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**LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF A MODERN CITY. BOURGEOIS MIDDLE-
CLASSES IN ESCH-SUR-ALZETTE (1842-1922)**

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INTRODUCTION

Léon Metz MP: We're not originally from the canton of Esch. But why did we go there? To make our fortune, don't forget! (...) **Michel Welter:** Speak for yourself! **Leon Metz:** You're not from Esch as much as I am not; I was there before, you came after me. **M. Welter:** You're talking about making a fortune. **L. Metz:** Didn't you go there to earn a living? **M. Welter:** But not to make a fortune. I must protest¹ (Bickering between Léon Metz, director of the Metz & Cie steel plant and liberal deputy for Esch and Dr. Michel Welter, doctor and social democrat, also deputy for Esch, at the Chamber of Deputies, session of 16 February 1897).²

1. Esch-sur-Alzette 1840s-1920s: A town in transition.

This brief allusion to the tensions between the different political factions representing Esch, in the Parliament, serves to introduce our story. The story of the presence of a bourgeoisie at the turn of the 20th century and of a branch of the middle-class that, although less wealthy, still claimed to play an active role in the town's destiny. In the mid-19th century, Esch-sur Alzette is still an agricultural village. Most of the just over 2,000 inhabitants are small farmers who supplement their meager incomes with sideline jobs as stonemason or brickmakers (Flies, 1979, 579). Other jobs of the main traditional trades, for example, shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths and carpenters, are also represented in the community (Kremer-Schmit 1986). Most of its population concentrates around and inhabits its small centre, known as Im Dorff Most of its population concentrates around and inhabits its small centre, known as Im Dorff (Flies 1979; Buchler et al. 2020). This medieval center remained for long a cohesive enough space for collective life. Esch-sur- Alzette was, thus, by the mid-19th century according to author Véronique Schaber a “town like any other” (Schaber 1984). Hubert Clément³, in 1923, would have referred to Esch in 1879 “as a poor, unimportant village with barely 2,000 inhabitants” (H. Clement 1923, 32).

¹ **In the original** : Léon Metz MP : Nous ne sommes pas originaires du canton d'Esch. Mais pourquoi sommes-nous y allés ? Pour y faire fortune ne l'oubliez, pas ! (...) Michel Welter : Parlez pour vous ! Leon Metz : Vous aussi bien que moi, vous n'êtes pas originaire d'Esch ; j'y étais avant vous vous êtes venu après moi. M. Welter : Vous parlez de faire fortune. L. Metz : Est-ce que vous n'y êtes pas allé pour gagner votre vie ? M. Welter : Mais pas pour faire fortune. Je proteste.

² *Compte-Rendu des Séances de la Chambre des Députés du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg* [C.R.], 1896-1897, p.1074). ³ Hubert Clement (1889-1953), teacher, journalist and editor to be of the *Escher Tageblatt* in 1928 and of the magazine *A-Z* as of 1934. He will also become Esch sur Alzette's mayor in 1935 and socialist deputy from 1934-1940 (Bodry and Fayot 2016).

⁴ In this instance, the notarial archives for the period 1842-1875 are revealing (ANLux - MCN-05348; ANLux - MCN- 07190.) A significant number of young people were employed in Paris and sought parental authorization in Esch when the time to get married came. The registers of deeds, which we deal with in part II, are another revealing source testifying to the emigration patterns.

⁵ Even at the inception of the first steel plants in Esch-sur-Alzette most of those who were neither major landowners (or owners of land rich in iron ore, nor had an occupation at the factories (accusing a labour surplus) preferred to emigrate (Kremer-Schmit 1986).

It did still share the same peasant character, and hence economic and social consequences of the rest of the country. The population was often poor, and emigration to the United States of America – as well as France⁴ and Belgium was not rare⁵. Up until 1845, the population was thus mainly busy in agriculture: cereals and hay were plentiful, fruit less so. The precariat of work as labourers, endured well into the second half of the 19th century and this irrespective of the presence of an early-stage iron industry that was already operational. There was in fact a surplus in job demands (Kremer-Schmit 1986; Gilbert Trausch 1969) in the agricultural sector. What made Esch stand out and confer it a certain regional prestige was its elevation to administrative center of its own district (1841), result from the administrative reform after the independence of Luxembourg from Belgium (1839). Luxembourg remained, however, an integral part of the Kingdom of Netherlands, albeit geographically “disconnected” from it. It is undoubtedly with the implantation of the industry that Esch-sur-Alzette sees its destiny as both industrial, commercial centre and melting pot emerge. As new educational institutions, the industry with its satellite businesses and the branches of the State institutions increased their presence, so did a new type of urban bourgeoisie.

In this cadastral map of the village of Esch-sur-Alzette and the Berwart castle from 1842, one can see the oval contours of the former medieval walls with (in darker colour) the Saint Jean Baptiste church and the vicarage house in the centre, the municipality building and school on the right, and the presbytery down near the river. The river Alzette flows through the Brill meadows (today rue du Canal), past the mill (today corner of rue de l'Eau and rue de la Libération) and along the gardens of the Boltgen estates (today rue de l'Alzette) and continues behind the castle and along the street to Luxembourg-city. New districts have sprung up since 1800: am Quartier on the right river side, rue de Faubourg near Tiergarten, new houses on rue de Luxembourg (Buchler et al. 2020).

Despite an enduring emigration, Esch's population did not stop increasing, in the period comprised between in 1842 to 1922. However in the period comprised between 1840 and 1870 this growth was barely extraordinary (Kremer-Schmit 1986), rather it seemed to follow a normal development of birth/death ratio. Although the iron ore deposits had previously been exploited in small scale, and mostly at a domestic level (Schaber 1984), its potential had not been fully "rediscovered" yet. The future mining and steel industries did not yet play any role in the economic life of the village, by the mid-19th century. An immediate consequence of the rediscovery of the iron ores was that the land in the municipality of Esch, which until then had been of relatively mediocre value, became more important. The iron industry being one of the most lucrative to real estate ownership, the sale of the *minette* land ensured considerable income not only for the private owners of the land in question but also for the entire municipality (Kremer-Schmit 1986). It is thus in the period 1865-1870 that the urbanization process takes off (after the railway came to town). The revenues of the municipality, which previously relied mostly on timber sales, now benefited from the sale of land to the industrial promoters. The needs of an increasing population could therefore be matched by the municipality's increasing profit. Over the next decades infrastructure multiplies: the sewage network, a new train station, new schools, gaz and public lighting (1899) as well as a slaughterhouse (1889).

In the early 1850's the Metz company starts its exploitation followed by ten other companies in the 1870s. Over the next two decades, the metallurgical plants dominate the landscape of the city: in 1871, the first blast furnaces of Société Auguste Metz & Co. ("Metzeschmelz") and the Société des Hauts Fourneaux de Luxembourg of the Brasseur brothers ("Brasseurschmelz") start operating.

In 1892, the S.A. des Hauts Fourneaux de Luxembourg merged with the Aachener Hütten- Aktien-Verein. The factory of the Aachener continued to be named "Brasseurschmelz" or "Al Schmelz". In 1907 the Aachener company was taken over by the Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks-AG. After the selling of the ownings of the German steel companies after World War I, the plant became the "Usine de Terre Rouge"

(owned by the Société Métallurgique des Terres Rouges), name that came into use in 1919 (Buchler et al. 2020). The Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks AG would build a third huge steel plant in Esch, west of the city, called “Adolf-Emil-Hütte” from 1909 to 1912. When it was taken over in 1919 by the Société Métallurgique des Terres Rouges, it was renamed “Usine de Belval”.

