various authors suggest conducting interviews until saturation of the data (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019), in practice this approach is still quite indeterminate, especially for a project which focuses on an ever-changing context. A strategy that enables one to have a rough idea of when data might be saturated is to look at peers' sample sizes. Ryan and Mulholland (2014), who worked on French skilled migrants' mobility before Brexit, interviewed 37 people. Lulle, Moroşanu and King (2018), in their project on the effects of

Brexit on European migrants, interviewed 20 participants from Ireland, 20 from Italy and 20 from Romania. Their focus was on the London region, which they recognised as not being representative of the UK as a whole. In their project, Brahic and Lallement (2020) combined both French skilled workers and the Brexit context and interviewed 15 people, however they focused solely on the Manchester region. Overall, this project aimed at roughly 30 interviews that would cover French skilled migrant workers facing Brexit who resided in a variety of regions in the UK. Randomly, all participants ended up living in England (rather than Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland) however they lived both in big cities and the countryside. The decision to conduct 30 interviews was also in line with advice for qualitative projects, such as Creswell and Creswell (2018), who advocate between 20 and 30 participants for a grounded theory study. Furthermore, the study aimed at organising follow-up meetings as well as doing participant observation, thus going a step further than the studies presented above. In the end, a total number of 35 people were interviewed at least once. 32 of those formal interviews were kept for this project[3], with a larger number of women (25) in comparison to men (7). Participants were aged between 23 and 68 years old and had arrived in the UK between the 1980s and 2015. All participants lived in England (rather than Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) in either urban or rural areas. All participants were considered skilled, as to namely have a university degree or to be working in a position requiring this level of education. Further demographic information about participants can be found in Appendix 2.

As discussed in section 4.4, the interviews were designed to be conducted individually and were guided by the interview guide. The study followed the Nottingham University Business Scholl Research Ethics and was approved in August 2018. Before each interview, an ethical form (Appendix 3) was shared with participants to ensure they understood the project and what would become of the information they were willing to share. The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder and lasted between fifty minutes and over five hours, with most lasting one hour or more. Two pilot interviews had been conducted to test out the relevance of the interview guide with no major changes made to it, and with the second pilot interview being included in the project due to its good quality and significance. The interviews

[3] Three interviews had to be removed as participants did not fit the sample criteria: being skilled and having arrived before the Brexit referendum.

were conducted in French as both participants and interviewer were native French speakers. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or virtually, based on participants' preferences. In the end, 18 face-to-face interviews were conducted and 14 virtually. While it can be considered as a limitation to conduct interviews virtually rather than face-to-face as the virtual element only gives access to a certain visual window (rather than the whole embodiment and settings of participants), it enabled me to reach a larger and more geographically spread sample. Virtual interviews were also considered by some participants as a way to have a first contact with me in safer conditions (especially for participants who were contacted through social media groups), which nonetheless led to some face-to-face follow-up meetings and conversation once trust had been gained.

Participant observation (including conversation) on the other hand was not recorded, but field notes were taken during observation and organised immediately after the observation. Participant observation/conversation occurred only after having first interviewed participants, which implies that all participants had been made aware of the study and its ethical considerations before being observed. When meeting participants, I also informally reiterated my role as a researcher through, for example, sharing with them my work progress. Participant observation occurred mostly in private spheres (such as being invited to various dinners or family events), but I also attended some public events with some participants (such as watching football games or going to anti-Brexit strikes). Casual conversations with participants were also regularly happening, again after a first formal interview, both face to face in cafés or more virtually through texting/chatting.

The records from the interviews were transcribed by me. A reflexive point will address this aspect of the project as to namely have become a researcher/translator (section 4.6). From there, the data were then thematically analysed, which is the topic of the next section.

4.5. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

When designing a research methodology, considering the method of data analysis is a full component of it. Indeed, method of data analysis is part of Denzin and Lincoln's research process, namely phase 4, together with method of data collection already previously presented (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). This section explains the choice for adopting a thematic analysis to the data gathered and highlights the various codes developed as part of this

inductive research project, especially building on the work (and rigour) of Gioia and his methodology.

Thematic analysis is here understood as a "qualitative data analysis that principally focus on identifying, organising and interpreting themes in textual data" (King and Brooks, 2018, p. 219). Themes are here considered as "recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experience, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question" (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019, p. 200). From this definition, two aspects are essential. First, the fact that themes are recurrent, i.e., that occasional statements, as interesting as they might be to the research question, cannot be considered themes as long as they are not identified in a variety of places. Secondly, the fact that it is the researcher who judges the relevance of themes in relation to the research question, i.e., that the researcher has a discernible role to play in the data analysis and that themes have necessarily a degree of subjectivity. Finally, themes are composed of codes, which are "comments or abbreviations linked to passages of text to indicate material of relevance to the research aims (…) Coding is therefore the process of indexing text with codes and in due course themes" (King and Brooks, 2018, p. 220).

Like the rest of the methodology, the method adopted for analysing data has to be considered in relation to the project's philosophical paradigms and its overall research strategy. This project is adopting a relativist ontology and a constructivist/intersubjective epistemology and is qualitative, processual, and inductive in nature.

King and Brooks (2018) suggest that in the case of relativist and constructivist projects, thematic analysis can be useful for a number of reasons. First of all, thematic analysis will help to "understand participants' meaning-making within the specific research context" (p. 222, from Table 14.1) thus going directly in line with the project's overall aim to investigate migrants' sensemaking of macro changes in relation to their migration, integration, and identification. Secondly, through a thematic analysis, the focus can be "on induction and emergent themes" (p. 222, from Table 14.1) thus enabling the inductive approach that this project has adopted. More specifically, the authors suggest that a thematic analysis in this case enables a "highly tentative use of a priori themes (if at all)" (p. 222). *A priori* themes are here understood as themes developed prior to coding (King and Brooks, 2018, p. 225). While an inductive strategy would go against the idea of having *a priori* themes, it is here important

to stress that a complete inductive strategy is not considered to be possible as "we are never completely uninformed about prior work" (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013, p. 21). In relation to this project, three *a priori* themes had been considered: migration, integration, and identification. Finally, King and Brooks (2018) emphasise how a thematic analysis in qualitative research enables us to consider the "researcher subjectivity integral to the whole process" (p. 222, from Table 14.1), thus going in line with the constructivist/intersubjective epistemology of the project.

All in all, adopting a thematic analysis goes in line with this project's philosophical paradigms as well as its overall strategy, and enables us to achieve an approach to data that 1) puts participants' experience at the centre of the project, 2) is inductive, and 3) recognises the role of the researcher in the data collected and the way the analysis has been conducted. With a thematic analysis, it will be possible "to identify, make sense of and highlight the key themes in a rich qualitative data set so that important features of the research phenomena can be communicated to and understood by a wider audience" (King and Brooks, 2018, p. 220).

However, one could remember that this project has the particularity to adopt a strong processual lens and that an important part of sensemaking and of a processual approach is to consider narratives. It is here important to make the distinction between a theoretical model of migration, integration and identification developed from the literature and the actual aim of this project to consider perceptions of macro forces in relation to the three processes of migrating, integrating, and identifying. The focus of this project is therefore not on the dynamic model itself but rather on the effects of perceived macro forces on it, from an individual perspective. Because I do not aim at researching the sequence in which migration, integration and identification happens, nor the progression at which they happen, a narrative analysis does not come as the best-suited approach available for this project, as indeed a narrative analysis would put emphasis on the *sequence* and progression of the phenomena (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). Instead, because the focus is on the 'bridge' between macro changes and migration, integration, and identification as a whole process as well as individual concepts (as depicted in Diagram 3 below), a thematic analysis (around the *a priori* themes of migration, integration, and identification) is considered more adequate.

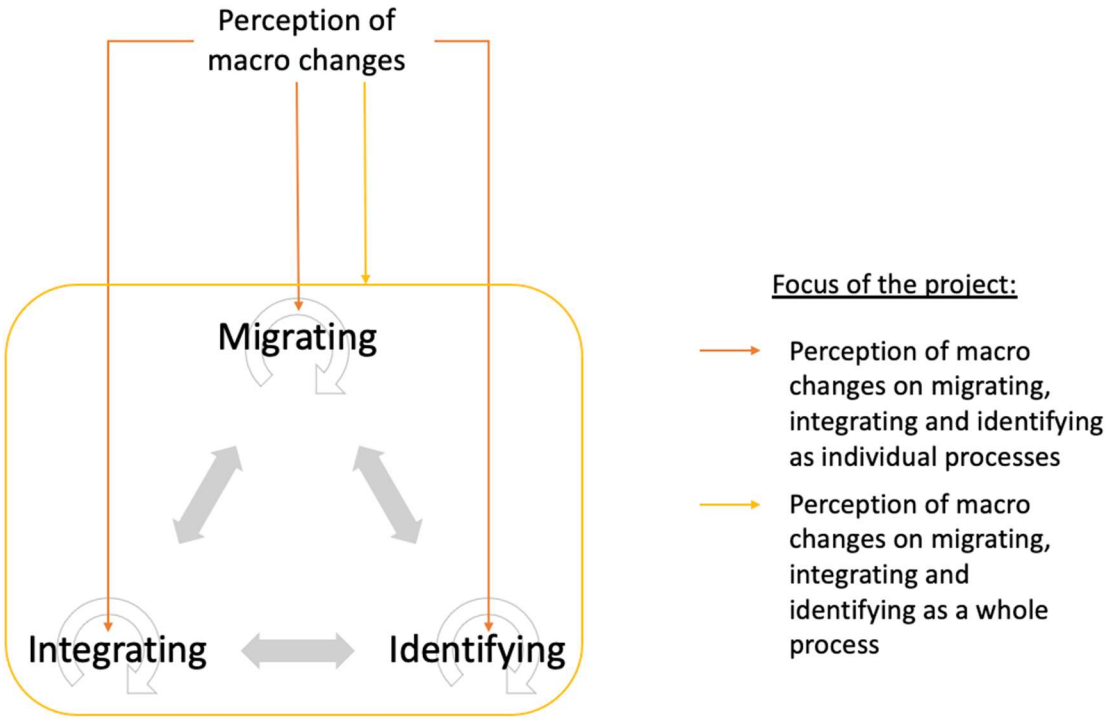

Diagram 3: Analytical focus of the project

A thematic analysis indeed enables us to consider how the perceptions of macro changes influence migration, integration, and identification as a whole process, but also migration, integration, and identification independently. Moreover, a thematic analysis enables us to consider the relationship between perceived macro forces and migration, integration, and identification (both as a whole process and individually) simultaneously, i.e., on concurrent planes, as schematised by the four parallel yellow and orange arrows from Diagram 3. A narrative approach would instead emphasise the linear and sequential aspect of the phenomena, which is again not the aim of this current project. A thematic analysis will therefore enable to put into perspective the effects of individual perceptions of macro changes on 1) their migration, integration, and identification, 2) their migration, 3) their integration, and 4) their identity, simultaneously, i.e., to put them into perspective vis-à-vis one another. A thematic analysis will enable me to put data, findings and themes next to each other (parallel) rather than one after the other (sequential), thus going in line with the *strong processual* lens that this project has adopted (i.e., that the world is in constant flux, with phenomena always and simultaneously changing (Bansal, Smith and Vaara, 2018)).

Naturally thematic analysis bears its own limitations and criticisms and that is why the next section will present the data gathered and the codes and themes developed in a manner that is based on Gioia's methodology and rigorous approach to qualitative inductive research.

4.5.1 DATA ANALYSIS

One of the main criticisms of thematic analysis, especially in inductive qualitative projects, is that "it leads to a fragmentation of accounts, resulting in analysis that loses the context of the particular circumstances in which data were collected" (King and Brooks, 2018, p. 232), thus raising questions from the readership such as "'How do I know that you know (what you are claiming)?' or more simply, 'Where is the evidence of your assertions?'" (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013, p. 18)

Gioia addresses these criticisms towards thematic analysis and inductive research by developing an approach to data analysis that allows "for a systematic presentation of both a '1st-order' analysis (i.e., an analysis using informant-centric terms and codes) and a '2nd-order' analysis (i.e., one using researcher-centric concepts, themes, and dimensions (…)). Taken together, the tandem reporting of both voices – informant and researcher – allowed not only a qualitatively rigorous demonstration of the links between the data and the induction of [new concepts] (…) but also allowed for the kind of insight that is the defining hallmark of high-quality qualitative research" (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013, p. 18).

However, before jumping into presenting the 1st and 2nd orders of analysis of this project, it is important to highlight here that while the Gioia methodology enables rigour in inductive qualitative projects, a good part of the analysis had first started with hesitation and trying things out.

The way the data have been analysed in this project first started once all data had been gathered (i.e., I did not start my analysis until the very end of my fieldwork). This was partly due to the fact that I had transcribed all interviews by myself, which took a certain amount of time, and so I could not start coding until the interviews had been transcribed, and partly because this way I could be as close as possible to reaching an inductive approach. While the transcription of the interviews was very time consuming, it still gave me "a general sense of the information and an opportunity to reflect on [the data's] overall meaning" (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 193).The following paragraph will describe the various steps

undertaken in the analysis of the data that led to a Gioia-style data structure. It should be stressed here that all the analysis has been done using NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis software package.

The first step undertaken regarding the data analysis was simply to dive into the data and to code anything considered relevant to the research question. This type of rough coding is sometimes called open coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2015), which leads to a long initial list of codes, which had at this stage no relation to one another. This first open coding enabled me to have a quick look at the various categories that my data were suggesting. In particular, and following Gioia, I made sure to name my codes after the terms used by participants themselves, rather than terms from the literature. This open coding was very messy, yet Gioia suggests that "it is important to get lost at this stage" (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013, p. 20). In the second step, I started deleting codes that were not as relevant to the research question as I had originally thought and regrouping certain codes together. This skimming exercise led to a shorter list of codes but also produced codes that were more strongly related to the research question. In this second step, I also continued coding but in a more refined way. An example of this open coding and regrouping of codes can be found in Table 1 of Appendix 4, where over 60 open codes and 8 regrouping codes are exposed. In my third step, I started developing themes in relation to the codes I had. As previously stated in section 4.5, I had three *a priori* themes that I had considered before starting my analysis: Migration, Integration, and Identification. Those themes were confirmed by the data and the initial codes I had developed. During this third phase, I also inductively developed an additional theme, namely related to Sensemaking. More importantly, in this phase, I noticed how some codes from phase 2 could actually go in several of my themes, as exposed in Table 2 of Appendix 4. This revealed a lot of confusion and highlighted that I needed to work more on my coding. In the subsequent phase, I therefore re-arranged my codes in relation to the themes developed and did some extra open coding. This enabled me to gather extra codes that I might have missed and to confirm the validity of the themes developed. This led to over 40 open codes being represented in 13 codes (1st order) and 4 themes (2nd order). The data structure of phase 4 can be found in Table 3 of Appendix 4. In a final stage, I re-arranged my themes into aggregate dimensions in order to be able to develop 2nd-order themes more in line with those dimensions. In particular, I decided to group Migration and Integration together in a common

dimension to reflect a general form of enactment. Furthermore, I moved Sensemaking up to offer a clearer presentation of the data and the overall analysis. I re-arranged 1st order codes accordingly and I developed eight themes that would be representative of the dimensions with more precision. My final data structure consists of 34 codes (1st order) and 8 themes (2nd order), split within 3 aggregate dimensions. This final data structure is more precise than the structure at stage 4 and can be found in Table 4 of Appendix 4, as well as in Table 2 below.

In their book chapter, King and Brooks (2018) present a variety of thematic analysis styles (e.g., template, framework, matrix) and while this project has not adopted one particular style over another, they all have a certain number of steps in common which have been used during the analysis. King and Brooks indeed confirm that thematic analysis should not be considered as a strict rule, mechanic-like with applying procedure, but that instead researchers are encouraged to use the sequences of procedure in a flexible manner that best fits their data, research question and overall research project. Among those steps, the authors highlight in particular the fact that thematic analysis is about "identifying themes, coding data to them, organising them into some kind of structure and producing an interpretation of the data", in an order that can vary (King and Brooks, 2018, p. 230). The various steps highlighted in the previous paragraph have followed this flexible procedure, ultimately leading to a Gioia-style data structure. In the end, the data structure presented in this project is grounded in a procedure for thematic analysis recognised by a number of authors (King and Brooks, 2018) while following the rigour of the Gioia methodology for a qualitative inductive project (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013).

1st order codes	2nd order themes	Aggregate dimensions
- I read a lot the news; I watched all the debates; I'm having a hard time with the BBC - The campaign was just lies; it has nothing to do with Europe - News like that they are neither verified, nor verifiable; their thing is not moving on	Knowledgeable about Brexit	Making sense of Brexit
- I was shocked; it was really a hit in the heart; it slapped me in the face - I was in tears; it was the lowest moment of my stay in the UK - I can't get rid of this anger; I was a bit pissed off - I don't know what is going to happen; I am scared; I panicked - It's time to decide and move on; I'm waiting for it to resolve itself	Evolving feelings	
- We're going to lose money; I am more reluctant to buy - I had some remarks; I work with people who all have voted Leave - There is a sort of xenophobia; a black sheet had descended upon us - We're a bit in stand-by; the atmosphere has changed	Perception of change	
- I am French / European, it's a personal satisfaction; France is so beautiful - I feel like a minority; I feel separated - I don't want the (British) nationality; other people keep reminding me that I am French	Feelings and emotions	(Re)constructing identities
- Being French is a bit dreamy - I see myself as an expatriate; I am surrounded by so many expatriates - Migrant is a bit extreme; we are migrants somehow - We are not necessarily a problem; I paid taxes - I am here at home; I belong - I am lucky to be white; I can be invisible	Reposition, hierarchy and belonging	
- I don't know what will happen - I am waiting; at some point I gave up - I didn't look it up; I don't want to know anything; I've absolutely done nothing - I applied because it was free; I had nothing to lose	(New) legal status and documentation	
- I wanted to be abroad; I was tired of France; I did an Erasmus - It was the moment to go; Brexit was a good reason to go back - I will evolve somewhere else; I'm going to leave England; I don't think I will spend all my life here - I am here at home, we are established; home is here	Migration: should I stay, or should I go now?	Migrating and integrating
- I have / do things in double; I have remained attached to France - My friends all have different nationalities; I meet French people - At work it's a bit difficult right now; people started to loosen up - British people are so different; England is a country both very near and very far - What the hell am I doing in this country?; I am part of the furniture	Integration: navigating a multicultural lifestyle in a neo-assimilationist country	

Table 2: Final data structure developed following Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013)

4.6. REFLEXIVITY

The final point to address in this methodology chapter regards reflexivity and the position of the researcher. Reflexivity is here understood as a "critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome" (Berger, 2015, p. 220). Reflexivity is highly related to the ontological and epistemological stances of the project as to namely consider the position and role of the researcher in relation to the data gathered and knowledge created. Reflexivity is therefore seen as an additional tool to offer rigour but perhaps more importantly transparency and so provides quality in qualitative research, in particular for a project that is relativist and intersubjectivist in nature, as indeed "reflexivity is a major strategy for quality control in qualitative research" (Berger, 2015, p. 219). Reflexivity can focus on a variety of aspects, going from researchers' gender or age to their political, religious, or even sexual stances. In this project, I pay particular attention to several aspects of my personality that have been relevant in gathering data: my nationality, my stance on Brexit, my age, my gender and finally my mother tongue, which will lead me to reflect on my insider/outsider status as well as on sharing participants' native language.

Before moving on to those reflexive points, let me share with you a couple of things about me. I am a female researcher, and I conducted the fieldwork for this project in my mid-20s. I am a French national and French native speaker. When the Brexit referendum took place, I was already living in the UK. I was pro-EU and so against Brexit and as a French national I could not vote at this referendum. I am still living in the UK legally because I have applied for the Settled Status, but British citizenship is something that I do not consider for myself.

As a French skilled migrant residing in the UK since before the Brexit referendum, I fit the criteria of participation for this project and I am therefore an insider researcher, i.e., "a member of the migrant group under study" (Carling, Erdal and Ezzati, 2014, p. 36), who "shares the experience of study participants" (Berger, 2015, p. 219). Being an insider has a number of qualities, particularly regarding an "easier entrée, a head start in knowing about the topic and understanding nuanced reactions of participants" (Berger, 2015, p. 223). However, being an insider also bears its own disadvantages as highlighted below.

Being a French migrant and having to face Brexit myself indeed enabled me to have access to French participants easily since I was able to start with my own network before snowballing and meeting additional participants. Furthermore, the people I reached out to "were very receptive and cooperative. They expressed confidence that being an immigrant myself, I will be able to understand and represent their experiences and struggles better than a nonimmigrant researcher" (Berger, 2015, p. 223). However, one of the challenges was to ensure that I would not impose my own understanding onto participants but instead make sure to record and hear their own version of the events, their own voices, and their own words. During interviews, I would therefore try to talk as little as possible and focus on my interview questions to not influence participants' perspective. Encouraging participants through little prompts was also a way to ensure they would share with me their own experiences rather than trying to guess and mirror mine. In the data analysis, sticking with participants' own terms for the 1st-order coding as recommended by Gioia (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013) was a way of assuring participants' own voices were at the centre of the project.

Secondly, my immigrant status and sharing a similar experience with my participants regarding Brexit enabled me to "address certain topics more easily or even be aware that I should address them" (Berger, 2015, p. 223). This was particularly relevant when discussing the transnational aspect of participants' lives, i.e., discussing the ties to and particularities of France while living in the UK, as well as the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, such as the Settled Status or the rise of xenophobia, issues I had experienced myself. However, by sharing similar experiences with participants, there is the risk that they do not feel the need to elaborate their answers or share as many details they would have with a researcher unfamiliar with their experience. Gawlewicz (2016) calls it 'assumption of shared experiences', where participants might indeed feel that there is no need to elaborate on something that should be obvious to the researcher, where researchers are indeed expected to "*read between the lines* and immediately understand their own experience" (Gawlewicz, 2016, p.35, italic in original text), exemplified through expressions like 'you know what I mean'. By sharing experiences and status with participants there is therefore the risk that details might be overlooked due to participants potentially withholding information and the researcher taking similarities for granted (Berger, 2015). Whenever possible, I would therefore ask participants

to elaborate, to give examples or more details in order to hear their own stories and not take for granted the experiences we might have shared.

Furthermore, two aspects of my identity were also relevant during my fieldwork, namely my age and gender. Most of the participants were older than me and had been living in the UK for a longer time than me. Because of this aspect, my interactions and even relationships with participants were subject to a form of mentorship. Several participants indeed needed to know for how long I had been living in the UK and/or my age to know how much I understood of their own experience. Because of my younger age, the interviews often took the form of shared knowledge and even advice from someone who had lived and experienced more. More than wanting to help me with my research project, they wanted to help me with my life in the UK, telling me things that will happen to me, the challenges I will have to face and the joys I will experience. Several participants contacted me back to know the progress of my project but also my own individual plans, adventure, and progression in life. Furthermore, a large majority of participants were female, and so beyond the mentor-mentee relationship, a strong sense of maternity emerged from those interactions. It is important to highlight here that it possible that I reminded them of themselves when they had arrived in the UK in their 20s. Several older female participants wanted to ensure my well-being, the progress of my project and even my romantic status. They wanted to make sure I had everything I needed in the UK and some even insisted for me to meet their family, children, and husbands. With those participants, interviews were often longer and more intimate. It was also with those participants that stronger relationships were built after the formal interviews, where I had been invited to family dinners and events, and where causal conversation through texting kept happening.

Finally, among younger participants and/or participants who had not been living in the UK for much longer than me, the fact that I was a researcher put me in a position of an 'expert' with participants asking me questions about Brexit, about aspects of the news they did not necessarily understand and/or asking me advice on what they should be doing in terms of migration and paperwork. In those rare circumstances, I tried to direct them towards official information from the government, not claiming I knew better than anyone else what was going to happen with Brexit. With participants seeing me as an expert, our relationship was therefore more of a teacher-student one, with participants answering strictly the interview

questions, often trying to guess the right answer or the answer I was expecting, and at the end asking me questions about Brexit and what should be done.

In the end, having been an insider researcher for this project enabled me to have easier access to participants, understanding their experience as migrants and their struggles since Brexit. However, I also had to face the problems of blurred boundaries, of not letting my own experience, values and words take over theirs. I had to ensure that they would be the ones disclosing their own idiosyncratic experience rather than my own being mirrored in theirs. Despite being an insider researcher, there were moments where my age and gender put me in the position of an outsider, as someone who had not experienced *enough* to be fully part of the study group. This did not raise particular challenges in terms of data collection as instead participants took me under their wing and became intimate. Finally, being a researcher also positioned me as an outsider vis-à-vis some participants when they considered me an expert on Brexit. With all participants I therefore had to address relations of power, where in most cases I was the subordinate one. In the specific case of this project, being inferior to participants was experienced as something positive since I was lucky enough for participants to indulge my (supposed or perceived) naivety and to share with me personal details of their lives.

By exposing such points, I wish here to highlight my own awareness on the way the data have been accessed and shared. I therefore do not claim that the data are generalisable. Instead, I wish here to offer an insight into the lives of 32 people who have crossed my own path. The information shared and the knowledge developed from it are the results of the interaction between them as individuals (intertwined within their own social dynamics) and me (an insider researcher, also intertwined within my own social dynamics). The data gathered and the knowledge developed are therefore relative and subjective to the interaction and relationship I have built with participants during either a single interview, or over months of conversation.

The final aspect that I would like to address in this reflexivity section is about the fact that I shared the same native language as my participants, conducted my whole fieldwork in that language and coded my 1st-order codes in that language (French); and yet, I am writing a thesis in a language that is foreign to me (English). Gawlewicz (2016) exposes how migrant researchers researching their migrant co-nationals in a common native language while writing

their report in another one expose themselves to having to address the role of the researcher as a translator. In respect to this challenge, it should first be pointed out that contrary to Gawlewicz, my background is foreign literature (including English) and linguistic. I therefore received training in translation from French to English and from English to French, and so prior to transcribing and translating my data I was aware of some of the ethical decisions that I would have to make in order to represent my participants in writing (Gawlewicz, 2016, p. 31). From this background, I understood that beyond words, I needed to translate a message, a voice, and various emotions. Furthermore, while more time consuming, I first transcribed my interviews, and only in a second phase did I translate them, rather than transcribing and simultaneously translating, which would have put me at risk of losing participants' initial messages. Translating migrant experiences also meant paying particular attention to cultural references. My role as an insider researcher was therefore put under pressure also during the translation process as I could not let my own interpretation take over participants' initial message. It is for this reason that I did my 1st-order coding in the original language of the interviews (French), and followed Gioia's comment on keeping participants' own terms to the letter (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013), i.e., keeping them in French. It is only when I moved on to defining my 2nd-order themes (i.e., from my own 'academic expertise' and from the literature) that I started switching to English, and naturally at the very end of my analysis, when reporting the findings into my thesis. By doing so, I not only kept true to participants' own terms and expressions as long as possible, but I also built an analysis from the original text, thus working on participants' voices and messages unbiased from translation.

In the end, while agreeing on being an insider researcher because I fitted the criteria of participation and so shared with participants the experience of being a French skilled migrant facing Brexit, I join authors in their calls to go beyond the insider/outsider dichotomy (Carling, Erdal and Ezzati, 2014) and to rather highlight the "complexity and diversity of experiences and views" (Gawlewicz, 2016, p. 31). On several occasions, I have been put into an outsider's shoes, because of my age, gender, political stance, or researcher status, which could not be captured by the simplistic insider/outsider status. Finally, while reflexivity is often articulated around the role of researchers and their personal characteristics, more attention needs to be paid to researchers as translators in an increasingly mobile (academic) world. The data provided in this thesis are therefore the results of a French migrant

researcher, sometimes considered too young to fully appreciate participants' experience, and the English quotes you will shortly have access to are the results of a highly conscious translation process.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS: *MAKING SENSE OF BREXIT*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the way French skilled migrant workers in the UK try to make sense of the macro changes they were and to some extent are still facing in their host country around the issue of the UK's membership of the EU. The term 'Brexit' is broadly used to talk about the exit of the UK from the EU, including a large 'Brexit context' of the campaign, the referendum, the results as well as the months and years following the referendum, as while it took place in June 2016, the UK was still processing its exit until January 2021, thus coinciding with the data collection in 2018/2019. The quotes and findings provided in this chapter and the following ones (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7) come from both interview and observation/conversation data as the two sets are merged.

To appreciate the uniqueness of the data and the analysis, this chapter starts with presenting the overall context of migrating, integrating, and identifying in the EU, and the specificities of Brexit and French migrants in the UK (section 5.2). Then, the chapter moves on to focusing on participants' sensemaking and as such addresses the first part of the research question and the first aim of this project: to explore migrants' own perceptions of the macro context in their host country. This chapter therefore serves as the basis to further investigate the role of migrants' idiosyncratic understanding of macro forces on their migration, integration, and identification, which will be addressed in Chapters 6 and 7. This current chapter is structured around three main findings: getting knowledgeable about Brexit (section 5.3), evolving feelings and emotions (section 5.4) and finally perception of ongoing changes (section 5.5). Independently, the chapter also offers an initial discussion and draws on two main conclusions (section 5.6): first, how migrant sensemaking can be defined as transnational and second, the centrality of emotions in making sense of macro changes, thus emphasising the potential of sensemaking as a way to bring emotionality to migration studies.

5.2 CONTEXT: EU MIGRATION AND BREXIT

As exposed in section 4.4.1 on fieldwork strategies, the project focuses on (1) skilled (2) French migrants in (3) the UK to investigate how migrants perceive macro context and forces

in their host country and how this understanding influences their migratory mobility, namely their migration, integration, and identification. This current section therefore exposes the particularities of intra-EU migration, integration, and identification, and highlights some of the effects of Brexit on the French population residing in the UK.

5.2.1 MIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND IDENTIFICATION IN THE EU

French migrants in the UK indeed fall within the intra-EU migration and while this project focuses on this specific group of people, it is important to understand the broader context and specificities of intra-EU migration to also be able to later understand the effects of Brexit. Like migration around the globe, intra-EU ***migration*** is characterised by various flows from one region to another. Contemporary EU migration is characterised by three main flows: from East to West, from South to North and from North to South.

The flow from East to West has especially grown since the 2004 EU enlargement. Indeed, in that year, ten countries from Central and Eastern Europe joined the EU[4] with the opportunity for their citizens to enjoy the EU's freedom of movement, i.e., to be able to go live and work in any other EU country. While the majority of old member states limited access to work to citizens from those countries for some years, the UK did not (Ciupijus, 2012). In 2007, two other countries joined the EU[5] and this time the UK required working permits from citizens from the new states. Overall, those two EU enlargements resulted in several Central and Eastern European citizens coming to work (and live, and eventually settle) in Western EU countries. However, while this flow has become one of the predominant ones within Europe, it should be pointed out that intra-EU migration still remains limited, with less than 10% of EU nationals living outside their country of birth (Eurostat, 2020). Nevertheless, migration from the East to the West of the EU has been extensively researched to the point of the creation of a journal dedicated to migration within, into or out of the Central and Eastern European region (CEEMR, no date), and with scholars focusing on migrants from Poland, Romania or Bulgaria as the most important flows, but also on smaller flows such as from Latvia (Genova, 2017; King *et al.*, 2016; Piętka-Nykaza and Mcghee, 2017; Ryan, 2010). The

[4] Countries joining the EU in 2004: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia.
[5] Countries joining the EU in 2007: Bulgaria, Romania.

specificity of the East-to-West EU migration is that it resulted from two waves of openness and freedom, namely the liberation from the influence of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and the adhesion to the EU a decade or so later (King *et al.*, 2016), combined however with the harshness of the financial crisis (Genova, 2017; King *et al.*, 2016). This resulted in migrants looking for economic and career opportunities in the West[6], yet as will be pointed out later on, often facing discrimination.

