

# FUN FAIRS IN BORDER AREAS

## A NATIONAL, TRANSREGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF THE "SCHUEBERFOUER"

### Research question

How is the national, transregional, and transnational intertwined in popular fairground culture in Luxembourg and how did this intertwining change?

1945 1975

The long 1960s

### Background

The "Schueberfouer" is one of the largest annual fairs in the region. It was founded in 1340 as a market mainly for trading animals and regional products. The market benefitted from Luxembourg's location on one of the most important trade routes in Europe. Historical records about the "Schueberfouer" are available for the Middle Ages (Pauly 1990) and more widely from the end of the 18th century upwards where the market evolved from a kermess into a fun fair with music, dancing and amusement attractions taking over (Kayser 2013). These later studies are mainly descriptive.

This research aims to investigate the fun fair within the context of transnational popular culture.

### Hypothesis

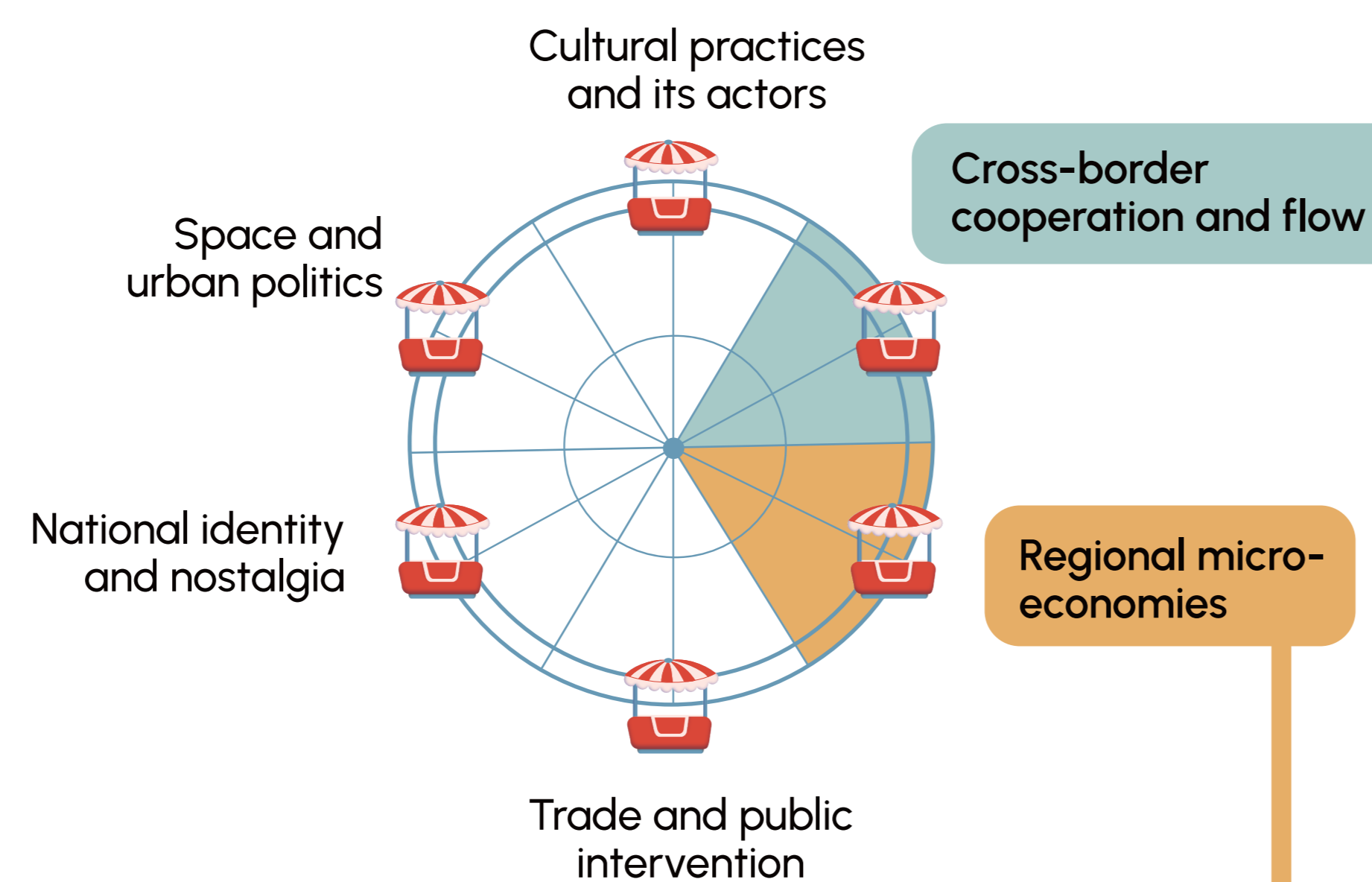
The "Schueberfouer" creates a heterotopic space that breaks up social and spatial borders for a specific time. It makes use of existing practices and produces new ones. They all reinforce a feeling of shared national identity as well as foster cross-border cooperation. These seemingly contradictory outcomes are fundamentally linked to each other while they can be differently weighted in time.