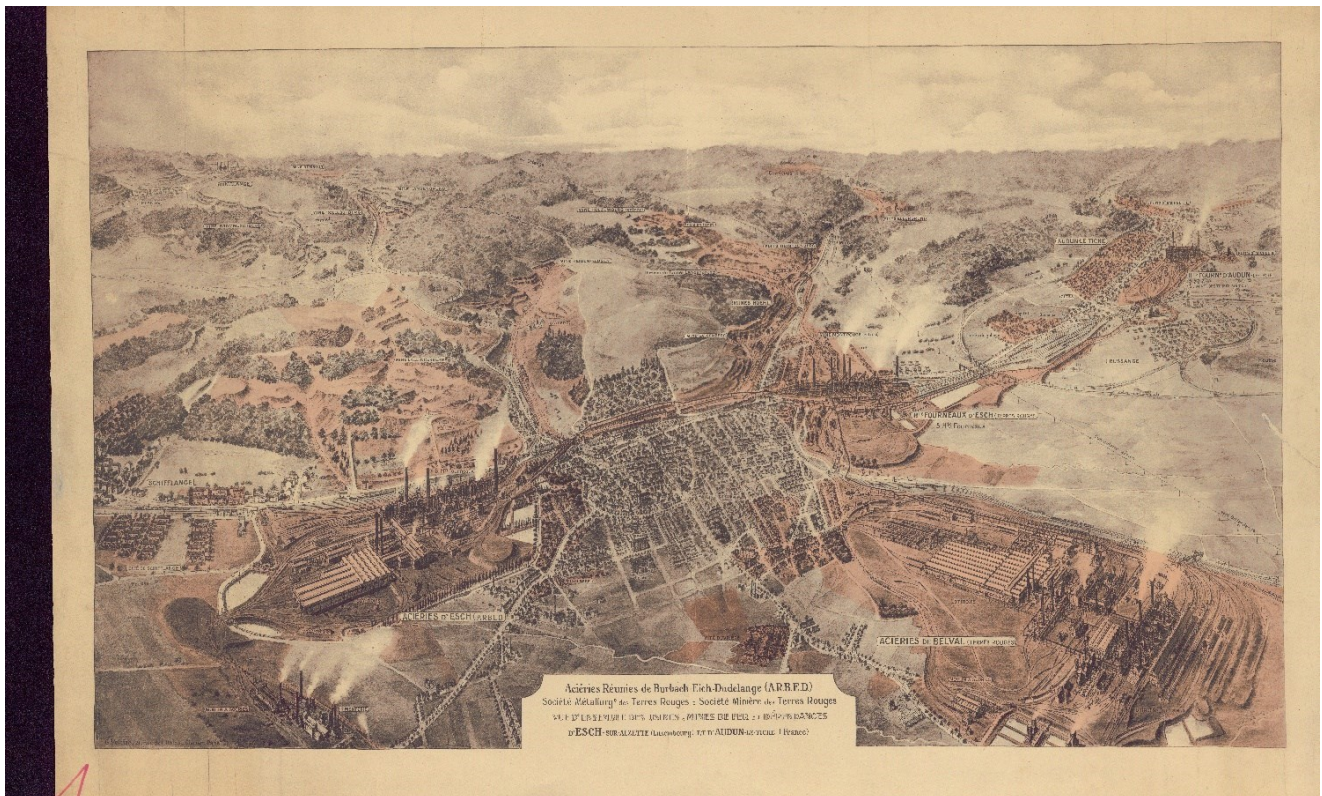


Figure 2: Plan realised by the Parisian cartographer Georges Peltier for the steel company ARBED showing the towns of Esch-sur-Alzette and Audun-le-Tiche in the 1920s, from north to south, and in particular (in brown) the iron and steel plants, mines and housing of ARBED, Société Métallurgique des Terres Rouges and Société Minière des Terres Rouges, which surround the town of Esch (ANLux, Archives ARBED, CP-01-012).

In this image, the oval shape of the old historical core of the town is clearly visible, as is the expansion of the urban area, initially towards and around the three plants (“Aciéries d’Esch” ARBED, “Hauts fourneaux d’Esch” Terres Rouges, “Aciéries de Belval” Terres Rouges) and the railway station, as well as the beginnings of the expansion to the north of the town, with the construction of the City Hospital.

On a first stage, small property owners benefited from the richness of their own terrains in iron ore. However, the emergence of the railway and its multiple export channels towards the German, French and Belgian borders, made it so, that eventually, small, independent landowners could no longer compete with

a better organized –both technically and financially- industry (Kremer- Schmit 1986). After the establishment of the initial industrial plants, requests for constructing side roads, altering watercourses, and creating level crossings were promptly approved by the municipal council. It was in the town's best interest to facilitate the growth of the industry, which significantly contributed to the village's prosperity and significance. The requests to the municipal council (ANLux INT-606 to ANLux INT- 612) of this initial stage demonstrate that whether it was the Metz family, the Collart, the Brasseur⁶, or still foreign owned companies, their requests faced little resistance. Requests were approved based on a quid pro quo, with the condition that the new owners would be responsible for maintaining the terrain after receiving the concession. This did not avoid trouble with individual owners themselves, who tried to profit as much as they could. In fact, in the period between 1854 and 1869 the requests for mining concessions by the main ironmasters saw the opposition of organized citizens and other smaller owners with interests in continuing their own profit in an independent way (Kremer-Schmit 1986). Parliamentary discussions reveal a government convinced to have one of the best laws in the region in which concerned the regulation of the mining concessions, but private resistance grew also in other towns of the mining South such as Differdange.⁷

Throughout the late nineteenth and into the first decade of the twentieth century, different social classes lived and mingled in a circumscribed space (Leiner 1994). According to Leiner (ibid), the result of this process was a mixed socio-professional structure of the old village center with a fairly high proportion of workers, while the "better" neighbourhoods - at least until 1914 - were to be found on the edges of the urban settlement area. This growth also implied an increase in urban commodities such as city lighting, sewage, new roads and new streets. In the meantime, the municipal administration was busy with enlargement of streets, the coverage of the Alzette street, and different projects of sanitation. After all the 19th century, had been the “hygiene” century par excellence. The urban planning was chiefly concerned, with the universal access to water and electricity, of which a great part of the town was still deprived of,

⁶ All representatives of the major industrialist families in Luxembourg, namely in its Southern region. Competition was fierce and the Metz tried to impeach Brasseur’s factory implantation, the central government ended up allowing both plants to be installed within weeks of difference (Kremer-Schmit, ibid).

⁷ **Kirpach, Director (Minister) of Internal Affairs** "It is up to the surface owner who suffers damage as a result of underground exploration to pursue his rights before the ordinary courts. This is the guarantee of the right of a citizen who claims to have been wronged by another; he goes before his natural judge, states his case, the judge assesses it and passes sentence (...). **Spoos, MP (Social-democrat):** (...) It should be noted that the industrial companies involved against the small landowners will pursue what they call their right to the last instance and will involve the farmers in legal expenses which will ruin them and which, in many cases, will exceed the value of the object in dispute. No, gentlemen, when we are talking about perhaps 800 small landowners whose rights have been infringed, we are no longer talking about private matters and civil interests; their cause becomes a public cause, in my opinion (C.R. 1896-1897, 3 February 1897, p.781).

at the turn of the century. The population growth fostered the construction of new buildings. Until the beginning of the 20th century, when access to credit in the form of bank loans was first introduced (Kaufmann 1909), the skilled working class and the lower middle-classes (Lorang 1991; 2009) depended strongly on the employer's housing schemes. Whereas for the less qualified workers, the options available did not go beyond the rent of a bed, at best a room in one of the city's hostels or other informal accommodation. The precarious situation for the vast majority of workers went on for several decades. Population soared in some neighbourhoods like the Brill or the Grenz. The presence of a predominantly working class was the cause for concern in terms of hygiene, an issue raised frequently during the local council meetings. The increase in population also rose concerns with security, often associated with a "perceived" potentially dangerous migrant population.