The second flow that is also predominant in the EU is from Southern to Northern countries. This flow is often explained due to Southern EU countries having been hit the hardest during the 2008 financial crisis and recovering more slowly, hence people migrating to Northern countries for economic reasons and job opportunities. However, this type of migration is not completely new as already in the 20th century migrant workers came from the South of the EU to the North for similar reasons. The motivations behind those moves are often related to the economy and/or employment but also an overall critique of the national system back home (Van Mol, 2016). King et al. (2016) have for instance documented the institutional dissatisfaction in Italy and job opportunities in the UK to explain young Italian graduates moving to London. Combined with the financial crisis is thus a deeper frustration with the Italian system, which echoes moves from the 1990s and the 'fuga dei cervelli' (King *et al.*, 2016). The South-to-North migration flow has again been documented quite a lot, focusing mostly on migrants from Spain, Italy and Greece, also with implications for second-generation migrants and family dynamics (Bartolini, Gropas and Triandafyllidou, 2017; Bygnes and Flipo, 2017; Castellani, 2020; Groutsis *et al.*, 2020; Herrero-Arias, Hollekim and Haukanes, 2020; Zontini, 2004b).

Finally, a flow within the EU that has also gained importance is the one from the North to the South of the EU. People migrating in that direction are often retired workers, who have decided to spend their old age in a warmer country. This type of migration has been called lifestyle migration, as the reasons to move are neither economic nor career-related but focus on accessing a better quality of life (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009; O'Reilly, 2012). Typical destination countries include Spain and the South of France (Benson, 2013; O'Reilly, 2000),

[6] Those are broad trends, and it should be recognised that Central and Eastern European citizens also move to the West for other motives, such as personal realisation (Lulle, 2020) or political dissatisfaction (Bygnes and Flipo, 2017).

with Miller for instance documenting British pensioners living in the Costa del Sol (South of Spain) and the way they narrated their new 'home' (Miller, 2019).

However, it is not because those three flows are the most predominant ones that other flows do not exist. Favell for instance has particularly researched flows within the North-West of the EU on his various projects on Eurostars. According to Favell, Eurostars "are not really high-flying elites (…). Rather, they are more like averagely successful professional middle classes back home, people who aspire to average middle-class satisfactions" (Favell, 2008a, p. 51). They "are often high achievers from modest backgrounds (…) [and move] for idiosyncratic reasons: sometimes as a somewhat marginal 'alternative' to a career path via in the national capital (…), sometimes because of an international idealism (…), sometimes for adventure and change" (Favell, 2003, p. 20). According to Favell, North-West EU migration is thus more influenced by lifestyle and self-realisation rather than economic and career enhancement or progress. This had been confirmed by various authors such as Braun and Glöckner-Rist (2012) in their quantitative study showing how British citizens move to Germany for love and work, and to France for the quality of life; Germans in Britain for work and love and to France for quality of life; while French citizens move to both Germany and Britain mostly for love (summary in Table 3, ibid, p. 412). In qualitative studies, Scott has documented and confirmed how British middle-class citizens move to Paris for their career, a better lifestyle or because of a romantic relationship (Scott, 2006) while King et al. (2016) have also documented the migratory characteristics of German migrants in London in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. The authors define German migration to the UK through Favell's Eurostar as well as the term 'middling transnationalists' (King *et al.*, 2016), which confirms the argument so far, but maybe more surprising is how the authors also define German migration to the UK as lifestyle migration, yet away from sunny landscapes, and more for the "cosmopolitan vibe of London and its cutting-edge urban lifestyles" (King *et al.*, 2016, p. 7). Moving from one economically stable country to another, it is clear in this article that Germans in the UK (typical of North-West EU migration) do not move for economic reasons but rather for reasons of lifestyle and personal realisation. This is reinforced by the idea that some of them faced career downgrading and/or a lower salary in order to achieve this life experience.

In terms of ***integration***, EU regulations state that EU citizens have "the freedom to seek employment, to work" and "everyone residing and moving legally within the European Union is entitled to social security benefits and social advantages in accordance with Union law and national laws and practices" (Bruzelius, Chase and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2016, p. 404)[7]. It means that EU migrants in their EU host country should be able to access healthcare, education and more, with no distinction made based on their country of origin. Yet, "uncertainties in the application of the fundamental right to freedom of movement and associated social rights remain" (Bruzelius, Chase and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2016, p. 405), leading to differentiated rights based on EU migrants' country of origin (especially old/new member states), length of stay, economic and employment status and other forms of classifying diversity. Furthermore, and despite the legislation supposedly ensuring equal opportunities among EU citizens, it has been also noticed how Eastern European[8] migrants face more discrimination than Western and/or Northern EU citizens. Genova (2017) for instance has documented how skilled Bulgarian citizens in the UK are subject of scapegoating especially as their arrival coincided with the 2008 economic crisis. The stereotype those skilled migrants typically face is the one depicting them as "poor, badly educated, benefits-driven, potentially dangerous, unskilled migrant[s]" (Genova, 2017, p. 38), by the local population but also in some national discourses. On the same note, Guma (2018) highlighted how Czech and Slovak citizens in Glasgow have been subject to restricted rights in terms of their welfare provision, such as rejected benefit applications or delays in payment. This also happened in a context where Eastern EU migrants were labelled in national discourses as "'benefit scroungers' and 'skivers'" (Guma, 2018, p. 2853) and where a clear distinction was made by state agents between British (deserving) citizens and 'Them', foreign undeserving migrants. This has pushed Ciupijus (2012) to conclude that "while nominally the citizens of accession countries have acquired EU citizenship, their Eastern European otherness allowed to claim only parts of it" (p. 35) and how "the experiences of Central Eastern Europeans using social services are shaped by their foreignness" (p. 45). Similarly, Southern EU citizens have also been the object of discrimination in their host country with Castellani (2020) highlighting how this tendency

[7] And once the transitional period for new EU members lifted.

[8] While Genova (2017) and Lulle (2020) warn against the umbrella term "Eastern European" as homogenising citizens from those regions and carrying negative connotations, it goes beyond the scope of this project to research their national specificities and characteristics.

of being 'On the fringes of social protection' was also slowly extending to citizens from older member states, such as Spanish and Italian citizens in Germany, echoing what Simola (2018) found in Brussels for young EU graduates, mostly from Spanish and Italian backgrounds.

Finally, and highly related to integration is the role and meaning of the European citizenship as well as migrants' national ***identity***. Citizens of a country belonging to the EU automatically receive European citizenship. As stated earlier, this should enable them to enjoy freedom of movement within all EU member states, work, access healthcare and education, albeit following a complex system of differentiated conditionalities and hierarchies (Bruzelius, Chase and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2016; Kilkey, Plomien and Perrons, 2014). The European citizenship does not make any distinction between citizens from different EU countries, i.e., regardless of when their country adheres to the EU. However, it has been highlighted how this citizenship is not embraced by most European citizens. Indeed, Joppke for instance has highlighted how European citizenship is a "citizenship without identity (…) being exclusively about rights with no complementary duties whatsoever, decoupled from even the thinnest of identities" (Joppke, 2019, p. 870). It is important to highlight that "citizenship of the Union is complementary to, but does not replace, national citizenship" (European Parliament, 2020), which thus implies that people residing in their country of birth often do not enjoy most of their extended EU rights (Joppke, 2019). Furthermore, in terms of identification with the European citizenship, it has been noticed that most EU citizens identify first with their national (or even regional) identity rather than with their European one (Dennison and Carl, 2016), confirming its status "as purely symbolic and more representative of the EU's market-oriented character than a viable alternative to national citizenship" (Graeber, 2016, p. 1673).

Furthermore, intra-EU mobility has the particularity to happen within white countries. Indeed, without diminishing the presence of ethnic minorities in all EU countries and among EU migrants, each member state can broadly be defined as a Caucasian-majority country. However, despite this fact, racialisation of certain EU migrants happens. Ryan (2010) for instance has documented how Polish migrants in London negotiate their ethnicity and has highlighted how her participants are being labelled and "stigmatised as violent, aggressive and dangerous", (Ryan, 2010, p. 365). Yet the study also highlights how this stigmatisation emerged from the Poles who can be noticed, thus implying that the quiet, well-behaved Poles are unnoticed and "may be able to take up a position of invisibility" (Ryan, 2010, p. 368),

confirming the particularity of white Polish migrants migrating to a majority white UK country. Similarly, Fox and Moroşanu have particularly documented this phenomenon of the racialisation of Eastern EU migrants around the experience of Hungarian and Romanian citizens in the UK, through a first study focusing on policies and tabloids (Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy, 2012) and a second one on migrants themselves (Moroşanu and Fox, 2013). Their studies have highlighted how those two groups of EU migrants have faced racialisation and discrimination on the basis of their skin colour (in policy) and cultural distinctiveness (in tabloids) and that despite being white in a white country, the two institutions managed to lighten or darken those (nominally) white migrants (Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy, 2012). Finally, often a marker of their non-Britishness despite being white, and so limiting their ability to be invisible, is EU migrants' accent when speaking English. This has been highlighted by both Ryan (2010) on Polish migrants and Genova (2017) on Bulgarian migrants in the UK as "while [they] remain relatively 'invisible' in terms of phenotypic markers, the most obvious difference that becomes a tool for othering is their accent" (Genova, 2017, p. 41).

Overall, by focusing on French skilled migrants in the UK, this project considers that their migration can mostly be defined as part of the Eurostars, as participants will have migrated within the North-West of the EU. Furthermore, by being skilled, there is a high chance that participants are middle class, either coming from middle-class families or from more modest backgrounds and having progressed on the socio-economic ladder. Their country of origin being broadly defined as economically similar to the UK, their move is likely to not be related to financial enhancement. Their integration and identities (of being white[9], skilled, Western and with a French accent) are not particularly subject to discrimination. Their migration, integration and identification could therefore be described as privileged (Brahic and Lallement, 2020), as indeed "nobody notices or complains about well-spoken French (…) They are unproblematic, and no politician or policy maker need ever make a fuss (…) These well brought up, highly educated young Europeans come to Britain with degrees in hand" (Favell, 2008a, p. 35). This naturally goes beyond the simplistic, discriminatory view that

[9] Again, this project does not intend the diminish the presence of ethnic minorities among French migrants in the UK but tends to focus on broad trends. As will be pointed out later on, one participant in this project belongs to a BAME group.

migrants are 'problematic', and this project therefore aims at documenting a privileged, even welcome to some extent, group of migrants facing Brexit.

5.2.2 BREXIT

While a whole analysis of Brexit would be very fastidious, it also goes beyond the scope of this project. However, understanding an overall timeframe of the event and some of the direct consequences is essential to appreciate what European citizens residing in the UK have been going through in the last few years.

In 2015, campaigning for his re-election as Prime Minister, David Cameron promised that if re-elected, he would make sure that a referendum on the UK membership to the EU would be organised. Once elected, he kept his promise and in 2016 the campaign started, opposing Remainers and Leavers. On 23rd June 2016, the referendum took place and led to the victory of the Leave side (52%), leaving Remainers bitter from this short defeat. The next day, Remainer David Cameron resigned, and Theresa May became the new leader of the UK. In March 2017, she triggered Article 50, which implied that the UK and the EU had two years to work out a deal before the official exit of the UK from the EU in March 2019. However, due to constant disagreements between the UK and the EU on various topics, the so-called 'Brexit Day' kept being postponed. Furthermore, May also faced unpopularity within her own government, which led to her resignation in the summer of 2019. Proud Leaver Boris Johnson endorsed the role of Prime Minister, which set a new tone for the Brexit context and negotiations, as reinforced by his various statements about 'getting Brexit done'. While Brexit Day happened in January 2021, trade negotiations are still going on between the UK and the EU. Up to January 2021, the UK still officially belonged to the EU, guaranteeing EU citizens living in the UK their EU rights on the British territory (and vice-versa for British citizens residing in Europe).

One of the direct legal consequences of Brexit is that legal EU citizens residing and working in the UK will become illegal if they do not apply for the correct documentation (or if their application is rejected). Brexit is thus a typical example of how regular migrants can easily become irregular because of institutional changes, a dichotomy already criticised by King (2002). In order to avoid this scenario, EU citizens already living in the UK must apply for a visa specific to EU migrants, called Settled Status, that was developed in 2018 and finalised

in 2019. The specificity of this visa is that it is free[10] and it (currently) provides the same rights as EU rights (including residing, working, access to healthcare education and social benefits). Citizens having lived (and being able to prove their residency[11]) in the UK for five continuous years can receive settled status. If citizens have not been living five continuous years in the UK (or if they cannot prove so) they are only granted the pre-settled status. The pre-settled status still covers the same rights as the settled status, and it enables EU citizens living in the UK to reach their five continuous years of residency ultimately to then have access to the settled status. There is however no guarantee that settled status will be granted after having received the pre-settled status, a new application is necessary. Furthermore, the British government does not provide physical proof of either status, leaving EU migrants with a simple confirmation received per email. Finally, both settled status and pre-settled status can be revoked by the British government, which overall confirms the precariousness of being granted this type of visa.

Ultimately, and if granted settled status, EU citizens have the option to apply for British citizenship. While the citizenship would enable them to have the exact same rights as British citizens without running the risk of losing those rights, the application is a much more complex (various tests to pass) and expensive (around £1,500-2,000) process. Furthermore, some EU countries do not allow double citizenship with the UK, which forces certain EU migrants to choose between their country-of birth-citizenship (including EU citizenship) and the British one. The French government however allows the French-British double nationality.

Another direct consequence that has been documented in both the press and academic publications is how, since the results of the referendum came out, there has been a notable shift in the tone used to talk about EU citizens residing in the UK. Indeed, the shift includes the generalisation of the term 'migrant' (in opposition to EU citizens or workers), which often echoes a negative connotation of being unwelcome, the rise of xenophobic and/or racists remarks if not attacks towards EU citizens, and an overall laissez-faire attitude vis-à-vis the way EU citizens are talked about (in public discourses, the press) and talked to (in more individual encounters) (Guma and Dafydd Jones, 2019; Mondon and Winter, 2019;

[10] An original £65 fee was later cancelled.

[11] Which can be done through active National Insurance Numbers, bills, work, or housing contracts. This however poses a certain number of problems, especially for unemployed people (e.g., students, non-working partners).

Starkey, Holstein and Tempest, 2021; Virdee and McGeever, 2017). This shift in discourse is thus an informal consequence that EU migrants have had to face for the last couple of years, highlighting a more relational rupture between EU citizens and their host country and/or their local community. This is typically exemplified when EU citizens now sometimes avoid talking in their mother tongue in public for fear of confrontation, or when May categorised EU citizens as 'queue jumpers' (Marsh, 2016; Sigona, 2018). While Chapter 2 had highlighted how the UK is a typical example of how a former multicultural country is now shifting to a certain form of neo-assimilationism (section 2.3), it is believed that the referendum and its results mark a clear rupture, if not the climax, of the UK rejecting its multicultural past.

More specifically, since the announcement of the referendum but especially since the results came out, a number of studies have focused on the various effects of Brexit for European citizens, in particular in relation to EU families (Sigona *et al.*, no date; Zontini and Però, 2019), notion of home (Miller, 2019; Zontini and Però, 2019), belonging (Botterill and Hancock, 2019; Guma and Dafydd Jones, 2019; Ranta and Nancheva, 2019; Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz, 2020; Zontini and Però, 2019) and identities/identification (Botterill and Hancock, 2019; Brahic and Lallement, 2020; Zontini and Però, 2019). Other studies have also focused on broader effects, such as welfare and social benefits (D'Angelo and Kofman, 2018; Kilkey, 2017) and on work environments (Luthra, 2020). Finally, a number of studies have also considered future migration or settlement of EU citizens, especially in relation to the reasons that have made those migrants move to the UK in the first place (Kilkey and Ryan, 2020; Lulle *et al.*, 2019; Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018; McGhee, Moreh and Vlachantoni, 2017; Zontini and Genova, 2022). Overall, those studies highlight how the results of the referendum have been experienced as a catalyst by EU citizens living in the UK, putting into question their sense of belonging, identity, and overall migratory journey (Kilkey, Piekut, and Ryan, 2020). They also highlight the precariousness that EU citizens might face in the aftermath of the exit of the UK from the EU, highlighting the uncertain context and potential loss of rights. Yet, all is not just dark, as Luthra (2020) for instance highlights in her study on how European academics in British universities found in their workplace a certain form of support in those dark times, while Ranta and Nancheva (2019) expose the sense of collective belonging that EU migrants developed around their common EU identity, growing from the rejection of that very same identity by their host-country nationals. Recently, Benson and her colleagues developed a

critical review of studies focussing on Brexit and migration, highlighting dominant themes and gaps within this burgeoning literature (Benson *et al.*, 2022). In particular, the authors highlight the "predominance of research on EU nationals from Central and Eastern European countries in the UK" (ibid, p. 383), thus reinforcing the originality and value of this project focusing on French nationals in the UK.

Two particular studies have documented French citizens living in the UK that are relevant for this project: the first one focuses on skilled workers before Brexit (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014) while the second one is related to Brexit (Brahic and Lallement, 2020). The study by Ryan and Mulholland confirms that French skilled workers who had moved to the UK independently (i.e., not as expatriates) are part of Eurostars. Indeed, their motivations to come to the UK are related to personal realisation (such as 'having fun' but also their career) as well as cultural literacy, language proficiency and the proximity to France. The authors thus highlight "personal and professional motivations for moving to London [which complicate] any notion of the highly skilled as motivated solely by economic opportunities" (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014, p. 591), confirmed by how future moves also "depended upon a range of factors, including career opportunities and family considerations" (ibid, p. 594). However, the authors do question the concepts of Eurostars and super-movers and suggest that those terms are more related to a specific life stage (e.g., young, childfree, eventually single movers) rather than being associated with all skilled French migrants in the West. Indeed "although many had enjoyed considerable geographical mobility early in their careers, they did not wish to continue moving (…) [as] the risks of movement can begin to outweigh the advantages" (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014, pp. 594–595), both in terms of career and family dynamics. One can however imagine that an unsettling event like Brexit could put back into the balance the pros and cons of moving or settling and how a stay thought of as permanent could end up being temporary (King, 2002). On the other hand, the second study by Brahic and Lallement (2020), focuses on the reactions, responses and strategies of French migrants in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum and offers an individual, personal perspective on the political context. The study confirms how the Brexit vote has been experienced by French migrants as damaging to themselves, to the UK as well as to the overall European project of integration. The study also portrays French migrants as being a privileged group, with few having experienced xenophobic remarks or discrimination before the referendum, stressing their

'desirability' and even 'prestige' in the eyes of the British population (Brahic and Lallement, 2020, p. 9). Yet, since the referendum, the study highlights French migrants' strategies to protect themselves, such as ensuring to be granted the right to reside or avoiding speaking French in public. In this study, all participants except from one expressed their wish to stay in the UK following the results of the referendum, for career and/or family reasons, confirming the intricate motives to migrate and/or settle beyond simple economic enhancement for French movers within the West.

In all, this project aims at joining the body of literature focusing on Brexit by investigating French Eurostars, the overall welcome and easily invisible EU migrants. By focusing on a group of EU migrants *a priori* privileged in comparison to some other EU migrant groups, this project hopes to highlight that Brexit does not make distinction among EU migrants, yet the way one faces it might differ. In particular, by focusing on French skilled migrants' migration, integration and identification, this project hopes to offer a more holistic approach to how privileged EU migrants face Brexit and the way they respond to it. To do so, and as exposed in Chapter 3, this project adopts a processual lens to migration, integration, and identification through the concept of sensemaking. As such, the subsequent sections of this chapter focus on the information shared by French skilled migrant workers in the UK who try to make sense of the macro changes they face in the Brexit context, starting with the information sources available to them.

5.3 KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT BREXIT?

In order to know how participants perceive and make sense of Brexit, it is first important to consider the sources of information participants would turn to, to become knowledgeable about Brexit. It will be interesting to point out in the next few paragraphs how French people adopted a transnational way of getting informed about Brexit, both in terms of traditional and social media, which slowly led to the development of a network of European citizens in the UK facing the ever-present Brexit atmosphere.

5.3.1 UNDERSTANDING BREXIT FROM HERE AND THERE

While some participants shared that they were only following "[British politics] during the big moments" (Juliette) or would "never pick up a newspaper" (Murielle) some others described themselves as "news addict" (Laurence), emphasizing the "vital" (Veronique) aspect of

following the news in times of Brexit. Overall, it was possible to develop an idea of what kind of media people were into, and hence from where they would get information about Brexit. The traditional newspapers (including their electronic versions) and TV programmes were very present in participants' statements. Among them, people would mostly read *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and/or *Le Monde*, and watch the BBC, Channel 4 and TV5 Monde. Through those traditional media sources, we can already see how participants adopted a pathway to information which can be described as bi-national, juggling between French and British medias.

The reason behind this can first be explained by the fact that Brexit was first and foremost an event happening in the UK, and hence receiving information from the British media could almost be considered as an unconscious automatism, in the sense that Brexit was constantly out there: headlines about Brexit were to be seen daily in the streets and on public transport, radio channels would repeatedly be tuned into Brexit news, and so people were continually, yet somehow passively, immersed in this Brexit flow. However, participants explained their disappointment with the British media, like Laurence who "[is] having a hard time with [the BBC]", while Fabienne calls it "the Brexit Bureau Channel", Lucas thinks "there is not much interesting" on British TV, and Veronique, who "followed every debate (…) every TV debate, radio, almost", found "lies … there are only lies … only lies". This could be explained by the fact that at least during the referendum period, British press coverage focused twice as much on pro-Leave articles than on pro-Remain ones, with a particular focus on the issue of migration (Levy, Aslan and Bironzo, 2016). Over time, participants even became tired of British media, like Murielle, who explained that "it's not that it annoys me but (…) their thing is not moving on". Turning to French media could be seen as a way to gather a broader understanding of Brexit, and a more EU approach to it. Indeed, it has been reported how European media coverage adopted a much more neutral approach to Brexit (*How Europe's media covered Brexit*, 2018), and so turning to French media could reflect a more active attitude to becoming knowledgeable about Brexit, in comparison to information received more passively from British media. Secondly, among the participants who were the most updated on Brexit, the majority of them were teaching French, at school or university level, and their own jobs therefore require from them to read and/or watch French media, like Veronique who reads the news "for work, because [her] job absolutely requires it" or Mathieu

who “force[s] [himself] to watch everything to really keep [himself] up to date with current events”. French teachers/lecturers represent around a fifth of all participants in this study, which can emphasise the idea of following news from France more than the average French population in the UK. However, even people not involved in teaching were still following the news about Brexit from a French perspective. This could be more broadly linked to the transnational lifestyle that all participants had adopted while living in the UK (Vertovec, 2009, 2002). Indeed, some participants had paid to have access to French TV, like Paul, who has “a Canal+ subscription, so it allows [him] to have access to all national channels plus Canal+”, or the ones who follow news from France daily, like Marion who “read[s] *Libe*[12] every morning, it’s in French, [as she is] not going to spontaneously go on an English website, no”.

Overall, by focusing on traditional media sources, we can say that participants adopted a transnational way of becoming knowledgeable about Brexit because of their disengagement with the British media, the influence of their work and more generally their transnational lifestyle. While this finding it not very surprising, it still highlights a form of transnational habit rarely mentioned in the literature.

5.3.2 A SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING OF BREXIT

However, online sources, like podcasts, YouTube videos or social media like Facebook or Twitter, were also resources to get information about Brexit. Even though pro-Leave activists were also more numerous and vocal on social media and online content than pro-Remain activists (Hänska-Ahy and Bauchowitz, 2017), participants still managed to find sources of information that fitted their views on Brexit. Indeed, Laurence listens to “Remainiacs Podcasts, it’s not bad” while Veronique herself explained how she follows on “YouTube, every discourse from Macron (…) [she is] in it from dawn until dusk”. So why turn to online content? This could first be explained as a way to gather extra pieces of information, especially coming from the participants for whom news was fundamental, while getting around their disappointment with traditional media. Furthermore, the additional information they accessed online offered them a different perspective about and analysis of Brexit than traditional media. Indeed, the Remainiacs, for example, define themselves as “not sick of

[12] *Libe* = *Liberation*, a French national newspaper

experts and we won't shut up and get over it" (their own website). However, and despite the global content of information participants could access online, it is interesting to see how the perspective still remains a French or British one on Brexit, which reinforces the transnational understanding and knowledge about Brexit exposed previously. Additionally, some other participants explained how they would be on social media to follow some Brexit trends, like Mathieu, who explained how he would mostly follow news on social media not so much for the value of the information but rather to "see which role social media have played in (…) Brexit (…) (as) on social media, all ideas are disseminated …". Finally, social media and online videos or podcasts would not only provide extra sources of information but may also be seen as a way to connect with other people facing similar issues, creating a sort of network among Europeans living in the UK, as indeed "social media is more likely to internally reinforce communities as opposite to connecting them to different communities" (Mcgregor and Siegel, 2013, p. 9). This was especially true when Laurence advised me to follow "3 Million in Limbo (…) it is a group of European people living in the UK, who formed this group", confirmed by Jeanne who described them as an "association (…) that fights a bit" and finally Fabienne who clearly identified with this group, as according to her, "well we belong to the 3 million eh". Interestingly enough, Professor Bueltmann, who campaigned with the 3 Million group, recently received funding for a research project on the emergence of a European diaspora following the Brexit referendum (Bueltmann and Bulat, 2021), thus hinting at the emergence of a collective European identity in those dark times.

All in all, participants' knowledge about Brexit came from British and French traditional media as well as online sources. Naturally, the validity of information shared on traditional media sources and social media/online content can hardly be compared and that is why the next few paragraphs will focus on the type of information accessed by participants, highlighting the lack of accurate information, which ultimately pushed them to develop an understanding of Brexit based on plausibility rather than accuracy.

5.3.3 INCORRECT, INCOMPLETE AND CONTRADICTORY INFORMATION

First, when mentioning information received in relation to Brexit, the most striking point mentioned by participants was the lack of and incorrect information shared with the population during the campaign that led to the referendum. Indeed, this campaign has been described by participants as "badly conducted" (Fabienne), "a lie" (Marion), where "there

[was] so much ignorance" (Veronique) and where "clearly the arguments were so shaky" (Mathieu) that "it had nothing to do with Europe" (Laurence). This goes in line with the idea that majoritarian pro-Leave articles drew migration as an issue during the campaign, while (future) regulation barely made above 10% in both pro-Leave and pro-Remain coverage (Levy, Aslan and Bironzo, 2016). Additionally, the information directly impacting EU migrants, shared during the campaign but most importantly also in the months or years following the referendum, was as unclear, and sometimes even as unreliable, as what was shared about Brexit, as expressed in Remigi and Martin (2017): "what I had initially heard in June (…) was no more on the agenda (p. 106). Agnès, for example, wondered about the settled status, "how is it going to work?" or thought that European citizens married to British partners could automatically get the British passport, "but it doesn't work like that then?"; Murielle was confused with the information she accessed in relation to her very young children's rights, "wondering what [the European Health Insurance Card] is going to become", as well as "the movement of people how it is … how it is going to work …"; finally, Laurence is juggling between truth and lies when explaining that "no one ever told us about [the comprehensive health insurance]" that European citizens were supposed to have acquired when arriving in the UK, while later claiming about that same insurance that "it's not true, that's false information". Mathieu summarizes quite clearly the situation in which EU migrants found themselves in when trying to access reliable information: "news like that, they are neither verified, nor verifiable, nor … not even altogether … credible".

Overall, despite the large number of sources that participants could access to become knowledgeable about Brexit, they repeatedly had to face incorrect, incomplete, or contradictory pieces of information. For that reason, and to conclude this section on 'knowledgeable about Brexit?', it would be more accurate to see how people's understanding of Brexit was evolving around plausibility, rather than accuracy. Plausibility over accuracy is one of Weick's established properties about sensemaking and while sensemaking is mostly mentioned in organizational studies (Mills, 2003; Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005), it is interesting to point out that the same properties are applicable to macro political changes influencing individuals' daily lives.

5.4 EVOLVING FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

However, as advocated by contemporary literature on sensemaking, understanding an event or a change does not only rely on knowledge but also on the feelings and emotions that this event has triggered. When mentioning the feelings and emotions that participants experienced since the beginning of the campaign until the time of the interviews, it was overwhelming to face the intense and sometimes extreme sentiments that participants went through while recalling the past two years or so. While the next few paragraphs retrace some of the most recurrent emotions expressed in the interviews, the list is far from exhaustive or definitive as those emotions keep evolving over time.

5.4.1 FROM 'IT WILL NOT HAPPEN' TO 'THE SLAP IN THE FACE'

When mentioning Brexit, a few participants declared how they saw it coming, like Veronique who "knew too well that [the British population] would say yes, that they wanted to be out"; however, the majority of the participants explained how their first belief about Brexit was "it will not happen" (Sandra). Indeed, a lot of people "thought it would be close" (Marion) but that the results of the referendum would give the win to Remain; Fabienne "expected it to be tight, but 52-48 it was for us, not for … the others". Therefore, the first emotion that participants expressed was their shock and disbelief when discovering the results of the referendum in June 2016. Agnès "was shocked", Laurence "was completely distraught", for Nathalie "it was really a hit in the heart and then uhm … also a punch in the stomach", while Mathieu "didn't believe it … [he] didn't believe it at all (…) it slapped [him] in the face". The surprise and devastation went on and on as participants were being interviewed.

This initial shock can be explained by the fact that despite living in the UK, participants accessed news which was mostly pro-EU and so anti-Brexit (as exposed previously), confirming the initial confidence they had in the value of belonging to the EU. Additionally, a third of the participants worked in universities (either as academic or administrative staff) and several of them explained that "when you are in a university environment, it's very different (…) it's very much Remain" (Marion), and "in this environment, essentially, we feel it less" (Joelle) because "once again, we are in a milieu quite educated" (Veronique), reinforcing the idea that they were not directly or regularly facing the promotion of Brexit. Furthermore, even people not working in university environments explained how they were

somehow “protected” (Veronique) from the hostility of the Brexit campaign due to their residential areas, like Laurence who “[is] lucky to live in a middle-class village”, Etienne who “[lives] in a region which is still (…) quite cosmopolitan” and naturally participants living in London who confirmed that “London is a separate cosmos” (Sandra) where “they are used to have foreigners” (Patricia).

Together with this initial shock, or what could be considered as the reason behind this initial shock, was also the feeling of having been rejected – as EU citizens – and betrayed – by their host fellows, also expressed by French citizens in Remigi and Martin’s testimonies (2017). Juliette admitted “it’s very curious, I really took it personally” while Emma also “think[s] that … I’ve … I’ve taken it … personally, yeah”. It is important to point out here that this feeling of personal rejection has been mentioned in recollection of the results of the referendum, in 2016. Back to 2018/2019, participants had time to step back from the initial panic and come to a certain explanation behind this vote, like Emma who in the end “needed time to understand (…) and discuss with [British people] (…) now it’s done, it’s done, we need to move on”, confirming that this feeling faded away over time for most participants.

The initial belief that Brexit would not happen, which ultimately generated a shock and that feeling of rejection among participants, could therefore be explained by the fact that participants were living and/or working in environments and among people *a priori* in favour of the European Union. By evolving in such environments, participants were to some extent less exposed to the resentment towards the EU and EU citizens which could explain why they thought (and hoped) the results of the referendum would be pro-Remain.

Following this first shock, however, various emotions and feelings arose and developed over time, going from sadness and anger to more extreme forms of fear and panic, as the next section will expose.

5.4.2 TEARS, ANGER, FEAR AND PANIC

While the four proposed emotions of this section are easily distinctive, it should be pointed out that among participants, those feelings overlapped, implying that people were often experiencing them simultaneously.

Sadness for example was very often expressed in relation to the shock exposed in the previous section, namely following the results of the referendum: “the day after the vote,

well [Laurence] was in tears", Fabienne "obviously (…) cried about it", Jeanne "thought that … reason would prevail", for Marion "it was the lowest moment of [her] stay in the UK" while Veronique confirmed "it's true that it's depressing, it's depressing …". Moreover, this sadness turned into anger for some participants, going from a little resentment, like Murielle who "was a bit pissed off though" and Mathieu who "on that day (…) was not in a good mood", to a more intense and constant form of indignation, like Laurence who is "angry, always angry, [she] can't get rid of this, this anger". Beyond this sadness and anger, fear developed as a feeling related to Brexit. Jeanne "[lives] a bit with the fear of thinking [she's] going to be separated from [her] husband and [her] child", Laurence "[is] scared to wear [her 'Bollocks to Brexit' badge], [she is] scared of the people's reaction if they see [her] with it, so [she is] afraid to express [herself] actually …", Agnès "[is] afraid that at the end, the rest of Europe will make an example out of the UK". Those examples are mostly expressions of fear, yet they did not concretise into any particular actions. Panic, however, pushed people from anxiety to some drastic decisions: Laurence "panicked so much that [she] told [herself], I'm going to apply for the permanent residence", Murielle "got a bit scared and (…) well [she] made an application for [British] nationality" while Mathieu, who is concerned about the value of the pound, "[has] already sold [his] first flat (…) [his] second flat has been on the market for … 3 weeks, and it has been sold for 2 weeks".

