

University of Luxembourg

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Symposium TH2: Exploring transformative
experiences and identity construction in
multicultural societies.

Meandering Identities: Affective Dialogues across Continents

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- Context
 - Globalization
 - Luxembourg
 - Theoretical background

- Qualitative Study – Method

- Results

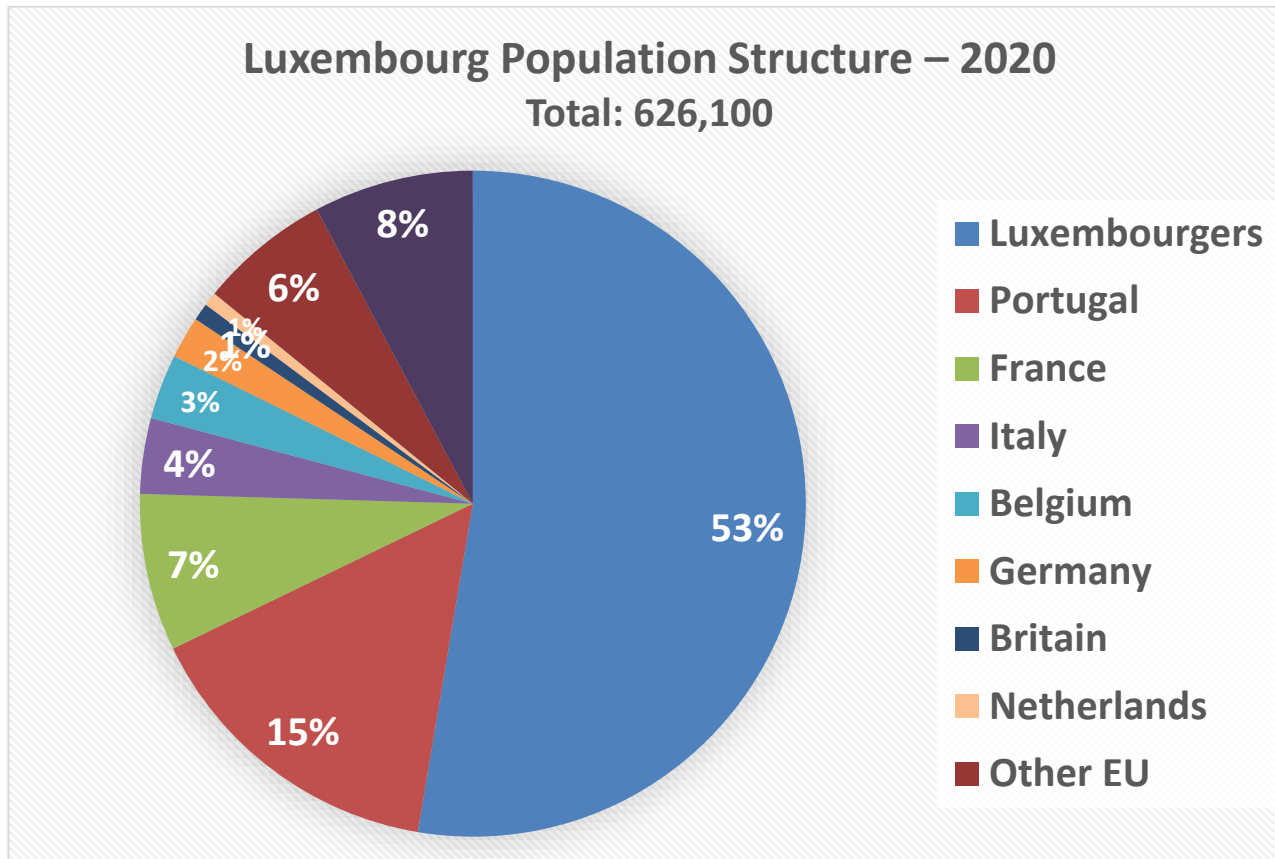
- Conclusions

- Discussion!

