

IPSE – IDENTITÉS POLITIQUES SOCIÉTÉS ESPACES (ED.)

## **Doing Identity in Luxembourg**

Subjective Appropriations – Institutional Attributions –

Socio-Cultural Milieus

〔transcript〕

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individual and collective level, which is being disregarded within the political identity option in question<sup>90</sup>. Accordingly, a permanent oscillation can be discerned in the interaction between the attributions and appropriations considered, because the institutional government aspiration in the sense of Foucault (here: GIMB) and the everyday-cultural aspiration for self-government (here: the members of the resident population we interviewed) partially overlap, thus allowing the existence of a permanent and fundamentally ambivalent variation. The ethical appropriation of the 'good' food ideal can be in harmony with the moral, intentional and correcting logic of the political attributions (*identitary adaptation*), deviate from them (*identitary opposition*) or follow completely different patterns (*identitary independence*). It is precisely this dynamism that constitutes the significance of the selected case example in terms of governmentality<sup>91</sup> research and for investigating identity-related construction processes.

## 7.4 CROSS-BORDER WORKERS AS FAMILIAR STRANGERS

Given its development and significance for Luxembourg society, the cross-border worker phenomenon suggested itself as a further illustrative example of processes of identity formation. With a total of 147,400 men and women (2009) commuting daily from Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany), from Lorraine (France) or Wallonia (Belgium) to Luxembourg to work, the Grand Duchy has the highest number of cross-border workers in the EU 27 (European Commission 2009: 18-20)<sup>92</sup>. Half of them are French, while Belgians and Germans each account for one quarter. Their total number has multiplied six-fold since the end of the 1980s and in 1995 there were for the first time more cross-border workers than resident foreigners working in the Grand Duchy while in 2001 the number of cross-border workers was greater than that of employees holding Luxembourgish citizenship. Today (2009), Luxembourgers make up 29 % of the workforce, resident foreigners 27 % and cross-border workers 44 %. Aside from soft factors (adequate jobs, career

**90** | However because the GIMB was designed as a long-term and social "process" and not as a "project" with immediate tangible effects (Wagener 2008: 25), this kind of synergy would not be impossible in future.

**91** | Following Foucault (1993; 1984b; 1983; 1982b; 1978; see also Bröckling/Krasmann/Lemke [2001] this neologism is made up of "gouverner" (to govern) and "mentalité" (mentality) and permits a simultaneous and relational reading in collective and individual forms of identity governance in the form of moral and political rationalities as well as of ethical and individual approaches to the self. Thus state control converges with control of the self. However, this convergence is fundamentally dynamic and variable as demonstrated by the case example presented here.

**92** | Only in Switzerland are there more cross-border workers from the neighbouring countries.

paths etc.), the strong attraction of the Grand Duchy can be primarily traced back to an attractive net income and the range of jobs on offer. For in contrast to the neighbouring regions, even during the economic recession more jobs are created in Luxembourg than can be filled with resident manpower, as shall be explained later.

### **Theoretical Approach to the Status of the Cross-border Workers**

In view of the exceptionally high quantitative importance of and dependence on manpower from the neighbouring regions in evidence since decades, the question arises which status is assigned to cross-border workers in Luxembourg, that of the stranger or that of the one who is familiar. This study therefore focuses primarily on the Luxembourg resident population's perceptions of the cross-border worker phenomenon which represent different forms of appropriation or construction of the latter. On a theoretical level, preoccupation with the strange first of all leads us to that direction of sociology which Stichweh calls the "classical sociology of the strange" (Stichweh 2005). This refers to Georg Simmel's essay "The Stranger" in which the author establishes a relationship between the stranger as a traveller and a given social community. He draws a distinction between the consequences for the absorbing community and their observation from the perspective of the stranger (Simmel 1908). These positionings are expanded by Robert Park in his concept of the *marginal man* who inhabits the borderline between two cultures and must develop resources in order to solve a cultural conflict (Park 1974). Finally, from an action-theoretical perspective, Alfred Schütz poses the question of the psychological processes that the stranger has to deal with once he enters a field of unfamiliar civilisation patterns (Schütz 1971). Just like Park, Schütz measures the status of the stranger by whether he/she manages to accept the rules prevailing in the absorbing community or whether, as a stranger, he/she ends up neither fully belonging to his/her old nor to the new environment. The common characteristic of these approaches lies in the fact that they both consider the stranger an 'intruder' into a given society which is described as a normatively integrated collective. This notion of homogeneous ingroups which are only barely accessible to outsiders presumably goes back to the experience of uni-directional and permanent migration in the 19th and 20th centuries and can be best associated with the dichotomic figure of thought of *familiar/strange*. With respect to the cross-border worker phenomenon as a circulatory form of mobility, this would mean that the status question could be solved via norm-related affiliation. Therefore, cross-border workers could either be defined as *familiar insiders* – who have mastered the normative set of rules of Luxembourg society – or as *alien outsiders*.