Another consequence of the city's exponential growth was the need for the construction of new or the enlargement of existent cemeteries, for the growing Catholic, Protestant and Jewish communities. It is especially through the need for the construction of new schools and buildings for the different religious confessions that the population growth sees its full expression. The construction of a protestant church receives financial support from the *Aachener Hütten Verein* in 1897, the first stone of the Synagogue is launched in 1898 and in 1908, it is the turn of the Italian community with the construction of the *Missione Italiana* Church in the Grenz neighbourhood.

Workers' residential districts were oriented toward the industrial companies in their peripheral locations. An increasing housing demand sees emerge the predominantly working-class neighbourhoods of Neudorf, the Grenz, and the Hoehl, which offered a first, but insufficient housing solutions. Notwithstanding the attempt from the industrial players to find suitable solutions to both their working-class force as well as its white-collar employee force, the housing shortage became critical and would eventually affect the precarious, the seasonal migrants as well as private and public employees alike. The precariat and penury of the working class will benefit small hostel owners, *marchands de sommeil* (pension holders), real estate promoters and a plethora of small businesses who could then live off a new clientele offered by the prospect of a population growth.

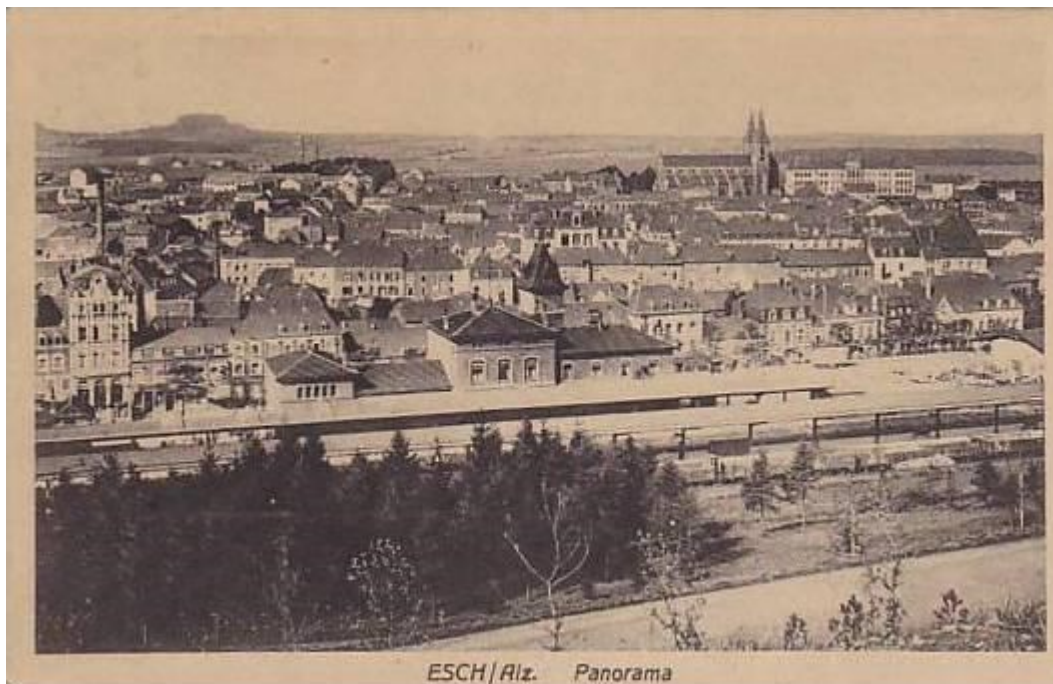


Figure 3: Esch-sur-Alzette. Panorama, sine dato. Archives municipales de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

1.1 The mining and steel industry in Esch-sur-Alzette.

From 1870 onwards, industrialists, built factories in the mining ore region in the South of Luxembourg. They centralised their activities around the Minette region, primarily, for reasons relating to saving on transport costs. Even before that, major Luxembourg and foreign iron ore companies had already bought up mining land in the south of the country⁸. Belgian and German companies, which used coke, were interested in luxembourgish iron ore. Despite its unfavourable geographical location, around 1870 Esch became the centre of the iron and steel industry, which was to be the backbone of the Luxembourg economy for a century. Although Esch was in the immediate vicinity of the iron ore deposits, it was far from the sources of its fuel supplies and was located away from the main communication routes, with no direct links to the waterways.

Towards the end of 1870, the directors of the Metz et Compagnie company requested an authorisation to set up four high furnaces in Esch, a request which was accepted a few months later in January 1871. A parenthesis serves here to introduce that the Metz came from a line of industrialists that began with a small

⁸ In 1854, a first application for a concession to mine iron ore is submitted jointly by Société Metz et Cie and the Prussian company Adolf Kraemer of Quint (near Trier), (Buchler et al. 2020).

forgery industry in Berbourg, in the East of Luxembourg. The latter grew to become one of Luxembourg's pioneer steel making industry. Its main steel plants were then implanted in the outskirts of the capital, in Eich and Dommeldange. Another company also became involved, the S.A. des Mines du Luxembourg et des Forges de Sarrebruck, chaired by Victor Tesch (1812-1912), who had close family ties with Norbert Metz⁹ (1811-1885), chairman of the company that bore his name. This and other alliances are no accident¹⁰. Norbert Metz and Victor Tesch were both shareholders in the Saarbrücken company. Their motivations in Esch are strictly linked to a growing opportunity in the German market which made them envisage an increase in their steel production and thus procure new mining concessions in Luxembourg. Not being able to financially sustain this new enterprise, each on their own, Tesch and Metz decided for a synergy in business. The factory in Esch was therefore arranged in such a way that it would be possible at any time to split it in two and operate each part separately. Each of the parties appointed a director, Hubert Müller-Tesch (1837-1917), son in law of Victor Tesch, and Léon Metz (1842-1928), son of Auguste Metz and nephew of Norbert Metz, the two brothers being the percussors of the development of the iron industry in Luxembourg.

1872 sees the commissioning of another two blast furnaces at the *Brasseurschmelz*, owned by Pierre Brasseur¹¹. The list of the 26 founders of his company, raised with a capital of 3 million francs, sheds light on his good connections to both the regional bourgeoisie in Esch's canton (the landowner and doctor Théodore de Wacquant, the landowner J.P. Hardt from Kayl, Nicolas Rothermel, pharmacist in Esch, and Auguste de Gerlache, landowner in Differdange for example) as well as those from the capital and elsewhere in the country. The names of the founders included in fact, Leon Würth, Pierre Brasseur's brother-in-law and Charles Simonis¹², both lawyers, as well as Antoine Dominique Pescatore, paper manufacturer among others.

20 years after, in 1892 the company will be taken over by the *Aachener Hütten- Actien-Verein* (AHAV) which led to the construction of two new supplementary high furnaces and a subsequent (1894-1904) first

⁹ One of his daughters Edmée was married to Emil Metz, Member of Parliament, industrialist, mayor of Eich (1866-1899), son of Norbert Metz.

¹⁰ See namely the work of Barthel (Barthel 2022) for the intricate marriage threads of the different families of Luxembourg's industrialist bourgeoisie.

¹¹ Pierre Brasseur (1832-1918), born in Esch-an-der-Alzette as the 7th child of the couple Alexis Brasseur-Schockmel. His father had founded the "Société pour Exploitation des Minières du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg" in 1861; He trained and exercise briefly as a notary (1865-1867), date until he becomes more involved with the mining activities connected mining landholdings, he already owned in Rumelange. His success is certainly coronated by a marriage into the Würth family - industrialist family of the capital- whose daughter Hélène he marries in 1865. He is the half-brother of notary Dominique Léopold Brasseur (1807-1863) also a notary in Esch.