- One facet of contemporary societies is their increasingly diverse composition.
- Era of super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007)
 - Heterogeneous population in terms of origin and migration status
 - Globalisation, interconnectedness and transnationalism
 - Complexification, acceleration of changes and increased *fluidity* of societies (Grzymala-Kazłowska, A. & Phillimore J., 2018)
 - Exposure to multiple cultures is becoming the norm rather than the exception (p. 963, West et al. 2017)



- Learning from Luxembourg (Murdock, 2017)
 - Foreign population percentage 47.5% (Statec, 2020)



- Luxembourg has experienced different **immigration waves**
- Immigrants – predominantly of European origin
- Diverse population (length of stay, **generation status**, socio-occupational roles...)
- Luxembourg is **trilingual** (LU, FR, DE) with EN and PT widely spoken
- **Mixed national families** – children growing up with more than one cultural point of reference
- **Opportunity for (direct) culture contact** - omnipresent
- **Older** more homogeneous cohort **vs. younger** heterogeneous cohort

Consequences – Living in a diverse society:

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- Living within a plurally composed society:
 - Boundaries between minority and majority become blurred.
 - Norms, values and symbols may be negotiated dependent on context.

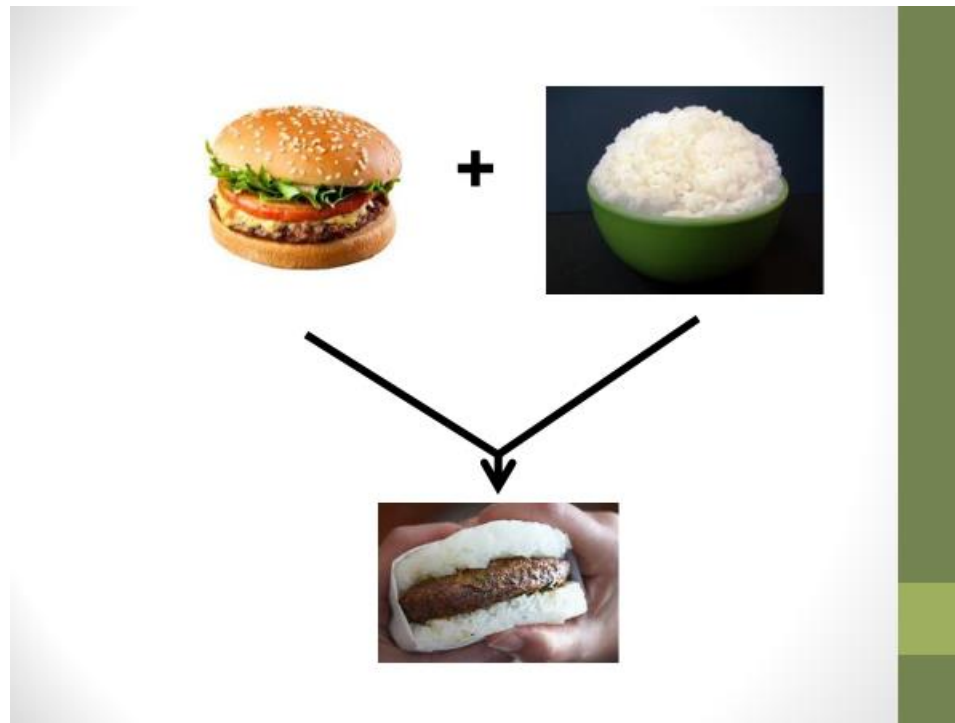
- Increased *fluidity*
 - Increasingly fluid and boundary crossing world (Hermans, Konopka, Oosterwegel, & Zomber, 2017)
 - People are on the move across borders and
 - *Within* themselves.

- Make up only a very small percentage of the total population
 - 0.32% of Ville de Luxembourg Population (VdL, 2020).
- Cultural difference to Luxembourg:
 - Relative homogeneity in Japan – extremely low foreign population percentage
 - Cultural distance to Luxembourg (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2017)

Cultural distance – Merged?