However, with transnational lives becoming an evermore widespread phenomenon (Pries 2008; Kreutzer/Roth 2006) that also includes cross-border workers, the figure of thought based on norm-related affiliation has become too limiting. Rather, we need to question "*um welche Modalitäten es sich eigentlich handelt, in*

denen jemand als Fremder erfahren werden kann”<sup>93</sup> (Stichweh 2005: 141). From a transnational perspective, therefore, the question of the stranger or the alien can no longer point to national supercollectives and ‘intruders’ required to adopt given norms or standards, but needs to focus on the constructions of the strange and the familiar performed by resident nationals. For if the perspective of the normatively integrated societies is to be broken up and the strange is to assert itself as a theoretical category also in post-modern everyday life, one needs to inquire into the processes that construct social phenomena as alien and/or familiar. With respect to the cross-border workers, it is therefore, necessary to determine their status on the basis of the appropriations and perceptions of the Luxembourg residential population. Armin Nassehi’s approach, which introduces the dichotomy of positive and negative appropriation (+/-) of social phenomena, provides some conceptual clues for addressing this task (Nassehi 1995). According to this approach the familiar – as the reverse of the strange – can carry a binary connotation: a positive and a negative one. This theoretical approach, which can be expressed in the thought model of *familiar (+/-)/strange*, makes forms of internal social differentiation tangible. On the other hand, the thought model retains the category of the strange, which absorbs certain social phenomena that resist positive or negative appropriation by the subjects and therefore remain beyond the limits of the familiar. With respect to the status of the cross-border worker phenomenon, this means that the cross-border worker can be identified as being familiar if the appropriations performed by the residential population are either positive or negative. He/she would need to be defined as a stranger if the respective appropriations have to be considered ambivalent, i.e. if the residential population adopts a positive *as well as* a negative attitude towards the cross-border worker phenomenon. Such appropriation processes of the strange/alien or familiar are practiced in all societies, since they depend on the identity-constituting differentiations that are performed in everyday life by inclusion (positive appropriation) and exclusion (negative appropriation). This refers to inclusive and exclusive practice strategies that, as forms of everyday-discursive appropriation, construct collective identities through specific semantics. It is against this background that we will take a closer look at the appropriation processes of the resident population in relation to the cross-border worker phenomenon.

### **Everyday-discursive Appropriations between ‘Indispensability’ and ‘Threat’**

Owing to the development of the Luxembourg employment market outlined above, there has been a growing awareness of cross-border workers within the resident population. The interviewees are convinced that the cross-border worker

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**93** | Personal translation: “Which are the actual modalities, under which somebody can be experienced as a stranger”.

phenomenon has become a much more prominent theme in everyday discourses than was the case during the 1980s. This in particular is due to the fact that commuters have become more conspicuously present and that, as a consequence, matters such as job competition or language contact have become substantial issues. It is also remarked that cross-border workers increasingly serve as a projection surface for social discontent, or, as an interviewee puts it: "*Et gëtt ee gesicht, dee schold ass*"<sup>94</sup>. The following insights into appropriation strategies concerning the cross-border phenomenon touch on aspects of the economy and the labour market as well as language and culture in Luxembourg. In the surveys, positive and negative implications of cross-border worker employment were addressed in order to create links to the thought model described above.

First of all, we will attempt to identify which appropriations of the cross-border worker phenomenon relate to socio-economic factors. To ascertain this we asked whether cross-border workers were necessary for Luxembourg's economy, which was confirmed by 87 % of the interviewees, clearly reflecting a positive-inclusive attitude towards the commuters. This is based on two inclusion strategies: on the one hand, it has to do with the usefulness of labour provided by cross-border workers which is brought up as an issue under the aspect of the insufficient resident manpower and the demand for specific qualifications that can only be partially met by Luxembourg's residents. This is a consequence of Luxembourg's rate of economic growth, which would not have been (and be) possible without the contribution of cross-border workers. For instance, already for several years about two thirds of new jobs created annually have been filled with cross-border workers, not only bringing the necessary manpower into the country, but also the required qualifications.