¹² See more about his biography in Part IV.

phase of construction of company housing (*Aachener Kolonien*) for workers. On 1 January 1905, the "A.H.A.V. Rothe Erde" is formed, having a few years earlier, acquired the blast furnaces and mines of Deutsch-Oth (Audun-le-Tiche), the nearby town on the Lorraine border (belonging to Germany from 1871 to 1918). In order to secure a coal base, the "A.H.A.V. Rothe Erde" forms a community of interests with the "Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks Aktien Gesellschaft" and the "Schalker Gruben- und Hüttenverein". These three companies merged on 1 January 1907 under the company name "Rhein-Elbe-Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks A.G.", which will then start building a third plant in the west of the city, the "Adolf-Emil-Hütte" in Esch-Belval. Between 1909-1912, the construction of this integrated steel plant - blast furnaces, steelworks, rolling mills - by the Gelsenkirchener takes place.

In December 1919, all these steel plants were taken over by the steel making company Société Métallurgique des Terres Rouges and subsequently transferred to the ARBED in 1926/1937.

1911 has seen the creation of ARBED (Aciéries Réunies de Burbach-Eich-Dudelange) through the merger of several companies: Société Anonyme des Hauts Fourneaux et Forges de Dudelange, Société des Forges d'Eich, Metz & Cie, Société Anonyme des Mines du Luxembourg et des Forges de Sarrebruck. A modernisation of the former *Metzeschmelz*, with construction of steelworks and rolling mills, had long been on the cards, also because it had been losing terrain to the more modern infrastructure and bulkier production of the *Brasseur Schmelz* (Barthel 2022) since the 1890s.

With the shift of the steel industry's centre of gravity to the Minett basin from the 1870s onwards, Esch grew rapidly. It is only natural that some neighbourhoods came to serve, geographically as satellite habitats to the industrial companies. In Esch, after 1870, the main labour agglomeration was located south-west of the town centre in the neighbourhood of the "Brasseurschmelz" (as of 1919, the name Terre Rouge becomes more popular) and to the Schiffflange side, east of the town centre, in the direction of the "Metzeschmelz". Entire districts were built around the new factories: first the Grenz/Hiehl (Hoehl) district near the Brasseurschmelz, the Neudorf near the Metz steel plant, and later the Uecht (Aacht) district near the Adolf-Emil-Hütte in Belval. With the construction of the Gelsenkirchener Schmelz in 1909-1912, the large workers' colonies Auf der Acht (today Cité Léon Weirich) and Ehleringerstraße (today Cité Dr Welter) were built in the west of the town. For a whole century, from 1870 to 1970, Esch was steeped in heavy industry.

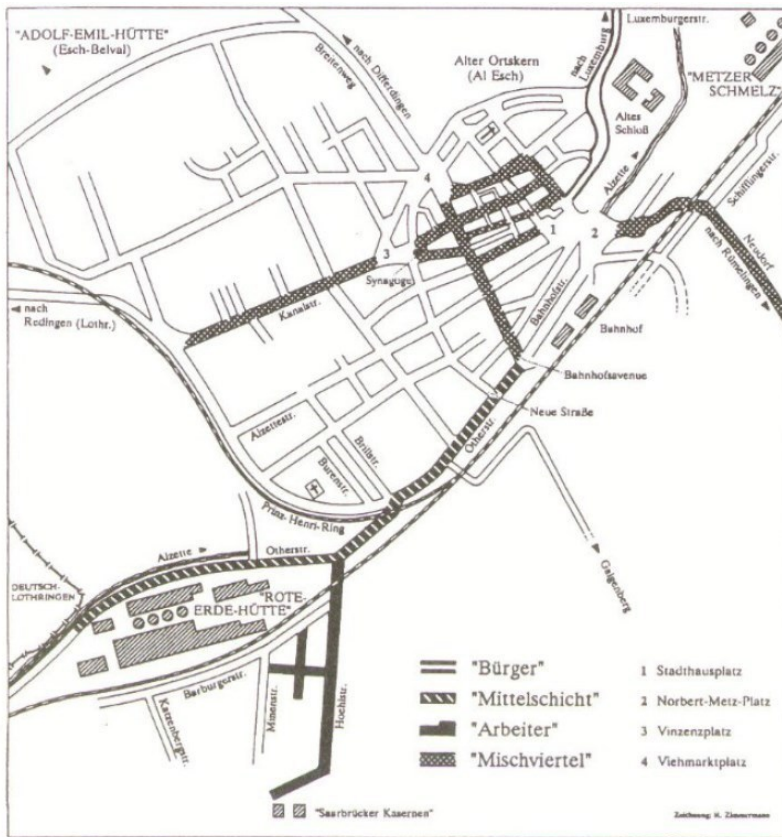


Figure 4: Neighbourhood formation in Esch-sur-Alzette. 1871-1900 (Leiner 1994, 245).

The above map clearly distinguishes the working-class milieu: The Hoehl street and Grenz neighbourhoods. The Grenz, has its the streets on the other side of the railway line. The Hoehl neighbourhood which started in the Hoehl street, was according to Leiner (Leiner 1994) the only exclusively working-class workers' colony in the industrial city, by the turn of the century. The development of the industry is also strictly connected to that of the railway connections. In 1873 the Esch-Pétange-Athus rail link is inaugurated offering a connection towards Belgium, followed in 1880 by the Esch-Audun-le-Tiche railway line, towards Lorraine. In 1906, the Ottange-Esch-Differdange funicular railway to transport iron ore becomes operative.

The centre of the town shifted from “Aal Esch”, the old center, to the south with the Rue de l'Alzette and the surrounding streets as the business centre. Urban infrastructures such as the gasworks and abattoir were built on the periphery of the city. With the opening of the “Adolf-Emil-Hütte” in 1912, Esch began its extension to the west and the north.

This new industrial setting opened new professional horizons for the educated classes. An increasing population not only employed in the main steel plants, as unskilled workers, but also in the services and businesses will establish itself to cater for Esch's business and consumption needs. For the wealthier population, the location on the north-eastern edge of the town became an ideal residential area to settle after First World War. The working-class neighbourhoods near the industrial plants and the business centre in the southern part of the city with its dense perimeter block development did not offer the environment that an aspiring middle class expected to live in. In the as yet undeveloped "Dellh h" district (it will develop only in the mid 1920's), the land parcels were deemed to be an ideal building land, close to the centre, well-ventilated and sunny on a slight hill, far away from the polluted exhaust fumes of the industrial plants. Until then, save for the exception of the northern part of Rue de Luxembourg, where the mansions of engineers, directors and merchants emerged, it can be said different social classes mingled in Esch, around its city center and the commercial streets of Alzette and the Rue d'Audun, something thoroughly demonstrated in Leiner's (ibid) work.

Other questions deriving from Leiner's work deserve the possibility of being further explored: What influences did urban development and industrialisation exert on processes of social mobility? Which mutations affecting socio-professional and family categories, demographic trends and mentalities can be traced back to the period spanning beyond his own study (1870-1910)?

Longtime associated with its working-class history, the "Red Esch" was also composed of a diversified, thriving middle-class, and to a lesser extent even of a "proper" bourgeoisie. This research attempts to provide for the first comprehensive social history study, focusing exclusively on the middle-classes and bourgeoisie of the turn of the (20th) century Esch-sur-Alzette. The aim of this research is to shed light on the role of the elites and middle-classes in the urban development of the city by analyzing the actions of its main representatives living in Esch in the second half of the 19th century and first two decades of the 20th century. How did class formation affect power relations in the city and how did it impact its urban development? Did the demarcation from a lower class contribute to a sense of identity among those who were middle class? Indeed, it will be here argued, that such stance needs to be nuanced in the case of Esch- sur-Alzette.