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- **Culture Mixing** = The coexistence of representative symbols of different cultures in the same space at the same time



Hong (2016)

Cultural contamination studies:

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- Cheon, Christopoulos, & Hong, JCCP, 2016)



Research Question:

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- Acculturation/ Proculturation (Gamskhurdia, 2018) **process:**
- How do women of Japanese origin living in Luxembourg *navigate* through their cultural worlds?
- What cultural negotiation processes or dialogues do they engage in?
- Can we bring these inner dialogues to the surface through visual primes?
 - Visual primes – including “contaminated” versions
(Cheon, Christopoulos & Hong, 2016)

- Participants:
 - 8 Japanese women living in Luxembourg
 - All married to a partner of European, but not Luxembourgish background.
 - All are mothers
 - All have lived in at least one other country before moving to Luxembourg
 - All were born in Japan & spent their childhood and youth in Japan
 - They come from different regions in Japan
 - All have family members living in Japan and visit Japan regularly.
 - Have lived in Luxembourg between 2 – 17 years on Luxembourg
 - All are active in the Japanese women association in Luxembourg

- Recruitment through Japanese women association in Luxembourg

Method – qualitative study:

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- Semi-structured interviews*
- Socio-demographic questionnaire (in Japanese & English)
 - Socio-demographic data inc. length of stay etc.
 - Where would you like to stay for the rest of your life & why?
 - Advice to Japanese women
- Conducted by the second author
 - In English – not mother tongue for either
 - At the Home of the interviewee or other place of their choice
 - Opening questions:
 - Name in English or Kanji
 - 3 business cards – 3 designs (Japanese, Western, mixed)

Semi-structured interviews – stimulus material

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- Guided by culturally sensitive chosen primes presented on a Tablet computer:
 - Culture sensitive – knowledge of Japanese culture
 - **Exercise 1:** Triple images: Japanese – Western – Mixed => “contaminated”
 - 5 Domains:
 - Beauty
 - Food
 - Leisure
 - Home
 - Private

Example - Beauty



Caucasian_Beard



Japanese_Beard



Japanese_Non_B
eard

Results – **Selection**

Results – selected domains:

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- **Home:**
 - **Entrance** – Border between inside and outside
 - Japanese traditional entrance – Genkan (Shoes are left outside the house)
 - Clear separation between inside and outside (i.e. step)

- **Food**

Results:

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Entrance_Contrast



Entrance_Jap



Entrance_Lux

■ Vi1 - reaction to entrance:

Because. The entrance space in the house, is separated well. It is separated well, and in the picture two it is also the wood that make it more clear. Actually, my original family has a similar entrance. Different but this kind of type and I have here [showing around the room] much more different but I prefer this separated entrance space in the house.

■ I: If you built a house you would chose the Japanese entrance?

I would choose this one [the Japanese entrance]. But actually, when I bought my house in Italy. I was in Italy before. ... And I try to explain. I want this kind of that and that. But my husband is not Japanese and the person who works for the house constructor had a different Idea. And I did a compromise.

Vi1 - The art of compromise:

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- I: A compromise
- Yes [laughing]. *If I were by myself, I think choose this kind of entrance.*
- I: But because of your partner
- [Interrupting] *Yes and because we are in Europe, we make a compromise and it is not a big deal.*



Entrance_Contrast



Entrance_Jap



Entrance_Lux

- *For me when you have to put the shoes on then we have to turn around. So, even if they took of the shoes neatly, but then they still have to turn around. [longer pausing, while looking at the Western picture] Yeah it is very Western.*
- *We built a house two ehh [pausing, short] one and a half year ago and we actually have a Genko (Japanese entrance) Yeah Thank to my husband, he is Netherlandish. But he used to live in Japan for five years. And he likes a gengka entrance style. So, he doesn't like to, anybody [pausing] He doesn't like anyone [pausing] His Idea is to stimulate people to take of shoes. So, if this like this [showing western entrance]. It is easy for people to come inside with shoes, but like this [showing Japanese entrance] not. At least they will think, "Should I take of shoes?" So "Yes please.". So, I can easily stimulate them to take of the shoes. So, we really designed ten centimeters higher step from the regular floor. The entrance is so little bit lower and different material. It is stone I think, and the floor is wood. So, you see it is different.*