### Interdisciplinary research method

- Historical source analysis: Archived municipal documents, council reports, newspaper articles, audio-visual material (photographs, TV and radio documentaries, maps, ...)
- Oral history, participant observation and walking ethnography (Venken 2010; Lee and Ingold 2006)
- Transregional biographies of objects (Kopytoff 1986)

### Discussion

The research will explore the following dimensions to approach an answer to the research question:



### CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND FLOW

The cross-border flow of professionals, audience, gastronomy, and attractions is an essential element of this fun fair. The founding deed of 20 October 1340 states that merchants were granted exemption from customs duties during the period of the market as well as eight days before and after.

In 1939, when the fun fair was closed at an early stage due to rising international tensions, foreign show people had to ask an extension to their rights as it was not possible to export their material in the allocated timeframe.

Nationality is instrumentalised differently over time. During the Second World War, German show people were invited to the "Schueberfouer" while after the war, preference was given to the "bons patriotes" (good patriots), meaning residents of Luxembourg.

### Tournée de l'Est

Show people and merchants at the "Schueberfouer" come from Luxembourg, France, Belgium, Germany, and some from the Netherlands. Detailed maps from the 1960s are available and the study will aim to establish a transregional map for people and goods to examine the significance of the transregional exchange at the "Schueberfouer".



What were the cross-border flows of show people, merchants, audiences, attractions, and food?

How did border politics and realities impact the trajectories of show people and goods? Which part did the regional infrastructure of road and rail network play here?