Dat fannen ech ganz richteg, well mir hu jo eendeiteg net genuch Leit, déi schaffe ginn; an menger Usiicht no, wa mir keng Grenzgänger hätten, hätte mir vill méi Problemer hei zu Lëtzebuerg. Da giff eis Economie och guer net fonctionnéieren; an vu que datt mir awer déi Grenzgänger hunn, hu mer eng Chance fir ze fonctionnéieren, respektiv, wat elo mat der Finanzkrise kënnnt, weess ee jo awer net; also, mä et sinn och vill Lëtzebuerger, déi einfach... bon, et wäert sécher alt, gesot: ze liddereg si fir schaffen ze goen; respektiv, si hunn einfach näischt geléiert, dat heeschti si hunn op der 9ième opgehal, an... 'Oh mir kréie jo eng Plaz'. Mee haut kriss Du keng Plaz méi ouni, a mëttlerweil hunn d'Grenzgänger zimlech vill Chancen, well si awer vill méi Ausbildung hunn, wéi esou munnechen Lëtzebuerger<sup>95</sup> (Female, 18 years old, Luxembourger, Heinrichscheid).

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<sup>94</sup> | Personal translation: "They are looking for somebody to take the blame".

<sup>95</sup> | Personal translation: "I think this is perfectly fine because we clearly don't have enough people here who are working; in my opinion, if we had no cross-border workers, we'd have a lot more problems here in Luxembourg. The economy certainly wouldn't run properly; but because we have the cross-border workers, it does; but then again, we don't know what's going to happen after the financial crisis ...; well, there are also many Luxembourgers who ..., yes,

The second inclusion strategy also aims at the indispensability of cross-border workers without however, any direct social valorisation. According to the interviewees, their indispensability is derived from work activities which Luxembourgers are reluctant to perform. They sum it up by saying that "Luxembourgers think such work is beneath them" or "don't want to get their hands dirty", which is why cross-border workers are employed for "the dirty work". It is also remarked that cross-border workers are especially indispensable for badly-paid jobs which Luxembourgers refuse to take on.

An et sinn der och vill, wou verschidde Lëtzebuerger sech ze gutt sinn, fir déi ze maachen. ... Also, di Drecksaarbechten. Wann dat net bei der Gemeng ass oder esou, da si vill Lëtzebuerger, déi soen: 'Oh nee dofir ginn ech awer net schaffen'. Also do kennen ech der awer och, déi dat gesot hunn. Oder: 'Fir déi Paie ginn ech net'<sup>96</sup> (Female, 31 years old, Luxembourg, Rambrouch).

When the qualifications of cross-border workers and their labour for low-paid jobs are emphasised, the interviewees also see in this a competitive advantage over Luxembourgers. This means, in everyday discourse, exclusive strategies are also practiced which can be subsumed under the keyword of 'job competition'. For instance, one third (34 %) of the resident population are of the opinion that cross-border workers take away jobs from the Luxembourgers and in this context the latter activate various exclusion strategies. They argue with the growing number of jobless who should be employed instead of cross-border workers, as well as with the low wages of cross-border workers, which allegedly push the Luxembourgers with their salary expectations out of the job market. Reference is also made to the image of the cross-border workers as "motivated employees", which is described as being the decisive factor for many employers and as being to the detriment of the Luxembourgers. In addition, there are a number of references to the "cross-border workerisation" of enterprises, accompanied by calls for the introduction of "quotas for Luxembourgers". Resident foreigners in particular emphasise the competitive relationship with cross-border workers and deplore that these speak just as little Luxembourgish as themselves, but still get a far better access to the job market. Two main reasons for this is the specific structure of selection mechanisms in

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I suppose one can say who are simply too lazy to work;... or they just never had any training, they left school after the 9th grade and..., 'Yeah, we'll get a job somehow'. But nowadays you can't get a job anymore without, and meanwhile, the cross-border workers have quite a lot of opportunities because they've had better training than many Luxembourgers".

**96** | Personal translation: "There are also many Luxembourgers who think certain kinds work are beneath them... in other words the dirty work. If they can't work for the municipality... there are many Luxembourgers who say: 'Na, I wouldn't work for that kind of money'. Well, I know some people who've actually said that. Or: 'I'm not budging for that kind of dosh'".

