

THE REUNIFICATION OF BRITTANY : ECONOMIC STAKES

Nowadays, the whole Brittany's economy - 5 departments meaning - stays far below its full capacity for creating wealth, innovation, sustainable development, foreign trade, when considering its many assets. One of the main reasons for that lack of competitiveness is the separation of the Loire-Atlantique department from the other breton departments .

It can obviously be noted with the traditional dynamic business : sea, food-processing techniques, biotechnologies, tourism, exports... The remarkable advantages of the international fame of Brittany - as well as the

very strong mix between culture and economy - has enabled the tremendous growth of the brand name "Produced in Brittany".

Loire-Atlantique greets the proposed products of this affiliation. Nevertheless, the local firms don't fully take advantage of it, because of a jammed identity, owing to the regional ambiguity.

Furthermore, the administrative regional split has slackened the relationship between the businessmen of the Brittany region and those of the Loire-Atlantique department.

BRITTANY'S STRATEGIC BUSINESS FIELDS AND ASSETS (5 DEPARTMENTS)

1 Sea

Main advantage : an exceptional geographical situation

2 Food-processing

Advantages : high standard expertise, as much in agriculture as in industry, very favourable climate and natural environment.

3 New information and communication technologies (NTIC)

Assets : a pioneer role in telecommunications and high standard maintained abilities in new "Images and Networks" technologies, first rate engineers schools.

4 Biotechnologies

Advantages: a remarkable research and development field for plants (sea weeds and halieutics)

5 Car / shipbuilding / aircraft industry

Assets : experience and technical skilled workforce.

6 Brittany's worldwide fame

7 Brittany's very strong sense of identity

Foundation of tight links between economy and culture, twinned with a very developed business network

8 A very important and active existing breton diaspora

IS BRITTANY IN A POSITION TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE FROM ITS ASSETS ?

... The answer is clearly «NO», because of the split of Loire-Atlantique from the other Breton departments, separation that is added to the insufficient financial means of the French regions.

Sea

Today, the dynamic of a cruelly missing to France **large maritime region, from Nantes to Saint-Malo, is greatly crushed.**

We can quote **many failures as a waste of efficiency** :

- the "European Maritime Safety Agency" hasn't been created in Nantes, despite its maritime location, for lack of a determined joint support of administrative Brittany and Loire-Atlantique

- the plan for a sea highway from Montoir-de-Bretagne to Bilbao, isn't moving on, because of an obviously missing backing of the Administrative Brittany towards that goal

- **the "Center of Competitiveness for marine excellence", that has been posted to the administrative Brittany, excludes the Loire-Atlantique. It follows a huge potential loss.**

- fishing problems are more complicated to solve because of a lack of coordination.

The reunification of Brittany would strengthen its worldwide position.

At a time, when shipping and marine transport industry provides 85 % of goods trade, the **Montoir-de-Bretagne maritime terminal**, in Loire-Atlantique, most important regional port, could assume **a better commitment** for developing in a united Brittany.

On the whole, on one side, a four departments administrative Brittany exists without having a great commercial port, whereas, on the other side, **Loire-Atlantique is largely concerned by sea, despite being part of an administrative region, with feeble commitment in that respect** (apart from the Vendée department). La Sarthe department only trades with the Basse-Seine harbours, especially.

A reunited Brittany would put an end to all the previously quoted weakness (or would at least diminish it). **The «Center of Competitiveness for marine excellence» would deal with a much improved and adapted size.**

Food processing

The Center of Competitive Excellence for food processing (Pôle de Compétitivité Agro Alimentaire) has been posted to the administrative Brittany by the French state. "Valorial" has been created for this purpose. At the same time, another center, with the same ambition, named "West" (sic) was founded in Nantes... This pole also groups together several companies of administrative Brittany. It is clear that **this duality is counterproductive**, even if relations have become established between both poles. The stakes in administrative Brittany and in Loire-Atlantique are obviously the same and there also, reunited Brittany would give more strength and means to this pole.