Those emotions are mostly related to the participants' future rights to stay in the UK, for them and their family. While a subsequent section will particularly focus on the changes perceived in the participants' daily life, with more concrete examples, we can see here how feelings and emotions, as varied as they can be, are central to the understanding of what participants are going through in the context of Brexit. Going back to the research question, we can see how emotionality is playing an important role in people's perception of Brexit and should be considered fundamental for future interpretations.

However, while some feelings and emotions are easily recognisable and can be pinpointed, sometimes the lack of information or knowledge exposed previously can also bring the sentiment of being lost.

5.4.3 LOST, CONFUSED AND DOUBTFUL

While it is difficult to show in text the notion of being lost or confused as expressed by participants, as it would mostly be apparent through the tone of the voice, the hesitation, or the mumbling, i.e., oral characteristics, some recurrent phrases and moments helped me identify this feeling.

First is the idea that people 'do not know'. For some participants it was clear that confusion was taking the lead when they could not answer several of the interview questions, like Murielle who often repeated in her interview that she "[does] not know what is going to happen" or Agnès who let her thoughts float on whether to be paid in pound or euro: "I don't know … we'll see, I don't know …". While these are very broad and general statements and while it is indeed very difficult to know in which direction Brexit will evolve, some other participants were lost regarding particular aspects of Brexit: for Laurence it is the timing as "it's going to go on for I don't know how long", while for Veronique and Fabienne it is about the settled status: "I mean, we don't know how it's going to go down" (Veronique), "I didn't even look it up, I don't know if I have to do it, from when … pff I've no clue" (Fabienne). With the length, the process, the *what* and the *how* of Brexit being so unclear and yet being so integral to participants' lives and future in the country, it is understandable that participants were experiencing moments of instability, which have been concisely summarised by Mathieu as "in the end, we don't know … no one knows anything". Additionally, another way of noticing that people were experiencing doubts and confusion was when people asked themselves (or the researcher) questions. Rhetorical questions could be observed, for example when Marion stated, "so now it's going to happen, Brexit and … what's going to happen?", not expecting any real answer. A more direct example is when Murielle openly and repeatedly admitted that "[she is] asking [herself] questions". Naturally, this echoes the section of the lack of correct information that participants struggled to access and the various questions that arose from it. More subtle, however, is how people offered some suppositions and guesses about the future. Thinking about his rights, Mathieu wondered, "What is going to change? Which rights are we going to lose? Because we are going to lose some, I doubt we will gain some", while Laurence stated that she "[thinks she] will lose [her] right to vote … in the local elections". Those are naturally only speculations, yet they enable us to see which aspects of Brexit people were having doubts about.

By hesitating, wondering or even guessing, people are not only trying to get this moment full of doubts out of their lives – which confirms the confusion they find themselves in – but more importantly for the scope of this project is to notice that while there is no way to predict the future, especially during Brexit, participants still tried to make sense of it, tried to develop a meaning of the context in which they are evolving and in which they need to make decisions. Those negatively experienced emotions of Brexit could be considered as what pushed participants to look for a meaning, as they tried to make sense of the change they had been facing. The link between the various emotions expressed so far, the lack of information and how to make sense of the situation, has been perfectly expressed by Jeanne:

> None of this … none of this makes sense and at the same time, with everything that's going on, and the news, it was a bit mind-blowing so … I waited, waited, I think at some point I gave up …

5.4.4 BORED

Inspired from this quote is also the last reaction that needs to be exposed in this section on feelings and emotions, namely boredom. Indeed, while shock, fear, anger, and doubts have been the emotions most expressed during the interviews, especially when recalling the Brexit context in 2016, back to 2018 or 2019, i.e., at the times of the interviews, a certain number of participants expressed how they got tired of Brexit. Marion had "had really enough [of Brexit] (…) now it's time to decide and move on" while Joelle is "so tired of it; each time we turn on the TV, it's Brexit, Brexit (…) after a while we … we lose interest, me I'm waiting for it to resolve itself". The boredom can be explained by the Brexit timeframe itself. While the referendum took place in June 2016 and Article 50 was signed in March 2017, the fieldwork took place between September 2018 and summer 2019. By that time, participants had seen three Prime Ministers (Cameron, May, Johnson), several deals between the UK and the EU being rejected countless times, a European election where their right to vote was sometimes denied, an attempt to suspend Parliament and a Brexit deadline being constantly postponed (from March 29th, 2019, to ultimately January 2021). In March 2019, before yet another vote on May's deal, Mathieu told me, "Normally, with today's vote, we should know a bit more [but] I've the impression that we won't know much, much eh; by tonight, we're going to be

in the same … situation" emphasising that never-ending Brexit period, where no decision is being taken.

Overall, and to finish this section on feelings and emotions regarding Brexit, it is safe and not surprising to conclude that Brexit has been experienced as a *catalyst* (Botterill and Hancock, 2019) for the majority of the participants, and hence has pushed them to encounter a number of uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, anger, fear and panic to finally end up being bored about the whole Brexit context. The various reactions of French skilled migrants facing Brexit echo the findings of Zontini and Genova on Italian and Bulgarian migrants facing Brexit who experienced betrayal, ambivalence and indifference (Zontini and Genova, 2022). Those feelings, despite not being definitive or exhaustive, show the emotionality that pushed people to look for meanings and is the foundation of people's understanding of Brexit. Yet one should not forget that those feelings have been evolving throughout the months and years following the referendum and hence a migrant idiosyncratic understanding of Brexit (itself in a constant evolution) is far from being set in stone.

5.5 PERCEPTION OF CHANGE

Finally, and as part of understanding Brexit, perception of change is captured in this last section in order to highlight how sensemaking does not only rely on knowledge, feelings and emotions but also on actual facts and particular cues (Weick, 1995).

5.5.1 ECONOMY

The first and probably most obvious change perceived by participants is how the British economy has not been as stable or certain as it used to be, as Marion explained: "The pound is going to lose value, we're going to lose money". Participants could especially see this change in the economy when comparing the value of the pound to the one of the euro as "the exchange rate is becoming …. It's becoming depressing" (Veronique). To give you an idea, 1 pound used to be up to 1.45 euro before the referendum, while during the field work, it was around 1.10 euro or even lower. When asked if participants had any particular way of facing this devaluation, their answers were varying: Agnès and Laurence "for the moment, no", they have no solution, Murielle "[does] not really understand how it works", Joelle thinks "it doesn't affect [her] (…) as [she has] two bank accounts", one in the UK and one in France, and

we remember Mathieu who sold his properties so that by the "end of May [2019], [he] won't have … any investment in the UK".

The devaluation of the pound and the instability of the British economy is not only a perceived change felt by participants but has been talked about in detail and confirmed on various information sources worldwide. The reason why it has particularly been picked by participants could however be that for people who regularly switch between pounds and euros due to their transnational lifestyle between the UK and France, this change was easily noticeable, especially as the British pound used to be known for its strength and stability. This change was also particularly pronounced among younger participants who were thinking about investing in the UK prior to the referendum, yet who now must face the insecurity of the market, like Paul for whom it was a "big financial impact (…) I'm more reluctant [to buy], yeah, because I don't know what's going to happen with the real estate market".

Perception of change during Brexit can therefore be translated as something as concrete as an economic depreciation, yet participants also perceived other, more subtle changes, like the way their relationships with others shifted, especially host country nationals.

5.5.2 SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Indeed, during Brexit, relationships between participants and their British acquaintances were perceived as having changed. The following few paragraphs will therefore focus on relationships with people known by participants (i.e., friends, neighbours, or colleagues), while broader, more general interactions with strangers (e.g., in the street) will be mentioned in the subsequent section, on xenophobia.

The first way that social relationships have been perceived as changed, was when participants started being questioned about their future plans: Laurence "[had] some of [her] colleagues who told [her], 'But why don't you become … why don't you become British?'" and "a lot of people ask [Marion], 'Oh but, how are you going to stay?'". Being asked those questions has put participants in various emotional states, going from sadness, anger and uncertainty as mentioned previously. However, it was striking to also learn that even their British relatives were asked similar questions, which put participants in even greater discomfort: Veronique's (British) husband was asked, "Are you going to stay, are you going to leave?", while Fabienne explained how "there has been 1 or 2 kids who told [her British-

French daughter] 'uhm do you think that you will have to … that you will be able to stay? (…) Is your mum going to be sent back?'".

While this questioning has been experienced as embarrassing and difficult to deal with, it became even worse when participants discovered that their own acquaintances or friends voted in favour of Brexit, as explained by Fabienne: "We have 'friends' (gesturing quotation marks) because well now I have a resistance towards certain people (…) who voted Brexit". This was also confirmed by Joelle who "[has] someone in [her] sport club, olala, each time he mentions Brexit to me, I tell him (…) it's not with me that you're going to talk about Brexit (…) it's our sport club, it's not the place to talk politics", while in Brexit testimonies, Nathalie explains how her "husband's family are Brexiters" (Remigi and Martin, 2017, p. 87). More than anger or sadness, betrayal can be felt from those quotes, and while various strategies will be discussed in Chapter 7, on migrating and integrating in the Brexit context, it shows how Brexit has affected people even in their closer circles.

Finally, while the effects of Brexit have mostly been pointed out in private spheres, three participants explained how it also came up at their workplace. Jeanne teaches languages in a school and "at work [she] had had some remarks as well uhm ... because of Brexit (…) it came from students (…) from students … and one colleague". Marion, who is a lecturer in the French department and involved in the organisation of the Erasmus programme at her university, confirmed that she "[had] students who voted Brexit (…) and on top of that he [a student] had done the Erasmus program". Finally, Emma works for a French company, in import-export services, and remembered:

> I found myself at the back of that mini-bus, I was the only woman, with those men … (…) in their fifties, white, who were at their peak, from the vote, and me, deep inside me, I told myself … it's not possible (…) so yeah, so this was the day we figured out that Brexit had happened, well that they had voted Brexit (…) at my work, so I won't lie to you, I work with people who all have voted uhm … Leave

While only three people mentioned some Brexit effects in their workplace, one could wonder why so few, while in the private sphere, this had been pointed out by all participants. This could first be explained by the fact that participants are skilled, and most of them have a

permanent contract, mainly in pro-EU organisations, hence being part of a certain *élite* and being protected from any extensive Brexit promotion. Furthermore, while this had not been the scope of this project, it would be interesting to analyse the way companies have reacted to the well-being and/or inclusion of their EU workforce (like at some universities for example) to know if this had had anything to do with Brexit remaining mostly outside of the workplace. Or could this simply be explained by the fact that people do not talk politics in the workplace?

5.5.3 XENOPHOBIA

As mentioned previously, those kinds of remarks also went on beyond the personal sphere as participants encountered discriminatory comments and criticisms from strangers, more broadly described in this section as xenophobia, as hostility towards foreigners (Starkey, Holstein and Tempest, 2021).

The first perception of change linked to xenophobia is probably how participants started being labelled as migrants by others (including politicians and the media, which was further echoed in their daily life). Veronique rejects this term: “We are not migrants (…) I mean we’re European” and while a subsequent chapter will particularly focus on identity and self-identification (chapter 6), this shows how this categorisation was part of how discrimination started taking place. Indeed, linked to this idea of being a migrant, people had the impression (and sometimes confirmation) of being observed. Laure felt “a bit paranoid sometimes (…) it’s stupid but for example you speak French in the street and uhm … you think, ha, if people hear us, what would they say, or you know, it’s stupid eh”. Other participants had also experienced this feeling, like Marion who “wondered, [as she] saw people observing [her], all of that, [she] asked [herself], is it because of my accent”, which Veronique confirmed: “We speak French in the street, and we are being glared at”. Responding on Laure’s comment about being paranoid, there is of course the doubt if people were really being observed or if on their side, they started observing people to see if *they* would observe them back. However, regardless of whether this observation was real or not, we can feel how participants started being conscious of their environment and of themselves as being French, i.e., speaking French or English with an accent, which could have been considered as disruptive (since “foreign simply meant bad” (Remigi and Martin, 2017, p. vii)).

More concrete examples of how xenophobia developed after the referendum include, for instance, Nicole who "received tomatoes on our car, in our driveway (…) we received stuff … some bin bags … some bags thrown away", or Laureline who also had her car vandalised, twice, yet when she called the police, they explained to her how it was normal, that several people with European-registered cars had theirs trashed as well, while Mathieu simply prefers to joke about it: "Me, I had bananas crushed on my car (…) it's about fruits and vegetables, it's stupid, they could have put some sausages, some ham, some stuff like that, it would have been nice (…) bananas … and so crushed I couldn't even eat them". While those examples could be described as indirect in the sense that participants did not face their aggressors, Mathieu, who had only received one pejorative comment from a drunk man in 16 years in the UK, had to face it: "Since Brexit, six times! Six times … five times some women and one time a man, who asked me some questions like 'But what are you still doing here?' (…) '[why] haven't you packed already?'".

The few examples I have quoted so far come from the same little handful of participants as they were the ones who mentioned some concrete situations that had happened to them directly. However, xenophobia in general, without particular examples, was mentioned by the majority of participants: "It started a bit to be some sort of racism uh … ordinary (…) I thought I felt some animosity" (Marion), "There is a sort of xenophobia that is very significant, and this since the vote …" (Veronique), "Well we see … there was some vehemence" (Fabienne), "There was this wind of … how is it called … of Euroscepticism" (Jeanne), "as if all of a sudden, the climate in the country had completely changed, as if a black sheet had descended upon [us] (...) the atmosphere has changed and we are no longer welcome" (Patricia), all confirming the general xenophobic atmosphere floating in the country since the referendum.

5.5.4 LIFE IN LIMBO

Finally, the last perception of change that will be mentioned in this section is about uncertainty, namely having one's life in limbo. Laurence, who is very well informed about Brexit, was the only participant who explicitly mentioned this concept: "We can't do [this], because we're … in limbo (…) but that's the problem, it's … we are … in limbo". However, understanding being in limbo as "a place of uncertainty, sadness, confusion, fragility, and many other painful feelings" (Remigi and Martin, 2017, p. vii), it was possible to see this

concept in application when participants shared their experience. Jeanne, for instance, thinking about her (British) husband and their bi-national child, "[does] not know; I think that we're waiting to see what is going to happen (…) I think we are a bit in stand-by actually (…) there is no more projects, really".

A typical and more developed example of someone having their life in limbo is probably Emma. Emma is in her 30s and has been living in the UK since 2005. She has bought a house in the UK with her (French) husband. They both have very good jobs and open-ended contracts. Emma explained that for them it would be easy to leave, "[they] just have the house", in the sense that it is just them, no children, only material belongings. However, while it would be easy to leave, they do not leave. Yet thinking that they have made up their mind about staying in the UK is also wrong. They are typically in limbo, in between, and this can be seen in the following extract:

> Well sometimes it's a bit stupid, we tell ourselves (…) we need a new table for the living room, so we're going to buy a new table, yeah, but we don't know if we're going to stay here, if we're going to move back to France (…) but in the end we do nothing, because we wait, we wait, in the end we are in the expectation, so we don't have much … but same idea, we need to change our cars, you know, so uhm … we're not going to spend this money.
>
> (Researcher) But what are you waiting for? Waiting to see …
>
> To see what is going to happen, to know if we stay or not, so both of us, we both need to change our car, it's … it's stupid right but uhm … (…) we're not going to buy a new car if ... if we need to leave soon.

The referendum happened in June 2016, the interview took place in January 2019, and while writing those lines in December 2019, Emma has still not bought a new car. It has been three years she needs one, and so it has been for three years that she has been – like others – in limbo.

Being in limbo is essentially what this chapter has been trying to show, namely the difficulty to gather correct information about Brexit despite the various sources available, the various uncomfortable feelings that Brexit has caused participants to feel and the various practical and relational changes that Brexit has brought into their life. In limbo is the accumulation of changes, lack of answers and constant uncertainty exposed in this chapter.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have applied the concept of sensemaking to Brexit and French skilled migrant workers in order to address the first part of the thesis' research question and explore migrants' own perception of the macro context in their host country.

With the thesis' research question being "How do migrants' perceptions of macro changes influence their migration, integration and identification?", the first requirement was to understand how people perceived Brexit, through the application of sensemaking. The first section has shown how participants had developed an understanding of Brexit based on various international information sources that yet could not always be trusted, and that is why their understanding had been defined as plausible rather than accurate. The second section has revealed the diverse emotions that this change had triggered among participants, showing that Brexit had caused several negative feelings, yet they are always evolving. Finally, the last section mentioned the changes perceived by participants, highlighting the fact that despite the potential inaccuracy of their understanding of Brexit, they perceived that changes were happening in economic, social, and relational terms. We can therefore say that participants' perception of Brexit had been an emotional and factual cataclysm.

5.6.1 SELF-SUFFICIENT ARGUMENTS

As an independent early discussion, this first empirical chapter has confirmed that participants made sense of a change based on particular *cues* they had extracted from their environments and their *social* relationships on an *ongoing* basis (Dervin, 1998; Mills, 2003; Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). However, when applied to migrants, sensemaking went beyond the pure local or national level as their understanding has been defined as transnational since cues and relationships went beyond national borders. While sensemaking has been popular since the 1990s, only a few studies have considered it in the context of migration at the individual level (Herrero-Arias, Hollekim and Haukanes, 2020;

Macías Gómez-Estern and de la Mata Benítez, 2013; Naidu, 2016). An interesting point to highlight is therefore the idea that when applied to migration studies, especially international migration, sensemaking and its several properties should be thought of in terms of 'here and there' (King, 2002; Vertovec, 2009; Yeoh and Ramdas, 2014). Indeed, senses developed from a particular event or change are based on migrants' experiences and involvements in the host country; yet at the same time, the home country's own cultural, religious, economic and/or political standards and references are assimilated by migrants themselves and therefore also play a role in migrants' development of meanings. All in all, migrants' sensemaking does not solely rely on the host or local context but also integrates their home country background and practice, and that is why migrants' sensemaking can be defined as transnational.

Secondly, and building on previous studies (Bartunek *et al.*, 2006; Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013), emotions and feelings play a role in sensemaking. Indeed, this chapter as highlighted the centrality of emotions when participants developed meanings about the Brexit macro context and when facing various changes at their own individual level. In particular, the change in this study has been perceived negatively by all participants and so one could wonder if the search for senses was not pushed by the need to escape that negatively experienced situation: developing meanings, making sense of the situation, facing it to ultimately break out of it. Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence (2013) already hinted in that direction when pointing out that "triggering events that produce negative emotions like anxiety and sadness are (…) more likely to energize our search for meaning" (p.226). The current project therefore seems to go in that direction as well, yet only further studies, focusing on the role of both negative and positive emotions, will be able to confirm this link.

Additionally, this project has confirmed that the senses and understanding of a particular change were based on *plausibility* rather than *accuracy* (Mills, 2003; Weick, 1995). While in previous studies the idea of plausibility was not an issue, in the sense that "inaccurate perceptions are not necessarily a bad thing (…) (as) people do not need to perceive the current situation or problems accurately to solve them" (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005, p. 415), it has been highlighted on several occasions in this chapter how uncertainty was actually a major concern in this study. Uncertainty can be emotional as well as factual, especially when understood through the notion of *in limbo* (Remigi and Martin, 2017). Uncertainty emerging from this study could be the result of a too-intense, negatively experienced change as

“extreme adversity may indeed motivate people to act, but might also inhibit their ability to interpret the situation” (Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013, p. 239), hence ending up stuck on standby, or in limbo. This study therefore not only confirms the link between emotions and sensemaking as expressed by Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence (2013) but goes a step further by suggesting the importance of uncertainty in sensemaking when emotions become too extreme, since “the very mechanisms that get engaged to deal with fear are the ones that can hamper sensemaking” (Ancona, 2012, p. 11). The emotions’ valence and intensity are therefore of prime importance for sensemaking, and while negative emotions have indeed more chances to trigger sensemaking, too-intense negative emotions are likely to obstruct the development of senses, and that is why uncertainty does play a role, namely the illustration of something not making sense.

All in all, and regardless of their triggering or obstructing roles, feelings and emotions were brought into this study through the concept of sensemaking. At the same time, various migration scholars expressed the current shortage of studies that highlight the role of emotions on migration and integration (Botterill and Hancock, 2019; Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018; Zontini and Genova, 2022; Zontini and Però, 2019). Considering sensemaking in migration studies could therefore offer a path through which emotionality could be talked about in migration and integration studies.

5.6.2 CONTRIBUTION TO GENERAL PROJECT

Going back to the scope and objectives of this project and focusing on how migrants’ perceptions of a macro change influence their migration, integration and identification, this chapter pointed out that it is first and foremost necessary to figure out the valence and intensity (Maitlis, Vogus and Lawrence, 2013) of how the macro change has been perceived in order to be able to develop on sensemaking and ultimately study future actions and behaviours. Indeed, “recipients do not make sense of a change effort in an affectively neutral way. They have feelings about the change. To more fully understand impacts of a change on its recipients, it is necessary to understand these feelings” (Bartunek *et al.*, 2006, p. 187). This chapter therefore serves as the basis where emotions and feelings have not only been exposed but more importantly have been analysed and logically comprehended in order to be able to investigate the impacts of Brexit on people’s migration, integration and identification. Without this chapter, the following chapters on identity reconstruction

(Chapter 6) and migration/integration behaviours (Chapter 7) would have no root to start from. Indeed, understanding the influences of a perceived change needs to be done through the analysis of the recipients' emotions as those emotions determine the senses made out of that change and define future behaviours. Yet, it should be emphasised that the experiences of migrating, integrating and identifying would themselves feed back to the way people make sense of macro changes, i.e., that sensemaking, migrating, integrating, and identifying happen in a loop, continuously influencing one another, as will be further developed in Chapter 8.

More importantly, this chapter also offered a connection between events happening at the macro level and individual migrants' everyday lives through a sensemaking lens. The analysis of the findings indeed went beyond the micro/macro dichotomy as it considered linking individual agencies and macro forces through the theoretical framework of sensemaking. Sensemaking enables an approach to and understanding of macro changes that is idiosyncratic to social actors as their own perceptions of the changes are the centre of attention (Weick, 1995). Through this particular lens, the perspective of migrants is central and at the same time brings the structural context into their own agencies. From the data and this specific analysis, it is evident that the way migrants perceive macro changes, whether accurately or not, interferes in migrants' everyday lives, both in their personal and social spheres.

The data indeed show that the perception of macro changes induces an emotional response in individuals which can be considered as the first evidence that a connection exists between changes at the macro level and individual migrants. Furthermore, the data also show that migrants feel economically impacted by macro changes and that macro changes alter their relationships with their direct networks (friends, neighbours, colleagues), with host country nationals more generally, but it also affects their family dynamics with their partners and/or children being impacted, as well as atmosphere in the workplace. Through a sensemaking lens, I therefore argue that migrants are both directly and indirectly impacted by how they perceive and experience macro changes. Changes happening at the macro level induce changes in migrants' everyday lives. These perceived changes are fuelled by how individual migrants understand the macro changes and how they have directly or indirectly been impacted by them. Yet, again, let us not forget that the way one perceives macro

changes is also highly related to personal experiences of migrating, integrating and identifying, aspects that are addressed in the next empirical chapters (Chapters 6 and 7).

The change in this study being Brexit, it has been perceived negatively by all participants, who experienced it through sadness, fear, anger, and eventually panic, going from a medium to an extreme intensity as showed by the data. Additionally, an emotion described as "uncertainty / in limbo" emerged from the data due to the lack of correct or concrete information about Brexit and EU migrants' future in the UK. The changes on which those emotions are based are factual as well as psychological and encompass a vast array of economic and social transformations, both in the private and public spheres, experienced directly by participants.

All in all, through a sensemaking lens and attention to emotions, I argue that a connection exists between macro forces and individual migrant agencies by emphasising how both micro- and meso-level factors are impacted by how migrants perceive and personally experience macro changes. Ultimately, changes in migrants' everyday lives trigger changes in their behaviours, as hinted in this chapter but as will be further emphasised in the subsequent chapters. The next chapters will indeed have to answer the following questions, to clarify how a negative perceived change influences people's migration, integration and identification based on the emotions and (lack of) senses developed about that change. Only then, and with the three chapters combined, will it be possible to explain how migrants' perceptions of macro changes influence their migration, integration, and identification.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS: *(RE)CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

A certain aspect of the argumentation in favour of Brexit was the reassertion of the British identity (and nationality) at the expense of European and EU ones. This chapter therefore exposes analysis and findings related to migrants' identification when those are being challenged by macro forces. First, the chapter illustrates some emotions related to being French and/or European in the Brexit context (section 6.2). Secondly, and based on those emotions, the chapter depicts how participants repositioned themselves within their host society and environments in terms of belonging, hierarchy, home, and whiteness (section 6.3). Those two first sections will show how it was personal experiences of the Brexit context itself that pushed people to reposition themselves and renegotiate their belonging within their country of residence. Then, the third part of this chapter will be about the new legal documentation that European citizens will have to apply for and provide in the post-Brexit context, exposing particular challenges (section 6.4). Finally, the chapter finishes with a conclusion and some early discussion (section 6.5).

6.2 FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

While in the previous chapter a section had been dedicated to feelings and emotions, it has only covered the emotions related to Brexit itself, the campaign, the results, and the months/years after it. This current section focuses on the feelings and emotions related to one's identities, citizenships and having to apply for legal documents due to Brexit.

6.2.1 PRIDE: REASSERTION OF FRENCH AND EU CITIZENSHIPS

While Brexit was built around and had been calling for the reassertion of British nationality, values, and culture, through the politization of Englishness and British sovereignty (Virdee and McGeever, 2017), the results of the referendum triggered among participants a counter-effect and namely the reassertion of their own identities. Those identities have been expressed through different levels, namely regional, national as well as supra-national, like

Veronique, for example, who defines herself as "Breton, French and European (…) yeah Britany[13] because it is in my life, in my blood, yes, because France is so beautiful as well and that I am so French for so many reasons and because Europe it's so important also". Indeed, this idea of being French or European was expressed by the majority of participants, like Paul who talked about "us, as Europeans, as non-British" while Murielle is "mostly French". The European feeling was especially present among British-French couples or families, as explained by Fabienne: "We are a mixed couple, right, we are not British, but we are not French (…) we are a multicultural family". Through the reassertion of their Frenchness or Europeanness, one could feel the pride that the Brexit context engendered among participants. This finding, from data collected in 2018-2019, goes in line with the results of a survey conducted at the end of 2019 with EU/EEA/Swiss citizens about the Settled Status, as "70.29% agree or strongly agree that their European identity was strengthened by Brexit; for over a third it also strengthened their national identity" (Bueltmann, 2019, p. 3). One could consider this pride as a way of making clear on which side of the Brexit story participants situate themselves, namely "on the good side" (Marion), as "be it Brexit or not, British people are always a bit on the side" (Joelle), "so ultimately you feel prouder of your country" (Chloé). Because of their incapacity to vote at the referendum and combined with the results of that referendum, participants felt the urge to expose their support, and in a way belonging, to the European Union, especially when being interviewed by a follow European citizen[14]. However, one should make clear to point out that thinking about one's identity, or citizenship in this case, had itself been triggered by the Brexit context itself, as explained by Laurence, who feels "different, vis-à-vis (her identity) … [but because] let's say before I didn't think about it".

Indeed, because Brexit has been calling for the reassertion of Britishness, and because none of the participants had the British citizenship, it pushed them to wonder, since we are not British, what then? And so, despite Brexit having been experienced negatively as expressed in the previous chapter, their reassertion of their Frenchness or Europeanness has mostly been experienced as something positive, as something empowering, like Laurence's children who "are proud, and they want to tell [British] people, you are … you are twats

[13] Region in France

[14] Refer to section 4.6 for reflexive comments on my role as a researcher

(laugh), we are French, you don't know what you are going to lose" or Marion for whom "it is a personal satisfaction to tell [herself], I am European, I still am French, and I won't give that up". It should be pointed out that even before the referendum, French nationals were ranked 12 out of 28 for European identity, "with fewer than 40 per cent of French" who do not identify as European at all, while British nationals in comparison were ranked 28 out of 28 (Dennison and Carl, 2016).

All in all, despite Brexit having been experienced as a negative change among all participants, it is interesting to notice that it triggered positive, even empowering emotions, such as pride, in regard to their own identities as French and/or European. In the financial crisis context, Graeber (2016) had already exposed the revalorisation and reaffirmation of the value of national citizenship, especially when political and/or economical distrust in the country of residence arose, while the country of origin's conditions are stable. This pride towards Frenchness and Europeanness could therefore be considered as a reassertion or a re-appropriation of participants' own identities and origins in a context where the manifestation of those are being constrained in their host country.

6.2.2 DOUBT, IDENTITY IN LIMBO

However, despite this citizenship empowerment, doubts created by, and surrounding, Brexit still persisted, including participants' ways of identifying. Indeed, in this new context, Marion explained how "despite everything, to be European, not to be European, it changes a lot of things". This is especially true when one thinks in terms of rights: EU citizens used to have the same rights as the British population (with the exception of the national vote), but it seems that they will lose certain of their current rights once Brexit happens (Kilkey, 2017). Furthermore, in a conversation I had with both Laurence and Agnès, the former explained how "now I feel separated [from the British population]", and this was confirmed by her friend: "Yeah … because you feel … like a minority now, in England". This reflection explores this idea that despite there being over 3 million of them in the UK, the European population is now a minority in the sense that they do not belong to the same category as the British people. Indeed, previously the French and other citizens from the EU shared with the British population a common citizenship, namely their European one. Even though this citizenship was mostly considered an ideal for some (Graeber, 2016), and while it was clear that many British people themselves did not identify with this citizenship (Dennison and Carl, 2016), they

still all had it in common. Yet, because of Brexit, a clear demarcation and fracture occurred around this citizenship. Naturally, coming from the idea of a shared citizenship, which also includes shared values, to being a minority in one's own country of residence, can put people in doubt, in an unsettling situation, in other words, *in limbo* (Remigi and Martin, 2017). Doubt and uncertainty were also expressed when participants did not really know how they would (or would like to) define themselves. This was the case for Chloé, for whom Brexit also corresponded to a change of professional status, and so she struggled to position herself in the current context: "other people keep reminding me that I am French, clearly (…) yeah, I don't know … up to now I was student …". Likewise, Veronique struggles and raised the following concern:

> I think I always have this sort of unconscious fear, that is … if I become British, am I going to lose my French nationality? I am scared.

While the French government had always made clear that dual citizenships would be accepted with the UK, be it before or after Brexit, and while Veronique made it clear later on that she refuses to apply for British citizenship[15], in a context where information is unverified, or changes regularly, one could understand why this fear looms over the head of several participants.

All in all, despite a positive reassertion of their French and European citizenships, participants were in doubt, having their identities in limbo because of the likely future loss of some of their rights, the fracture with the British population around a past shared citizenship and because of the continual uncertainty that surrounds Brexit.

6.2.3 ANGER AND REJECTION TOWARDS SETTLEMENT STATUS AND BRITISH CITIZENSHIP

Yet, when asked about future documentation, which includes the Settled Status, the British citizenship, or the various tests that one needs to pass in order to be granted the latter one, participants' reactions were unanimous: "Me, British? No, no, no" (Chloé), "I will never apply for the citizenship" (Marion), "I don't want the nationality" (Jeanne), "We are currently

[15] Later on, in 2021, Veronique informed me that she had applied for British citizenship, clearly exposing the ever-changing nature of identification.

receiving emails about the Settled Status (…) I don't want to hear anything about it" (Veronique), "I want to tell them (…) I don't want [your nationality]" (Fabienne) and so on. While a subsequent section will focus on the decision of some people to apply for the British citizenship (two women out of the 35 participants) or for the Settled Status, this current section wants to show the emotions related to *having to* apply for a particular documentation in order to be allowed to stay in one's own country of residence.