Moreover, our title remits to the notion of modernity which is both a socio-cultural and historical concept that refers to the transition from traditional ways of life to contemporary, industrialized societies characterized by technological advancements, urbanization, and changing social structures. We privileged here the notion of modernity to that of progress, because whilst the former encompasses a broad spectrum of transformations, including shifts in economic systems, political ideologies, and cultural expressions,

which have shaped the modern world as we know it today, it carries less of the prejudice of the latter. A prejudice that may be associated with a society which in any way we would want to depict as “backward”, just because relying almost exclusively on an agrarian economy. Modernity in Esch, means of course, transformed modes of production, paving the way for a new economic order. As it also means a much-needed infrastructure, transport, sanitation and better housing conditions. On the other hand, modernity stands in our research, for all the cultural shifts taking place at the same time and which will at the core of the fundamental changes the city will undergo during this almost one century of consolidation of the industry and urban development.

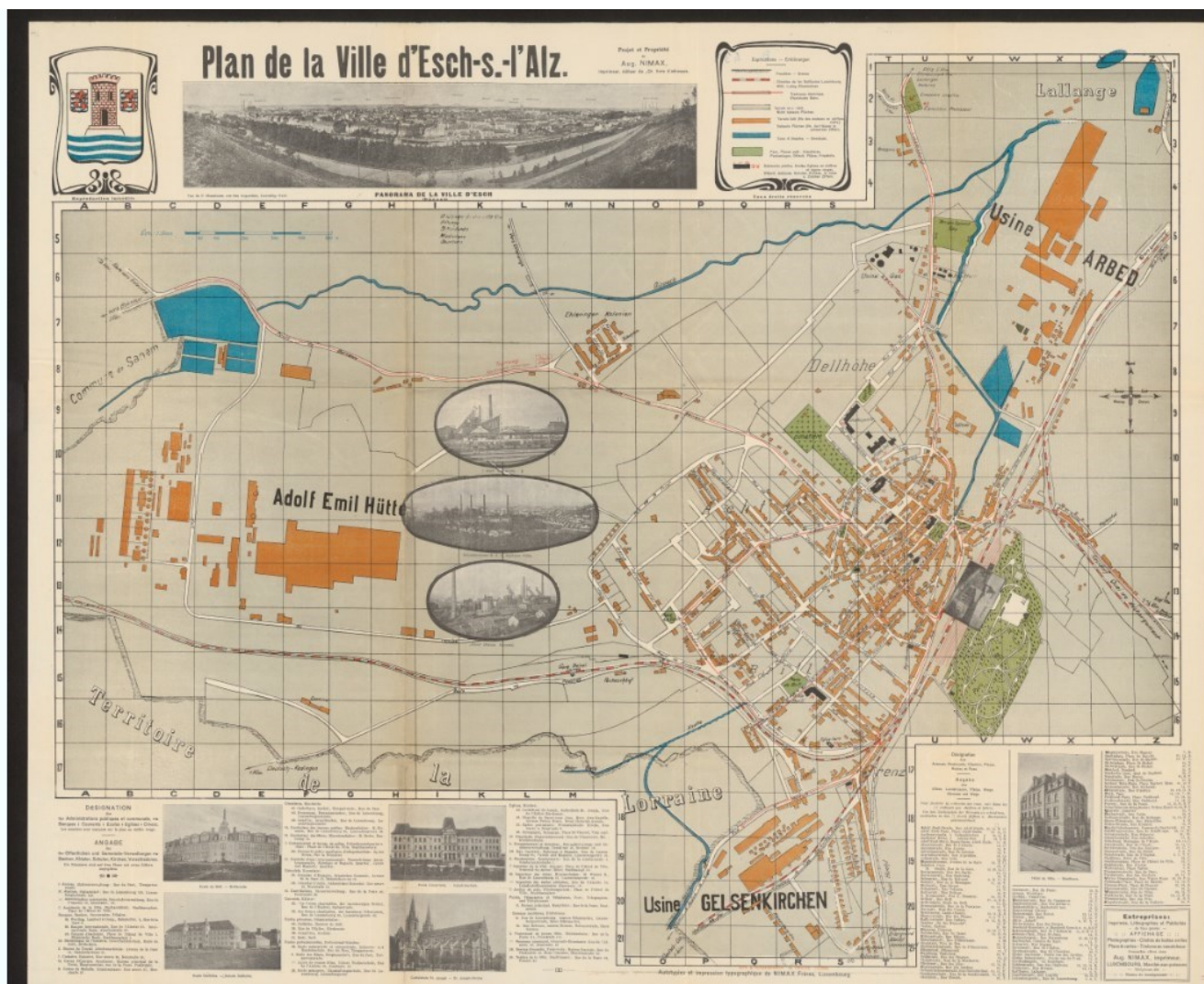


Figure 5: Esch-sur-Alzette, 1916. The above map shows distinctively where the different steel plants were placed (Nimax, 1916).

2 SOCIAL CLASS – Conceptual problematics

“Ech mengen d’Mëttelschicht ass eppes, wou mir praktesch alleguerten hei dozou gehéieren“ (Gilles Roth¹³, RTL-Télé, 29.09.2023 as cited in D’Land „Wäit an d’Mëttelschicht“, 9.02.2024.)

2.1 Middle-class and/or bourgeoisie? A problematic conceptualization

Using outdated class terminologies can be risky in the 21st century. In Luxembourg, the statement by the current Minister of Finance denotes in fact a somewhat dominant idea that a majority of the population is middle-class, a notion which can be traced back in the timeline of to the country's imaginary on social class belonging.

This section covers for a literary review that breaks down the concepts of middle-class and bourgeoisie throughout time and across different locations and perspectives. It goes on describing what different historical and sociological scholarship mean by bourgeoisie and middle-class (es). The discussion then continues to an overview on the status of historiography in Luxembourg concerning social class. It concludes with the grounds justifying the need for further research on the bourgeoisie and middle-classes in the Esch-sur-Alzette of the early 20th century and hence legitimate the present research’s aims.

The terms bourgeoisie and middle-class have evolved over time, with significant departures from their original meanings, particularly during the 19th and 20th centuries. The industrial revolution brought about drastic changes to societal structures. Similar to what is happening with the working-class in the 21st century, social sciences require new ways to rethink these conceptualisations, of which those fueled with Marxian perspectives, and with them new analytical lenses (Raphael 2020).

Moreover, there is undoubtedly a common thread of derogatory connotations with the bourgeoisie, examples from the literature range from Kierkegaard and his despise for the status quo of the bourgeois, to the work of Flaubert (Chaline 1982). Often, criticism of the bourgeoisie arose within the bourgeois milieu itself. The French philosopher Edmond Goblot (1858-1935), best known for his scathing sociological essay *La Barrière et le Niveau* (Goblot 1925) - in which he lays the foundations of a pioneering theory of social distinction- provides a useful lens. Abandoning materialist class analysis in favour of an original cultural perspective, Goblot unabashedly deciphers the mores of the French

¹³ In English: I believe that the middle class is something we all here, practically belong to. Gilles Roth, Minister of Finance (2023-). Former long-term mayor of Mamer, one of the wealthiest municipalities of the country.

bourgeoisie, a world he knows all the better for having come from it himself (Goblot, 1925). Although Goblot did not go down in history with the "fame" of his colleagues Emile Durkheim and even a later Pierre Bourdieu, part of his analysis on the French bourgeoisie fits the bourgeois and middle classes of contemporary Luxembourg particularly well.

A thorough review on the matter of bourgeoisie in Europe can leave one with the impression that the bourgeoisie, as perceived above, crystalized in the 19th century. In the present day the term is still used discretionarily at times its meanings becoming so elusive that it became a fit-for-all term to distinguish haves and haves-not. It is also so overwhelmed with a prejudice that it lacks any analytical clarity.