NTIC

New information and communication technologies

• **The center of competitive excellence "images and networks", posted to administrative Brittany also pushes aside the Loire-Atlantique.** It moreover results from it an evident loss, in spite of some connections established between companies of Loire-Atlantique and Mayenne departments.

• The region "Pays de la Loire" (and thus the Loire-Atlantique department) went out of the MEITO (House of Electronics, computing and western on-line data processing), the efficiency of which being nevertheless very appreciated by the companies members. Today the persons in charge of the MEITO would like to retie contacts with the companies of Loire-Atlantique.

The problem would be solved at once in a reunited Brittany.

Biotechnologies

The try of coordinating administrative Brittany's and Loire-Atlantique's research centers is not very decisive, even if "Genopole Ouest" contributes to a certain link.

A cruel lack of a coordinated project between the four departments Brittany and Loire-Atlantique makes us lose an international competitiveness.

It is particularly illustrated by the **marine biotechnologies concerning micro-seaweeds**.

Micro-seaweeds present a unique potential (medicines, oil, food-processing industry, pollution cleaning up, etc...) and an expertise, amongst the best in the world, exists in Nantes (IFREMER). On the other hand, the main part of the professionals who could run this, still relatively virgin scientific potential, are dwelling in administrative Brittany. The lack of coordination between these two complementary entities, but also structured project, carried on by a unique region, is going to make lose France the possibility of being leader in a very new domain with a high added value economic development.

Furthermore, five departments Brittany is one of the rare regions to present on its territory, at once, quality universities, research units, INSERM, CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research), INRA, but also the "IFREMER" organization and a veterinary school, it, on a territory which has a strong economic performance concerning sea and agriculture. Even there, **the present economic and scientific potential must be coordinated and directed by a strong and coherent region. At present, the administrative split breaks any dynamism** allowing this logic, because every administrative region (Brittany and Pays de la Loire) structures its own projects, without acting jointly with its neighbour, even rather in competition, as in the project micro-seaweeds.

Finally, it is necessary to know that, approximately 85 % of the scientific publications, published by Pays de la Loire and Brittany altogether, are concentrated on three universities, Nantes, Rennes and Brest... Brittany thus has the internal means towards its own ambitions. We remain persuaded that the particular spirit which exists in Brittany, where the business managers are eager for innovation and particularly reactive, should allow **unified Brittany to be one of the major poles of biotechnologies in France**. The stakes are very important for this territory, whose the so successful agriculture needs a second breath, whose the marine resources ecological problems (nitrates, oil spills) require an appropriate answer.

Car, shipbuilding and aircraft industry

The business centres of excellence are well established and the subcontracting passes beyond the administrative borders but the corresponding competitiveness poles, "automobile" and "composite materials", would certainly gain a better fluidity and efficiency in an only one region.

Energy

Electric and gas supply for Brittany includes obviously the Loire-Atlantique department. **To speak about the safety for Brittany's electricity and natural gas**

supply, Loire-Atlantique being put apart, has no sense. In particular, the Cordemais power plant and the 400 000 volts Cordemais-La Martyre (near Brest) power line and the Montoir-de-Bretagne gas terminal, impact directly on the supply and safety for whole Brittany. The renewable energies amongst which, wind turbines, experiments for marine energy (marine turbines) at Paimpol, Bénodet and Le Croisic, project of seaweeds exploitation to produce some energy in Saint-Nazaire, would gain to be well coordinated and integrated into a global energy plan, on the suiting regional scale : reunited Brittany.

Tourism

The "department de **Loire-Atlantique**" chose to lean on the world-famous "**Brittany**" in its promotion. It is true that its heritage (Dukes of Brittany's restored castle, Dobrée Museum, Clisson and Ancenis castles, City of Guérande, St-Nazaire) set up an excellent front door for the whole of Brittany.

The **project of classification** of "Nantes-Saint-Nazaire-Estuaire de la Loire" in conformance with the UNESCO world heritage would have obviously better chances to succeed if Nantes and Saint-Nazaire leaned clearly on their history, their true identity and their Breton heritages.