Luxembourg's education system and the rising unemployment rates since 2001, which particularly affect foreigners, adolescents and women (Statec 2009: 108).

Sie könnten ja auch die Zahl der Grenzgänger irgendwie begrenzen, statt 130.000 herein-zulassen ..., wenn das so weitergeht und immer mehr Leute herein gelassen werden, dann sieht es in Luxemburg bald nicht mehr so gut aus, so ist die Lage. ... Ein Portugiese kann praktisch nicht mehr hierher kommen, wenn er kein Luxemburgisch kann, und die anderen können doch erst recht kein Luxemburgisch; warum sollen die also herkommen dürfen und wir nicht?<sup>97</sup> (Male, 38 years old, Portuguese, Consdorf).

Already since the 1990s one can identify also on a practical level an exclusion strategy which has led to a segmentation of the job market. This involves the tendency of employees with Luxembourgish citizenship to increasingly withdraw from the private sector in favour of jobs in the public and semi-public sector (see Statec 2009). These are not only attractive in terms of job protection and social security but they also offer a 'safeguard' against the competition of foreign manpower. This development, called "withdrawal strategy" by Fehlen and Pigeron-Piroth (2009) becomes possible due to a "national entrenchment capital", which includes, aside from Luxembourgish citizenship, the respective language skills, socio-cultural knowledge and social networks within the country, something that, as a rule, is only to a limited extent available to cross-border workers.

[Le secteur public] constitue une sorte de refuge, dans lequel les salariés luxembourgeois peuvent faire valoir leurs compétences particulières (notamment linguistiques) qui sont raréfierées sur le marché. Il se trouve ainsi à l'abri de la concurrence des travailleurs étrangers, de plus en plus nombreux et qualifiés<sup>98</sup> (Fehlen/Pigeron-Piroth 2009: 11).

Next, we will examine the appropriations regarding the cross-border worker phenomenon in the socio-cultural context of Luxembourg's culture and language. For this, members of the resident population were asked whether they considered

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**97** | Personal translation: "They could also somehow limit the number of cross-border workers, instead of letting 130,000 of them in ... if this goes on and more and more people are allowed in, then soon it won't look that rosy in Luxembourg anymore, that's the situation.... A Portuguese practically can't come here anymore if he can't speak Luxembourgish and the others really don't know a word of Luxembourgish; why should they be allowed to come here then, and not us? The Germans can't speak Luxembourgish either and yet they come here and work for the municipalities. In these cases, I don't think that's right. Why should they be allowed to come here ...?"

**98** | Personal translation: "[The public sector] constitutes a refuge of sorts, where the Luxembourgish employees can exploit their particular (primarily linguistic) competences which have become rare on the market. It is thus protected from the competition of foreign workers who are becoming more and more numerous and qualified".

cross-border workers an enrichment to Luxembourg's culture. More than half of the interviewees (55 %) said they did, although we have to assume that the social desirability effect influenced the responses to a certain degree. For the inclusion of cross-border workers in the sphere of the familiar, as expressed here, corresponds first of all to a public discourse<sup>99</sup> which unfolded particularly in the context of the cross-border worker festival in 2008. For instance, a press release of the *Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research* reads as follows:

Unter dem Motto 'Zusammen arbeiten, zusammen feiern, zusammen leben' hat das Fest zum Ziel, über die Arbeitsbeziehungen hinaus und außerhalb der Bürozeiten, einen echten interkulturellen Dialog und einen gemeinschaftlichen Geist zwischen Grenzgängern und Anwohnern, sowie unter den Grenzbewohnern selbst zu fördern. Das Fest der Grenzgänger hofft so ebenfalls zur Entwicklung einer gemeinsamen regionalen Identität beizutragen. [...] Für Luxemburg als 'Land der 100 Nationalitäten' ist die Vielfalt kein leeres Wort, und das Fest der Grenzgänger ist dazu berufen, keine einmalige Initiative zu bleiben<sup>100</sup> (*Ministry for Culture, Higher Education and Research 2008: 1*).

In contrast to this inclusive strategy of identity attribution, the interviews also brought negative appropriations of the cross-border worker phenomenon to light. In these instances, the familiar is constructed by identity-constitutive differentiations when cross-border workers are expected to adapt themselves to Luxembourg's culture and show greater interest in and respect for Luxembourgers.