In fact, the study of the bourgeoisie has sparked, with few exceptions, little interest from the 20th century historical perspective. In the same vein, among present day research, if it is true that the bourgeoisie is granted a prominent role in the fields of urban studies and sociology, it is less so the case in History. Indeed, often the research on the bourgeoisie of the 20th century, lacks prolificacy, namely by means of comparison between cities (Chaline 1982; Pinson 1985). In the late 1960's, the social history of the bourgeoisie and middle classes met a renewed interest, particularly through the contribution of the French *Annales* school and in Germany, through the Bielefeld working group (Leiner 1994). Despite having contributed majorly to an advance in the knowledge of the bourgeoisie and middle classes in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century, this research field seems to have been short-lived and dropped in attractiveness already by the mid 1980's.

Longtime disregarded by social history, the bourgeoisie was an indispensable social category and a vehicle for the development of equality in society, notwithstanding the undeniable paternalistic role some actions by the bourgeoisie were tainted of, in the period here at stake. Indeed, in the course of the time that spans from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century there is no doubt that the urban bourgeoisie promoted, at least to a certain extent, social progress. The bourgeoisie appears to be a term that is more straightforward in its aim to define who belongs to it whereas the attempt at a defining a middle-class definition and categorization represents a greater conundrum.

The problems of language, together with the belief that we can establish terms with equivalent meanings in different societies, is one of the greatest problems of comparative social history, exacerbated by the way that terminology was itself a matter of contest within each society (Crossick 2004, 91).

Nevertheless, historians and social scientists alike do concur that although they have common characteristics there is no such stratum that can be identified under the reductive umbrella of one single middle class. Rather, there are several and different types of middle classes, of which the bourgeoisie may

or not be considered an integrant part of. As we are about to develop further, the place of the bourgeoisie inside or outside the middle class, is also a discussable according to the context of time and place of the actual research.

Class matters as a variable and determinant in most social research. Virtually all individuals, at different stages of societies 'development would know how to pigeonhole themselves into a class category. Whether that identification corresponds to objective categories belongs to the subjectiveness that class-consciousness poses.

If one excludes the working class, (admittedly the most straightforward in terms of what it encompasses) both the definitions of middle and upper classes present a variety of meanings across time, place, and languages.

With such a plethora of connotations, the richness of each of their significations represents its very limit. For what "bourgeoisie" may mean in the present day is not necessarily, what was meant in the early 20th century, nor across different geographical locations. As Jürgen Kocka comments:

The English "middle class" is not identical with its French, German, or Italian equivalents, *bourgeoisie*, *Bürgertum* and *borghesia* (Kocka 2004, 15).

In the quest for a definition of a concept so fluid, language matters. In fact, not only are concepts such as bourgeoisie and middle-class, often used interchangeably, as it happens that within the same language they may stand for very different meanings. It is enough to think of the way British or American historiography differently connotes middle-classes¹⁴ and "bourgeoisie" (in itself a French word) to realise that both terms carry very different cultural and historical layers of meaning. Jürgen Kocka (1999) commented, in relation to the 19th century German *Bürgertum*, "most- German-language historians are likely to agree on which occupational and social groups should be counted as part of the *Bürgertum*¹⁵ (conveniently translated as "middle-class" and sometimes "bourgeoisie") and which should not (...)"(Kocka 1999, 192). Also in Britain, social historian Geoffrey Crossick denounces the problem of the English language and of its historiography to come to terms with the ambiguous concept of middle class. In fact, Crossick (1998) claims that the English language misses the duality that both the French and German¹⁶ terms allow, that is, a concept that encompasses the distinction between educated and wealthy

¹⁴ In his study, Cole (Cole 1950) mentions how a poll in the USA in 1939 showed that 88% of the interviewees considered themselves to belong to the middle-classes (ibid: 276).

¹⁵ The term bourgeoisie has its etymological roots in a legally defined class of the *Ancien Regime* whereby it literally meant the inhabitants of the city "Bourg", hence merchants and business owners. It has its German comparable in the "Bürgertum", both having however evolved to describe different circumstances in time.

¹⁶ Namely through the use of the postfix *Stand* and *Schicht*.

classes, who are however not members of nobility. Crossick adds further, that it is only towards the end of the 19th century that both French and German equip themselves with their terms, *classes moyennes* and *Mittelstand*, respectively, to designate “exclusively” an inferior part of the wealthy/ owner-type educated class (Crossick 1998, 1093). In Luxembourg too the question of the middle classes makes a first appearance in the electoral campaign, and from 1902 onwards became major domestic political themes. In the attempt to break down the middle class into different strata, scholarship referred often to Marxist thought, who mainly theorized in terms of the *grande bourgeoisie* (capitalists) and the *petite bourgeoisie* (capitalists doomed to disappear) against the proletariat. However, this polarized stance in terms of oppressors and oppressed, has to some extent, disregarded the roles of the middle classes. The *petite bourgeoisie* was indeed, in Luxembourg and elsewhere, more tenacious than one would initially think of, and it went on surviving against all (Marxian) odds:

Against all probability, these prophecies did not come true. The more or less general fact is that, in spite of this formidable push by all the powers that threatened to destroy them, the middle classes have not disappeared. In almost every country, the number of small businesses has been maintained or increased.¹⁷ (L’indépendance Luxembourgeoise, *Les classes moyennes*, 20&21 Novembre, 1909, p.1)

In fact, different scholarship (Foster, 1979; Parkin, 1990; Giddens, 1995) point to the restricted sense in which Marx conceived the bourgeoisie - very much a fruit of his epoch - and in particular the bourgeoisie’s inextricableness from capital itself. As much as we agree that Marx’s conceptions are essential in any definition of class, past and present, any attempt to further delve into Marxian thought is a matter that falls outside the scope of this research to discuss.

In Luxembourg, even what some portrayed as a radical left in Luxembourg at the end of the 19th century, with the creation of the *Parti Social Démocrate*, left little doubt as to who the actual target of the brand-new social democracy in Luxembourg were:

Presenting such a programme [revolutionary and socialist] in a census election would have been political suicide¹⁸ anyway, even if the two Democratic candidates had had this in mind. Rather, one has the impression that they saw themselves as representatives of the people; and by people they meant those newly created electoral strata who will be going to the polls for the first time: middle and small farmers, craftsmen, workers in the steel industry, civil servants in industry and the public services. Business people, railway workers, etc. All these people may have a reason to be dissatisfied with the ruling class, are interested in more economic and social security, want their places of residence to be better off, more schools, a developed infrastructure (Fayot 1979, 1:45).

¹⁷ **In the original** : Contre toute vraisemblance, ces prophéties ne se réalisèrent pas. Le fait à peu près général est que, malgré cette poussée formidable de toutes les puissances qui menaçaient de les anéantir, les classes moyennes n’ont pas disparu. Le nombre des petites entreprises, dans presque tous les pays, se maintient ou s’accroît.

¹⁸ Poll tax had just been decreased from 30 to 15 francs but universal suffrage was at this point nothing but a mirage.

A new middle class emerged in Luxembourg, and with it came a caricature, albeit plausible, of the average middle-class individual with an agricultural background and a strong affinity for private property¹⁹.

Moreover, the word “middle” remits to a place in between. The notion of class is therefore defined by one class’s relationship vis-à-vis the others. Similarity and specificity can thus only be understood in relation to one another.

2.2 Demarcations between bourgeoisie and middle-class.

At the extremities of the class ladder lay the nobility and the working class. Nobility and aristocracy, appear in historical perspective, as a (more) easily identifiable class, through its possession of land, inherited wealth and titles. In most western European countries, this straight forwarded identification was challenged by the mid-19th century, with the emergence of groups of self-made men, who excelled on the financial/economic plan, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. By then, the balance between nobility and self-made men had shifted. Briefly, “wealth became more important than title, and a move towards more meritocratic criteria took place (Kocka 2004, 28)”.