SE 3 - Entrance Border – between inside and outside

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Entrance_Contrast



Entrance_Jap



Entrance_Lux

- SE3: *In Japan here, but I like more space [showing at lux].*
- I: The third one. Can I ask you why?
- SE3: *Because it is tidy, I like this one as well but there is nothing, I am not used to be in Japanese [pausing]. Yes, this one*
- I: Have you currently an entrance like this?
- SE3: *Yes. But our shoes are outside. Not inside. We have also shoe boxes they are inside, but just the shoes, we put shoes outside.*

US8 Entrance

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Entrance_Contrast



Entrance_Jap



Entrance_Lux

- US8: *Oh-. Well. [pausing longer]. Then number three.*
- I: *Why?*
- US8: *Because when you come in it is quite spacy looking. That makes it more comfortable. With the light it makes it more energetic. Number two looks very nice to me, but not as a home. It is bit more nostalgic for me, but it is very small, and this will lead probably into a very small house.*

HD5 ENTRANCE

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Entrance_Contrast



Entrance_Jap



Entrance_Lux

- HD5: *This one.* [Lux]
- I: Why?
- HD5: *When you enter big space. Relax. Actually, I want to chance all decoration. Design. Everything I would take off, steps as well. This is not my taste. I need a step, I prefer like this [Jap]. With step I would prefer to enter. Combination of both.*

Entrance – AS 4

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Entrance_Contrast



Entrance_Jap



Entrance_Lux

- AS4: *Hm-. It is difficult because I like those two. [Jap and Lux].*
- I: Yeah?
- AS4: *This (Lux) I like it because it has a lot of space, but items of the entrance I would prefer this one (Jap).*
- I: Items?
- AS4: *For example, the material and the ambiance. I like it.*
- I: So, you would like to have a mix of both?
- AS4: *Yeah [Giggling].*

V02 – Food domain

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Bento_Jap_3



lunch western



Mix_2

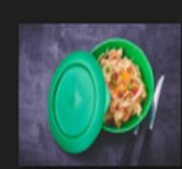
- *... nice balanced food. [pausing] And colorful. Hmm Yeah this [showing the Luxembourgish version] is the emergency choice. When I made pasta the day before, and it would be the only food. And they would like to have a bento box. [clapping, once loud (while smiling)] Kids take this.*
- *... And this [mixed picture]. I don't know this is western sausage with whatever sauce on top, plus Japanese rice. [breathing loudly in] If this would become pasta or bread [pausing, short] it is possible. But hm- If I use sausage with rice, I would put some Japanese sauce. Instead of this Western sauce.*

HD 5 Lunchbox

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Bento_Jap_3



lunch western



Mix_2

- HD5: *Of course. [Jap] Of course this one is very good, but I would not write something on the rice. The others are not that good for the nutrition.*
- I: The second questions would be if your child would ask you to make him a lunchbox, which one would you like to prepare for him? And Why?
- HD5: *This one. [Jap] Because of the nutrition.*

SE3 Lunchbox me vs child

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Bento_Jap_3



lunch western



Mix_2

- SE3: *Eh-. What is this?*
- I: Luxembourgish “Wein-zossis”.
- SE3: [laughing] *Ah-. Okay. Zossis. [laughing]. This one [Jap]*
- I: The first one?
- SE3: *Yes because of fish. And the vegetables I see.*
- I: Is there another reason?
- SE3: *Because of the fish and the rice. I need rice. And colors also. Colors are very important for Japanese. That's it.*
- I: And second question. Would be when your child would
- SE3: *Yes. [laughing] My daughter goes to Luxembourgish school. And this is normal usual and can be put in the microwave. Which we did not have at home. So that would be better for her.*
- I: Would you also prefer to make it, or do you have like a personal preference? I would like to do?
- SE3: *I can do it. Yes.*

Concluding remarks

- *“I feel good now here. I find a good balance between Japan and myself”.*
- She reached integrative complexity (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006)
 - She feels accountable to more than 1 cultural world
 - She actively engaged in the process of negotiating and reaching a balancing
 - *Now* – implies the dissonance experienced – now resolved.
 - Now she balances her cultural worlds – active process
 - Holding a balance requires effort – tensegrity (Marsico & Tateo, 2017)
 - Tension – positive force.