Et ass och fir mech een wichtegen Aspekt datt Frontalierer, wann se an Lëtzebuerg kommen, datt se net nëmmen heihinner kommen fir ze schaffen, mä datt se sech wéinstens e bëssen fir eis Kultur souzesoen interesséieren an och vläicht iergendwéi een Austausch oder kommunizéieren mat den Lëtzebuerger. Et sinn wierklech vill Frontalierer, déi gesinn Lëtzebuerg nëmmen als Staat, wou een Suen verdéngt; d.h. si kommen heihinner, si schaffen dann ginn si nees zeréck an si interesséieren sech guer net. Dat fannen ech émmer e bëssen blöd. Leit, déi awer dann heihinner kommen an vläicht dann eben sech integréieren an eis Gesellschaft dat fannen ech dann besser an wann si dann och nach

**99** | See also section 5.5.

**100** | Personal translation: “With the theme ‘working together, celebrating together, living together’ the festival aims at promoting – beyond work relations and office hours – a true intercultural dialogue and a spirit of community between cross-border workers and local residents, as well as among the cross-border workers themselves. The cross-border worker festival hereby hopes to also contribute to the development of a common regional identity. [...] For Luxembourg, as the ‘country of 100 nationalities’, diversity is not an empty phrase and the cross-border worker festival is predestined to become more than a mere one-off initiative”.

versichen e bëssen Lëtzebuergesch ze schwätzen an dann fannen ech dat och gutt<sup>101</sup> (Male, 18 years old, Italian, Strassen).

As the quote suggests, there is also an exclusive appropriation practice with respect to the Luxembourgish language. This is exhibited in the opinion that cross-border workers are a threat to the Luxembourgish language (57 %) as well as in the statement that cross-border workers should be able to at least understand Luxembourgish (86 %)<sup>102</sup>. The interviewees report that they are not able to communicate in Luxembourgish in the public space, in particular in the retail and catering trade and the health sector<sup>103</sup>, and state that anyone working abroad should, as a matter of course, also speak the local language, by which, in this case, they exclusively mean Luxembourgish. While cross-border workers are not expected to have advanced language skills, say the interviewees, they should however display at least elementary linguistic competences which would also be sufficient to “show their goodwill”.

Ech fannen et ganz schlëmm, datt een am Cactus, op lëtzebuergesch keng Wirschtecher méi bestelle kann, well si een net verstinn. Also, ech fannen ee Minimum vu Sprooch missten si awer kënnen, well wa mir an d'Ausland ginn, do kënne mer och net soen 'Hei, mir si Lëtzebuerger, mir kommen, hei schwätzt emol lëtzebuergesch mat eis'<sup>104</sup> (Female, 31 years old, Luxembourg, Rambrouch).

The differentiation made above between people who speak Luxembourgish and those who have no knowledge of the language, as well as the fact that interviewees were prepared to qualify the linguistic competences expected from cross-border workers reveal that the Luxembourgish language, in the context of the cross-border worker phenomenon, functions primarily as an identity marker (Lüdi 2008: 187,

**101** | Personal translation: “This is also an important aspect for me, that the cross-border workers, when they come to Luxembourg, don't only come here for the work but that they also take at least a little interest in our culture, or that they maybe somehow mingle with Luxembourgers or communicate with them. There are really many cross-border workers who see Luxembourg as a state where they can earn money; that is, they come here, they work and then they go home again and have no interest whatsoever [in the country]. I always find that a bit stupid. But if people come here and then maybe integrate into our society, then that's a lot better. And if they even try to speak a little Luxembourgish, then that's good too”.

**102** | See also section 4.2.

**103** | See also section 4.3.

**104** | Personal translation: “I think it's absolutely disgraceful that one can't order sausages in Luxembourgish anymore at the *Cactus* [a Luxembourg supermarket chain] because they don't understand you there. Well, I think they should at least know the basics of the language; because if we go abroad, we can't very well go and say to someone 'We're Luxembourgers, here we are, talk to us in Luxembourgish'”.

190) rather than as an effective means of communication. This is partially also reflected by the strategies of language usage employed by the interviewees, who, in terms of language contact with cross-border workers, can be subdivided into four different types:

- The *confrontational* ones strategically try to exclusively speak Luxembourgish with cross-border workers and will, for example, leave a store if someone tells them “*En français, s'il vous plaît*” or “*Comment?*”<sup>105</sup>.
- The *constructive* ones, on the other hand, concede that cross-border workers cannot learn Luxembourgish if the resident population actively speaks the languages of the cross-border workers. Therefore they act inclusively and even speak Luxembourgish in difficult conversational situations if they notice that shop assistants or waiters “are making an effort”.
- The *pragmatic* ones remain exclusive in their approach and speak apriori French, because experience has taught them that they will achieve their communicative objective by using this *lingua franca*.
- Finally, there are the *mediating* ones who absorb linguistic information in the context of greeting, or in conversation with another customer/guest/patient, and then act in a strategically inclusive manner by linguistically adapting to the shop assistant/waiter/care assistant.