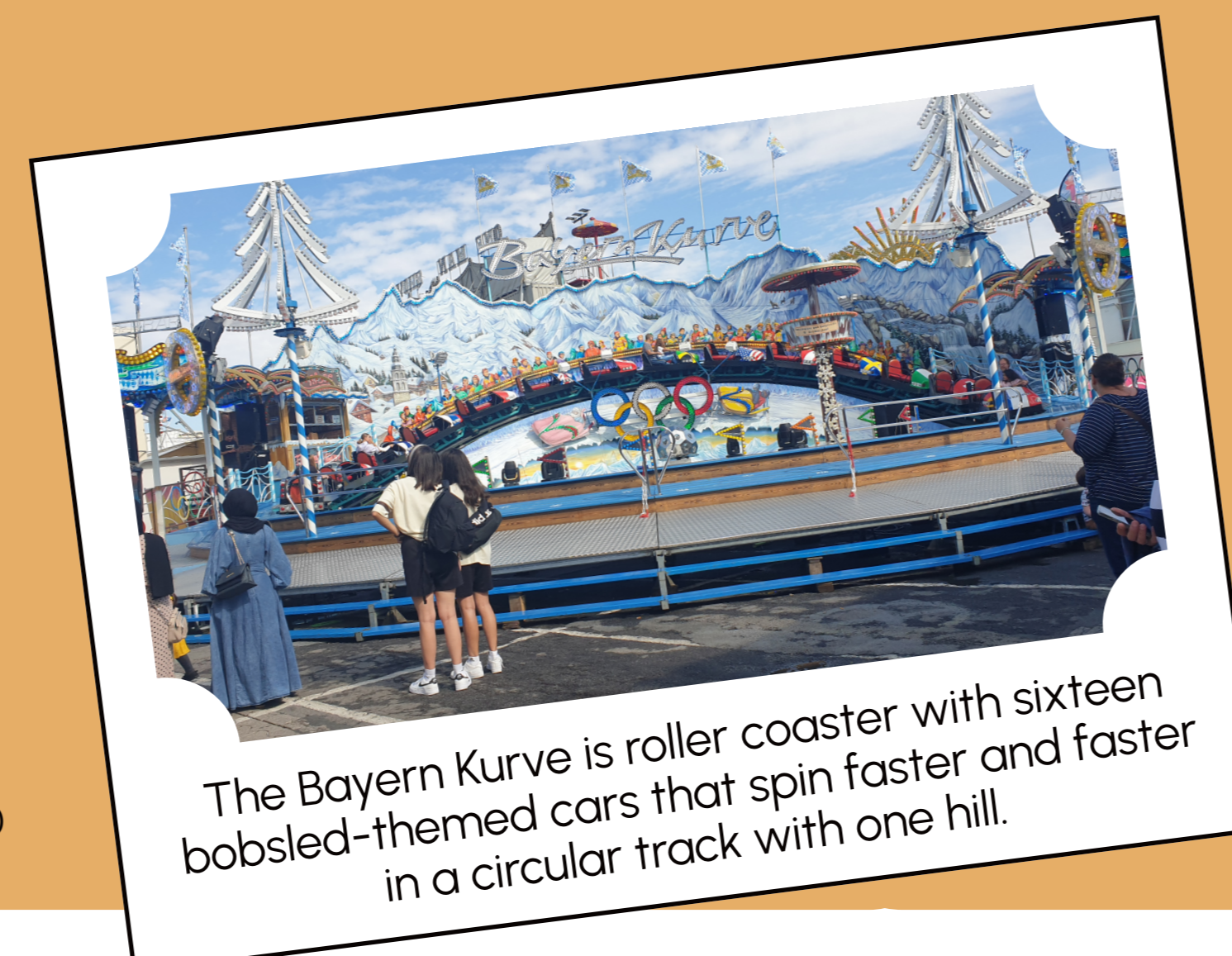
Which other cross-border collaborations between cities or other actors can be testified?

### REGIONAL MICRO-HISTORIES

The research will present several biographies of objects that reveal that the production and distribution of amusement rides and goods are telling stories about cross-border relationships and collaborations. (Kopytoff 1986).

Example  
Bayern Kurve

(Source: Private, 2022)



The Bayern Kurve is roller coaster with sixteen bobsled-themed cars that spin faster and faster in a circular track with one hill.

As is often the case, this attraction takes an event or development from real life and adapts it thematically. In this case, the set up alludes to a dangerous curve of a bobsleigh racing track, which came to fame at the IV. Olympic Winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1933, hosted by the Nazi state under Adolph Hitler. Built in 1910, the track was last used in 1966 and is listed as a historical monument since 2003.

The Bayern Kurve was designed and built in 1965 by the German roller coaster engineer Anton Schwarzkopf (1924 – 2001) for Heinz Distel, a show man from Munich. The model we see today in Luxembourg is one of 50 and was probably built for Ludwig Meeß & Söhne in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. This model is now owned by the Thomas Bozec from Normandy, France.

The newspapers reveal that the Bayern Kurve was premiered at the "Schueberfouer" in 1968. Unlike France and Luxembourg, this amusement ride is since the 1980s no longer popular in Germany. Most models here have been put in storage or were sold to the United States of America.

### Sources

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### Popkult60



The PhD thesis is carried out within the research project **Transnational popular culture – Europe in the long 1960s** and aims to contribute to a systematic and multi-perspective historiography of European cultural transfers in a transnational perspective in pop culture in the long 1960s.

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