Anger is naturally what comes up from those quotes, and vis-à-vis the Settled Status Veronique explained that "we do something that we don't want to do". For someone who had previously been working for the European Union, being now forced to apply for a particular documentation in order to be allowed to stay in a country where she has freely been living and working for the last 21 years is naturally difficult to accept. 'Angry' was also one of the most frequently used words in a survey in 2019 about the Settlement Status among various EU citizens (Bueltmann, 2019). But more than anger, it is probably the strong feeling of rejection that emerges from those quotes. While the previous chapter highlighted being rejected as an EU citizen by the British population, the rejection discussed in this section is to be considered the other way around, namely participants rejecting the Settled Status but even more strongly, the British citizenship. Chloé indeed explained how she would not want the British citizenship because "well, do they really deserve all my time, my energy, my knowledge, whereas … [they voted Brexit]"; she would prefer to "participate in [a country] (…) that would be worthwhile, because they [Britain] won't give it back to you". Those two forms of rejection naturally go hand in hand as it is the initial feeling of having been rejected as a European citizen that triggered the second one, as to refuse to be part of, or give to, the same group of people who have turned them down initially.

It is therefore based on the initial feelings and reactions developed towards Brexit itself that those feelings of anger and rejection towards particular documentations have emerged. It is the feelings developed as part of making sense of Brexit that triggered that resentment against the documentation requested from the Brexit context.

Overall, this section has exposed the emotions related to identities and citizenships in the Brexit context, as namely a reassertion of the participants' Frenchness and Europeanness, their anger and rejection towards the documentation they have been asked to apply for, while having their identity in limbo due to future loss of rights and general continuous uncertainty

surrounding Brexit. While the last section of this chapter will mention the practical realities of applying for a particular type of document, this section has presented the emotional realities of having to apply for future required documents. However, those feelings and emotions have themselves been triggered by participants' initial senses made out of Brexit and their negative experience of this macro change. From this section, therefore, it is believed that (1) it is through their emotions that participants were inclined towards particular identification, yet (2) those emotions were themselves the results of the particular context and of the senses made out of a negatively experienced macro change.

6.3 REPOSITION, HIERARCHY AND BELONGING

In a context where Britishness was being reasserted and politicised, participants ultimately had to also reposition themselves within the society they were living in as Brexit "has compelled many EU citizens to reengage with questions of national and European identity" (Botterill and Hancock, 2019). This current section will therefore expose the reality of being French within the EU or broader citizenship hierarchy, the dichotomy between migrant and expatriate, and will pay particular attention to the notion of home, belonging and whiteness.

6.3.1 BEING FRENCH WITHIN THE CITIZENSHIP HIERARCHY

The first reposition that French migrants in this study did was to reposition themselves within the global citizenship hierarchy (Castles, 2005; Harpaz, 2019). Typically, this hierarchy implies that within the global inequality, there are premium and non-premium citizenships, with Western countries providing the premium ones (Spiro, 2019), due to their economic strength, political stability and peace, and their influence on the international scene. People with premium citizenships enjoy more rights and security, a broader mobility freedom and a higher social status and are therefore typically more welcome than people with a citizenship ranked lower than theirs (Bauman, 1998; Harpaz and Mateos, 2019). In a context like Brexit, this citizenship hierarchy had been used in various discourses spread during the campaign, such as getting rid of Eastern (lower-skilled) workers, migrants from broader origins and refugees (Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018; Virdee and McGeever, 2017) or voting Brexit as to avoid an EU extension further East (the case of Turkey was a particular example during the campaign). However, this type of discourse had also been used by some participants to position themselves higher than Eastern European citizens living in the UK:

> Well, you have the stereotype, it's going to be the Polish etc., they are really considered as migrants here, French, Germans, Spanish, we still are … (…) they will soon realise they are losing in quality, eh. (Paul)

> He stops, he looks at me … and I tell him, I said to him 'I am French', and then he goes 'ho you're French', you see, he was expecting to see a Polish or a Romanian. (Guillaume)

While it can be deplorable to figure out that even within EU members there are disputes as to who is supposedly more worthy to be welcome and to live in the UK, this shows how some participants used those discourses and the citizenship hierarchy to legitimize their own stay in the UK as 'good' migrants (Cranston, 2017), especially in opposition to other migrants, not all participants considered this citizenship hierarchy legitimate as some were offended by it, like Fabienne who had, "Some neighbours, well … they told me 'ho no but you, you're a good one' … I said, 'but what does it mean to be a good one?' … no but since when are there some criteria!?".

Yet, regardless of whether you believe and/or use the citizenship hierarchy or not, several participants recognised that being French was indeed a chance in the Brexit context, like Joelle who "think[s] that [Brexit] is not necessarily against erm … French or Italians, it's against Eastern countries, or other migrations, all … migrations erm … because also there are a lot of Africans who … well all of those who escape their countries, who try … who try to come to the UK", recognising the racist rhetoric of Brexit beyond simply belonging to the European Union. In the end, and in this current context, participants believed that "the French way is always a bit dreamy" (Chloé) and that other EU citizens or from further origins might have experienced Brexit more drastically.

6.3.2 MIGRANT VERSUS EXPATRIATE

The second way that participants repositioned themselves was regarding the dichotomy between migrant and expatriate. While both terminologies have engendered a certain number of studies as to conceptually define one in response to the other (Andresen *et al.*, 2014; Cerdin and Selmer, 2014; Kunz, 2016; McNulty and Brewster, 2017), few studies actually offer an empirical response and ask people directly how they define themselves (Cranston, 2017). During the interviews, I did not provide participants with any definition, as

I would solely follow the terms they would be using on their own, to define either themselves or their peers, before questioning them on the term used.

Some people identified themselves as expatriate in a spontaneous way, like Paul who tries "to find the most suitable tax scheme for expatriates (…) because as expatriates, we are impacted (…) I am surrounded by so many expatriates", or Joelle who said, "my friends were essentially from university, and only expatriates as well", highlighting the socio-economic category in which participants put themselves. However, when asked about the distinction between expatriate and migrant, things started to get a bit confusing for several people: "I feel more like an expatriate (…) but I don't see the difference, I mean, it's more like … I don't know if there is a difference" (Murielle), "I see myself as an expatriate, yeah, even though I don't have an expatriate contract" (Paul). Some others defined themselves as expatriate, but mostly as a rejection to the term migrant: "expatriate, yes, migrant, no, because … they are lucky to have us" (Veronique). Indeed, several participants recognised the pejorative, often racial, connotation that the term migrant implies, like Chloé when she stated, "migrant, no … migrants are used to be associated with … with Syrians, Libyans, and all", or Laurence and Agnès:

(Laurence) Yeah, I feel that [migrant] is pretty extreme, I think that …

(Agnès) Yeah, it has some connotations, that's the problem …

(Laurence) Yeah, yeah, racist yeah, I think it's racist.

However, some other people also define themselves as migrant in a natural way, like Marion who thinks that a lot of "European migrants came here to do something" or Fabienne: "Yes, migrant, they are migrants now, we are all migrant, yeah, I agree with that", and some, despite being aware of the pejorative connotations, "we are migrant somehow, even though the word these days is not very … not very pretty" (Marion). And finally, some people used the term migrant as an empowering term, like Mathieu: "Oh me, I am a French migrant, eh, I am a French migrant, yeah … yeah, I use the word migrant (…) it's classier to say you're an expatriate (…) well, I'm a foreigner here, that's all", embracing the political connotation of the word.

While even scholars do not always agree on the distinction between migrant and expatriate, it is not surprising to see the range to which participants used the migrant-expatriate scope to define themselves, without coming to a clear or unanimous answer. While Brubaker (2013) talks about categories of analysis and categories of practice, the migrant/expatriate debate clearly falls into this conversation. This project has been based on the definition that migrants are people undertaking an international relocation, assessed by the change of their principal residence (Favell, 2008a; McNulty and Brewster, 2017; Poston, 2006). Expatriates, on the other hand, are also people who have undertaken a relocation abroad, yet they are understood to have been sent abroad by their company, through an expatriate contract (Andresen *et al.*, 2014; Baruch *et al.*, 2013). Expatriate could therefore be considered as a specific form of migration. While those two categories of analysis are being made distinct from an organisational perspective (sent abroad by company, expatriate contract), participants in this study made the distinction between being a migrant and being an expatriate mostly through racial and/or socio-economic factors. Interestingly, however, there is also the concept of the self-initiated expatriate (SIE), which is defined as an individual who is responsible for their own relocation abroad, without having an expatriate contract (Andresen *et al.*, 2014; Inkson *et al.*, 1997). While this term is mostly used in academic, managerial discussions, it seems to be the way some participants would prefer to be identified. Yet, what makes the distinction between a migrant and a SIE? Could it be the employment factor? In a context where expatriates are welcome, while migrants are not, more attention needs to be paid to this dichotomy, not only in the academic and theoretical spheres, but most importantly on the empirical use of those terms, both by states and institutions, as well as by people embodying those categories.

6.3.3 BELONGING AND HOME

Moving on to the third point of this section, participants tried to reposition themselves also through the idea of belonging to the country. This was done through a number of strategies, but mostly through two main arguments: first, they deserve to be here as they had been working throughout their whole stay in the UK, and secondly the UK was their home.

The first notion of belonging to the country was fairly easy to pick as several participants explained how they had been working their whole life here, like Joelle: “In any case we are not … we are not necessarily a problem (…) we have always been in the system, I

have always worked here" and Marion: "I didn't feel that I was stealing resources (…) I paid taxes (…) I always did, I never exploited the system". This idea of belonging through working and paying taxes had also been exposed in the Brexit testimonies: "I have been here over 30 years, paying taxes, National Insurance" (Remigi and Martin, 2017, p. 127), as well as in the case of skilled white South Africans, negotiating their belonging through economic duties (Halvorsrud, 2014). By arguing about working and paying taxes, participants tried to explain how they belonged to the country through a legitimisation that could be defined as a financial one: I have worked and paid taxes, participated in the economy, hence I belong, and have the right to belong, here.

The second argument was based on the idea that the UK is their home, as simply put in words by Jeanne: "I am here at home, I mean … with all due respect of course to … to the country that welcomes me". While a home is often associated with a house (a physical object), and while several participants had indeed invested in properties in the UK, like Agnès: "yeah, a house (…) with a mortgage" or Mathieu who is "the owner of two flats in the city centre", it is difficult to really explain when or how a place becomes home. For some participants, especially women, home was defined through the idea of having British children (due to British partners) and as they are mothers to those British nationals, they felt they also belonged to the UK:

> At the school, I completely invested myself, in the sense that I belonged to the Parents Association, I organised, I did some (…) charities, fund raising erm ... every year I organised something for the community (…) when we are somewhere, we are not just passengers, we should … we have to get involved in the life (…) I bore two children who are doing pretty well because … well I am involved in their education (Fabienne)

This form of legitimization could be described as a civic one, as participants tried to explain how they integrated but moreover took part in their neighbourhood's life and dynamism.

All in all, as part of their repositioning within their country of residence, participants argued through two main arguments why they (had the right to) belong to the UK: the first argument was a financial one, through economic duties, while the second one has been described as a civic one, through participation and engagement in local communities, both

representing the UK as their home. The "right to 'belong', their contributions to the British economy and society, and the way in which they felt 'at home'" was also found by Lulle, Moroşanu and King (2018), on Italian, Romanian and Irish nationals living in the UK.

6.3.4 WHITENESS AND INVISIBILITY

Finally, participants' repositioning was also expressed through the notion of being white in a predominantly white country. Indeed, all participants interviewed in this study (with the exception of one person) could be described as white, and a certain number of them recognised that being white in such a context was very fortunate. In response to Chapter 5 and the various forms of rejection and xenophobia that participants encountered, having the opportunity to blend in because of their skin colour was something that participants slowly realised, like Laurence:

> It made me realise that … alright we're European, we're European, we're white, but if we had a different skin colour well (…) suddenly I told myself that … alright, now nobody can see that I am French, apart from my accent, and if I were completely different, in terms of skin colour and all, well I understand the kind of … discomfort (…) when you're on the bus, when you're on the train, you know when … you feel like … a stranger, whereas now we can … yeah … as long as I don't open my mouth, nobody can know.

Because Brexit had a clear racist argumentation (Virdee and McGeever, 2017), whiteness came as a chance but furthermore as a strategy to avoid potential xenophobic confrontation. Indeed, participants recognised that by being white they "(could) be invisible" (Marion), especially "when we are around other people, I try to … not to get noticed" (Dominique), as "when you are white, you're less … less dis-integrated" (Joelle), in the sense that it is easier to fit in. However, contrary to Halvorsrud (2019), whiteness had not been used by participants to legitimise their stay and belonging to the UK. This could be explained by the fact that with Brexit being officially a European topic, and with the majority of EU citizens being white, legitimising one's belonging through whiteness would not have much power in this context as potential challengers would also be white. The citizenship hierarchy mentioned earlier seemed however to have had more influence on their negotiation of belonging.

Whiteness has been expressed by participants as part of their identification, which however had itself again been triggered by the Brexit rhetoric. Indeed, previously, people did not necessarily think about their own skin colour, they just took it for granted. By the same logic that Brexit had forced them to reposition themselves within their country of residence, in terms of their Frenchness, it has also pushed them to reconsider their own skin colour, mostly due to the racist line of argument of Brexit. This finding is interesting as whiteness had mostly been studied in contexts of empire and post-colonialism, focusing on what whiteness can offer or legitimise, through the idea of privileged ancestral ties (Cranston, 2017; Halvorsrud, 2019; Kunz, 2016; Leonard, 2010). Few studies actually focus on migrant whiteness in other (especially Northern or Western) contexts. This study therefore offers an insight into how whiteness is being used not as a tool to access particular benefits, but as a tool to be invisible.

All in all, Brexit has indeed triggered among participants the need to reposition themselves within the society they were living. This repositioning took the form of being French within the broader hierarchy of citizenships and being white in a predominantly white country. The need to reposition themselves also made them face particular queries: locating themselves within the migrant/expatriate scope, or the notion of home and belonging. Those questionings indeed seemed to have not encountered any unanimous answer from participants, but constant hesitation and legitimisation. While this section was mostly related to identities that participants had given to themselves, i.e., a form of self-identification, the next and last section of this chapter will expose the factual realities of applying for a new legal status and documentation that Brexit has made mandatory.

6.4 (NEW) LEGAL STATUS AND DOCUMENTATION

Among the many aspects that Brexit will change, there will be official documentation that will become mandatory for all EU citizens residing in the UK. Essentially, this documentation has two forms: people can either apply for Settled Status, which will be granted if they manage to show proof of residence in the country for five continuous years (they will acquire the pre-settled status if they can show proof for less than five continuous years) or they can apply for British citizenship. Since 2015, British citizenship can only be acquired if people have a permanent residence certificate in the first place, i.e., Settled Status in the Brexit context. For

people not married to British partners, they will have to wait one year after they had been granted the settled status to be allowed to apply for the British citizenship. For people married to British partners, they can apply for British citizenship straight after receiving their settled status. People with pre-settled status cannot apply for British citizenship.

The reasons why it is considered as two different forms of documentation are because (1) they do not have the same cost (the settled status is free, while the citizenship is above £1200), (2) their application modalities are different (the settled status application is done through an app, while you need to pass various tests for the British citizenship) and (3) they do not give the same rights (it is unclear yet which rights people with settled status will have, but they will most likely lose some in comparison to their current rights as EU citizens). This current section will therefore expose some of the challenges and strategies vis-à-vis the new legal documentation required for EU citizens.

6.4.1 UNCERTAINTY, FRUSTRATION AND DOUBT

The first aspect that arose from mentioning legal documentation was uncertainty, as expressed by Chloé: "(we) don't know exactly what it will be". Indeed, it must be explained here that during the time of the fieldwork (2018-2019), the Settled Status was not as developed as it is today. During that year, the British government created the concept of Settled Status (replacing the Permanent Residence for the Brexit context), created an app for it, which went through several pilot phases, and which had been offered first only to particular people in the population (including academics in British universities). The initial cost of the Settled Status was £65, which several universities had accepted to pay on behalf of their staff, before it eventually got removed by the government.

Again, while uncertainty and doubt are difficult to show and express in words, allow me to focus on the case of Jeanne. Jeanne arrived in the UK in 2010 and is married to a British man. While she had previously worked in the banking sector in France, she changed her career path in the UK to become a schoolteacher. Her extra studies in the UK had been paid by "a scholarship to study the PGCE because (the UK) does not have enough language teachers". Here is her experience when applying first for the Permanent Residence, and then for the Settled Status:

> When Brexit had been voted, I decided to (…) do a certain number of paperwork, and to ask the permanent … the permanent resident card (…) and it's at that time that I encountered a certain number of problems (…) I had stopped (working) to study (…) but I had been working for two years, I had just stopped (…) so I called (the Home Office) and they told me erm … well in any case, I wouldn't qualify … so I didn't send my file, because I didn't want to receive this letter [explaining I had so many days to pack my stuff and be deported] (…) so I'm here legally, and out of a sudden, BOOM … and on top of that, they had given me the scholarship (…) what do [they] want? That I give it back? (…) I waited, waited, and I think at some point I gave up (…) and lately, when they opened the … opportunity for the Settlement Status, it was the second phase of the procedure (…) and I got it, they were able to link my information, I guess.

The story of Jeanne clearly exposes the irregularity of the whole process of applying for the Settlement Status. Why was she first denied the Permanent Residence when she was able to get the Settlement Status a few months later? Another way that participants expressed doubts about this new documentation was the fact that despite having been granted this status, EU citizens do not receive any official – and physical – letter confirming their status:

> I have the impression it's not working really well still (…) I have taken some screenshots, even though they are not valid (…) no, there is nothing else, and that's another point (…) to ask for a paper document because … at any time, I don't know, there is a bug in their computer system … everything disappears, I don't know, there is a bug … at the airport, how will they check that I have the Settlement Status. (Jeanne)

Finally, and to wrap up this section, the difficulty in applying for the Settled Status was also expressed through various frustrations: the need to have an Android device, as the app would not work on an iPhone (happened to Etienne), the app not recognising your five continuous years and asking for further proof of residence, the app not recognising your passport or ID card (happened to Patricia), the app registering married women with their maiden name (expressed by Jeanne), all of which had also been expressed in the press and in various reports

(Bueltmann, 2019; Hinsliff, 2020; Perrigo, 2020), highlighting how EU citizens had been put in limbo, despite trying to get regulatory documentation.

All in all, applying for the Settled Status, which would ultimately give an individual access to British citizenship, was and still is not a straightforward process as often claimed by the British government. It is supposed to define EU citizens' future rights in the UK and yet people's experience of the process has been uncertain and frustrating. Because of the uncertainty surrounding the current process, and all the frustrations associated to it, EU citizens currently find themselves in what could be described as an administrative limbo.

6.4.2 ACTIVE PASSIVITY

Not all participants had decided to apply for the Settled Status. Indeed, in the current context, EU citizens have until June 2021 to regulate their situation, and given the official statement of the British government that "it usually takes around 5 working days for complete applications to be processed" (GOV.UK, 2020), EU citizens could in theory wait until the last minute to apply for it: "Right now, we are receiving messages, for the Status, you know, to apply for the status. For now, I don't want to know anything, they're offering to do it now … I don't want to know, I'm waiting, waiting, waiting, when it's going to be … I give myself at least 18 months[16], because we still have one year, I think ... until December 30th, 2020" (Veronique). Veronique works in academia and had been offered the opportunity to apply for the Settlement Status through her university, as part of the trial. Yet she refuses to do it. A lack of trust in the process as well as anger at being forced to do it led to Veronique's decision. Mathieu had also refused to apply for the Settled Status at the time of the interview: "I have done absolutely nothing vis-à-vis the status … the settlement status and all, because actually [the British government] doesn't know at all where it is all going. One day they announce one thing, one day they announce another, so the day when March 29th will arrive, in two weeks[17], well, we'll see then if we need to panic or not". Again, a lack of trust in the British

[16] The interview took place in November 2018, Brexit day was supposed to happen on March 29th, 2019, with a transition period until December 2020.

[17] The interview took place in March 2019, at that time Brexit day was still supposed to happen on March 29th, 2019. Brexit day got later postponed to January 31st, 2020.

government and in the settlement scheme is clearly exposed, yet both explained how they will eventually regularise their situation when the time comes.

This particular situation could be described as a form of active passivity, where participants actively decide not to do anything regarding the future documentation they will soon need. Active passivity has also been exposed in the press, as some EU citizens "are simply putting off filling in their settlement forms. Some feel bitter about the whole thing, unhappy about Brexit and unwilling to cooperate with the process" (Bulman, 2020). While Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich (2007) talk about 'intentional unpredictability' and McGhee, Moreh and Vlachantoni (2017) call it 'deliberate indeterminacy', the focus is on the open-ended but also provisional characteristic of this phenomenon. The terms 'intentional', 'deliberate' or 'active' all imply that participants are aware of the actions they should be taking in order to protect themselves in the Brexit context – and hence cannot be considered as part of the vulnerable population not informed about this mandatory documentation; yet they prefer living in 'unpredictability', 'indeterminacy' or 'passivity' for a certain amount of time. More than anger and distrust, it is believed that French skilled workers can also *afford* to be actively passive, as their socio-economic situation more or less guarantees them an easy application process, since the UK clearly seeks to keep its skilled (Western) EU workers (Virdee and McGeever, 2017).

6.4.3 GETTING OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION

Finally, not all participants had decided to be actively passive, and some did decide to apply for a documentation. From all participants, only two women had started their application for their British citizenship at the time of their interviews (neither were married to a British partner, but both had held either a permanence residence or settlement status for over a year). As mentioned earlier, two participants decided to be actively passive and to wait until the last minute to apply for the Settlement Status (despite having the opportunity to do so through their university employers). Five people had decided to return to France or re-migrate and hence did not apply for any (UK) documentation. Eight people did apply for the Settlement Status, including six academics who did so because it was advertised by their university and they "had nothing to lose" (both Monique and Joelle). The 14 people left, which was more than half of the total number of participants, are considered to be in limbo: they

did not apply for the settlement status despite being aware of it, nor were they actively rejecting it. Those results are summarised in the table below.

Type of document	Number of participants
British citizenship	2 (no British partner)
(Pre-)settlement status	8 (including 6 academics)
Active passivity	2 (both academics)
Return / re-migration	5 (incl. 2 with children)
In limbo	14 (only 3 because the app was not open to them yet)

Table 3: Legal documentation requested by participants at the time of interview (2018-2019)

So why have so many people ended up in limbo? The timing of the interviews naturally provides the first explanation: the Settled Status was only being developed, and people had just started discovering what it was and the modalities for applying for it. From those 14 persons, only three could not apply for the settlement status because the app had not yet been made available to them, meaning that still over a third of all participants could have (technically) applied for the settlement status and received it as the majority of them had been living and working in the UK for over five years. The second explanation is the lack of knowledge about this newly developed status and the lack of knowledge about having to apply for a documentation, a visa in general, as participants did not know where or how to start the procedure, like Fabienne who admitted, "I don't know, I didn't even look it up, I don't even know if I have to do it, or from when … pff I have no clue". The third explanation is fear, fear to do it wrong, fear to be rejected and fear to give one's personal details, as expressed by Dominique: "the reason why I didn't do anything up to now is actually because … I'm scared (…) I'm scared in the sense that now, I am here, nobody is asking me for anything, they don't have all my life details, and once I'll have made the file … if they want to bother me, well they'll have … all the elements in hands".

But more importantly, it is about not knowing what to do in the future in terms of migration. Several people explained that because they did not know if they were going to stay or leave, they adopted a strategy of what could be described as 'wait and see' (Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018). Indeed, it is important to highlight that for French skilled workers

in this study, there has never been a 'British dream' in the sense that they did not migrate for economic reasons, but mostly for an international experience or relationships (confirmed in Braun and Glöckner-Rist, 2012). There is this idea that they could always go back to France or go somewhere else, where they would be welcome, where there would be other opportunities. This is also the reason why so few people had applied for the British citizenship (and so many rejected it). Sigona (2019) confirms this finding by explaining that "attitudes towards naturalisation vary significantly among EU nationals. Better off and more educated EU nationals, for example, are more reluctant to apply to become British, on ideological and political grounds. Among EU14 nationals this response to naturalisation was more frequent". Following Graeber's logic (2016), French people would indeed have less incentive to apply for British citizenship due to the political and economic situation (including employment) back in France, and the possibility of returning home, which is also confirmed using Harpaz (2019), as French people already possess a 'premium citizenship', itself revigorated in the Brexit context, so they would not see the need to apply for the British one. This point directly complements debates on the value and meaning of citizenships and whether they are still considered as cultural and identity motives or solely as part of a global instrumental strategy (Castles, 2005; Graeber, 2016; Harpaz and Mateos, 2019).

6.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has exposed findings related to migrants' (self-)identification when they are being challenged by different experiences of macro forces. The first part has revealed the various emotions related to one's identification in the Brexit context, which appear to have been both positive (such as French and European pride) and negative (anger and uncertainty towards Settlement Status and British citizenship). The second part of this chapter exposed how participants, beyond their emotions, tried to reposition themselves within their host society and how they legitimised their stay and belonging to the UK. This was mostly done through using the global citizenship hierarchy and playing on their 'premium' citizenship, highlighting their economic and civic involvement in the country, being white, and for some, the idea of being expatriates rather than migrants. Finally, the last part of this chapter highlighted the factual and technical realities of applying for a new form of legal document, soon to be needed from all EU citizens living in the UK. It exposed how the process had not been a simple and straightforward experience as the British government claims, which was

largely the reason why some participants decided to be actively passive towards it, waiting to the last minute, while the majority of participants at the time of the interviews were considered to be in limbo, not knowing where or how to start their application.

6.5.1 SELF-SUFFICIENT ARGUMENT

What is first emerging from this chapter in general is the discrepancy between how people see themselves, through their personal repositioning within the society as 'good' migrants (French, white, expatriate) and how the realities of their environment (i.e., the macro perspective on EU migrants) still keep them in limbo. This directly shows the importance of considering the context in which one's identification is exercised, as this very context will ultimately expose divergence between a self and a legal identity, and between a felt and an accessible identity. Indeed, the context also defines what can be accessed and achieved in terms of identification, and that is why "constructions of identity should be always understood as the practical product of the interaction of on-going processes of self-identification and external categorization" (Pratsinakis, 2018, p. 6). What is emerging from this chapter is therefore the idea that when considering identification in times of macro changes, three components are central: emotions, self-repositioning as well as contextual factors. While emotions and self-repositioning are related to internal, personal identification, contextual factors relate to the fact that identification is an external process as well, evolving based on social encounters as previously proven (Jenkins, 2014) but also based on legal, political and/or economic features. Indeed, people develop their identities based on what is available to them and while a lot of attention has been paid to social encounters and the social aspect of identities, especially through Cooley, Mead and Goffman (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000), this chapter highlights how identification can also be formed based on socio-economic, legal and/or political features, be they opportunities or limitations. Contextual factors therefore play a central role in identity (re)construction, especially in times of macro changes.

Furthermore, the second point highlighted in this chapter on identity is how identity (re)construction becomes a conscious process in times of macro changes. While identification is always *in* construction in the sense of being an ongoing process of identifying (Jenkins, 2014), it should however be emphasised that this continuous identification is mostly an unconscious process. Yet, in times of macro changes, i.e., with macro forces targeting

particular identities (e.g., migrant) and/or promoting others (e.g., Britishness), this chapter has highlighted how the process of identification becomes a conscious one. Macro forces have indeed pushed people to reposition themselves vis-à-vis certain categories, a process which they admitted was new to them. It is therefore the combination of sensemaking of a macro change (Chapter 5) and an emphasis on identification (Chapter 6) that highlighted the cognitive influence of macro forces on individual identity (re)construction, especially through their emotions and self-repositioning.

All in all, this chapter illustrates how macro forces influence individual identity construction both in a practical (through contextual limitations and opportunities) as well as a cognitive manner. It therefore extends research on individual identity construction by incorporating the influence of external factors beyond social relationships, as to namely include macro-contextual features such as political, legal and/or socio-economic aspects.

6.5.2 CONTRIBUTION TO GENERAL PROJECT

While the previous chapter ended on questioning how a negative perception of a macro change influences one's migration, integration and identification, this chapter has highlighted that both negative and positives outcomes can emerge from a negatively perceived change, at least in terms of identification. Indeed, this chapter has exposed how emotions related to participants' identification had been positive regarding their Frenchness and/or Europeanness, but negative when mentioning future legal documentation, engendering uncertainty, and anger. Yet, it was suggested that the emotions towards particular identities (be they positive or negative) had themselves been defined by the initial feelings and senses developed towards Brexit in general. Following the same logic, participants' repositioning within their host country had also been triggered because of the Brexit rhetoric itself, implying that both emotions and repositioning towards particular identities had been affected by how the change had been understood and experienced in the first place, emphasising how sensemaking and identifying continuously fuel each other. Yet not all identities are available to everyone (especially in the global hierarchy), and that is why contextual factors (as opportunities or limitations) had to be taken into consideration, as they also influence one's identification, both practically and cognitively.

Ultimately, and to answer the second part of the research question as to namely investigate how migrants' perception of macro changes influence their identification, this chapter has highlighted the fact that the perception of macro changes does influence individual identification and this is done through three channels: emotions, self-repositioning and contextual opportunities/limitations. Eventually, when challenged by macro changes, migrants face two possible outcomes: inclination towards or rejection of the local identities based on the way they have both cognitively and practically experienced the change. The diagram below summarises the connection between perception of macro changes and individual identification.

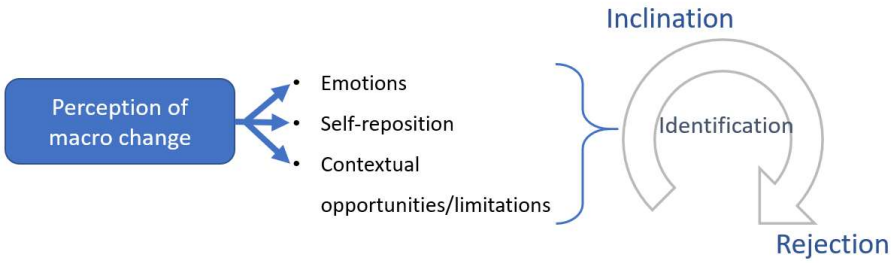

Diagram 4: Perception of macro change influences individual identification

Going back to the thesis' main research question as to know how migrants' perception of macro changes influence their identification as well as migration and integration, it is important to reiterate at this point that who one is in society defines the type of migration and integration that migrants experience (as exposed in Chapter 2). Knowing now that perception of macro change influences identification in the way illustrated above, the next and final empirical chapter of this project will expose the migratory and integration options and strategies adopted by French skilled migrants facing Brexit.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS: *MIGRATING AND INTEGRATING*

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this third and final empirical chapter, migration and integration behaviours are analysed and discussed in relation to Brexit. It should, however, be pointed out that the migration and integration behaviours mentioned in this chapter are based mostly on what people described in their interviews and that despite some follow-up exchanges, their answers rather reflect their intentions than actual actions. The chapter will first quickly mention why participants migrated to the UK in the first place, in order to understand why some had decided to stay, go back to France, leave for another foreign country, or had not yet made their decisions in the current Brexit context (section 7.2). The second part of this chapter will discuss integration behaviours and focus on the people still residing in the UK, highlighting their quest for a multicultural lifestyle that Brexit is putting into question (section 7.3). Finally, the chapter finishes with some concluding remarks and an early discussion (section 7.4).

7.2 MIGRATION: SHOULD I STAY, OR SHOULD I GO NOW?

In order to understand why people would decide to either migrate to another foreign country, return to France, or stay in the UK, it is first important to understand the initial reasons that pushed or pulled them to come live and stay in the UK. Only then, and in addition to understanding how they made sense of Brexit and how their identities developed, will it be possible to comprehend their migration and integration behaviours more fully.