The overall analysis of the findings shows that the Luxembourg resident population practises positive-inclusive as well as negative-exclusive strategies in respect to the cross-border worker phenomenon. On the basis of the quantitative data, one can take the investigation a step further and ask which strategies are activated in which social field. This requires a comprehensive examination of socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects, for which the positive and negative statements about the cross-border worker phenomenon need to be collated (table 4).

Positive Appropriation (+)		Negative Appropriation (-)	
Socio-cultural field	Socio-economic field	Socio-cultural field	Socio-economic field
Cross-border workers are an enrichment for Luxembourg culture.	Cross-border workers are needed for the Luxembourg economy.	Cross-border workers are a threat to the Luxembourgish language.	Cross-border workers take jobs away from the Luxembourgers.
55 % (approval)	87 % (approval)	57 % (approval)	34 % (approval)

Table 4: Positive and negative appropriation strategies of the Luxembourg resident population.

105 | Personal translation: “In French, please” or “What?”.

Socio-cultural field		Socio-economic field			
	Cross-border workers are a threat to the Luxembourgish language.	Cross-border workers are an enrichment for Luxembourg culture.	Cross-border workers take jobs away from Luxembourgers.	Cross-border workers are needed for the Luxembourg economy.	
Approval in %	Negative appropriation (-)	Positive appropriation (+)	Negative appropriation (-)	Positive appropriation (+)	Appropriation overall
Luxembourg resident population	57	55	34	87	/
Status of cross-border workers	Strangers		Familiar +		Familiar strangers
Privileged conservative milieu	37	62	15	93	/
Status of cross-border workers	Familiar +		Familiar +		Familiar +
Petty bourgeois milieu	64	48	38	87	/
Status of cross-border workers	Familiar -		Familiar +		Strangers
Tradition-oriented milieu	74	45	54	86	/
Status of the cross-border workers	Familiar -		Strangers		Familiar strangers
Underprivileged milieu	64	53	56	75	/
Status of the cross-border workers	Familiar -		Familiar -		Familiar -
Meritocratic-oriented milieu	59	58	30	91	/
Status of the cross-border workers	Strangers		Familiar +		Familiar strangers
Privileged liberal milieu	46	62	16	89	/
Status of the cross-border workers	Familiar +		Familiar +		Familiar +
Hedonistic milieu	59	50	49	82	/
Status of the cross-border workers	Strangers		Familiar -		Familiar strangers
Alternative milieu	45	68	28	88	/
Status of the cross-border workers	Familiar +		Familiar +		Familiar +
Status-oriented milieu	53	48	26	93	/
Status of the cross-border workers	Familiar -		Familiar +		Strangers

Table 5: Status of cross-border workers in socio-cultural milieus.

As far as the positive-inclusive appropriation strategy is concerned, one can note that the Luxembourg resident population tends to apply it in particular in the socio-economic field, for instance in the case of the indispensability of cross-border workers for the national economic growth (87 %) compared to the cultural enrichment of Luxembourg (55 %). Negative-exclusive appropriation strategies, on the other hand, take effect particularly in the socio-cultural field, for instance in the answers to the question concerning the threat to the interviewees' own language posed by cross-border workers (57 %) compared to job competition (34 %). However, this overview merely provides initial indications concerning the applied appropriations by social sectors and allows no statements about possible ambivalent appropriation strategies or about the status of the cross-border workers in socio-cultural milieus.

### **On the Status of the Cross-border Workers in Socio-cultural Milieus**

Following on from the figure of thought outlined above of *familiar (+/-)/stranger*, the table 5 presents a systematised representation of the status of cross-border workers, based on the appropriation strategies of the Luxembourg resident population and on socio-cultural milieus. The observations are based on quantitative survey results and point to three essential types of status of cross-border workers in Luxembourg.