This was undoubtedly what happened in Luxembourg too with the rise of the business bourgeoisie of the steel industry impregnated of a liberal wind of change. This was the first time that an élite did not have origins in family of birth and heritage but who worked its way up to economic or social success, their way of living was not necessarily opulent but it very much championed individual accomplishment.

Who belongs where within the middle-class at the turn of the 20th century? As seen, both middle-class as bourgeoisie can be further nuanced into lower and upper middle classes or *grande* and *petite (petty)* bourgeoisie. Kocka (1985) offers his conception of middle-classes by displaying who is in and out of the middle-classes during the “long” 19th century, which sees its end with the World War I:

The concept “middle-class” comprises merchants, manufacturers, bankers, capitalists, entrepreneurs, and managers, as well as rentiers, together with their families (...), Wirtschaftsbürgertum- the economic middle-class- in German). It also comprises the families of doctors, lawyers, ministers, scientists and other professionals, professors or universities and secondary schools, intellectuals, men and women of letters, and academics, including those who serve as administrators and officials in public and private bureaucracies (...), (Bildungsbürgertum- the educated middle class- in German). Middle-class does not include nobles, peasants, manual workers and the mass of lower-class people in general (...) (Kocka 1995, 784).

Moreover, the 20th century also sees the emergence and explosion of new professions in both the public and private sectors.

¹⁹ See namely Christophory (Christophory 1978) on his description of a post-industrial middle-class in Luxembourg.

In the latter nineteenth and twentieth centuries, (...) an ever-growing number of low- and middle-ranking salaried employees and white-collar workers in both the private and public sectors - have been seen as belonging to the 'lower middle classes' (...) (Kocka 2004, 16).

It is debatable where boundaries should be drawn and the perspective of an only professional categorization is not without fault. Kocka (ibid) uses the term middle-class *proper* [sic], to accompany his narrowing definition. Kaelble (2004) proposes simply distinguishing between a bourgeois milieu in the narrow sense ("the upper middle-class") and a petit bourgeois milieu. This distinction would allow a conciliation with the categorization used by Stefan Leiner (1994) in his pioneer study of the population of Esch-sur-Alzette:

Oberschicht	Obere Mittelschicht	Untere Mittelschicht	Obere Unterschicht	Untere Unterschicht
Gutbesitzer	Vollbauern	Handwerksmeister	Handwerker	Agrarische Unterschicht
Grosse Fabrikanten	Kaufleute	Kleinbauern	Handwerksgesellen und Lehrlinge	Heimarbeiter
Bankiers	Kleine Unternehmer, Geschäftsführer	Handwerksmeister	Hochqualifizierte Fabrikarbeiter (hohes Qualifikationsniveau)	Angelernte Arbeiter (niederes Qualifikationsniveau)
Leitende Angestellte	Rendanten, Sekretäre, Kontrolleure, Buchhalter, Kommissare	Spezialhandwerker	Qualifizierte Arbeiter (mittleres Qualifikationsniveau)	Ungelernte Arbeiter (ohne spezielle Qualifikation)
Leitende kommunale Wahlbeamte	Freie Berufe (nicht akad.)	Kleinhändler	Arbeiter im Transportgewerbe	Sonstige Unterschicht
Präsidenten, Direktoren, Professoren	Baubeamte, Inspektoren, Obermeister (Techn. Dienst)	Gastwirte	Hausierer	
Räte, Assessoren, Referendare, Richter	Ingenieure, Privatbeamte	Lehrer (niedere Schulen), Privatlehrer	Untere Angestellte in der Privatwirtschaft	
Oberlehrer	Offiziere (Leutnantsrang)	Beamte, Assistenten, Polizisten, Aufseher, Schreiber	Ladenpersonal, VerkäuferInnen	
Pastoren		Meister (öff-techn.Dienst)	sozialpflegerische Berufe	
Höhere Angestellte (akad.)		Commis, Handlungsgehilfen, Verwalter	Untere Beamte, Angestellte im öffentlichen Dienst	
Freie Berufe (akad.)		Werkmeister, Aufseher (privatwirtschaftlich)	Soldaten	
Offiziere (Hauptmann bis General)		Techniker, Zeichner, Laboranten, Bauschüler		
		Unteroffiziere		

Figure 6: Categorization of professions according to class: II. Soziale Schichtung nach Sozialrängen (Leiner, 1994: 348).

We believe that the first two top of the ladder categories *Oberschicht* and *Obere Mittelschicht* allow for a legitimate alignment with what Kocka (ibid) calls a *middle-class proper* and Kaelble's (*upper*) *middle*

class milieu (ibid: 282). The *Untere Mittelschicht* would thus unequivocally correspond to the petty bourgeois milieu also mentioned by Kaelble (ibid). A professional categorization only has nevertheless, as pointed out above, its shortcomings. A case in point being the difficulty in distinguishing between a small or grand entrepreneur and degree of professional expertise based on the sources available²⁰. Equally difficult to measure empirically is the social weight of doctors and teachers, whose salaries often went unmatched with the degree of social deference offered to them. Émile Colling, a GP in in Esch-sur-Alzette, in the first half of the 20th century also alludes to the feeling of respect that his profession was vested with:

What I liked best about these people as a doctor was the boundless trust they placed in their doctor, whose words were a gospel that was not shaken. (...) I would also like to emphasise that even the worst of the rowdies always remained upright towards the doctor. Even when the blood alcohol level had already reached alarming heights, they answered the doctor in a tone that was even respectful. This person was taboo for them! They never got cheeky (...) Just like the doctor, the priest remained a person of respect for most of them (Colling 1999, 12–14).²¹

The terms bourgeoisie and middle-class are sometimes interchangeable, but not without nuances. *Bourgeoisie* is a term that better applies to a specific number of élite professions and namely those of the higher ranks of the industrial actors that Esch welcomed as of the late 19th century. It does, in our view also coincide with the élite /upper- middle class that Leiner (1994), one of the first to have detailed the Esch's social tissue for the same period, classified as *Oberschicht*. It has, furthermore an inherently social characteristic to it rather than a merely economic. Combined with money, came power and a sense of collective identity, not necessarily shared by the other well-off layers of the middle-class.

By privileging the all-encompassing concept of “bourgeois middle-classes” we are therefore taking into consideration for our study: the bourgeoisie “proper”, the “old” middle-classes (with a longstanding presence in the city, before industrialisation, and predominantly of agrarian stock), as well as the new middle-classes who reached the city, immediately after the inception of the first plants.

This research's bourgeois middle-class(es) will thus include the rest of a group, which remains nevertheless a very diversified group. This group includes: the “old agrarian middle-class”, the major landowners, whom we will here refer to as autochthonous old middle class. The “old” middle class group

²⁰The patent tax was abolished in 1849. For this research we can rely on commercial registers (mandatory as of 1909), where only at times there is mention of social capital as well as scattered information about number of employees and type of expertise. Two publications of, 1908 and 1911 respectively (Association d'assurance contre les accidents 1908; 1911) - listing different groups of business owners- help establish a distinction between small and big entrepreneurs, namely by means of number of employees per company/firm (see PART III).

²¹ **In the original:** Was mir als Arzt an diesem Menschenschlag am besten gefiel, war das grenzenlose Vertrauen, das sie ihrem Arzt entgegenbrachten, dessen Worten waren ein Evangelium an dem nicht gerüttelt wurde. (...) Ich möchte noch betonen, dass sogar die schlimmsten Rauf-und Radaubröder gegenüber dem Arzt immer hochständig blieben. Auch wenn der Blutalkoholspiegel schon bedenkliche Höhen erreicht hatte, antworteten sie dem Arzt in einem sogar ehrerbietigen Ton. Dessen Person war für sie tabu! Frech wurden sie nie (...) Ebenso wie der Arzt blieb auch der Pfarrer bei den meisten von ihnen eine Respektperson.

will furthermore include well-off business and tradesmen, already present in the city before industrialization. Finally, we will mean by *new Eschois* all those members of the new middle class, in the shape of entrepreneurs, technical staff, medium to high rank civil servants and including all the members of the liberal professions who settled in Esch, especially in the post 1870's.