First and foremost, one should understand that for participants of this study, i.e., French skilled workers, the UK has never been considered as a place where they could make more money than they would in France, as French skilled workers did not move for economic incentives, as expressed by Marion, who is "not here to get richer, so no … no (…) I haven't really found better conditions here, right it's ... I found something that I liked". Indeed, the main reason that instead pulled participants towards moving to the UK was the opportunity of an international experience, especially through a year spent abroad during higher education. Nathalie for instance "did an Erasmus year in Cardiff", while Fabienne's "third year

[of study] had to be a year [in industry] abroad (…) a company not far from Long Eaton could offer me an internship, and so that's what I did, I ended up coming to the UK". Previous studies have already highlighted how studying abroad was a factor for further migration during more mature life stages (Recchi and Favell, 2009; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). Most participants arrived in their 20s or early 30s and that is why, associated with their international experience, some participants also expressed their need for independence, like Juliette, who "also wanted to leave, get away from [her] family, you know, get away from the parental home". While some participants mentioned some job opportunities they found during their year abroad, like Paul, who initially came for "two years as an international corporate volunteer (…) so here, in Nottingham, at [local place], just next door, and then I signed my contract … my permanent contract", a lot of participants also expressed that the reason that made them stay in the UK afterwards was related to romantic relationships they had developed during that year abroad, like Agnès, who had been working for a year in London, "and then I met my [future] husband" or Camille, who "met … her boyfriend" and future husband during her year as a French assistant. Independence, adventure, and relationships as factors to move to the UK confirm the results of other authors studying French skilled workers in the UK (Braun and Glöckner-Rist, 2012; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014).

Furthermore, about a third of the participants had arrived in the UK before the 2000s, i.e., when the UK was known to be a multicultural place and hence a country where participants would be welcome. This is an important facet in order to understand how Brexit has changed participants' lives. Despite the British economy being more irregular than it used to be, it still is a strong one; however, the national context has drastically changed over the last decades, from a multicultural one to a neo-assimilationist U-turn (Però, 2013). Because participants had no economic motives to come live in the UK as they initially were attracted by a multicultural country, Brexit, as a reflection of this neo-assimilationism, would directly put into question their reasons to still be around.

Keeping in mind those initial reasons to migrate and stay in the UK, this chapter will now move on to migration behaviours that participants planned (and some adopted) in response to the Brexit referendum.

7.2.1 LEAVING

Among all participants, Samuel and Nathalie had been interviewed when they had already returned to France. Both had arrived in the UK in the mid-1990s, and both left the UK in 2017, i.e., after the Brexit referendum. Samuel originally came to the UK because of a relationship with a person living in London, while Nathalie did an Erasmus year before meeting her future husband. Both expressed how the UK was a place where settlement was easy: "ease to meet people, absence of social class divisions, unlike in France, professional opportunities, rapid growth and development within the company" (Samuel), clearly reflecting the British multicultural context pre-2000s. Their decision to move back to France, however, was far from being solely related to Brexit. Indeed, "around 2008, [Samuel and his wife] bought a secondary residence in [France] and that's when the idea was born to return to France. Little by little, we prepared ourselves to return to France", while Nathalie "wanted to go back, because my parents I found that … I wanted to create memories with them, with the children … as long as they were healthy". Both intentions to return to France emerged way before Brexit. However, thinking that Brexit did not have anything to do with their return would also be wrong. Indeed, "[Nathalie and her British husband] had considered [going back] several times and … pff … there was always a good reason (…) not to go back (laugh) erm pff … we wait until the pound is … until we have a better exchange rate erm … well right now at work everything is going well, anyway … there was always a good reason [to say] … but now … [Brexit] was a good reason to go back". While Brexit did not trigger their intentions to move back to France, it, however, could be considered as the final straw that broke the camel's back, namely from an intention to go back to France, to its realisation. Remembering how he experienced the results of the referendum, Samuel indeed explained how he "then realised that England that had adopted [him] wanted to 'divorce' (…) After reflection, I do not regret at all having left before that fateful date of March 2019[18]. I think I would have experienced with difficulty this change in society, materialised by inter-community tensions". The stories of Samuel and Nathalie show how Brexit was not at the origin of their intentions to leave the UK, as their return to France was mostly motivated by personal and familial reasons. Brexit, however, persuaded them to attain those intentions.

[18] At the time of the interview, Brexit day was supposed to be in March 2019. It later got postponed.

Other examples of intentions to leave the UK are Paul, Maurine, and Maryline. All three are younger than Samuel and Nathalie and arrived in the UK between 2005 and 2014, i.e., in a more neo-assimilationist context. At the time of the first interview, all three were still living and working in the UK but had the intention to re-migrate to other foreign countries.

Paul for instance does "not want to stay in England, [but also] does not intend to go back to France within the next five or ten years". For Paul, the UK has never been a place where he would permanently settle as "at some point I would like, yeah, at least … to settle down in France for good". Maurine has a similar opinion regarding her stay in the UK: "for me England has always been a step actually (…) I never saw myself living here". Paul, Maurine, and Maryline's reasons to stay were mostly due to local job opportunities and relationships they had started there. While Brexit was once again not the original factor in their intention to leave the UK, it definitely pushed them towards that direction, as Paul reflexively explained how he thought he "would have stayed maybe … I might have thought about staying a bit longer (…) I could have seen myself here for another three or four years, I saw myself still evolving professionally here … but now, I will evolve professionally, but somewhere else (…) so I'll be leaving earlier than planned …", emphasising the effect of Brexit on his career path and decisions. Similarly, Maurine thought about the impact of Brexit on her career: "in my head, I told myself, I am going to leave England, so it's true … yeah in my head I was like yeah, that's Brexit, it's time to go … got to go, right (…) at work, I could have done much more, and I didn't do it erm … and actually I want a change". For Maryline, who is very career focused but who also has children, "it was a matter of timing (…) I received a job offer [in Germany] (…) it's something I wanted to do for a long time and it's … between Brexit and erm … the school it's … for me it was the moment to go (…) Brexit helped a bit … to confirm this choice".

While at the time of the interviews, those were only intentions to leave the UK, follow-up meetings and various chats revealed that the three of them left the UK. Paul managed to move to the US since his company has a branch in California. When I later met Maurine, she "got some big news to tell [me]": she had received her visa to Canada and because her British company was being restructured, they offered her a redundancy plan, which she accepted and would leave her job in December 2019. She wanted to spent Christmas in France, then

travel several months to learn Spanish, before going to Canada[19], emphasising not only her career choices but also the need for new adventure abroad. In the case of Maryline, her departure was almost ready at the time of the interview as she had already accepted her German job offer. She officially started her new job in Germany in July 2019, an ideal timing for her as it corresponded to the beginning of her children's school year.

All in all, Brexit had not been the initial reasons to leave the UK for any of the participants, be they returning to France or going somewhere else. Brexit was mostly a trigger that made their intentions to leave the UK turn into reality. Reasons to leave the UK and go back to France were mostly related to personal and familial reasons, while re-migration to other foreign countries was motivated by new adventures and career development. The two participants who went back to France for family reasons were older than the three participants who had decided to re-migrate for career and adventure motives. This goes in line with the studies from Suutari and Brewster (2000), who observed how younger Finnish migrants were interested in career progression, with no economic incentives in mind, but also with the study from Thorn (2009), who found that young people are interested in adventure (while older in career or relationships). This also goes in line with the scepticism of Ryan and Mulholland (2014) about calling all Western EU migrants Eurostars, which to them rather reflects an early life stage of migrant (i.e., moving while still young, possibly no children, nor married) than a later one. None of the participants regretted their time and experience in the UK, yet all felt it was time to go, echoing how their initial reasons to come to the UK had vanished over time, emphasised by the Brexit context.

7.2.2 STAYING

So, while five out of all participants decided to leave the UK, a certain number of them also stated how they would stay in the UK, despite Brexit. One of the major reasons to stay in the UK was related to their family life cycle, especially children's education. Joelle, for example, had been looking for jobs in France but explained how she would "stay at least until [her daughter] goes to university (…) my … main reason for still being in England, but especially in Nottingham, is … it's my daughter's education". Her daughter being in her final school year,

[19] The type of visa Maurine got allows her to enter Canada within one year after receiving it, hence this flexibility. Her visa would be valid for 2 years and open to work- or non-work-related settlement.

Joelle did not see herself moving her family while her child was so close to getting her A-levels and finishing school. Similarly, Fabienne explained how "[her] son is 18, so in any case (…) he is going to study in England but (…) my daughter, she is 16, it would be more complicated to bring her back to France with me, I have to say it because … she is in the British [school] system". While Fabienne would not be against leaving the UK to go back to France, or even to another foreign country, as "why not start all over again in Barcelona", it is clear that having still one child involved in the British school system played a major role in her decision to stay in the UK, at least for a while. More than children's education, it is familial ties that made some participants decide to stay in the UK. Indeed, Camille would love to go back to her home region in France, and despite her children being now adults, "it would be a complete rupture" as "it would be difficult because my children are here … I have more ties here, and now we have a grandson so … we take care of him, he lives next to … next door, so we take care of him once a week, and if we were to go back to France (…) it would cut the affective bond (…) the proximity with … the children and our grandson; also it's … we feel a bit more … we feel more useful here". It should be pointed out that Camille lost both her parents, and hence her direct and close family is now mainly in the UK, rather than in France.

Others explained how they "do not have any intention … to move", mostly because "I am at home here erm … I have ... yeah it has always been here, it has always been home erm … France erm ... it's where I was born, but … home is here" (Laurence), expressing a certain form of rootedness. Murielle was one of the participants who had decided to apply for the British citizenship in the wake of Brexit. She explained how her family life is now in the UK. Her children do not have the French citizenship; her Pakistani husband holds a visa to reside only in the UK and does not speak French. For Murielle, the choice is clear: "we are established here, and we don't have the project to move back to France so (…) for them [the children] the British citizenship is the one they need". She further explained: "our life is here (…) staying here yeah, staying here, and getting established a bit more, because we are … it hasn't been a long time since we're here so (…) making our life here, watching the kids grow up and ... that's it". The idea of getting established in one place seems to be one of the main reasons for Murielle to stay here. Similarly, Maeva was the other participant who had decided to apply for the British citizenship and hence decided to stay in the UK. For her, the France she left in the 1980s and the France of today are not the same: "when we left, France was not like that,

France was really different 30 years ago, 35 years ago it was erm … it's not the same at all so … we go back there [for holidays] and we discover things and we tell ourselves erm … pff … ola, we're better off in England (laugh)", which emphasises her sense of belonging to the UK. Furthermore, in summer 2018, Maeva lost her husband and "[British citizenship] was not something he wanted to do, and for me, when he left, I said, me, I want to be able to stay in the country, with Brexit, I owe it to my children, and I owe it to my employees, to be able to stay, otherwise I will close up the company and put 15 people out of work".

Interestingly enough, Fabienne, Murielle, and Maeva are all mothers but also entrepreneurs and freelancers. Having their own company and network in the UK implies that their jobs are highly linked to and dependent upon them being able to reside, work, and hence stay in the UK. Yet none of those women directly mentioned this aspect. For them, staying in the UK is about family, as it is also linked to the notions of home and belonging expressed in the previous chapter, having more ties in the UK than in France. The fact that they mentioned family and home over career and their own company as reasons to stay emphasises the gender aspect of migration and settlement, with women being more often in charge of the family stability and protection (Anderson, 2013; Zontini, 2004a), even in the case of skilled female entrepreneurs.

All in all, participants who had decided to apply for the British citizenship were naturally the ones most likely to decide to settle in the UK. However, even some people considered in limbo in terms of their official documentation had decided to stay at least for some time. Participants' main reasons to stay despite Brexit were mostly related to children's education and familial ties. A few of them also mentioned the UK being their home, implying a stronger sense of belonging to England than to France. Participants who had decided to stay were again older than the participants who had decided to re-migrate but had also been living in the UK for longer, which suggests a certain form of rootedness and a stronger sense of belonging (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). Despite some of the participants being business owners in the UK, none of them expressed economic and career incentives to stay in the UK. We could therefore say that despite Brexit, reasons to stay in the UK were still motivated by the same factors as the ones that motivated participants to originally come and stay in the country, namely lifestyle and relationships over career and money.

7.2.3 IN LIMBO

Finally, at the time of the interview, a lot of participants did not really know what to do in terms of their future migration or settlement. The most obvious cases are probably French–British couples, who were torn between staying in the UK, where the French partner would not be welcome and would have to apply for particular documentation or going back to France or elsewhere in the EU, where the British partner would face those issues. When asked about future plans, Laurence indeed explained how "it depends on what happens … but the issue is that my husband is British (laugh) so erm … if we were to leave for France, there would be the same issue", highlighting the fracture that Brexit created within Europe, and within French–British couples. Similarly, Marion also mentioned this issue: "I am not that attached to the UK that I want to stay here at all costs, no (…) the problem would be … won't he [her British boyfriend] have the problem the other way around?". Because the conditions of British residents in France, or more generally in the rest of the EU, were as uncertain as the conditions to stay for EU citizens in the UK, French–British couples often ended up in limbo in terms of deciding to settle down in one place or another. Veronique is also torn between the idea of staying in the UK or leaving and going back to France. Indeed, in her interview, she would repeat several times how "Brittany [her home region in France], I miss it to death". Her love for her British husband is the only thing that holds her in the UK but she recognised that because he is 28 years older than her, "if he were no longer here, because we don't know, I'm telling you (…) if he is the first one to go, because we have indeed a very big age difference, right, and then I retire … well girl, I'm going home … and it's Brest [French city], I won't stay here another second he!". Veronique is stuck between her love for her British husband and her love for France, which has been exacerbated by Brexit, as she used to love the UK, but now considers that "there is nothing really to unite us [British and European citizens], really, I mean, deep down".

Furthermore, even French–EU couples or single participants were hesitating whether to stay or to leave. Indeed, many of them expressed contradictory plans, like Mathieu, who had sold both his apartments, so that he "won't have any investments in England, so I will be ready to leave" yet his "aim is not necessarily to move", while later in the conversation explaining how he "would like to stay here, otherwise [his] future will be either in Japan or in Canada". Mathieu's notion of migration and settlement is split between three different

continents, clearly exposing his indecision towards his future move. Chloé, who just started as a post-doctoral researcher after her PhD in the UK, explained how she "was not really looking for a country, but I was looking for a project, so I was really open to any country erm … any city in the UK, even in the US (…) it's not … like I absolutely want to stay in England … it was for [the job opportunity]", highlighting how her migratory process is linked to the job market. Yet, because of Brexit, she does not know "how long [she] will stay abroad and if [she will] change countries … well it's complicated (…); I don't think I will spend all my life here", while later in her interview stating how she does not really see herself moving away from the UK, mostly because of her relationship with her Italian boyfriend.

While some participants had made up their mind about staying in or leaving the UK, a large number of participants were hesitating. For some, the indecision was clearly linked to their relationship structure, namely being with a British national, and hence facing migratory restrictions in one place or another. However, even some of the French–EU couples or single participants were in limbo regarding their future migration, despite having the opportunity to go anywhere else in Europe. Adventure and career opportunities seemed to be related to their hesitation, while the timing of the interview (with the settlement status not being fully developed and unknown future rights for EU citizens) certainly played a role as well. Yet, believing that this in-limbo state is solely related to Brexit would be oversimplification and would not represent the constant questioning that migration implies. Previous studies had also emphasised the "uncertain future migration plan" of their participants (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014, p. 594), confirming how migration and settlement are never a sure thing, always somehow uncertain, as it depends on so many factors, both personal (e.g., family, career), and contextual (e.g., Brexit).

All in all, Brexit pushed participants to reconsider their stay in the UK. For some, Brexit was the triggering event that pushed them to leave the UK, to either go back to France or to another foreign country. Reasons to leave the UK were mostly related to personal and familial reasons, adventure, or career development, and hence Brexit was not the major cause of their departure. For some others, contrarily, Brexit made them realise how much they belonged to the UK and they decided to stay. Reasons to stay in the UK were mostly related to children education, familial ties, and the UK being their home. Participants who had applied for British citizenship were naturally the ones most likely to stay; however, even some participants in

administrative limbo also decided to stay for a while at least. Finally, several participants could not decide at the time of the interview whether they wanted to stay in the UK or leave it. French–British couples were caught in that indecision, but also French–EU couples or single participants.

The fact that family-related reasons came up in all three migration scenarios (staying, leaving, in limbo) could be explained by the fact that the majority of participants were female (25 out of 32), including 13 with children, while on the opposite (and randomly) all men in this study did not have children. It has often been recognised how women have a strong sense of family caring including (but maybe especially) during migration (Anderson, 2013; Thorn, 2009; Zontini, 2004a). However, previous studies documented also migrant men's fathering experiences (Kilkey, Plomien and Perrons, 2014; Parreñas, 2008) and so the gendered aspect of this result and of this particular study is to be taken with parsimony.

7.3 INTEGRATION: NAVIGATING A MULTICULTURAL LIFESTYLE IN A NEO-ASSIMILATIONIST CONTEXT

This second section presents the integration behaviours and strategies adopted by participants post Brexit referendum. This section mostly focuses on the participants who had decided to stay in the UK or the ones in limbo, still living in the UK. Participants who indeed had decided to leave or already left the UK will be less considered in the section as their integration is mostly associated with dis-integration, namely leaving the country. Highlighting how participants continued embracing a multicultural lifestyle, the chapter will expose how Brexit has reinforced the neo-assimilationist context in which participants have been living, before finishing on participants' questioning about their habit of (still) living in the UK.

7.3.1 A MULTICULTURAL QUEST AND LIFESTYLE

Unsurprisingly, all participants had adopted a multicultural lifestyle while living in the UK. Coming from France, living in England, and sometimes being in a relationship with a person from a third country, their lives were encompassing aspects and habits from various countries, and that is why their integration in the UK could be described as multicultural. First, the proximity between France and the UK allowed them to regularly bring products from France, like Paul, who drives to France "at least twice a year and each time yeah, I bring meats,

cheese, wine". Furthermore, and with technological progress, TV channels, radio, films, newspaper articles, books, music, and so on are also available through the internet, and several participants enjoyed them, like Marion, who "[has] remained very attached … to everything, everything that is … yeah, French culture". While Brexit did not directly impact consumption of international products, at least up to now, some participants wondered if this lifestyle was still going to be possible in post-Brexit times, especially the participants who remembered how in the 1980s or 1990s it was sometimes difficult to find European products in England: "I have seen the changes (…) in supermarkets, when I arrived, we couldn't find much (…) there were some products like that, which were difficult to find, and of course, things like cheese erm … meats (…) [now] we can find everything! So, we ask ourselves, what is going to happen after … after Brexit? Maybe the prices will go up a lot anyway (…) maybe there will be less choices" (Camille). The quest for a transnational and multicultural lifestyle was clearly expressed by participants, and while shelves in supermarkets still offered a variety of products at the time of the interviews, various newspapers circulated information about the potential shortage of some products, going from food to toilet paper, especially in the event of a no-deal Brexit (Busby, 2019; O'Carroll, 2019). This type of media coverage is probably the reason why participants paid particular attention to this aspect of their integration in the UK, as to wonder what would change in their lives.

More than the simple consumption of products from abroad, participants' social integration and relationships could also be described as multicultural. Several participants had realised how their close friends were mostly Europeans, like Juliette, whose "friends, they all have different nationalities … I have some British friends, but otherwise it's still different nationalities … not necessarily British" or Marion, who has "met a lot of foreigners (…) I have Italian friends, Spanish friends (…) a few British actually … even though my boyfriend is British". This connection with European citizens seems to have happened in a natural way, as expressed by Laurence: "maybe I have more … close French friends, maybe, but it must be an affinity, maybe we have more affinities". Several participants expressed the habit of inviting people home for a coffee or dinner as a way to build friendships, a habit they would share especially with Spanish or Italian acquaintances, but "[British people] don't have this culture of inviting people over, so that is … so weird" (Marion); "they don't invite people over, this friendliness is missing here" (Paul). While Brexit once again did not drastically change

social integration and relationships from one day to the other, one of its consequences was, however, participants actively reconnecting with French networks, like Camille, who is now "part of [a French group], as you know, so I know a little bit more French people (…) it's the first year I am doing this, so I meet a few French people, like that we can talk erm … about Brexit and other things, so I think that the [friend] circle … the circle has changed (…) there is a new network of acquaintances, with more French people". Socialising with French or European groups to share and discuss concerns surrounding Brexit had also been highlighted in the study of Brahic and Lallement (2020), on French migrants in Manchester. While connecting with French or more generally with European groups may seem common, it is, however, one of the side effects of Brexit as in the pre-Brexit context, some participants tended to avoid those kinds of groups, like Marion: "I never looked for French people, on the opposite, at the beginning I told myself, I am going to try not to [be too much with French people] … I should speak English", or Maeva whose "aim was not to live in autarchy with the French (…) we didn't want erm … to be on the margins". Behind this reconnection with other EU migrants lies the feeling of rejection expressed in Chapter 5, namely having felt personally rejected by the British population due to the results of the referendum. Furthermore, part of this social reconnection was also the need to connect with people facing similar issues, questioning and uncertainties, asking people what information they had, and what their future plans were.

Overall, participants had developed a type of integration that could be described as multicultural, both in terms of their consumption of culture or products and of their social relationships. While Brexit did not drastically change this lifestyle, it called into question if this would still carry on in the context of Brexit. One of the strategies adopted by participants to face uncertainty, discrimination, and the feeling of being rejected from one's own country of residence was to reconnect with people facing similar issues, namely with French and EU networks.

7.3.2 IN A NEO-ASSIMILATIONIST CONTEXT

Despite their quest for a multicultural lifestyle, Brexit did remind participants the hard way how they were living in a country that had been described as neo-assimilationist for the last two decades (Anderson, 2013; Però, 2013). Marion indeed expressed how she "think(s) that England is a country … both very near and very far", evoking the geographical proximity yet

the political and/or cultural rupture surrounding the European question. Veronique also evoked that rupture as "culturally speaking, they [British nationals] are so different (…) we have nothing in common … they have nothing in common with us [Europeans] … they have nothing in common with us, so that's why they went out [of the EU]", highlighting how participants perceived their country of residence, as if Brexit threw light on the atmosphere of the country, while before it would have been kept quiet. Mathieu expressed this phenomenon as "for [him] it's more about people's … people's tongue loosening up … yeah but erm … those ideas, they were there before, they were … they were hidden, they were bailed out, people didn't dare to express them, now they don't hesitate". While it has been recognised that the UK was indeed a country where multiculturalism was repressed, it seems that Brexit was a wake-up call for participants to realise in which type of country they were living.

In the pre-Brexit context, several participants had also expressed the difficulty of becoming friends with British nationals. While approaching and conversing with them was not an issue as they are "very welcoming people" (Laurence) and "they are nice, globally they are nice" (Veronique), it seemed that passing the step from acquaintances to friends was a difficult one, as evoked by Berenice who "had found that for years erm … it was very difficult to make … to make friends". Brexit did not facilitate this aspect of social integration, as confirmed by Maurine, who believes that "from a social integration point of view erm … I even found it easier, it was easier back then, than it is now, to be honest", despite Maurine arriving in 2012, i.e., when the UK had already switched back to an assimilationist country.

Furthermore, the neo-assimilationist atmosphere had seemed to become more visible also in the workplace. Despite this phenomenon having been expressed only by a minority of participants, it is relevant to express it here, rather to falsely believe it did not happen at all. Mathieu, for instance, works for the language department of a British university. As part of his job, he "organise[s] trips with his colleagues, we've planned trips to France, Italy, Spain, and Germany", and while his university was always glad to have Mathieu being involved in those trips, now "the university is a bit worried about sending us abroad, so they check everything 36 times". It seems that the perception of Mathieu's organisation about himself had switched from a responsible and experienced lecturer taking students abroad, to a potentially immobile person, due to the uncertainty surrounding EU citizens' freedom of

movement. Regarded previously as an experienced lecturer, he is now considered a problematic EU citizen at his workplace. Similarly, Emma remembers being "the only girl, with those men (…) in their fifties, white, at their climax due to the vote". Not only does this quote express the unrestricted neo-assimilationist discourse allowed in her workplace, but for someone who could be described as a leader figure, responsible for a number of male employees, in what could be described as a rough sector, namely construction, defining herself as a 'girl' facing 'men' (i.e., a child–adult relationship), we understand how Emma's usual managerial personality had been supressed, almost reversed, by the Brexit and open neo-assimilationist context allowed in her workplace.

Overall, Brexit had been considered by participants as a sort of wake-up call, and it made them realise about the neo-assimilationist nature of the country they were living in, highlighting the rupture with their quest for a multicultural lifestyle. While this neo-assimilationist awareness happened mostly in the private sphere, some participants had to learn how to be regarded as a problem even in their workplace.

7.3.3 QUESTIONING THE HABIT OF BEING HERE

Finally, what this multicultural quest within this neo-assimilationist Brexit context had pushed participants to do was to question their habit of (still) being and living in the UK. Reflexively thinking about her time spent here, Veronique remembered "at the beginning … [being away from France] is like a vacuum, but well … we're here, we get settled, we're busy, so well … we look for our way, we look for our path, but after it's … worse, it's … the worse it gets ... as the years go by, and what the hell am I doing in this country? (Laughs) It's hard". Similarly, Marion evoked the various times she had hesitated to go back to France:

> I arrived in 2010, I didn't have the intention to stay (…) I thought I would leave after 9 months, well in the end I got that PhD opportunity, I stayed, and then, 4 years ago, I met my boyfriend (…) [Brexit] really hit me, frankly, I think at that time, I really could … I really could have gone (…) I handed my thesis in May 2016, so erm … so I already had less … reasons to stay, I had handed my thesis … I didn't really know what I was going to do, I asked myself, why don't I go home?

At the time of the interview, Marion was still living in the UK with her boyfriend, unsure of their future migration or settlement. More than a wake-up call about the atmosphere in their country of residence, Brexit was a wake-up call as to wonder how they had made it so far, how come they are still living in this country, while it should have been a temporary stay. Scott defines those types of migrants as international settlers as they "are committed to a long-term stay (…) [even though] initially this may not have been the case, but for one reason or another they gradually became emplaced" (Scott, 2006, p. 1114). Laurence has indeed come to the following conclusion: "I have been here for so long; I am part of the furniture", while her friend Agnès recognised she now knows better the British system and administration that the French ones, highlighting her rootedness in the country. It seems that over the years, participants had settled in the UK without really questioning it, like a habit, as if over time their settlement became not only logical but also somehow rigid and fixed (Lulle, Moroşanu, and King, 2018). Brexit gave them to opportunity to (re)examine this settlement, like Juliette: "actually … (blank – thoughtful) actually it's weird because I really didn't look [for a job] in France … I didn't even … think, I thought it that was a logical continuation and that I was feeling good actually, I had, well you know, I had my life (…) so yeah, in the end I stayed, I don't know".

Overall, and regardless as to whether participants had decided to stay in the UK, leave it, or were still undecided about it, Brexit gave them the opportunity to reflexively assess their migration and integration processes. While Brexit is often experienced as a tumultuous period, it seemed that participants took the time to evaluate their stay in the UK, the reasons that had convinced them to come and ultimately stay here, their achievements, the changes they had faced and the time that had passed, years for some, decades for others.

7.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, participants' migration decisions and integration behaviours following the Brexit referendum have been revealed. While some had decided to leave the UK for professional or familial reasons, some had decided to stay in the UK despite Brexit, mostly for familial reasons or the idea of belonging to the UK. However, at the time of the interview, a certain number of participants did not make up their minds regarding their future migration, which could be explained by the timing of the interviews and the uncertainties surrounding

Brexit, as well as career or personal indecision. In terms of integration, participants had adopted a multicultural lifestyle in the pre-Brexit context that the referendum did not drastically change from one day to the other. However, questioning arose as to whether this lifestyle was still going to be possible in the Brexit context. Furthermore, it seemed that Brexit had been a wake-up call for participants that made them realise the type of neo-assimilationist country that the UK is. Reconnecting with European networks seemed to have been a strategy developed in the Brexit context in order to minimise or smoothen some of the Brexit effects, such as uncertainty or xenophobia.

7.4.1 SELF-SUFFICIENT ARGUMENT

In terms of migration, those findings first reveal how reasons to migrate to another foreign country in times of macro changes are similar to the reasons for initially migrating to the UK. Indeed, career development or career opportunities have been highlighted in previous studies as reasons to move for French skilled workers (Cerdin and Le Pargneux, 2010; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014) but also for skilled workers from other EU states (Favell, 2008a; Recchi, 2008; Recchi and Favell, 2009). However, two major distinctions arise between those studies and this current project. First, this project has considered people leaving their host country to go to another foreign country and so has focused on re-migration rather than on people leaving their home for the first time. Multiplicity of movements is a rare phenomenon, and this current project offered a comparison between initial and further migratory motives. Secondly, while previous studies on intra-EU migration focus on opportunities based on the EU openness and collaboration, participants in this study faced uncertainty and backlash because of their Europeanness, thus being in a different psychological and emotional state. The mindset of their initial and further migration is thus drastically different and yet motives to move are similar.

Secondly, this study has brought adventure to the forefront as a reason to re-migrate for young French skilled workers. Adventure has not been picked up in studies specifically on French workers, but studies on other Western skilled migrants had already pointed out this motive such as in the New Zealander context (Thorn, 2009) but also among other EU workers (Selmer and Lauring, 2012; Suutari and Brewster, 2000). Yet, the study by Selmer and Lauring focuses on academic migrants only, while the one by Suutari and Brewster is already over two decades old and focuses solely on Finnish engineers. The current project therefore offers

more contemporary data on reasons to migrate among EU skilled workers and extends adventure as a motive to move abroad to other skilled workers, namely working in various private sectors at managerial position and with background in both natural and social sciences.

Thirdly, and based on those results, economic incentives are still not a factor that would push or pull French skilled workers to move to a foreign country, which clearly "complicates any notion of the highly skilled as motivated solely by economic opportunities" (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014, p. 591). Indeed, within the literature on skilled workers, a lot of attention has been paid to the brain-drain approach and has focused on economic incentives for those workers to move abroad. In the EU context, i.e., within countries economically similar and with unrestricted migration opportunities, this approach does not seem adequate as already pointed out by Cenci (2015). However, Cenci solely focuses on southern EU countries, while this current project has focused on North-West EU migration, where the same conclusion could be drawn: the brain-drain approach is not applicable to skilled migrants within the North-West of the EU; their migration is not motivated by economic incentives, thus extending Cenci's finding. A common point between the study of Cenci and this current project is, however, how in both cases the countries that migrants are leaving are under crisis: financial crisis in the case of Cenci's paper and the Brexit turmoil in this project, thus leading to a further point that namely even in turbulent times, i.e., of political unrest and economic depression, skilled EU migrants do not consider their economic situation as a reason to migrate. Finally, while the economy does not seem to play a role in skilled EU migrants' migration, neither did the macro change they were facing. Indeed, the data have shown how despite Brexit having been experienced negatively, it had not been considered as a reason to re-migrate but had solely been a triggering factor leading to a departure already considered in the past. On the other hand, Favell's approach in regarding skilled EU migrants as Eurostars and namely people moving for lifestyle and self-realisation (Favell, 2008a) seems more appropriate. However, this study has confirmed the scepticism raised by Ryan and Mulholland (2014) about this concept and to namely question the use of the term Eurostar since the data suggest that it rather reflects an early life stage of skilled EU migrants than being representative also of older skilled migrants.

Finally, those findings throw light on the constant ongoing aspect of migration and integration. Indeed, while migration and integration are often thought in terms of constant and ongoing processes rather than fixed ones, few studies have empirically exposed this phenomenon (Scott, 2006). This study has offered an example of this phenomenon by revealing how people found themselves in limbo, be it regarding their migration decision or document application, and constantly having to question their stay. The very nature of this study and its emphasis on processes has shown how migrants continuously recreate and reposition themselves, and evaluate their migration and integration, based on the changes they have to face, be they personal or contextual, which highlights how migrants need to make constant decisions regarding their migration and integration processes. The participants who were in limbo during the time of the interview will most likely decide on further action in the foreseeable future; however, the very timing of this study has shown and highlighted the phenomenon of migrat*ing* and integrat*ing*, i.e., of the constant ongoing practices.