*Cross-border workers as familiar individuals:* The appropriation of the cross-border workers as familiar individuals is based on an unequivocally positive or negative construction of the phenomenon. In the case of cross-border workers being appropriated as *negative familiar individuals* – as they are in the underprivileged milieu – we tend to find mostly negative and exclusive appropriation strategies in both socio-cultural and socio-economic fields. In the latter these strategies are reflected by an emphasis on job market competition and the downplaying of the need for cross-border workers. With respect to the appropriation of cross-border workers as *positive familiar individuals* – predominant in the privileged conservative, privileged liberal and alternative milieus – positive and inclusive strategies prevail in the examined fields, expressed in the emphasis on the positive implications of cross-border worker employment and in the relativisation of the negative ones.

*Cross-border workers as strangers:* The appropriation of cross-border workers as strangers is based on an ambivalent construction of the phenomenon. This means that the interviewees applied positive as well as negative appropriation strategies in respect of the cross-border worker phenomenon. This form of appropriation is a feature of the petty bourgeois and status-oriented milieus which, on the socio-cultural level, tend to display an exclusive attitude towards the cross-border worker phenomenon and, on the socio-economical level, an inclusive one. The factor of cultural enrichment is qualified in favour of a supposed linguistic threat by cross-border workers, which is particularly marked in the petty bourgeois milieu. Nevertheless, the need for cross-border workers is confirmed, and the alleged job

market competition is seen as a relatively insignificant issue, particularly in the status-oriented milieu.

*Cross-border workers as familiar strangers:* The appropriation of cross-border workers as familiar strangers reflects a circumstance not foreseen by Nassehi, in the sense that in the social fields under review the cross-border worker is constructed in an ambivalent as well as in an unambiguous manner. This status is reflected in the appropriations of the Luxembourg resident population as a whole and the members of the hedonistic milieu in particular, who, from the socio-cultural aspect, construct the cross-border worker phenomenon both positively *and* negatively. An illustration of this is the simultaneous assumption that cross-border workers provide cultural enrichment on the one hand and present a threat to the local language on the other. However, when it comes to their constructions in the socio-economic field, the groups mentioned above show marked differences: while the Luxembourg resident population in general stresses the indispensability of cross-border workers for the economy in an inclusive manner, the hedonists emphasise the job competition aspect, thereby assuming a rather exclusive stance. The status of cross-border workers as familiar strangers is also evident in the appropriation strategies of the tradition-oriented milieu. Here, however, we find an ambivalent construction on the socio-economic level with an emphasis on job market competition and the concurrently expressed need for cross-border workers, contrasting with a predominantly negative and exclusive strategy on the socio-cultural level.

### **On the Figure of the (Familiar) Stranger**

The analysis carried out here shows that the applied inclusion and exclusion strategies of the Luxembourg resident population represent different appropriation forms in respect of the cross-border worker phenomenon. In the socio-economic field, the predominant strategy tends to be the inclusion of cross-border workers by emphasising their economic indispensability. On the socio-cultural level, however, there is a marked tendency towards exclusion strategies based primarily on the perceived threat to the Luxembourgish language. These appropriation processes, which vary by socio-cultural milieus, were further examined for coherence, as a result of which partly contradictory constructions were revealed. These differ depending on the examined socio-cultural milieu and point to a largely ambivalent status of cross-border workers in Luxembourg, which has been represented by the figures of the *stranger* and the *familiar stranger*.

In view of the introductory remarks, these findings may at first seem to present an identity dilemma. However, by interpreting them a potential logic in the strategic interplay of everyday-cultural inclusions and exclusions can be brought to light. For while, during the second half of the 20th century, the presence of immigrants and cross-border workers “*in den Köpfen zu einer Selbstverständlichkeit*

wurde”<sup>106</sup> (Fehlen 2008: 82) due to local enterprises’ demand for them, and xenophobic discourses thus barely evolved in Luxembourg, protectionist strategies against competition by foreign manpower have established themselves particularly since the periods of economic downturn in the new millennium. In the research findings these are reflected not so much by an open and consistent rejection of cross-border workers in the sense of the *negative familiar* but are conceded, for the reasons mentioned above, their economic indispensability. However, from the point of view of many Luxembourgers, this ends at the threshold to the public and semi-public sector, something which is regulated by the already mentioned entrenchment competence. Against this background, the logic of the strategic interplay of socio-economically motivated inclusion strategies on the one hand, and socio-culturally motivated exclusion strategies on the other, which aims at securing growth and prosperity at home and at protecting the job market, becomes clear. According to the findings, cross-border workers are considered important for the economy by the resident population, however, if they knew Luxembourgish, they might gain broad access to those sectors currently ‘protected’ from competition by ‘foreign labour’. The socio-cultural argument of the linguistic threat – in particular in the tradition-oriented, underprivileged and petty bourgeois milieus – is applied in an exclusive manner in order to secure the competitive advantage over cross-border workers in the socio-economic field.