- Visual stimuli:
 - Provoke the dialogue which shows how
 - Elements are placed on the scale
 - As elements are added – Scale becomes heavier
 - Continued effort required.



Process of proculturation (Gamaskhurdia, 2018)

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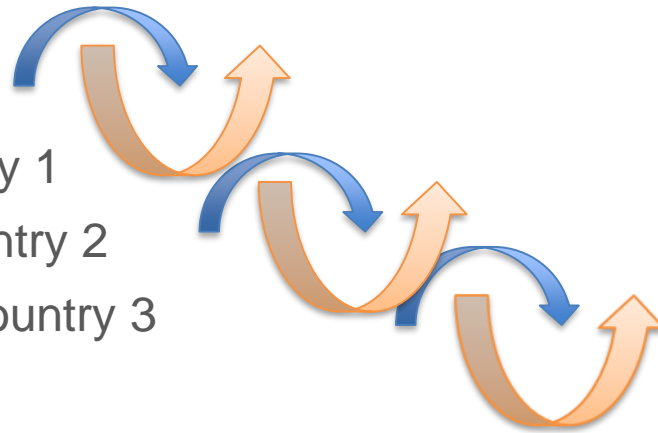
■ Participants

■ Have left Japan

- Moved to country 1
- Moved to country 2
- Moved to country 3

- Married
- Children

- What triggered reflection?
- What triggered willingness to engage and integrate?
- How is information/ experiences chosen – becoming salience – and put on the balance/ scale?



Borders, **Tensegrity** and Development in Dialogue (Marsico & Tateo, 2017)

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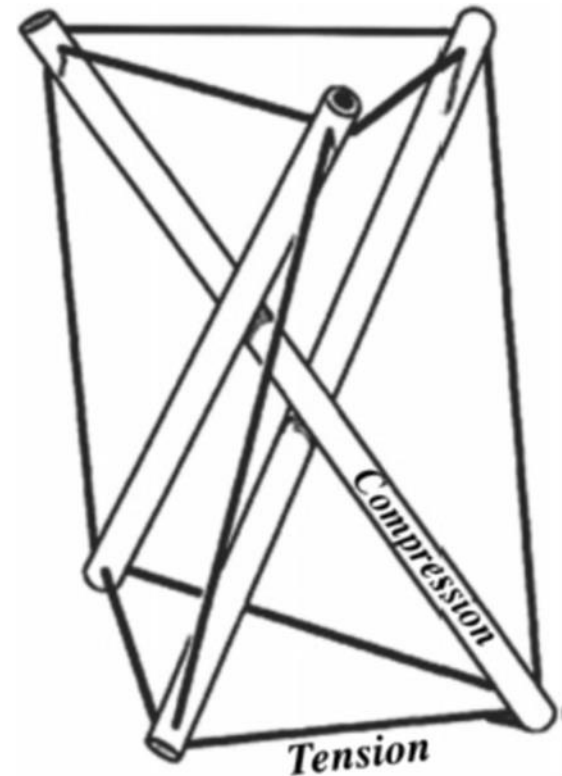


- ... Such fields of tension emerge as a result of positioning and counter-positioning processes in the arena of the power-laden society where a distinctive cultural value system, promoted by societal institutions and historical traditions, provide the Self with opportunities and constraints for development. (Marsico & Tateo, 2017, p. 537).
- Self – *dynamic semiotic system in constant evolutive tension*

Self-stabilizing tensegrity network.

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- Tension as a positive force
- Movement – positioning and counter-
 - Positioning within different meaning systems
 - Anchoring in concrete lived experiences



Marsico & Tateo, 2017, p. 548 – Simple, self-stabilizing tensegrity network.

- Visual primes

 - Researcher – willingness to engage
 - Willingness to engage with the cultural origin of the participants
 - Knowledge of documented cultural differences
 - Preparation of material
 - Testing of the material
 - Careful planning of the presentation of the material
 - Opening questions
 - Establishing of trust
 - Closure – offer of a present – in the form of a photo
- Engaged, attentive, culturally sensitive

- Fulbright student – 2022
 - Female – Japanese – American
 - Follow-up study with some of the Interviewees
 - In close cooperation with the second author.

- Recruitment of *male* participants.



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