Overall, this chapter has highlighted how skilled EU migrants' motives to re-migrate in times of macro changes remain very similar to their initial reasons to move within the EU, with the macro change itself only being a trigger to migration rather than a motive. Adventure came up as a new motive among French skilled workers, which could potentially be explained by their experience as a migrant and getting confident in their ability to move and settle abroad. The term Eurostars fits with French skilled migrants' motives to move abroad (both for their initial and second migration), but the term is more in line with an early life stage than a later one.

7.4.2 CONTRIBUTION TO GENERAL PROJECT

Going back to the scope and objectives of this project and focusing on how migrants' perception of macro changes influences their migration and integration, this chapter highlighted two spectrums which reflect the migratory and integration behaviours (and strategies) adopted by skilled migrants in this study following a macro change, that are yet highly related to the way one makes sense of macro changes and to the way one identifies.

The first spectrum reflects the migratory decisions adopted by participants going from a definite decision to stay to the enactment of their decision to leave. In between, and because of the timing of the interviews, one can find people who *might* stay / leave, and

people who could not say, i.e., in limbo. Those undecisive or unsure migrants (i.e., toward the middle of the spectrum) by their inaction are by consequence staying in their host country. Similarly, people *with the intention* to leave are also stayers until the enactment of their decision to leave. Leaving one host country (and based on this project's definition of migrant) is reflected by the change or relocation of one's principal residence, be it in their country of birth (return migration) or to another foreign country (re-migration). Staying on the other end could be exemplified through investments in the local country, through material belongings or civic engagement as to reflect a certain form of rootedness and the expression of being at home. The second spectrum highlighted in this chapter, which is probably not as straightforward as the first one, is the one reflecting migrants' integration behaviours following their perception of macro changes. This spectrum goes from integrating within the host society to separating from it. Like in any spectrum, there are middle grounds where people further integrate on certain aspects of their daily lives while separating from others. Integration can typically be exemplified when participants adopt a multicultural lifestyle (both in terms of product consumption and social relationships) or participate in civic duties, thus incorporating the local culture into their own habits. Yet the macro change (experienced negatively in this study) pushed them towards the separation side of the spectrum, exemplified through an emphasis on cultural differences and the rapprochement to EU/French networks.

All in all, migrants' perception of macro changes influences their mobility in a way that makes them oscillate on both migratory and integration spectrums: a stay that was thought as temporary was turned into permanent, a deep local integration was tainted by some separation (and vice versa). This first confirms one of the dichotomies against which King has already warned us (King, 2002) as to namely not consider migration as a fixed plan, either temporary or permanent, but that instead plans as well as circumstances change. Furthermore, this strengthens the ongoing nature of both migration and integration, as processes always in evolution, with migrants evolving on both spectrums simultaneously. Finally, decisions about migratory trajectories influence the way one (dis)integrates from one's host country. Yet, integration experiences (included in relation to macro changes) also feed back on migratory plans. Migration and integration not only are thus ongoing in themselves but also influence each other continuously.

However, it would be oversimplification to believe that a migrant integrating would necessarily stay and one separating would leave (and vice versa). Migration and integration are complex processes that need to be considered also in relation to identification. The discussion of the thesis presented in the next chapter will thus focus on the influence of migrants' perception of macro changes on their overall migratory mobility, namely their migration, integration, and identification considered altogether.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis introduction (Chapter 1) highlighted how gaining a better "understanding of how people respond to and negotiate hostile environment is a key concern for contemporary societies and social science research" (Gawlewicz and Sotkasiira, 2020, p. 7). This present study thus seeks to illustrate and give a better appreciation of how migrants themselves navigate the macro changes they face by focusing on their own personal and subjective experiences of macro changes in relation to their international mobility.

Focusing on the case of French skilled workers in the UK facing Brexit, the data have shown that migrants are affected by the way they experience macro changes. Participants indeed felt personally impacted by macro changes when making sense of Brexit. This had been documented by the emotional responses migrants experienced following the Brexit referendum as well as the changes they perceived in their everyday life, such as economic depreciation, hostility, or xenophobia (Chapter 5). Furthermore, perceived macro changes also impacted migrants when they repositioned themselves vis-à-vis their own identities, ethnicity, and citizenships, either as a personal self-reposition or in relation to their host society, which ultimately put their notion of home and belonging into question (Chapter 6). Finally, the data have exposed how experiencing macro changes also impacted migrants' family, social relationships, or career. Those changes in their everyday life pushed them to renegotiate their behaviours, both vis-à-vis their integration in their host country and their migratory projects (chapter 7). Taken altogether, the three empirical chapters demonstrate how the way in which migrants experience macro changes impacts their identification, notion of home and belonging, and eventually calls into question their staying in their host country. Ultimately, the data show that perception of macro changes influences migrants' decisions and ways of migrating, integrating, and identifying.

An aspect that has not been particularly developed in the three empirical chapters but that is worth reflecting upon is the notion of space. The reason for space not having been further exposed is that while, initially, attention to space and place was part of the analysis

(especially distinction between experiences of participants from pro-Leave and pro-Remain regions, distinction between rural and urban areas), analysis of the data did not provide sufficient support to such assumptions. Indeed, no distinctive experience of Brexit could be related to particular places. Furthermore, and coming from an organisation studies background, attention was also paid to the workplace, and the majority of participants expressed no particular effects of Brexit at their workplace. This 'non-finding' was attributed to the specificity of the sample, namely skilled French workers, with most of them in managerial positions and/or in companies supportive of EU workers. This however raises the point of workplace as places of insulation and encourage further studies on differentiated experiences based on space and place.

The contribution of the thesis which is exposed in the following sections therefore focuses on migration, integration and identification in times of macro changes, with no particular focus on space. However, one should not forget that for each concept (migration, integration and identification) spaces and places do play central roles (as exposed in Chapter 2) and so still underpin the contribution of the thesis.

8.2 A NOVEL CONCEPTUALISATION OF MIGRATORY MOBILITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The present section discusses the findings of the empirical chapters taken altogether in relation to existing literature and goes beyond the individual discussions so far provided at the end of each empirical chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Based on the combination of the three empirical chapters, the current chapter puts to the forefront the overall contribution of the thesis, by namely presenting in a two-step progression a novel conceptualisation of migratory mobility that is holistic and dynamic in nature. The concept of human mobility comes from the recent work of de Haas and colleagues (de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020) to encapsulate the constant movement of people, with migratory mobility implying a change of residence while non-migratory mobility does not (e.g., commuters, tourists), yet recognising the possible shift from non-migratory to migratory mobility. In this chapter, I build on the concept of migratory mobility (rather than migration) to make it clear that migratory mobility implies more than the act of migrating (like integrating and identifying, as will be exposed), and I therefore use the concept as an outcome of the theorisation of the relationship between

migration, integration and identification in times of macro changes. Furthermore, while this chapter builds upon the findings of this thesis, and so on the case of French skilled workers facing Brexit, it is believed that the applicability of the conceptualisation of migratory mobility offered in the next sections could be applied to wider and more diverse groups of migrants and various social changes. Indeed, the key of the novel conceptualisation is to put in relation individual actors and their changing (social, economic, political) macro context. On that basis, the conceptualisation can be applied to migration beyond the EU, regardless of migrants' skills and aptitude, and go beyond Brexit. For example, the conceptualisation could be applied to Hispanic migrants in the US facing the Trump era, expatriates in Hong Kong during China's (political) takeover, or more recently and globally, how migrants experienced restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic imposed in their various host countries. To develop and present this novel conceptualisation of migratory mobility, the chapter first suggests that migratory mobility is a dynamic and multifaceted process, composed of migrating, integrating, and identifying (section 8.2.2). Then, it presents the need to bring perception of macro forces into the conceptualisation of migratory mobility (section 8.2.1). The combination of those two points leads to the thesis' main contribution as a novel approach to migratory mobility that is holistic and dynamic, which is discussed in section 8.2.3. As exposed in Chapter 2 (section 2.1), migratory (human) mobility and migration are often used interchangeably. In this work, however, the term migration refers to the act of moving between places and includes reasons to move and direction of move. Migratory mobility on the other hand refers to the experience of migrating as a whole, including processes beyond the move. In the end, the outcomes of such a novel conceptualisation of migratory mobility are presented through a typology of migratory trajectories (section 8.2.4).

8.2.1 HUMAN MOBILITY AS DYNAMIC AND MULTIFACETED

One of the specificities of this study has been to approach the data considering that everything is constantly ongoing. Indeed, sensemaking enables an approach to events that is strong processual, i.e., events happen continuously but furthermore concurrently (in 'parallel') (Bansal, Smith and Vaara, 2018). Through this lens, events' dynamic nature is central, and I therefore join scholars who conceptualise migration as ongoing (Gawlewicz and Sotkasiira, 2020; Kilkey and Ryan, 2020; Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018; Mulholland and Ryan, 2022). Yet, instead of focusing on time lapses as offered in longitudinal studies, the

study focuses on migration's daily and mundane dynamic nature. Through this processual lens, the following paragraphs argue for the conceptualisation of migratory mobility as ongoing but furthermore multifaceted, composed of migrating, integrating, and identifying.

In the literature, individual migration is conceptualised as relying on a variety of personal, individual factors (through the push-pull model or the neo-classical approach for example) and social factors or linkages (such as through the migration systems, diaspora, or network theories). Yet, migration has also been defined as dynamic, or liquid (Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018), with particular attention paid to projects changing and to how migratory trajectories evolve over time and space (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). On the other hand, the integration literature at the individual level suggests that home and belonging are central for migrants. Home is conceptualised both in terms of material structure, but furthermore in terms of affective and social attachment (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, 2016; Miller, 2019), making it a place where the personal and the social intersect. Belonging, on the other hand, is very much conceptualised through its social aspect, namely social embeddedness (Ryan and Mulholland, 2015; Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2019). Both home and belonging are also related to time and space (Miller, 2019), with attachment to people, places, and sense of belonging increasing as time passes. The integration literature thus complements the migration literature, also in a dynamic way. Finally, the identity literature highlights the fact that migrants' citizenship(s), ethnicity, gender, and their overall identities impact their migratory experience. Citizenships, ethnicity and/or gender can favour certain migration trajectories (Evergeti and Zontini, 2006; Harpaz, 2019; Reynolds, 2015) while ethnicity, language, religion and/or gender can help to find a house, a job and friends and to integrate in general (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, 2016; Zontini, 2004b). Who one is within society therefore defines the type of migration and integration one experiences.

Although the idea that international mobility implies more than a move is accepted, little thought is given to bringing migration, integration, and identification under one common umbrella. It is recognised that integration and identification are central to the experience of migration yet the act of considering the three concepts altogether is not given much attention. Migration is often related to integration or identification (La Barbera, 2015) but rarely to both simultaneously (with some exceptions that are discussed in section 8.2.3).

These shortcomings limit our understanding of individual mobility as most of the current approaches separate elements of the migratory experience from one another. Bringing migration, integration, and identification back together is crucial because, ultimately, individual migrants go through them concomitantly. A more holistic approach to the experience of international mobility is therefore necessary. Furthermore, since each concept has been defined as dynamic, fluid or ongoing in the literature, this holistic approach also needs to consider the continual nature of human mobility.

The data show that migration, integration, and identification are related to one another within the one's mobility experience. Indeed, by considering all three empirical chapters together (Chapters 5, 6 and 7), the data show how feeling at home, applying for a visa (or even local citizenship) and staying in one's host country, i.e., various aspects of migration, integration, and identification, are closely related. Similarly, feeling like an expatriate, focusing on one's career and leaving for career progression also relate to each other. The data thus highlight the fact that a fluid and even harmonious relationship exists between migration, integration, and identification. However, the data also show more discrepant or even contradictory connections between migration, integration, and identification. The data indeed documented how migrants can feel at home but still reject the idea of applying for the local citizenship. Some secure their legal document in their host country, while looking for ways out of it. Some are deeply embedded within their local community but separate themselves from the broader and larger host society. The data therefore expose the fact that migration, integration, and identification are related to one another in ways that might appear consistent and coordinated, while others are more disparate or even conflicting, yet always evolving over time.

Relating those findings to existing theories, it is first argued that migration and integration can be conceptualised as dynamic concepts on the basis of their (underlying) relationship with identification. Indeed, the data show that identification influences migration as well as integration. The way one identifies impacts the actions one undertakes, including vis-à-vis one's migration and integration. Migration's and integration's dynamism is thus prompted by the concepts' relation with the ongoing process of identification (Jenkins, 2014). While several authors have documented migration and integration as being dynamic concepts (Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018; Ryan, 2018; Ryan and Mulholland, 2015), few studies have

attempted to explain the underlying reasons or factors behind this dynamism. The current study argues that migration and integration are grounded in identification (as who one is in society defines the types of migration and integration one experiences) and because identification is ongoing (Jenkins, 2014), migration and integration also evolve over time. It is therefore this underlying relationship between identification, migration, and integration that explains how both migration and integration are dynamic processes in themselves. Yet, the data also shows that migration and integration feed back to the way one identifies. In particular, the data showed how having been a migrant and having lived abroad for years impact the way migrants describe themselves and their sense of identification with particular communities, reinforcing their national identity, potentially embracing supra-national forms of identification. While previously argued that identification continuously fuels migration and integration in a way that makes them dynamic, I go a step further here and argue that migration and integration fuel identification back. Finally, migration and integration are also related to one another. Building on the literature, moving necessarily implies integrating into a new place, either smoothly or with some difficulties. Integrating here does not mean assimilating but rather suggests ideas of embedding (Ryan, 2018; Ryan and Mulholland, 2015) and feeling at home (Miller, 2019; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Yet, building on the data of this study, the way one manages to integrate and the experiences one faces when integrating impact back on migratory decisions: extending or reducing one's stay, moving or settling, moving back home or internationally. According to both the literature and the data, migration and integration are therefore related, and influence one another.

The study therefore suggests that migration, integration, and identification are (1) dynamic processes in themselves, as previously shown in the literature and elaborated on in the previous paragraph, and (2) they continually fuel one another in a way that makes them part of a process that continuously sustains itself. The study therefore argues that migration, integration, and identification are part of both an intra-concept continuum (dynamic in themselves) as well as an inter-concept continuum (fuelling one another). On that basis, the study suggests a novel conceptualisation of migratory mobility (a concept borrowed from de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020) that is dynamic and multifaceted, composed of migrating, integrating, and identifying. This novel conceptualisation is multifaceted because it relies on

the three processes of migrating, integrating, and identifying; it is dynamic because the processes are all ongoing and influence one another.

8.2.2 BRINGING PERCEPTION OF MACRO FORCES INTO MIGRATORY MOBILITY

The second specificity of this project has been to adopt a theoretical framework based on the concept of sensemaking to understand migrants' subjective perspective of macro changes, thus joining scholars calling for the development of new lenses to investigate the relationship between individual migrant agencies and macro changes (Kilkey and Ryan, 2020; O'Reilly, 2012). The centrality of the sensemaking approach lies in developing an understanding of macro changes that is based on a plausible understanding, idiosyncratic to social actors (Weick, 1995). Through this lens, the analysis goes beyond the micro/macro dichotomy: migrants' perspective is central while simultaneously bringing the broader context into their own agencies. Through this lens, the study suggests paying more attention to how individual migrants perceive and incorporate the macro changes they face into their own mobility.

Indeed, the data show that perceived macro changes induce an emotional response in individuals which can be considered as the first evidence that individual migrants are not separated from the macro context in place, as they instead emotionally react to macro changes. Furthermore, the way migrants perceive and experience macro changes also incites them to (re)construct their identification, especially around their ethnicity, citizenship, and sense of belonging. Perceptions of macro changes thus directly impact individual migrants. Additionally, the data show that such perceptions also indirectly impact individual migrants. In particular, the data documented how experiencing macro changes alters migrants' relationships with host country nationals, family dynamics as well as career projects. Through a sensemaking lens, the study therefore suggests that migrants are both directly and indirectly impacted by changes they feel are happening at the macro level. Perceptions of macro changes therefore create changes at the individual level, ultimately inducing changes in migrants' behaviours. Indeed, the data show that perceived contextual changes trigger migrants to renegotiate their migration, integration, and identification, that is, their mobility. These renegotiations are fuelled by how individual migrants subjectively understand the macro changes and how they have directly or indirectly been impacted by them. Individual migrants ultimately incorporate the macro changes they face into their decisions and ways to

enact on them. The data therefore suggests paying more attention to the perceptions of macro changes in influencing individuals' behaviours vis-à-vis their migratory mobility.

Relating those findings to existing theories, the first point to raise is how the data confirms that migration relates to personal factors, singular to migrants' persona. In particular, the push-pull model explains migration solely in terms of financial improvement (Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014). By extension, the neo-classical approach incorporates broader aspects of individual inspirations, namely human capital (e.g., skills and experience) and human psychology (e.g., preferences and expectations), and explains how individuals are motivated to move abroad to improve at least one of those factors through a cost-benefit analysis (Kurekova, 2011). Both the push-pull model and the neo-classical approach conceptualise migration in terms of migrants' personal motivations and personal gains, which have been found and confirmed in the current study. However, those theories are often criticised for considering migrants as rational decision-makers, with full knowledge of the context, that would automatically grant them financial or personal gain (Cenci, 2015). The current study highlights how migrants do not need to be rational decision-makers and/or to have a full knowledge of the macro context to enact. Instead, the sensemaking approach suggests that migrants have a plausible understanding of the macro context, which nonetheless enables them to make decisions and act. The current study suggests that migrants do consider the costs and benefits of migrating, yet that it is based on a plausible understanding rather than on an accurate knowledge of the context. As such, the current study offers a refined approach to current micro-level theories of migration by suggesting that full knowledge of the context is not necessary in initiating migration. Instead, scholars engaging with micro-level migration theories are encouraged to understand and embrace migrants' subjective and idiosyncratic understanding of the macro context when they make the decision to move abroad for personal gains. Following a sensemaking approach, migrants therefore do migrate for personal gains (validating micro-level migration theories), but their cost-benefit analysis of migrating and their decision to migrate are based on their subjective beliefs and idiosyncratic understandings of the macro context.

The second point to raise is how the data confirms that migration also relates to factors that are more social. The network and diaspora theories indeed pay more attention to migrants' social capital (Ryan, Erel and D'Angelo, 2015). In the current study, family,

friends, and overall network were central in intentions to move and/or for reasons to settle. The network and diaspora theories explain migration in terms of migrants' social connections as the basis for movement, which has been found and confirmed in this study.

So, although the idea of migration relying on both individual and social factors is accepted, little thought is given to how migrants incorporate macro forces into their mobility. At the micro and meso levels, i.e., when migrants' perspective is the focus, few studies have investigated the way migrants navigate within the broader context and ultimately on the connection between macro forces and individuals (with some exceptions like Ceric and Crawford, 2016; Erel and Ryan, 2019; Kilkey and Ryan, 2020). The migration systems theory does bring micro, meso and macro levels together but in a way that does not embrace migrant subjective and idiosyncratic perspective, as instead the focus is on *systems*, i.e., *links* between migrants and their environments (Faist, 2000). Yet, it is currently recognised that macro structures enable or constrain individuals' migration (Brettell and Hollifield, 2015) and so it is essential to understand how migrants themselves make sense of, and navigate, those macro forces.

Indeed, these shortcomings limit our understanding, as most of the current approaches separate individual migratory decisions and experiences from the broader macro context in place. Taking macro forces into account when investigating mobility from an individual perspective is important because, ultimately, migratory mobility is part of broader structures and social changes. "We can only develop a richer understanding of migration processes if we do not conceptually separate them from broader processes of social change of which they are a constituent part" (de Haas, 2021, p. 1). There is thus the need to understand "how migrants experience and respond to changing geopolitical episodes" (Kilkey and Ryan, 2020, p. 1) by "[theorizing] the complex and non-linear ways in which macro-structural change can shape migration aspirations and capabilities" (de Haas, 2021, p. 2).

The current study suggests that while personal and social factors are central in migratory mobility, those factors are also related and impacted by the broader structures in place and the way migrants perceive and understand the macro context. Migrants' preferences and motivations evolve as their living context evolve; their social priorities change as macro changes alter their social relationships. Rather than seeing migrants solely in relation to their selves and/or their social circle, the present study suggests extending

current micro- and meso-level theories by including the influence of perceived macro changes on migrants and their migratory experiences. By including migrants' perception of macro changes into micro- and meso-level theories, i.e., by bringing closer micro, meso and macro levels yet keeping a migrant perspective, richer understanding of individual migration can be gained. Migration intention and direction depend on personal, individual factors (e.g., push-pull model, neo-classical approach), on social relationships (e.g., network and diaspora theories) but also, as shown in this study, on subjective understanding of the broader macro context.

This section has thus argued how both personal and social factors are central to migration, going in line with existing literature. Yet, the data showed that the way migrants perceive, and experience, macro changes impacts those factors. This section therefore suggests bringing perception of macro forces into the conceptualisation of migratory mobility by bringing closer micro- and meso-level theories and by anticipating the impact of perceived macro forces on those micro- and meso-level factors. Such a conceptualisation offers a step forward to considering migratory mobility in a more holistic light, that connects the micro, meso and macro levels in which migrants are embedded, yet keeping a migrant-idiosyncratic perspective.

8.2.3 MAPPING THE NOVEL CONCEPTUALISATION OF HUMAN MOBILITY

According to De Haas (2021), in "recent decades the systematic theorisation of migration processes has been largely abandoned" (p.2). The author indeed contrasts this lack of theorisation with the ever-burgeoning empirical studies on migration and concludes that this "lack of theorising hampers our ability to meaningfully interpret empirical 'facts', to understand how macro-structural factors shape migration processes" (p.2). While the previous two sections discussed the findings in relation to existing theories, this section goes a step further and attempts to answer de Haas' call. Indeed, thanks to the two-step progression made so far, the following paragraphs discuss the thesis' main contribution, namely a novel conceptualisation of human mobility.

From the literature (Chapter 2), and further confirmed in the data, it was acknowledged that migration, integration, and identification are each processes in which the personal and the social intertwine, thus spanning micro and meso levels. From section 8.2.2,

it was further argued that migration, integration, and identification are dynamic processes in themselves that continuously fuel one another in a sustainable way. The section therefore argued that migratory mobility (understood as going beyond the single act of migrating) is a dynamic and multifaceted process, composed of migrating, integrating, and identifying. Section 8.2.3 on the other hand argued that each process of migratory mobility (migration, integration, and identification) is impacted by the way migrants personally understand and experience macro changes. The section therefore argued for bringing perceptions of macro changes into migratory mobility.

The model below (diagram 5) summarises those various points about migration, integration, and identification. The combination of those points allows for a novel conceptualisation of individual migratory mobility as a dynamic, multifaceted process (composed of migrating, integrating, and identifying) related to macro forces. Again, the concept of migratory mobility is borrowed from de Haas and colleagues (de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020) to emphasise the idea that migrants' mobility implies more than the act of migrating. I indeed use the concept as an outcome of the theorisation of the relationship between migration, integration and identification. In this model, individual social actors (migrants) are at the centre of attention. Each aspect of their mobility (migrating, integrating, and identifying) is conceptualised as ongoing (intra-concept continuum), related to one another (inter-concept continuum), and where the personal and social are entangled (spanning micro and meso levels). Finally, each concept is also schematised as being impacted by the way broader macro contexts are personally and subjectively perceived by migrants themselves.

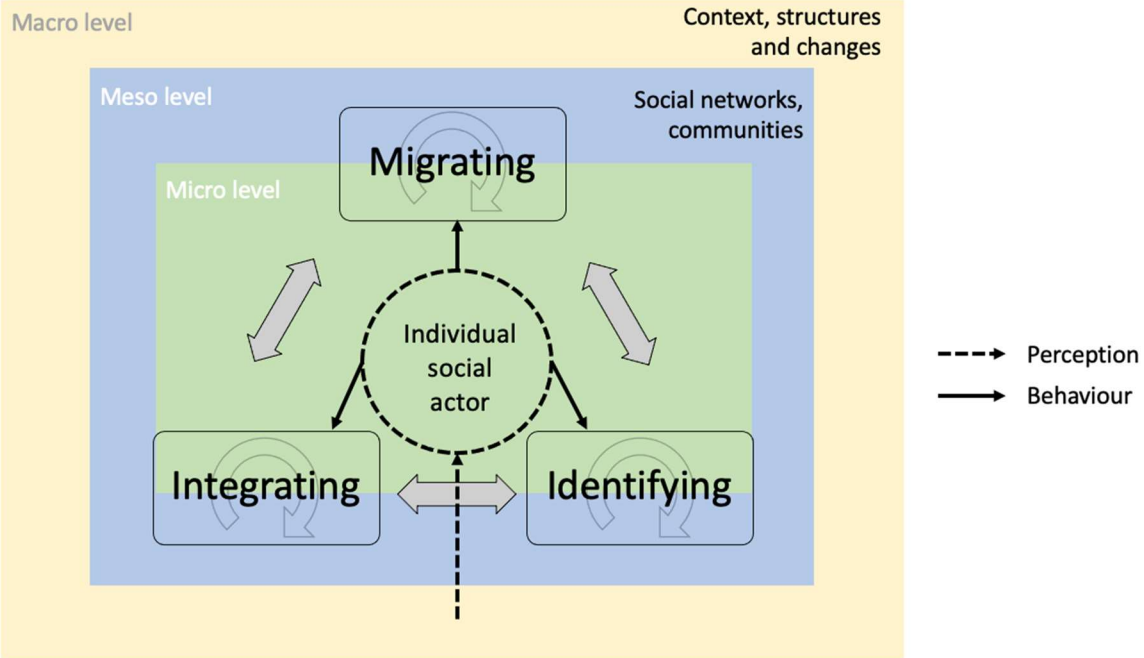

Diagram 5: Conceptualisation of migratory mobility as a multifaceted, dynamic process related to perceived macro changes

The first strength of this novel conceptualisation of migratory human mobility is that it offers a relationship between the micro, meso and macro contexts in which migrants navigate. More specifically, individual migrants are conceptualised at the heart of the model. This aspect of the conceptualisation is critical as it portrays individual migrants as actors of their own mobility project and at the centre of the mobility process. In this model, individual migrants indeed incorporate their understanding of the macro context into their migration, integration, and identification. Similarly to how Kilkey and Ryan (2020) emphasised how a life-course framework enabled them to project "people [as] not passive in the face of wider social forces" (p.7), the novel model argues for the conceptualisation of migratory mobility in a way that connects individuals to broader social changes without depicting them as passive subjects vis-à-vis the macro structures in place. Individual migrants are instead portrayed as active decision-makers of their own mobility projects, based on their subjective understanding of the macro context. Furthermore, this conceptualisation combines rather than puts in opposition existing theories from different levels of analysis (Erel and Ryan, 2019). This aspect has already been called for by De Haas, when he argues that "the way forward is not to develop entirely new theories but to find concepts and analytical tools that

help us to build upon and bridge insights provided by existing theories" (de Haas, 2021, p. 9). The novel approach to human mobility indeed embraces theories both at the micro (e.g., push-pull model, neo-classical approach) and meso (e.g., diaspora, network theories) levels. It considers individual migrants and their motivations as part of a complex process that does not dissociate the personal from the social. Instead, migrants' motives to move abroad, but also ways of integrating and identifying, are rather a combination of both personal and social factors. The study thus embraces existing theories of migration, integration, and identification that explain human mobility from an individual perspective; it positions both personal and social factors as central to migrants' mobility. Yet, it offers a nuanced approach to those factors by incorporating the impact of perceived contextual changes on those factors. It indeed considers that both personal and social factors are impacted by the way migrants experience macro forces, which ultimately alters migrants' intentions and behaviours vis-à-vis their migration, integration, and identification, that is, their mobility projects. This novel approach therefore puts migrant agencies at the centre of the conceptualisation of human mobility, yet it also considers migrants in relation to and within the larger contexts. The current study thus argues for a more holistic approach to human mobility that embraces migrants' motivations without separating them from the broader context they face. This holistic approach depicts migrants as active social actors vis-à-vis macro changes, rather than passive subjects.

The second strength of this novel conceptualisation of human mobility is its dynamic nature. In this model, individual mobility is indeed conceptualised as ongoing based on its multifaceted dimension. A number of studies have been calling for more consideration of time in migration studies, especially when conceptualising the process as dynamic, fluid, and ongoing (Gawlewicz and Sotkasiira, 2020; Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018). A number of those studies approach migration from a longitudinal lens, i.e., focus on changes over time laps, time periods and on events at a particular point in time (Kilkey and Ryan, 2020; Mulholland and Ryan, 2022). While those studies are necessary to understand migration (and by extension, mobility) as ongoing and fluid, the strength of the novel conceptualisation is its focus on mobility's daily and mundane continuity. While longitudinal studies are of prime importance, refined and additional knowledge can be gained by focusing on time as a daily practice. Migration should not necessarily take months or years to be conceptualised as

dynamic and ongoing. Instead, the study argues for paying more attention to the day-to-day processes of migrating, integrating, and identifying that make human mobility an everyday dynamic process. The current study suggests paying attention to time in the experience of migration as a commonplace practice. The current study indeed sheds light on the processes of migrating, integrating, and identifying as daily, ongoing practices, sustaining human mobility as fluid, ongoing and dynamic.

This ongoing, dynamic nature explained by the multifaceted dimension of human mobility is indeed critical because it portrays human mobility as a process that sustains itself. By understanding that human mobility relies on migrating, integrating, and identifying, three processes that are dynamic in themselves and influence one another, one can then see how human mobility is sustainable in itself. Meso-level migration theories have been praised to explain migration throughout time and the perpetuation of international movement, yet micro-level migration theories have often been criticised for lacking this aspect and for focusing on causes of migration as a one-off event (de Haas, Castles and Miller, 2020; Kurekova, 2011). In the current model, where both micro- and meso-level migration theories are combined, human mobility sustains itself. Yet, mobility sustains itself not only in relation to migration intention, but also in relation to experiences of integration and identity (re)construction. The current study indeed offers a more refined approach to both migration and integration by suggesting (at least) one factor that is at the foundation of the dynamism of those concepts, namely identification. Such an understanding enables us to gain a better vision of those concepts as *processes*, i.e., evolving over time, in a continuous manner. Once again, while a number of studies have documented individual mobility as dynamic, or liquid (Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018), few have given thought to the underlying phenomena happening in a continuous, mundane manner, that sustain individual migration as an ongoing process (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). The model, through its holistic aspect of combining migrating, integrating, and identifying, therefore suggests that migration is an ongoing dynamic process, continuously updating itself based on its association with integrating and identifying, and thus being sustainable over time, and over various contexts.

Finally, the third strength of this novel conceptualisation of human mobility is that it connects various elements of the experience of moving and settling abroad, rather than focusing solely on the movement from one country to another. Indeed, conceptualised as

multifaceted, human mobility in this model includes processes of migrating (i.e., moving from one place to another), but also integrating (settling, embedding, feeling at home) as well as identifying (self-identification, more social forms of identifications as well as the legal aspect of citizenship). In this novel conceptualisation, human mobility is thus conceptualised as more holistic by linking the process of migrating to other processes which migrants go through when migrating, namely integrating and identifying.

The combination of migration, integration and identification has been explored in a few studies. However, a number of those studies adopt a macro-level approach to the combination of migration, integration, and integration, such as the work of Delanty, Wodak, and Jones (2008) on *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, who investigate the question of migration in Europe and how racist and anti-immigration discourses are being normalised and democratised in European political discourses. Similarly, Adamson, Triadafilopoulos, and Zolberg (2011) give a good overview of the relationship between migration, identity, and belonging within liberal states. While the paper is critical for understanding changes at the macro levels and the implications for migrants, the focus of the paper (and of the rest of special issue) is on state perspective. Little insight is given into how migrants themselves navigate shifts and changes within liberal states vis-à-vis migration and integration of migrant populations. The conceptualisation of human mobility presented in this study adopts a migrant perspective and puts migrants at the centre of the migration, integration, and identification processes, while recognising that those processes are impacted by the perception of changes happening at the macro level. The present study thus not only relates migration, integration, and identification to one another but also emphasises how individuals incorporate macro changes into their mobility projects.