Therefore, appropriation processes concerning the cross-border worker phenomenon that at first glance may seem contradictory can indeed follow an ‘everyday logic’ that submits to the desire for security by imagining a community by demarcation. This suggests a further investigation of everyday-cultural appropriations of the cross-border worker phenomenon, which cannot be categorised along the lines of *familiar* or *stranger*, in terms of their nature as intermediate categories. This means explicitly focusing on the appropriations of the resident population with their inherent contradictions and thereby reconstructing the cross-border worker as an ambivalent yet independent category. At a conceptual level this implies a broadening of Nassehi’s approach by the figure of thought of the *familiar stranger* [*familiar (+/-) / stranger*]; at the empirical level, the task involves further clarifying the positions of the subjects between inclusive and exclusive appropriation processes and thereby elucidating the ambivalent logic of everyday culture.

## 7.5 CONCLUSIONS: IDENTITIES AND AMBIVALENCES OF EVERYDAY CULTURES

In the present chapter we investigated examples of different areas of everyday cultures and showed the (political) attributions and (individual as well as milieu-specific) appropriations in respect to identity-constitutive forms of action in circulation. It

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**106** | Personal translation: “Came to be taken for granted in people’s minds”.

involved issues of gender-related performances and gender experiences, of attitudes concerning food and of the perception of cross-border workers in Luxembourg. In addition to their everyday relevance and identity-constitutive potential, it was possible to establish a further common characteristic of these topics: a distinctive ambivalence. This was clearly evident in the social practice under examination, where the binarities male/female, good/bad and familiar/strange are broken up in a productive and partly arbitrary manner, revealing different patterns of 'everyday logic'.

A remarkable result in the area of gender is the fact that the interviewees showed a tendency to embrace the ideal of sexual equality in their actions while *at the same time* still remaining mentally rooted in their traditional patterns. Conversely, they advocated gender equality while acting, for instance in the case of parenthood, according to traditional patterns.

This contradiction is also reflected in attitudes concerning food: findings on forms of attribution show that 'good' food tends to be treated in an object-centered manner (for instance in the form of nutritional guidelines), while, in terms of appropriation, there is a tendency to experience it in a person-centered way (for instance in the form of subjectification and communitisation). Here we see forms of practice that *simultaneously* integrate the attributed identification characteristics in a selective, context-related and constantly varying manner (e.g. in the form of adaptation, opposition or autonomy concerning nutritional guidelines).

Finally, while conceding that cross-border workers are important for Luxembourg's economy, interviewees criticise their Luxembourgish language competence, which is perceived as inadequate in everyday situations. *At the same time*, more importance seems to be attached to an appreciation of what is regarded as one's 'own' – to be performed by linguistic means – rather than to linguistic competence itself, in particular when it comes to those areas of the job market that are largely dominated and 'protected' by Luxembourgers and that very often can only be accessed by those who have a command of Luxembourgish.

In the case examples of everyday cultures examined here, we can identify discursive practices which pragmatically transcend a binary 'either-or logic' and follow a flexible 'as-well-as logic' – for instance, when, in the experience of gender, essentialisms as well as constructivisms are practised in parallel, when contradictory standards and habits of 'healthy' as well as 'indulgence' food mutually penetrate each other, or when cross-border workers are perceived both positively as well as negatively – and thus as 'familiar strangers'. In the context of our Luxembourg investigation, the various latent forms of 'everyday logic', by which dynamic identity constructions can be identified, therefore appear to be to a large degree pragmatic and self-related: a self-concept of the subjects, which experiences gender as only one aspect of everyday practice among many others and, depending on the context, argues either naturalistically or culturally; which favours pragmatic-hedonistic food habits in everyday life, or a self-image which gives in to the desire for that which is considered own's 'own' by ambivalent constructions of the 'strange'.

In view of the above, it should be noted that this chapter deals primarily with appropriated identities and examines, in addition, to what extent attributed identities are (not) adopted, in the course of which strategies of adaptation, opposition and autonomy are activated in regard to models for identification. Therefore, identities are neither predetermined nor unalterable, but can only be traced as a snapshot and in a specific context of everyday practice.

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