Networks and institutions

One knows that an economy is all the stronger as it leans on networks. Those of the regional associations integrate generally the whole of Brittany; it is the case of the Locarn Institute, the Forward Planning Brittany, the Club des 30, the Breton Economic Diaspora, the Cultural Council, the Cultural Institute, the Fest-Yves...

On the other hand, the bodies of national and institutional character are held in administrative division; it is the case of the trade and labour union organizations (CRCI, MEDEF, CJD, Professional Chambers, State Bodies).

It results from it an **important loss of exchanges** between Loire-Atlantique and the other Breton departments. A reunited Brittany would end this penalizing split.

Economy and culture

These **two domains strengthen mutually**, particularly in our region where the cultural dimension is very strong. The association "Product of Brittany" (see the annexed document), Breton Economic Diaspora, Institute of Locarn, Forward Planning Brittany, for example, lean on that relation. Unfortunately for Loire-Atlantique, and in spite of good progresses, ambiguity remains and comes to disturb the potential partners who do not indeed understand the Loire-Atlantique positioning, especially on the inter-

national stage. All the European territories which succeed currently, owns in their successful alchemy, a strong identity ingredient : Flanders, Catalonia, Basque Country, Bavaria, Scotland... Brittany has this quality and Loire-Atlantique has to gain everything by taking advantage of this image.

Breton economic Diaspora

The Breton Diaspora, by far the most important of France, constitutes an economic strength for the region. Networks such as "DEB" (Breton Economic Diaspora) and "BZH NETWORK" are very active. Loire-Atlantique also benefits from these Breton networks, in spite of some communication difficulties relating to its "unnatural" administrative regional membership.

The legibility of the region Brittany

The parameter of legibility has a great importance. It influences directly the fame of a region as for its international recognition.

Brittany is outstandingly placed on this plan, what is not the case of the identity "Pays de la Loire". This last one is only adding ambiguity and confusion with regard to the real "Pays de la Loire", those which constitute the "Val de Loire" (Orléans-Blois-Tours-Angers).

This lack of legibility implies the priority name "Brittany" for our region.

Inter-regional cooperation

One could think of making up for the multiple noticed weaknesses by a good inter-regional cooperation. Obviously, **the numerous attempts proved themselves little effective, because of a lack of ability for reacting and motivation, causing frequent blockings, even sterile competitions**. A unique and dynamic regional management is still missing.

Infrastructures

Brittany's partition partially explains the lack of improvement as for the archaic Rennes-Nantes railway connection. It is widely responsible for the delay, taken to realize the Nantes-Rennes motorway, which was the Breton roads plan last section to be set up (1991), while it is an essential link, connecting Great-Britain to Spain !

The future TGV railway line plan was not subjected to a dialogue and favoured Rennes to the detriment of Nan-

tes. It didn't take into account the planned "Notre-Dame des Landes airport" servicing nor the urgency for creating a Rennes-Nantes fast railway link.

The partition strenghtened the rivalry between Rennes and Nantes

As they each became Capital of Region, they tended to strengthen the administrative split effects, rather than limiting it, by establishing a real coordination. The delay in the modernization of their rail and road connections is better explained so, when considering both cities fears to opening towards the competition of each other one.

The administrative reunification would favour a cooperation of both cities, which are more complementary than competitors and which, because they are distant from only 100 km, can form a bipolar metropolis, offering a high-level services range for Brittany and nearby departments. This coupling would strengthen them in a win-win play. It is the indispensable condition to provide Brittany - and the West part of France- with a European dimension metropolis that will work in network with Brest, Saint-Nazaire, Quimper, Lorient, Vannes, Saint-Malo and Saint-Brieuc.

Sustainable development : a principle calling for reunification

The sustainable development forces us to judge our daily habits, our social and economic organization, our plans for future evolution, by measuring their long term compatibility, according to the Planet Earth's potential. The region is the best scale to elaborate a strategy and coordinate the local actions.

Which region ? As, obviously, the Breton peninsula forms a natural and human unit, it is the required geographical frame for reflection and action. This frame corresponds with Brittany, in its thousand-year-old dimension, with its five "departments", one of which the "Loire-Atlantique".

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