Some other studies pay more attention to the individual, micro perspective when researching migration, integration, and identification, but tend to overly focus on one of the processes over the two others (or on another aspect, such as Karim and Al-rawi (2018) who focus on social media in migration and integration in Europe). Madsen and van Naerssen (2003) for instance do recognise that the experience of migration impacts and alters one's identification and integration. Yet, the paper focuses mostly on the act of border crossing, as a one-off event, and pays little attention to further mobility implications. Likewise, in her book La Barbera (2015) focuses on the influence of migration on identity construction, while

integration seems to be only peripheral. Similarly, Ralph and Staeheli's (2011) paper on mobilities, belongings and identities focuses mostly on the notion of home, as something both fixed and mobile, yet gives little insight into implications for migration and/or identification. On a similar note, Ferbrache and Yarwood (2015) explore the relationship between mobility, citizenship, and belonging, yet the paper focuses mostly on citizenship (with little further consideration for other types and forms of identification) and so the paper adopts a very legal and regulatory approach to mobility and belonging. While the legal and normative aspects of citizenship and human mobility are important, I argue that identification goes also beyond its legal form and includes other forms of self- and group-identifications, both reflected in the presented conceptualisation as identification spans the micro and meso levels. In the current model, migration, integration, and identification are not simply related to one another, but they each also reflect their ongoing, personal, and collective nature.

Finally, even in the case where migration, integration, and identification are given equal attention, those studies often do not emphasise the dynamic, ongoing, and sustainable nature of migratory mobility. In her paper, Gilmartin (2008) calls for further research on the relationship between migration, identity, and belonging, yet she does not seem to embrace or encourage the dynamic and ongoing nature of each concept. King et al. (2006) combine migration, settlement, and gender while paying particular attention to time. However, the chapter focuses on temporality over long periods (life-course and longitudinal approaches), rather than on the mundane and day-to-day practice of mobility. Second, the authors focus on the migration of migrant first generation and on the integration of migrant second generation. The present model suggests paying attention to migration and integration within the same generation as ongoing processes and day-to-day practices. However, the authors do suggest that "integration should be addressed in a more holistic way to include, among others, questions of citizenship and identity" (p.260), an aspect that the present study offers by relating integration to identification within the umbrella of human mobility.

All in all, the novel conceptualisation of individual mobility presented in this study has three main strengths: 1) it offers a relationship between micro, meso and macro contexts from a migrant idiosyncratic perspective, 2) it is dynamic and thus presents individual mobility as a process that sustains itself over time, and 3) it relates the process of migrating to other processes of integrating and identifying. While the core focus of this project is individual

migration, this novel conceptualisation embraces and connects existing theories both within and across disciplines. This conceptualisation of human mobility offers a more holistic approach to the experience of migration by spanning levels of analysis, temporality, and individual processes. This novel conceptualisation of human mobility therefore "advance[s] our understanding of migration processes as an intrinsic part of broader processes of social change" (de Haas, 2021, p. 2) and thus responses to De Haas' (2021) call for the theorisation of migration processes.

8.2.4 OUTCOMES: TYPOLOGY OF MIGRATORY TRAJECTORIES

By adopting the above suggested conceptualisation of migratory mobility as a multifaceted, dynamic process related to macro forces, it is essential to discuss the implications and outcomes of such a conceptualisation, notably by using the novel conceptualisation to offer a typology of different mobility trajectories following macro changes. Again, while this project has relied on French skilled migrant workers facing Brexit, I would like to invite readers to see how the conceptualisation of migratory mobility and its outcomes could be applied to more diverse groups of migrants and to other (social, political, economic) macro changes. I therefore encourage further research on the use of this novel conceptualisation and the outcomes that will be described below (in the form of a typology) on other migrant populations and in other contexts.

According to the novel conceptualisation of human mobility, migrants can react in a variety of ways following macro changes. Migrants indeed make different senses of macro changes, develop different emotional responses, perceive different changes in their daily lives, have different senses of belonging or identifying and so on. While facing the same macro change, their response in terms of their mobility can thus be quite vast. By focusing on the behaviours and actions of migrants, the study offers a typology of four different trajectories that emerged directly from the data. The four trajectories differentiate themselves based on two main dimensions: integration style and migratory actions. Both dimensions are grounded in the both the literature and the data.

The first dimension, ***integration style***, is a combination of individuals' identification and integration strategy. It encompasses aspects of identifying with host country nationals, a sense of belonging to the host country and applying for national legal documentation. The

integration style can therefore be split between embedding and separating. Migrants who self-identify with the host country nationals, feel that their host country is their home and is where they belong, and/or have applied for a visa or even for their host country's citizenship are defined as embedding. On the other hand, migrants who do not self-identify with the host country population, feel that they do not belong and who have not applied, or have refused to apply for any legal documentation in order to be allowed to stay in their host country are defined as separating. The second dimension, ***migratory actions***, is more straightforward and considers migrants' movement by focusing on their change of principal residence, in line with this study's definition of migrants (Chapter 2). Migratory actions can therefore be split between people staying and leaving (from the host country perspective). Migrants who go back to their home country or re-migrate to another foreign country are leaving their host country. All other migrants are therefore staying. Migrants who have not yet made up their mind whether they would stay, or leave, are considered as staying because their lack of actions makes them remain resident in their host country. Similarly, migrants who *intend to* leave are also considered as staying because of their lack of enactment towards relocating their principal residence. Behind decisions to stay or leave lie a variety of identifications with host country nationals, home country, and sense of belonging, as emphasised in Chapter 7.

The dimensions of integration style and migratory actions each have two possible outcomes. The interaction of these outcomes results in four different migratory trajectories following macro changes, as shown in table 4 below: (1) committing to stay, (2) exploring opportunities, (3) resigning to circumstances, and (4) committing to leave. The typology intends to present and explain different migratory projects in times of macro changes from a migrant perspective. The typology offers a focus on migrants' enactment following a cognitive and emotive assessment of macro changes as behind the typology lies the importance of sensemaking, identification and emotions, yet the focus of the typology is on individuals' behaviours. By focusing on migratory *trajectories* – rather than migrant types – the emphasis is put on the dynamic and ongoing nature of human mobility. Indeed, "although migration research by definition studies people on the move, it nevertheless often uses a 'sedentarist' approach" (Snel, Bilgili, and Staring, 2021, p. 3211). By focusing on trajectories, the study hopes to avoid the reification of migrants and their mobility. Migratory trajectory is here understood as a broad "concept and may include multiple journeys in various directions over

a longer period of time, including possible longer periods of residence in a country before people decide to move on" (Snel, Bilgili and Staring, 2021, p. 3211). Each trajectory is named based on a gerund (*-ing*) to emphasise the ongoing and dynamic nature of migratory mobility and the arrows in the table schematise that migrants do change trajectories throughout their life course (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). Each trajectory will be discussed in relation to the literature in the following paragraphs. However, because few studies have focused on the dynamic nature of migratory trajectories within Europe[20] (with some exceptions like Ryan and Mulholland, 2014), the following paragraphs will discuss these trajectories also in relation to fixed migrant typology, while still highlighting some commonalities and differences.

Integration style	Migratory actions: Staying	Migratory actions: Leaving
Embedding	Trajectory 1: Committing to stay	Trajectory 2: Exploring opportunities
Separating	Trajectory 3: Resigning to circumstances	Trajectory 4: Committing to leave

Table 4: Typology of individual migratory trajectories following macro changes

Trajectory 1: Committing to stay

Migrants who are committing to stay are characterised by both having a sense of belonging to their host country and having decided to stay despite facing macro changes. They identify as part of their host society, especially as they consider themselves beneficial for this society since they see themselves as good migrants, participate in the economy, and are involved in some local civic duties. They have applied for a visa allowing them to stay in their host country, and some have even decided to apply for the citizenship, displaying a proactive action towards their integration. Very often those migrants have close relationships with host country nationals, especially among binational couples and families. Some feel themselves

[20] Some papers are emerging on trajectories to or through Europe, in particular see the work of Caarls, Bilgili and Fransen, 2021; Schapendonk, Bolay and Dahinden, 2021; Schapendonk and Steel, 2014; Snel, Bilgili and Staring, 2021.

closer to their host country than to their home country due to the amount of time they have spent abroad, and their separation from their home country over time.

Some authors have attempted to describe migrants on this trajectory as well. Scott (2006) for instance talks about assimilator-settlers and international settlers to describe British migrants in Paris with a "permanent" sense of "commitment to the host country or city" (refer to his typology p.1112). According to his study, international settlers are migrants "with a stronger 'bodily presence', [who] are committed to a long-term stay in Paris – initially this may not have been the case, but for one reason or another they gradually became emplaced" (p.1114). Assimilator settlers on the other hand are "living in Paris to cement mixed-nationality relationships [and] those in these relationships were the only interviewees to have naturalised" (p.1114). While Scott does recognise two types of settlers, he fails to draw a clear distinction between the reasons for assimilator-settlers to settle and the ones for international settlers. While reasons for the former are clear (family-related factors), reasons for the latter are not made explicit and raise ambiguity. Furthermore, the study suggests how assimilator-settlers settle for family reasons only, the same way that their motive for migration was relationship alone. The current study has highlighted how reasons to migrate and to settle in a foreign country are a combination of family factors but also of career, identity, and notion of belonging. The current study thus offers a more comprehensive distinction among migrants who decide to settle. Among them, migrants committing to stay have the intention to stay in their host country which is assessed by their sense of feeling at home and belonging, itself often materialised by the acquisition of a legal documentation.

Similarly, Ryan and Mulholland (2014) talk about migrants who end up "rooted" in their host country. In their research on highly skilled French workers in London, the authors point out how family and local knowledge rooted their participants in the British capital, suggesting how "the process of emplacement involves combinations of career advantages with personal and familial factors" (p.598). Furthermore, the authors clearly "consider how plans change over time as people begin to extend their stay and become settled (…) [acknowledging] a 'continuum of emplacement'" (p.597-598). However, within this continuum of emplacement, the authors fail to offer an adequate explanation for migrants actively seeking and reaching settlement as the authors solely consider settlement as an informal decision. The study does not take into account the differing categories of settled

migrants while the current typology suggests that among settled migrants (i.e., in the column of 'staying') two trajectories exist: committing to stay and resigning to circumstances. Migrants committing to stay are likely to actively seek integration, especially through visa and/or citizenship application, which is not represented in the study of Ryan and Mulholland (2014).

Overall, while migrants who decide to settle in their host country have been studied in the past, the current study and typology offer a distinction between migrants who follow a trajectory of commitment (committing to stay) and those on a more conflicted path (resigning to circumstances) based on the proactivity (active/passive) and the direction (integrating/separating) migrants put into their integration style. The current section has discussed trajectory 1 (committing to stay) while a subsequent section will discuss trajectory 3 (resigning to circumstances) more into details.

Trajectory 2: Exploring opportunities

While in trajectory 1 (committing to stay) migrants are actively securing their stay in order to settle, in trajectory 2 (exploring opportunities) migrants are characterised by their actions towards securing their stay in their host country while at the same time exploring ways out of it. Migrants on trajectory 2 (exploring opportunities) typically represent the discrepant relation between migration, integration, and identification. On this trajectory, migrants have applied for documentation to stay while applying for jobs or projects somewhere else. Their trajectory is described as exploring opportunities because they are trying to make the best out of macro changes. There is a strong sense of cost-benefit analysis in their decision to migrate and their way of settling. They want to keep all doors open, hence securing their stay in their host country while looking at what is available somewhere else. They do not reject the idea of leaving and coming back some years later, hence the importance of securing their stay here with a legal document that would allow them to come back. They are, generally speaking, young (30s) and without children (though some might have children). Their main motivations are their career opportunities and career progression. Their sense of belonging is especially strong to their company, and that is why some of them are looking for transfers within their company, yet to another country.

Migrants exploring opportunities naturally echo Favell's Eurostars (Favell, 2008a), those "ultra-mobile cross-national professionals" (Favell, 2003, p. 33), often middle-class, travelling, working, and living their cosmopolitan lives across borders in North West Europe. However, when Favell elaborated on his Eurostars, the EU was growing, with two waves of extension towards the East, incorporating ten more countries in 2004 and two extras in 2007. For at least the last decade, and especially since June 2016, the trend has reversed and a wind of Euroscepticism has been blowing over several EU countries, with the Brexit referendum at its apogee. For the first time since its creation, the EU is not extending but is shrinking. How are the Eurostars doing in those times? The current study reveals that despite Favell's book on Eurostars being over a decade old and despite Euroscepticism, skilled migrants who believed in the European project in the first place did not lose sight of this belief. With the freedom of movement rated as the most valuable right of European citizens (Favell, 2008a, p. 17), the typology presented in this current study reveals how migrants following a trajectory of opportunities in particular can still be classified as Eurostars, despite Brexit, with their career perspectives not being limited to a national territory.

However, as volatile as Eurostars can be, Favell already pointed out their wish to belong to their host society. They are not tourists; they wish to integrate into their host society and blend in. The current typology thus confirms Favell's findings on Eurostars as migrants caught in a "tension between mobility opportunities and accumulation through settlement, investment and identification" (Favell, 2003, p. 29) by exposing how migrants exploring opportunities take all the chances offered by the EU, both in terms of having the occasion to integrate and settle while still looking at (career) prospects outside their host country, and this, even in times of Euroscepticism and Brexit.

Trajectory 3: Resigning to circumstances

Migrants on the third trajectory drawn from this study, namely resigning to circumstances, are characterised by feeling separated from their host society, having not applied for any legal documentation and yet still staying in their host country, often for their partners, families, and overall networks. Migrants resigning to circumstances thus encompass both migrants in limbo, typically waiting to see what happens, and more conflicted migrants, actively passive, waiting to take the necessary actions to secure their stay. Migrants resigning to circumstances

are another example of the disparate or even conflicted relationship between migration, integration, and identification.

In their study on Irish, Italian, and Romanian migrants in the UK facing Brexit, Lulle, Moroşanu, and King (2018) found out that each nationality developed different future migration and integration plans. Romanian participants adopted a wait-and-see strategy in respect to their future migration plans, which echoes migrants resigning to circumstances (trajectory 3) from the current typology. “For the Italian interviewees, future plans included learning to adjust, preparing for new hardships in the United Kingdom, but with the hope that they will continue to be valued by their employer” (p.8), highlighting a desire to stay but also integrate, at least in their professional sphere, which resonates with trajectory 1 (committing to stay) from the current typology. Finally, Irish participants seem to have been the ones ready to move, expressing “their desire for temporary migration (…) [as their] future was envisaged as “some years” in the United Kingdom, and then moving away” (p.7), suggesting trajectory 2 (exploring opportunities).

Overall, the study from Lulle, Moroşanu, and King (2018) seems to suggest that migrants from countries whose economy is not as stable as the one in their host country would be more inclined to stay (Italian, trajectory 1 and Romanian, trajectory 3). On the other hand, migrants from a richer country like Ireland would consider moving. The current study on French workers suggests a more refined approach to migrants from economically similar country. It namely pointed out how (1) a stable economy back home did not necessarily imply moving (e.g., trajectory 1 and trajectory 3 migrants), (2) people might stay for other reasons than money and career (especially in trajectory 1 and trajectory 3), and finally (3) a stable economy back home did not come up as a reason to move back home (among migrants on trajectory 4). The current typology indeed highlights how migrants on trajectory 3 (resigning to circumstances) want to stay in their host country mostly for familial and social ties, rather than career and financial reasons.

EU migration scholars often focus on migration flows from the South to the North and/or from the East to the West of the EU. The current study thus offers a West-to-West approach to EU migration and highlights that when the economy and employment in both countries are similar, the importance of social relationships and networking come up as major

reasons to decide to settle in one's host country, despite not necessarily fully integrating, as suggested by migrants on trajectory 3 (resigning to circumstances).

Trajectory 4: Committing to leave

The final trajectory that the typology of this study suggests is committing to leave. Migrants on the route to committing to leave are characterised by their complete separation from their host country, both in terms of integration style and migratory action. Within this trajectory, we can distinguish two types of leave or departure, namely migrants going back home and migrants re-migrating to another foreign country. Both are considered as committing to leave because their remigration implies leaving everything behind to settle down somewhere else, sometimes new, often with a partner and/or family while their initial migration was individual. Whether migrants have decided to go back to their home country or to another foreign country, their departure is a new adventure.

Thorn has been working on the motives and behaviours of migrants. In particular she points to the combination of travel and adventure opportunities with career motives as reasons for skilled New Zealanders to move abroad (Thorn, 2009). The current study has pointed out how similar motives are to be found also among the European population, in particular French skilled workers in the UK. Not only were those motives present to move from France to the UK, but in times of macro change, those motives were also very much present for migrants who migrated to another foreign country. As explained earlier, migrants going to another foreign country are mostly young and without children, and their separation from their host country was motivated by new adventure and their career progression. However, Thorn (2009) recognises that the importance of difference motives varies between male and female migrants and at different life stages. While the current study cannot confirm the distinction between male and female migrants since the study has a large majority of female participants, the distinction at life stages has been confirmed also among French skilled workers. Indeed, for migrants committing to leave their host country, it was often older participants who had wished to go back to France, and this was for familial reasons, while younger participants were looking for an adventure abroad to advance their career progression. This further confirms the point raised by Ryan and Mulholland (2014) about Eurostars being indeed motivated by self-realisation through career and adventure yet at a specific, early life stage, rather than englobing skilled EU migrants from all ages and life

courses. However, one limitation of Thorn's paper is the gaps within the population of her study in terms of age group and marital status. Namely, she did not encounter enough participants aged between 30 and 39 years old, and she only considered single participants among people between 20 and 29 years old. Over a third of this study's participants were in the age group 30-39 and the majority of the 20- to 29-year-olds of this study were in a relationship. The current study thus suggests that Thorn's findings can be extended to young (20- to 29-year-old) partnered participants and participants aged between 30 and 39, at least for the French skilled migrant population.

Overall, and based on its three empirical chapters as well as the novel conceptualisation of human mobility, the thesis suggests a typology of four different trajectories: (1) committing to stay, (2) exploring opportunities, (3) resigning to circumstances, and (4) committing to leave. Each trajectory has been discussed in relation to some of the literature, and the typology has already echoed and confirmed findings from previous studies. Furthermore, it has also offered steps forwards as to understand the various trajectories on which migrants embark when facing macro changes. The typology therefore directly breaks the too-often-homogenous perspective on skilled migrants from the West (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014) and instead reflects the diversity that exists among them, from a dynamic perspective. Furthermore, this chapter has also highlighted how the conceptualisation of migratory mobility and the typology that came out of it could be applied to more diverse group of migrants and various contexts, encouraging thus further research in those areas.

The typology is however not fixed and should indeed be understood as flexible and adaptable, with migrants' plans changing over time and engaging in different trajectories as their sensemaking, identifications and general life course actions and behaviours evolve. Migrants on trajectory 3 (resigning to circumstances) can end up at trajectory 1 (committing to stay) by deciding to integrate further and apply for specific documentation. Those same migrants can decide the opposite and completely leave the country and thus end up following trajectory 4 (committing to leave). Even migrants who are on trajectory 1 (committing to stay) can change to exploring opportunities (trajectory 2), especially once children education is over and parents decide to migrate somewhere, while keeping ties with their host country. The reader should indeed not forget that this typology relies on the novel conceptualisation

of human mobility as a dynamic and multifaceted process of migrating, integrating, and identifying, concepts that are part of both an intra- and inter-concept continuum and impacted by perceived macro changes. So, typically, changes between different trajectories can be triggered by changes at the micro, meso or macro level as each aspect of human mobility (migrating, integrating, identifying) is impacted by factors at those three levels. Finally, while this typology is applicable to a variety of contexts, to flux happening between different countries and to different migrant population, it would be difficult to apply in the context of forced migration as indeed migrants caught in this specific form of migration do not have, by definition, the chances of choosing their migratory trajectories.

8.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the empirical findings from Chapters 5, 6, and 7 have been taken altogether and discussed in relation to the existing literature to present the contribution of the study. In particular, through a two-step progression, the chapter presented a novel conceptualisation of human mobility as a dynamic and multifaceted process, composed of migrating, integrating, and identifying, impacted by how migrants themselves subjectively perceive macro changes. Based on this novel conceptualisation and supported by the data, the chapter also presented the outcomes of such a conceptualisation through a typology of four different trajectories that migrants pursue following macro changes. This novel conceptualisation of human mobility offers a more holistic approach to the experience of mobility, both by connecting the micro, meso and macro contexts from a migrant idiosyncratic perspective, as well as by relating migration to other processes, namely integrating and identifying. The core of the conceptualisation is individual migrants as active, yet subjective, decision-makers of their mobility process together with putting in relation existing theories, both within and across disciplines. The novel conceptualisation presented in this study thus offers a broader and more comprehensive perspective on individual mobility, in relation to how macro changes are perceived and experienced by migrants themselves.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter first summarises the thesis by highlighting the key points of the eight previous chapters, paying particular attention to the contributions of the project (section 9.2). Then, the chapter highlights the limitations of the study and suggests areas for further research (section 9.3). Finally, the chapter finishes with a concluding section, closing up the thesis, where I also offer some personal, opening reflections on individual migratory mobility in contemporary societies (section 9.4).

9.2 SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

Overall, the thesis explores experiences of individual mobility in times of macro changes with a specific interest in understanding how migrants themselves perceive and navigate changes happening at the macro level and incorporate them into their own mobility projects. The introductory chapter of the thesis (Chapter 1) exposes how this specific interest was born out of my MSc dissertation conducted during summer 2016, when the Brexit referendum happened.

More specifically, the thesis builds upon three bodies of literature to reflect the experience of individual mobility: migration, integration, and identification (Chapter 2). The review of those three bodies of literature highlights how each concept can be studied from a micro or macro perspective, and how each process, in its own stream, has been defined as dynamic or ongoing. However, within these bodies of literature, two main limitations were identified: (1) these three bodies of literature represent and explain different aspects of human mobility but in a separated manner, and a holistic approach is therefore missing; and (2) each concept can be studied from an individual or state perspective, but a connection between the two is rare. The thesis thus aimed at addressing those two issues through an overarching research question, namely: *How do migrants' perceptions of macro change influence their migration, integration, and identification?*

To answer this research question, an analytical framework based on the concept of sensemaking was developed (Chapter 3). In particular, sensemaking offers a connection between individuals and macro changes, but furthermore it is ongoing and so enables an approach to events that is strong processual, i.e., everything is constantly ongoing. In this third chapter, studies that have applied the concept of sensemaking to migration and/or integration were also discussed.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the methodological tools used in this project. In particular, the study is grounded in an approach to reality that is constructivist/relativist and intersubjective. On that basis, the chapter exposes the qualitative strategy adopted for the project that is based on a case study built around individual interviews and participant observation. The analysis of the data has been a thematic one to emphasise the simultaneity of events and reflect the strong processual approach of the project.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the context and empirical findings of the thesis and investigate French skilled migrant workers' perception and experiences of changes triggered by the Brexit referendum. In particular, Chapter 5 focuses on how participants tried to make sense of Brexit and highlights the emotional, relational, and factual changes participants experienced. Chapter 6 is about participants (re)constructing their identities in Brexit times, with attention paid to emotions, ethnicity, belonging and legal status. Finally, Chapter 7 addresses participants' migration and integration strategies and highlights a variety of migratory trajectories following the Brexit referendum.

Finally, a discussion of the three empirical chapters taken together is offered in Chapter 8. In particular, the chapter presents in a two-step progression a novel conceptualisation of human mobility that is dynamic, multifaceted, and related to how macro changes are idiosyncratically perceived and enacted upon by migrants themselves. The contributions of the thesis are developed with more attention in the following section.

9.2.1 CONTRIBUTIONS

In this section, the contributions of the study are emphasised by highlighting how they address the thesis' aims. The main contributions are theoretical, with additional methodological and empirical contributions briefly outlined.

As stated in the previous section, the thesis had two main aims:

- to develop a holistic approach to individual mobility that would embrace the concepts of migration, integration, and identification
- to offer a way to connect micro and macro levels within the mobility experience of individuals

Additionally to those two aims, the thesis should not forget that each process (migration, integration, and identification) had been defined as dynamic and ongoing in the literature, and thus the novel approach to individual mobility needed to take into account the dynamic nature of the processes.

The ultimate contribution of the thesis has been to offer a novel conceptualisation of migratory mobility that is dynamic, multifaceted and connects micro, meso and macro levels from a migrant idiosyncratic perspective (presented in section 8.2.3). This novel conceptualisation of mobility addresses the thesis' aims and take into consideration the dynamic nature of the three processes on which human mobility is based, namely migration, integration and identification.

More specifically, the first strength of the novel conceptualisation of human mobility has been to offer a relationship between micro, meso and macro contexts in which migrants navigate by particularly focussing on migrants' idiosyncratic perspective of macro changes. This directly addresses the second aim of the thesis. This particular aspect of the model was feasible to achieve by embracing existing theories both at the micro and meso levels, suggesting that each concept of the model (migration, integration, and identification) spans the micro and the meso level, but furthermore, through a sensemaking lens and the data which documented how each concept is also impacted by the way macro changes are subjectively perceived by migrants. By adopting a migrant idiosyncratic perspective on human mobility, the model manages to connect micro, meso and macro factors relevant to the experience of migration, while keeping migrants at the heart of the process. This aspect of the model thus contributes to bringing existing theories closer to one another, including from different levels of analysis, but furthermore to offer a unique, migrant idiosyncratic perspective on migratory mobility.

The second strength of the novel conceptualisation of human mobility has been to be dynamic. While it was not an aim *per se* of the thesis to offer a dynamic approach to individual

mobility, given that each process had already been defined as ongoing in the literature, the model needed to embrace this dynamism. The implications of a dynamic model of human mobility have however been central, in the sense that mobility is conceptualised as a day-to-day practice (with time as a mundane activity) and furthermore that individual mobility sustains itself over time and various contexts. So, while migration, integration, and identification as ongoing (fluid) processes are not novel, the study has further suggested the centrality of its mundane and day-to-day dynamism together with its sustainable nature. This aspect of the model thus contributes to considering time as an everyday practice in migration studies in a way that makes mobility a sustainable process.

Finally, the third strength of the model has been to connect the concepts of migrating, integrating, and identifying to one another, which directly addresses the first aim of the thesis. This aspect of the novel conceptualisation is central because it relates various elements of the mobility experience under one common umbrella. It further emphasises how migrants do not go through migration, integration, and identification in a linear, sequential way, but that instead the three processes are concomitant to one another. The model thus not only relates migration to other processes of integration and identification, but it does so by highlighting the influences that one has over the two others as part of an inter-concept continuum. The centrality of the model is thus not only the connection between migration, integration, and identification, as per the initial aim of the thesis, but also how those three processes are happening in parallel to one another. This aspect of the model thus contributes to offering a more holistic approach to the mobility experience by relating various processes through which individuals go when migrating.

All in all, the thesis' main theoretical contribution has been the development and presentation of a novel conceptualisation of human mobility that offers a more holistic approach to the mobility experience by (1) embracing migrants' idiosyncratic perspective of macro changes and thus connecting micro, meso and macro levels from an individual approach, (2) being dynamic and arguing that migratory mobility is sustainable, and (3) relating processes of migration, integration, and identification to one another in a concomitant and simultaneous way.

Yet, it would not have been possible to develop this novel conceptualisation of human mobility without the unique analytical framework developed around sensemaking and used

for three main purposes. Linking individual migrants to macro changes was central in this project; however, the sensemaking lens adopted in the study enabled me to approach macro changes from a migrant idiosyncratic perspective, thus offering a relationship between individual agencies and changes happening at the macro level without undermining migrants as active social actors. While this approached could be critiqued for methodological individualism, the combination with an intersubjective paradigm enabled me to include relationships and group dynamics as being part of individuals' sensemaking. This aspect in itself contributes to shared sensemaking, or group/collective sensemaking (Brown, Colville and Pye, 2015), inviting further research in that area. Secondly, one of the features of sensemaking is its 'ongoing' nature (Weick, 1995), which enabled me to go beyond the mere outcomes of migrants making sense of macro changes, but moreover to focus on the *process* of individuals making sense and enacting. Because the study was focusing on migrating, integrating, and identifying (i.e., three processes defined as ongoing), the thesis needed to adopt an analytical lens reflecting the dynamism of those processes. Finally, the study went a step even further and linked the process of sensemaking to a strong processual approach. This approach used in process research, considers that everything is continuously ongoing and that events thus happen in parallel (rather than sequentially, as in 'weak' processual lens) (Bansal, Smith and Vaara, 2018). It is therefore through a sensemaking lens as an analytical framework that a migrant-centred, dynamic, and multifaceted conceptualisation of migratory mobility was developed.

Through the concept of sensemaking, the study thus contributes to the development of lenses that enable the study of events both subjectively and as ongoing processes. In relation to migration studies, this particular lens complements the life-course approach already used by several scholars (Kilkey and Ryan, 2020; King *et al.*, 2006). As the life-course lens, the sensemaking/strong processual lens relates individual subjective experiences to macro changes. Yet, it offers a focus on time as a day-to-day, mundane practice. All in all, the study methodologically contributes to the development of lenses that connect micro and macro contexts as well as those focusing on time, dynamism, and processes, be it in migration studies or beyond.

Furthermore, by focusing the project on the case of French skilled migrant workers facing Brexit in the UK, the thesis empirically contributes to four main domains. First, the

project contributes to intra-EU migration, a field that has been burgeoning in recent decades (King, 2002), albeit mostly focused on flows from the South to the North of the EU, from the East to the West or from the North to the South of the EU, in the case of lifestyle migration. The current project joins the few articles on migration within the North-West of the EU, highlighting the non-economic incentives for those populations to move abroad (Favell, 2008a; Ferbrache and Yarwood, 2015; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014; Scott, 2006). Second, the project contributes to the more general flux of migration happening within the global North, which again has attracted less attention than migration from the global South to the global North or within the global South. The current project, however, goes beyond the notion of expatriate as 'good migrants' (Cranston, 2017) and encourages discussion about migration even in the case of flux within the global North. Then, by focusing on French skilled workers in the UK, the project goes beyond low-skilled versus elite forms of migration and joins scholars who have been calling for more attention to be paid to Eurostars (Favell, 2008a) and to this 'middling group' (Ryan and Mulholland, 2014; Scott, 2006) of educated middle class migrants. Finally, by focusing on Brexit, the thesis also empirically contributes to the burgeoning body of literature focusing on this unique event (Benson *et al.*, 2022; Brahic and Lallement, 2020; Kilkey and Ryan, 2020; Lulle, Moroşanu and King, 2018; Sotkasiira and Gawlewicz, 2020; Zontini and Però, 2019) and to the case of migrants navigating the EU shrinking rather than expanding, as previous studies on intra-EU migration have focused on (Genova, 2017; King *et al.*, 2016; Ryan, 2010).

Finally, in terms of practical implications, the thesis would be of particular use for policymakers wishing to understand the impact of polices developed on migrant population. In particular, for countries economically relying on migrants as part of their workforce, understanding the impacts of policies on (skilled) migrant workers is crucial if they wish to attract the 'best and the brightest'. In a world where Western economies are aging, attracting young skilled migrants will be one of the challenges of the 21st century.

At a different level but on a similar note, the thesis would also be useful to organisations employing skilled migrants and in particular to their HR departments, whose role will be to attract, recruit but also retain this workforce. By understanding why migrants would stay in a foreign country to work, organisations can adapt to offer migrant workers the incentives they are looking for. The thesis has for instance particularly highlighted how factors

outside of the workplace are key, such as the role and importance of family, and thus encourages organisations to develop strategies to accompany skilled migrants and their family better, such as flexible working hours, home office, day care etc.

The thesis therefore practically contributes to helping develop a better and more comprehensive conversation between actors at different levels of the society, such as policymakers, organisations, and migrant workers.

Overall, the thesis' main theoretical contribution is its novel conceptualisation of human mobility whose three main strengths have been highlighted in Chapter 8 and summarised in the previous paragraphs. The thesis' main methodological contribution is its development of an analytical framework through the concept of sensemaking as an actor-centred lens and a strong process-thinking approach, as highlighted in Chapter 3. In terms of empirical contributions, the thesis contributes to studies on intra-EU migration within the North-West and more generally to migration within the global North, and naturally it contributes to the burgeoning body of literature on Brexit. Finally, the thesis hopes to be of practical use to actors at different levels of society, to favour a better understanding and harmony between policymakers, organisations, and migrant workers.

9.3 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH AREAS

While the previous section has highlighted the various contributions made by the study, it is important to keep in mind that, as in all research projects, the current study also bears its own limitations. This section thus highlights some of them in an effort to suggest further research areas.

The first limitation of the project, as often occurs in migration studies, is the danger to fall for methodological nationalism and/or methodological individualism. Regarding the former, the thesis has adopted an approach to migration that is transnational, i.e., recognising that migrants are not limited by the borders of nation-states, either physically or even normatively, but that instead the experience of migration and mobility in general surpasses national borders. This was particularly possible by focusing on individuals and their transnational lifestyle, highlighting back and forth movements between home and host countries, consumption of different cultures and networks spanning national borders. Yet, by focusing on individuals to explain migration, integration, and identification (i.e., social

phenomena), and especially with a sensemaking lens privileging individuals' perspective, the thesis ran the risk of being criticised for methodological individualism. To this critique, the thesis made it clear that the individual, migrant idiosyncratic perspective adopted in the project should not be considered as the unique explanation for migration, integration, and identification in times of macro changes. Instead, the thesis made it clear that through such a subjective approach, the thesis wanted to refine existing theories, yet also embrace the influence of meso- and macro-level dynamics, such as migrant networks and macro forces. The thesis indeed tried to look at and include perception of the macro context (e.g., political, economic, social environments), especially through the concept of sensemaking, and used individualism as a lens. By highlighting the scope and limits of the project, the thesis hopes to have addressed the risk of both methodological nationalism and individualism but encourages scholars to think about those issues in future projects, and eventually develop other, more appropriate solutions to such limitations.

The second limitation of the study is its sample. While the study has made clear that it did not claim to be generalisable, participants have been selected through the snowball strategy, which started with personal acquaintances. On that basis, a number of similarities across participants could have happened (e.g., age, job position, family structure). I tried addressing this issue when making sure not to interview more than two persons referred to me by the same participant. While in terms of age, years spent in the UK as well as job and family structure, the sample is diverse, the study has a clear excess of women (25) in comparison to men (7), which has also been the case in other projects of EU migrants facing Brexit (e.g., Gawlewicz and Sotkasiira, 2020). I therefore encourage future studies to consider male participants and eventually compare whether the experience of Brexit differs between male and female EU migrants in the UK. More generally however, the homogeneity of the sample in terms of race, class, religion, sexual orientation (and more) calls for paying more attention to unique experiences of Brexit, especially regarding intersectionality. The sample is also composed of participants living primarily in the (East and West) Midlands. Initially, attention was paid to places and especially participants' experience of Brexit based on their place of residence as it was indeed believed that people living in pro-Leave regions and/or rural areas would more strongly feel the effects of Brexit. However, the analysis did not provide substantial distinction between pro-Leave and pro-Remain or between rural and

urban places of residence, which could be related to the lack of geographical diversity of the sample. Related to place, and coming from an organisation studies lens, a lot of attention was also paid to the effects of Brexit on participants' workplaces (e.g., work relationships, fit with the company and culture). Most participants expressed that they had not experienced changes in their workplace, but only in their private life. This 'non-finding' (or 'significant nothingness' (Oliver, 2022)) could therefore suggest workplaces (especially for skilled workers, often in managerial positions) acted as a buffer to the negative impacts of Brexit. On those points, I therefore encourage future studies on Brexit and more generally on social changes to investigate the (non-)role of places, both rural and urban, but also workplace versus residence.

Furthermore, the novel conceptualisation of human mobility presented as the contribution of this study has encouraged the combination of migration theories both at the micro and meso levels. However, the data collection mostly focused on individual factors being impacted by macro changes. Some social factors have been referred to by participants, but it was not the initial aim of the project to reach for this type of answer. In the present study, meso-level factors have indeed been mentioned by some participants but made their way to the model mostly thanks to existing literature. Future studies thus should pay more attention to how meso-level factors (e.g., families, communities, friend circles, relationship with colleagues) are impacted by macro changes and how changes at the meso level impact back on migratory projects. Future studies need to provide more empirical evidence on how meso-level factors are impacted by macro changes.

Additionally, the novel conceptualisation of migratory mobility has been developed based on the case of French skilled workers in the UK facing Brexit. Yet, it is believed that more diverse migrant groups and different (social, economic, political) macro changes could also benefit from using the conceptualisation of migratory mobility. Further research is therefore encouraged on the applicability and outcome of migratory mobility in different context and different social changes, such as the Trump era, China's takeover of Hong Kong or the COVID-19 global pandemic, for different migrant populations.

Finally, while the strength of this study has been to focus on the ongoing and daily practice of migration, integration, and identification, it would still be interesting to consider what migrants become and how their mobility projects evolve. While efforts have been made

to re-contact participants after a certain period of time and to keep in touch in order to see how mobility projects had evolved, a lot of the data collected focus on migratory intentions, rather than realisation. Future study should consider the combination of migration as daily practice together with a longitudinal approach in order to gain knowledge on how migratory projects are thought of in a day-to-day practice *and* their actual realisation over time. The study thus calls for the combination of a strong processual lens with longitudinal approach, i.e., with a strong processual lens being used at different time periods or at different events.

In line with those three limitations, the study encourages future research to pay more attention to the two following points. First, bigger, more diverse samples are needed to understand the effects of the Brexit referendum on the 3 million European citizens residing in the UK. In particular, attention to male versus female experience has been raised, but furthermore, attention could also be paid to entrepreneurs, whose work and network are directly linked to being able to legally reside and work in the UK. Second, the novel conceptualisation of human mobility highlights how the combination of both micro and meso level factors is central to the experience of migration. Future studies should thus go beyond the micro/meso dichotomy and develop research projects that blend those two levels of analysis, as both are inseparable within the experience of migration. In particular, the notion of accumulation advanced by Erel and Ryan (2019) using Bourdieu could be a way forward as to combine micro-level and meso-level (human, social, psychological) capital in relation to one's mobility. Also, by blending those two levels, the study further encourages consideration of other processes that are related to the experience of migration, beyond integration and identification, such as the shifting and fluidity of networks and family formation, to offer more holistic approaches to what human mobility encompasses.

9.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Overall, the thesis has offered a holistic, migrant idiosyncratic approach to the experience of migration, integration, and identification in times of macro changes. In a world facing a number of hostile environments, it has become of prime importance to understand how migrants themselves navigate and incorporate the changes that define their living conditions. By building on both the sociological and organisational streams of literature as well as data collected during the UK negotiating its exit from the European Union, the thesis has provided

a novel approach to individual mobility that connects micro, meso and macro contexts from a migrant idiosyncratic perspective, through the processes of migration, integration, and identification. It is therefore hoped that the thesis will provide useful guidelines to future research and will encourage scholars to develop migration and/or mobility approaches that reflect its multifaceted and dynamic nature. It is also hoped that this can lead to a better understanding of the experience of migration from an individual perspective in order to develop more adequate and targeted policies supporting migrant populations in times of macro changes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE[21]

Interview guide

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS INTERVIEW, WHICH WILL BE RECORDED, BUT AT ANY TIME YOU CAN ASK ME TO TURN OFF THE RECORDER. ALSO, EVERYTHING WILL BE ANONYMISED, AND THE INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT SECURED. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTION, DON'T HESITATE, NOW, DURING OR AFTER THE INTERVIEW.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (ICE-BREAKER)

- CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY? WHO YOU ARE, WHAT DID YOU STUDY OR WORK AS, WHAT DO YOU DO NOW? (DEMO INFO AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION)
  - AGE, GENDER, FAMILY SITUATION (PARTNER, MARRIED, KIDS), CURRENT LOCATION
  - EDUCATION: LEVEL, TOPIC, PLACE (HOME VS ABROAD)
  - WORK: PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES, LEVEL, LENGTH, PLACE, TYPE OF CONTRACT

MIGRATION

- HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN LIVING IN THE UK SO FAR? WHEN DID YOU ARRIVE? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE UK WHEN YOU ARRIVED? (LENGTH OF MIGRATION, BRITISH SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT AT THAT TIME)
- HAVE YOU EVER LIVED IN ANOTHER FOREIGN COUNTRY BEFORE THE UK? (PREVIOUS MIGRATION?)
- HOW DID YOU COME TO LIVE IN THE UK? (MIGRATION PROCESS, DECISION MAKING)
- WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE LEAVING FRANCE? (PUSH FACTORS)
- WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE COMING TO THE UK? (PULL FACTORS)

INTEGRATION

- HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LIFE IN THE UK? ARE THERE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT THAN EXPECTED? (INTEGRATION, ADAPTATION)
- HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR **WORK** IN THE UK? (WORK INTEGRATION, WORKING WITH LOCALS OR EU)
  - INTEREST? WORK-LIFE BALANCE?
  - SALARY? MORE OR LESS THAN IN FRANCE? PURCHASING POWER AND LIFESTYLE? BETTER OR WORSE THAN IN FRANCE? BREADWINNER?
  - WHO DO YOU WORK WITH? (UK/EU/INTERNATIONAL)
  - ANY PLANS FOR RETIREMENT YET? PUTTING MONEY ASIDE IN FRANCE OR IN THE UK? WHAT ABOUT THE PENSION SCHEME, IS THERE ONE AT YOUR WORK? DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO IT? HOW MUCH? WHY?
- HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR **SOCIAL LIFE**?
  - WHO DO YOU MOSTLY HANG OUT WITH? WHERE DO YOU GO? (INTEGRATION WITH LOCALS / COMMUNITIES, ADAPTATION TO CULTURE)
- HOW IS YOUR **FAMILY** DEALING WITH LIVING IN THE UK?
  - CHILD'S EDUCATION? (BRITISH OR FRENCH SCHOOL)
  - PARTNER'S WORK? PARTNER'S IDENTITY? (FAMILY INTEGRATION)
  - FAMILY BACK HOME?

1

[21] The interviews were conducted in French: participants and interviewer were French native speakers. The interview guide has been translated by the interviewer for the purpose of the thesis.

- What about **housing**? (embeddedness)
  - do you rent, or have you bought a house here?
  - Do you have a mortgage in the UK?
- Do you have any other loan in the UK (student, mortgage, car)?
- Would you say you participate in the British life? How? (ex. voting, union, any association, civic involvement)

Transnationalism

- Regarding your life back in France, would you say you keep any form of contact there? With whom, and how? Friends / Family / Working network? (social network)
- Do you sometimes go back to France? On which occasions, how often? Can you give me examples? (transnational journeys)
- What about your parents, which relationship / form of contact do you keep with them? (parents' caring?)
- Has it happened that you sent money to people in France? Why, which occasion? Often? (remittances)
  - Are you sending money to your parents? To repay them for something or to support them?
  - Do you send money to yourself on a French account?
  - Do you have a loan in France (students, car, mortgage)? How are you reimbursing it, from which account (€/£)?
- Do you sometimes bring French 'culture' or traditions into the UK?
  - Bringing food or clothes
  - Watching French movies/TV, listening to French music/radio, following French sport, French media? Which TV cable / satellite do you have (British or international)? Cooking 'French'? Did you celebrate the World Cup? How? With whom?
  - Do you celebrate any French holidays or cultural events?
- Would you say you participate in the French life? How, why? Can you give me examples?
  - Do you vote?
  - Do you still have a French bank account? When/What do you use it for?
  - Do you have properties there?
- What about the healthcare system, do you use the NHS, la sécurité sociale or both? Why? Which occasions? Do you have a European Health Insurance Card, do you use it?
- How would you relate to the European freedom of movement? Is it relevant to you or your work? How, why?

Identity

- How would you describe your current sitaution / position in terms of identity? How would you describe yourself? What about the terms 'migrant' or 'EU citizen' or 'expat', how do you feel or relate to it? (self-dentification)
  - Is there any context or places where you feel yourself more 'migrant', or 'EU worker' than other time/place?
  - Has Brexit made you change the perception of yourself?
- What about British people, do you think they agree with you being (...) (expat/migrants etc) or would they rather define you another way? (categorisation)

- What about other EU migrants? Do they feel the same way as you, or are there other views on what it means to be living abroad? (community identification, potentially challenge inconsistencies, potential snowball effect - new participants)
- How would you describe the way European workers have been defined in the British politics or in the media? How do you feel about that? (reaction to media's / politician's discourses)
- What about the EU citizenship, I assumed it was very relevant to you when you arrived, right?
  - How relevant is the EU citizenship to you today? Do you still relate to it? Can you give me examples?
  - Do you feel there is a French/British discrepancy, divide or rivalry? Do you think it has always been here? Has it increased since Brexit? Can you give me examples?

Changes brought by the Brexit context

I would like now to move on to the reasons that brought me here, namely Brexit.

- **Do you remember the campaign prior the referendum?**
  - Where were you, what were you doing?
  - How did you feel during the campaign? Can you give me examples?
  - Did you encounter any judgemental remarks during the campaign?
  - What did you think of the media / media coverage at that time? Any specific memory?

- **What about when the leave-side won in June 2016?**
  - Where were you, what were you doing, what was your 'status' at the time of the referendum? (situation when referendum happened)
  - What were your plans at that time? Have your plans changed since then because of Brexit?
  - How did you feel when the leave-side won?

- **How do you feel today, at the eve of the official Brexit deadline?**
  - Do you (still) feel (xx)?
  - Which changes have you noticed?
  - In terms of everyday life, conversation with various people, at work, in your neighbourhood, have you noticed changes? Can you give me examples?
  - What about your relationship with British people? Have you experienced any racism, hate or anything similar in relation to Brexit (as can be read in the media)?
  - Have you noticed changes in the way you see yourself? Or the way you are perceived by others?
    - Do you feel more or less French/European? Is there one more relevant to you today? Why? Can you give me examples?
  - What do you think of the media today, and their coverage, providing information regarding Brexit?
  - How do you react to the value of the Pound going down since the referendum? How do you face it?

- **So, from those points, where do you see yourself in the future in response to Brexit?**
  - Where do you see yourself living? Why?
    - If away from the UK: Where and Why? (transnational / multi-destination migrant)
    - If staying in the UK: under which conditions (ex. visa vs citizenship)? What are you thoughts on the settlement status? Have you applied yet? Why (not)? Have you considered applying for the British citizenship? Why (not)? Do you know you have to pay approx. £1200 for the British citizenship? Have you considered getting married to your British partner to have a quicker access to the British citizenship? (renegotiation of migration following policy)
  - What about your plans, the ones you had prior Brexit, are they still up-to-date or have you cancelled/modified them? Why? Any new plans? (housing, working, family)

Ending

- Would you like to add anything regarding what you've just told me? Your migration, your integration, your relationship with France, Brexit or the way you feel about all of that?
- Do you have any question?
- Is it ok if I recontact you in some months to know how things have evolved for you?

Thank you for having taken part in this interview. All shared information will be anonymised and kept secured. If you have any questions or remarks, don't hesitate to contact me: suzanne.couloigner@nottingham.ac.uk

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Interviews 1 and 4 not considered as participants arrived after the Brexit referendum

Interview 28 not considered as participant does not fit the 'skilled' definition used in this project (no university degree, not in a position requiring this level of education)

Participants 29 and 30 interviewed while they had already returned to France

Participant	Gender	Age	Level of Education	Arrival in the UK	Place of residence	Relationship Status (partner's country of origin)	Children
Interview 1 Marc	Male	26	MSc	2018	East Midlands Urban	Single	No
Interview 2 Juliette	Female	25	MSc	2014	London Urban	Couple (UK)	No
Interview 3 Paul	Male	27	MSc	2015	East Midlands Urban	Couple (UK)	No
Interview 4 Pierre	Male	25	MSc	2018	West Midlands Rural	Single	No
Interview 5 Agnès	Female	50	No	1987	East Midlands Rural	Married (UK)	Yes
Interview 6 Laurence	Female	57	No	1984	East Midlands Rural	Married (UK)	Yes
Interview 7 Marion	Female	30	PhD	2010	East Midlands Urban	Couple (UK)	No
Interview 8 Veronique	Female	58	MSc	1999	West Midlands Urban	Married (UK)	No
Interview 9 Guillaume	Male	23	N/A	2014	East Midlands Urban	Single	No

Interview 10 Chloé	Female	28	PhD	2014	East Midlands Urban	Couple (Italy)	No
Interview 11 Berenice	Female	30	PhD	2008	East Midlands Urban	Couple (UK)	No
Interview 12 Jane	Female	28	MSc	2014	West Midlands Urban	Fiancé (UK)	No
Interview 13 Laure	Female	35	MSc	2015	East Midlands Urban	Married (France)	Yes
Interview 14 Emma	Female	34	BTS	2005	East Midlands Rural	Married (France)	No
Interview 15 Dominique	Female	45	PhD	2013	London Urban	Married (Bangladesh)	Yes
Interview 16 Jean-Pierre	Male	68	MSc	1980	West Midlands (n/a)	Married (UK)	No
Interview 17 Lucas	Male	26	BTS	2015	South East England Urban	Couple (New-Zealand / Holland)	No
Interview 18 Monique	Female	55	PhD	1995	West Midlands Urban	Single	No
Interview 19 Fabienne	Female	45	N/A	1999	East Midlands Rural	Married (UK)	Yes
Interview 20 Laureline	Female	30	PhD	2004	East Midlands Urban	Married (Iran)	No
Interview 21 Nicole	Female	65	PhD	2007	East Midlands Urban	Married (Sri Lanka)	No
Interview 22 Etienne	Male	40	MSc	2003	East of England Rural	Couple (Cyprus)	No
Interview 23 Camille	Female	64	MSc	1981	East Midlands Rural	Married (UK)	Yes
Interview 24 Murielle	Female	30	MSc	2007	East Midlands Urban	Married (Pakistan)	Yes
Interview 25 Joelle	Female	50	PhD	2002	East Midlands Urban	Divorced	Yes

Interview 26 Maurine	Female	32	MSc	2012	East Midlands Urban	Single	No
Interview 27 Mathieu	Male	43	MSc	2006	North West Urban	Single	No
Interview 28 Clemence	Female	35	No	2014	East Midlands Urban	Couple (UK)	No
Interview 29 Samuel	Male	50	N/A	1996 (return to France in 2017)	(London Urban)	Married (Japan)	No
Interview 30 Nathalie	Female	45	MSc	1994 (return to France in 2017)	(South East England Urban)	Married (UK)	Yes
Interview 31 Maryline	Female	35	MSc	2005	South West England Rural	Married (UK)	Yes
Interview 32 Sandra	Female	30	MSc	2009	London Urban	Married (France)	Yes
Interview 33 Jeanne	Female	50	BA	2010	North East Rural	Married (UK)	Yes
Interview 34 Patricia	Female	35	BA	2006	London Urban	Single	No
Interview 35 Maeva	Female	58	MSc	1984	London Urban	Married (France)	Yes

Summary (32 interviews)	**Male: 7 Female: 25**	**Age: 23-68 Average: 42**	**N/A or No: 5 BTS: 2 BA: 2 MSc: 15 PhD: 8**	**Arrival: 1980-2015 Average: 2003**	**Couple / Married: 26 Single / Divorced: 6**	**With children: 13 No children: 19**

Migratory decisions post-interviews

Participant 3 left the UK to go to the US with his British girlfriend.

Participant 26 left the UK to go to Canada. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she could not enter Canada, and ultimately returned to the UK.

Participant 31 left the UK to go to Germany with her British husband and their two children.

APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Nottingham University Business School
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Information for Research Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research project. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you may change your mind about being involved in the research at any time, and without giving a reason.

This information sheet is designed to give you full details of the research project, its goals, the research team, the research funder, and what you will be asked to do as part of the research. If you have any questions that are not answered by this information sheet, please ask.

This research has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by the Nottingham University Business School Research Ethics Committee.

What is the research project called?

Renegotiating migration in political transformation: the case of French skilled migrants in Brexit Britain

Who is carrying out the research?

PhD student Suzanne Couloigner, from Nottingham University Business School. PhD in Business and Management Supervisors: Dr. Ziming Cai and Dr. Davide Pero Awarded scholarships for this project: Nottingham University Business School Scholarship and Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship for Research Excellence (EU)

What is the research about?

This research project will look at how Brexit influences and challenges the life of French skilled migrants in the UK. It will try to understand how identity and self-identity, family, work, residence, migration, integration, social relationships (with locals and other EU migrants) are challenged by Brexit itself, the policy, but also by various discourses on media and in the public settings. The focus will be on the individuals, their families, their communities in the UK but also their relationships back to France. Attention will be paid to gender and ethnic issues. The aim of the project is to understand how a policy like Brexit challenges migrants' life (migration, integration) and ultimately make policy makers aware of it.

What groups of people have been asked to take part, and why?

You have been asked to take part in this study because: - you are a French migrant in the UK (i.e. you have the French citizenship and your principal residence is in the UK) - you have a university degree, or you are working in a position requiring this level of education - you have arrived in the UK at least 6 months before the Brexit referendum (i.e. before January 2016) You therefore fit the population on which this project is focusing and that is why you have been asked to take part in this project.

What will research participants be asked to do?

You will be asked to answer a number of questions during an interview (face to face or on Skype, based on what is more convenient for you). The interview is meant to last approximately 1h. The interviews will be conducted in French and will be recorded with a voice recorder.

There is a priori no harm for you to participate in this study, however, I am ready to stop the interview and/or the recorder whenever you would like to. You have also the opportunity to withdraw from this research anytime you want, without justification.

You will not be paid or receive any compensation since the interviews are based on voluntary participation only. If you agree, and if needed, I will contact you to conduct a second interview a few months after the first one, still individually, on the same topics.

Examples of interview questions: how did you come to live in the UK? How would you describe your life in the UK? Do you go sometimes back to France? How did you feel when the referendum pro-Brexit happened?

Topics of interview questions: identity and self-identity, family, work, residence, migration, integration, social relationships (with locals and other EU migrants, both in the UK and back in France)

Also, various casual conversations on the same topic will happen, however, the conversations will not be recorded. Those conversations are aimed at gaining some background about the topic through observation and conversation. The idea is to discuss the topic of Brexit in a more casual settings, potentially with other people, not necessarily participants, without interview guide or recorder, and therefore to be more natural and spontaneous. If I wish to take note and/or mention some of your comments in my work, I will ask for your consent. Again, you can refuse and/or withdraw from the project at any time.

For example: 'your comment on XXX was really interesting, is it ok if I take note of it / mention it in my work?'

What will happen to the information I provide?

The records made from the interviews will be transcribed and made anonymous (through changing your name, and other demographic information if needed or asked to). Both the records and the transcriptions will be kept on my personal university OneDrive, of which I am the only one to have the password.

Notes from conversation / observation that will have been taken will as well be stored on my personal OneDrive and made anonymous.

Both those forms of data will be used to develop themes about how Brexit influences and challenges French migrants' lives. Direct quotation might be used in my PhD thesis; however, anonymity will be kept (through changing names)

What will be the outputs of the research?

This research project is part of my PhD and so is done in order to write my PhD thesis.

Potential conference papers and/or articles might be developed from this thesis.

Contact details

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Complaint procedure

If you wish to complain about the way in which the research is being conducted or have any concerns about the research, then in the first instance please contact the supervisors.

Or contact the School's Research Ethics Officer:

Chris Carter
Nottingham University Business School
Jubilee Campus
Nottingham NG8 1BB
Phone: 0115 84 66062
Email: christopher.carter@nottingham.ac.uk

APPENDIX 4: STAGES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Different stages of thematic analysis: development of codes (1st order) and themes (2nd order)

Table 1. Phases 1 and 2: open coding and initial regrouping

Development of open codes from informants' terms (non-exhaustive list) and regrouping of the initial open codes, leading to over 60 open codes and 8 regrouping codes

Phase 1: open coding	Phase 2: regrouping of the codes
I left France because … - I was attracted by Britain (cultural aspect) - I wanted / needed to learn English - I wanted an international experience - I studied abroad in the UK / Erasmus - I found work in the UK / got a job opportunity - I fell in love / I got married	I wanted to be abroad
I left France because … - I wanted to leave my parents' home - I didn't like what I studied in France / the way I was taught in France - I didn't like life in Paris - There was no job in France at that time	I was tired of France
In France I … - I'm in contact with my family - I still have friends there - I lost friends in the long term - I have a bank account - I go there regularly - I bring food / books / clothes back from there - I go to the dentist / GP (medical appointments)	I have / do things in double

Since Brexit … - I don't know what I will do (in terms of paperwork) - The comprehensive health insurance … I've never heard of it - I read a lot the news - I avoid the news - I made a French passport for my kids - I went to various Brexit protests - I don't want their nationality (i.e. British) - I don't want to hear about the settlement status - My application for the permanent residence had been rejected - I have applied for the settlement status because it was free - I meet French people	What I do since Brexit
Since Brexit … - I have had racist remarks - I feel like a minority - People stare at me when I speak French - We are treated like migrants - We're going to lose money - The economy is bad - At work it's a bit difficult right now - I don't think I will invest in the UK anymore - I don't know how it will impact my pension - I am married to a British man, but I am not more protected	Things have changed for me since Brexit

Since Brexit … - I don't know what I will do (in terms of paperwork) - The comprehensive health insurance … I've never heard of it - I read a lot the news - I avoid the news - I made a French passport for my kids - I went to various Brexit protests - I don't want their nationality (i.e. British) - I don't want to hear about the settlement status - My application for the permanent residence had been rejected - I have applied for the settlement status because it was free - I meet French people	What I do since Brexit
Since Brexit … - I have had racist remarks - I feel like a minority - People stare at me when I speak French - We are treated like migrants - We're going to lose money - The economy is bad - At work it's a bit difficult right now - I don't think I will invest in the UK anymore - I don't know how it will impact my pension - I am married to a British man, but I am not more protected	Things have changed for me since Brexit
Since Brexit … - I don't want to stay in the UK / I will evolve somewhere else - It was time to go - I thought I would have stayed longer in the UK - My life is here / my home is here - I am not leaving - I belong to the EU - I don't know how the settlement status works - I think Europe will punish the UK for Brexit - I am scared they will deport me	What I am planning to do

Table 2. Phase 3: development of the themes

Migration, integration and identity were a priori themes confirmed by the data; sensemaking was developed as a new theme inductively.
In this phase, I noticed how the initial codes 'things have changed for me since Brexit', 'what I do since Brexit' and 'what I am planning to do' could go in almost all my themes. In the subsequent phase, I therefore rearranged those initial codes and split them into various codes so that 'change', 'new actions' and 'future actions' would be in all my four themes.

Codes from Phase 1 (non-exhaustive list)	Codes from phase 2	Phase 3: initial themes development
- I wanted an international experience - I wanted to learn English - I fell in love	- I wanted to be abroad	Migration
- I wanted to leave my parents' home - I didn't like life in Paris	- I was tired of France	
- It was time to go back (to France)	- Things have change for me (migration aspect)	
- I am here at home - I am not leaving	- What I do since Brexit (migration aspect)	
- I don't want to stay in the UK - I will evolve somewhere else - I thought I would have stayed longer in the UK	- What I am planning to do (migration aspect)	
- I have remained attached to France	- I have / do things in double	Integration
- I have had racist remarks - At work it's a bit difficult right now - There is a sort of xenophobia - British people are so different - People started to loosen up	- Things have change for me (integration aspect)	

- I meet French people	- What I do since Brexit (integration aspect)	
	- What I am planning to do (integration aspect)	
- I feel like a minority - I see myself as an expatriate - I am lucky to be white	- Things have change for me (identity aspect)	Identity
- My application for the permanent residence had been rejected - I have applied for the settlement status because it was free - I am waiting	- What I do since Brexit (identity aspect)	
- I don't want their nationality (i.e. British) - I don't want to hear about the settlement status	- What I am planning to do (identity aspect)	
- The campaign was just lies - Brexit had nothing to do with Europe	- My view on the campaign and Brexit	Sensemaking
- I didn't think it would happen / I was shocked - I was so angry - I really took it personally - I am worried - I am scared - I am sad / I had been crying - I am lost	- My feelings about Brexit	
- I read a lot the news - I avoid the news - We're going to lose money - I had some remarks	- Things have changed for me (everyday life, beyond migration, integration and identity)	

Table 3. Phase 4: coding re-organisation in relation to initial themes developed

I re-arranged my main codes in relation to the themes developed and did some extra open coding, leading to 13 codes (1st order) and 4 themes (2nd order)

Open coding / extract from participants	Regrouping of codes	Themes
- I wanted an international experience - I wanted to learn English - I fell in love	- I wanted to be abroad	Migration
- I wanted to leave my parents' home - I didn't like life in Paris	- I was tired of France	
- It was time to go back (to France)	- It was time to go back (to France)	
- I don't want to stay in the UK - I will evolve somewhere else - I thought I would have stayed longer in the UK	- I will evolve somewhere else	
- I am here at home - I am not leaving	- I am here at home, we are established	
- I have / do things in double - I have remained attached to France - My friends all have different nationalities - I meet French people	- My life is very international	Integration
- I have had racist remarks - At work it's a bit difficult right now - There is a sort of xenophobia - British people are so different - People started to loosen up - England is a country both very near and very far	- British people / England is different	
- I feel like a minority - I don't want their nationality (British) - I am happy to be European	- My feelings about who I am now	Identity

- I see myself as an expatriate - Migrant is a bit extreme - We are not a problem - I am here at home - I am lucky to be white	- How I see myself	
- My application for the permanent residence had been rejected - I have applied for the settlement status because it was free - I am waiting - I don't want to hear about the settlement status	- My new status	
- The campaign was just lies - Brexit had nothing to do with Europe - I read a lot the news - I watched all the debates	- My view on the campaign and Brexit	Sensemaking
- I didn't think it would happen / I was shocked - I was so angry - I really took it personally - I am worried - I am scared - I am sad / I had been crying - I am lost	- My feeling about Brexit	
- We're going to lose money - I had some remarks - There is a sort of xenophobia - We're in stand-by	- Things have changed for me since Brexit	

Table 4. Phases 5: adjusting themes and organising aggregate dimensions

Re-organisation of the themes into aggregate dimensions in order to develop 2nd order themes with more precision. Migration and integration have been grouped together and sensemaking has been moved up for a clearer presentation of the data and the overall analysis. I re-arranged 1st order codes accordingly.
The final coding structure consists of 34 codes (1st order) and 8 themes (2nd order), split within 3 aggregate dimensions. This final coding structure is more precise than the structure at stage 4.

1st order codes	2nd order themes	Aggregate dimensions
- I read a lot the news; I watched all the debates; I'm having a hard time with the BBC - The campaign was just lies; it has nothing to do with Europe - News like that they are neither verified, nor verifiable; their thing is not moving on	Knowledgeable about Brexit	Making sense of Brexit
- I was shocked; it was really a hit in the heart; it slapped me in the face - I was in tears; it was the lowest moment of my stay in the UK - I can't get rid of this anger; I was a bit pissed off - I don't know what is going to happen; I am scared; I panicked - It's time to decide and move on; I'm waiting for it to resolve itself	Evolving feelings	
- We're going to lose money; I am more reluctant to buy - I had some remarks; I work with people who all have voted Leave - There is a sort of xenophobia; a black sheet had descended upon us - We're a bit in stand-by; the atmosphere has changed	Perception of change	
- I am French / European, it's a personal satisfaction; France is so beautiful - I feel like a minority; I feel separated - I don't want the (British) nationality; other people keep reminding me that I am French	Feelings and emotions	(Re)constructing identities

- Being French is a bit dreamy - I see myself as an expatriate; I am surrounded by so many expatriates - Migrant is a bit extreme; we are migrants somehow - We are not necessarily a problem; I paid taxes - I am here at home; I belong - I am lucky to be white; I can be invisible	Reposition, hierarchy and belonging	
- I don't know what will happen - I am waiting; at some point I gave up - I didn't look it up; I don't want to know anything; I've absolutely done nothing - I applied because it was free; I had nothing to lose	(New) legal status and documentation	
- I wanted to be abroad; I was tired of France; I did an Erasmus - It was the moment to go; Brexit was a good reason to go back - I will evolve somewhere else; I'm going to leave England; I don't think I will spend all my life here - I am here at home, we are established; home is here	Migration: should I stay, or should I go now?	Migrating and integrating
- I have / do things in double; I have remained attached to France - My friends all have different nationalities; I meet French people - At work it's a bit difficult right now; people started to loosen up - British people are so different; England is a country both very near and very far - What the hell am I doing in this country?; I am part of the furniture	Integration: navigating a multicultural lifestyle in a neo-assimilationist country	