It needs to be noted here the complexity in ascertaining at times what the revenues, salaries and accumulated capital were at the disposal of certain individuals. We will be addressing this in each of the chapters when discussing what the sources available to us allowed to establish regarding certain individuals. This research may well not have been intended to be about their role, nevertheless the lower middle classes are key to understanding the urban and political scene in Esch.

In the latter part of the nineteenth and in the twentieth century they [Master artisans, retail merchants, innkeepers] were frequently along with the growing number of low- and middle-ranking salaried employees and white-collar workers in both the private and public sectors—seen as belonging to the "lower middle classes," the Kleinbürgertum, the petite bourgeoisie—that is, not to the middle class proper (Kocka 1995, 784).

Furthermore, two levels of distinction urge. Firstly, that of a distinction between private and public employee which as we are about to see mattered too in the context of contemporary Luxembourg. Secondly, that of a distinction between an economic and an educated bourgeoisie, which Kocka (2004) describes as follows:

Another way of understanding (...) differences in the history of the European middle classes is to probe their composition, particularly into the relationship between Wirtschaftsbürgertum and Bildungsbürgertum. In the economically advanced countries of the West, merchants, bankers and rentiers and later manufacturing entrepreneurs and industrial managers, as well, constituted the bulk and core of the middle class from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. There were, of course, lawyers and clergy, doctors and officials, university professors and teachers at public schools and lycees, as well. Their numbers and importance grew (...). Yet relative to the scope, wealth, status and influence of the economic middle class, they clearly remained in second place (...) (Kocka 2004, 22).

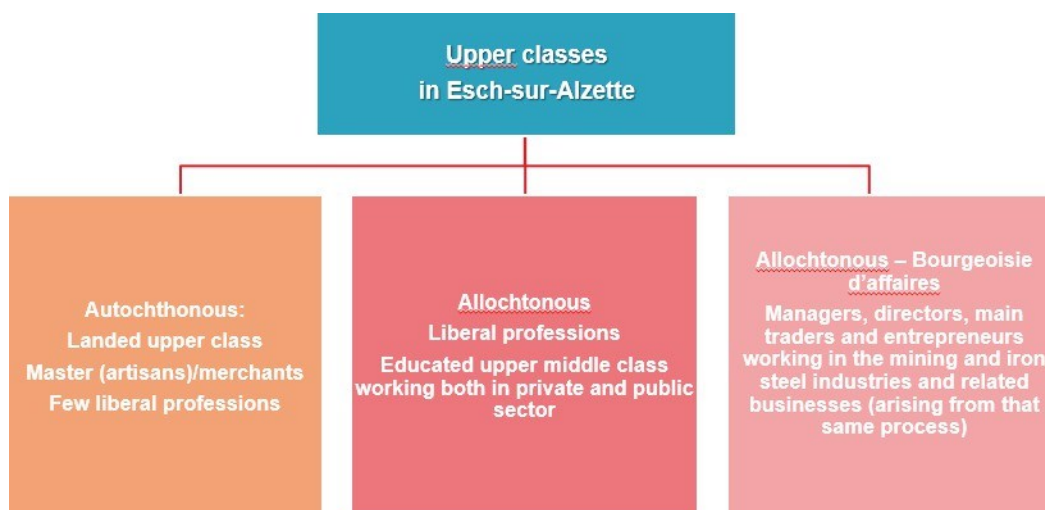


Figure 7: Schematisation of the upper-classes present in Esch-sur-Alzette, at the turn of the 20th century.

Another aspect worth highlighting in the analysis of social class also is the importance of “deference” and social status, a variable highly unlikely to be measurable but fueled with importance. Beyond the accumulation of capital or fortune, in Max Weber’s (Gerth and Mills 1991; M. Weber 1995) view came other less objective criteria such as income and occupation but also more subjective causes, cultural and religious, which, translated into prestige and power, weighed as much as class determinants as did the economic power.

This comes at a period in time where rationalization and modern institutions had attained their *momentum* and gained further signification. Western European States had by the early 20th century not only promoted but consolidated progress in numerous fronts of societal organization, namely, in health services (Siegrist, Hannes 2004, 94). As bearers of progress, these professions exercised a soft power of some sort, and their role in society came to replace that previously borne by “theologians and ministers [who had] lost their influence” (Siegrist, *ibid*: 69). This might not have completely been the case for a profoundly unsecularized society as Luxembourg was still at the turn of the 20th century, but it did bare some truth to it.

What becomes clear in the exercise of class definition was that of a strong perception of hierarchy as well as of social mobility in their quest for enhancing one’s life’s opportunities. One might have difficulty in casing a profession into one or another class, but a notion of where one did not belong “downwards” was often present²².

Different scholarship demonstrated other ways in which the bourgeoisie can be identified. Less tangible but equally relevant were, for example family relationships and networks. Philanthropy, including charitable work, and education are key aspects of the bourgeois middle class lives. So were political affiliations, as also postulated by Max Weber. Such aspects became even more relevant during the mid-19th, early 20th century as the bourgeoisie roles came to be increasingly public ones.

This brings us back to the dual terminology of bourgeoisie and middle class. Crossick (Crossick 1998) goes on to argue that the imprecision and opacity of both terms has led historians to remain vague on the question of which groups belonged to this class, thus neglecting the question of the process of its formation. The latter interpretation legitimizes the use of both concepts, *bourgeoisie* and *middle-class* as reconciled with one another, without them having to be incompatible. However, considering the case in

²² To this note, it also revealing how according from the data of the Oral Survey in early 20th century Belgium, the informants had a very clear idea of belonging, neatness and (not) mixing, for example when travelling and in respect to the wagons they occupied in their railway trips (Kurgan -Van Hentenryk, 1983).

point, the city of Esch-sur-Alzette, of the early 20th century, we contend that the distinction between bourgeoisie and middle class is not only useful but necessary.

The interchangeability in the use of the terms should nevertheless disclaim the non-neglectable differences between the two:

Middle class is usually broader than bourgeoisie, in that it reaches further down into the “petite bourgeoisie” and more narrow in that it may exclude parts of the élites. (...) One explanation to the fact that the preference for “middle-classes” gained terrain is that the terms Bourgeoisie and “bourgeois” lend themselves to critical, political and polemical usage than the more neutral “middle class” (Kocka, 2004: 36).

Because this research focuses on the bourgeoisie “proper” (industrialists, steel plant directors, notaries, lawyers), but addresses also the role of the agrarian landowners, as that of State and private employees, and most importantly, artisans, entrepreneurs and merchant’s whereby an assessment of their precise wealth is not possible, the distinction between the two terms as per above imposes itself. We are indebted to Leiner for a categorisation that still seems pertinent, which we have adopted not without simplifying it in order to better capture the three distinct middle classes, their different geographical origins and social backgrounds. We will argue on several occasions how what the German scholar postulated became a reality in the following decades (1910s-1920s). However, we have devoted much more space to the role of landownership in our attempt to trace the "old middle class" of agrarian stock present in Esch and the extent of some of the causes of its transformation, and in some cases even decline. In line with what Van Leuween and Maas (2005) have advocated when of the classification for the HISCO coding scheme, a useful understanding of class division based also on the importance of power relations urges. The fact that the same research conceives of farmers as a separate entity in the class coding scheme should support new understandings of class, especially in predominantly agrarian settings. Another peculiarity of the Luxembourg context should be highlighted here. In contrast to Germany, where, especially in the second third of the nineteenth century, the *Bürgertum* is increasingly demarcated from the below "petty bourgeois" professions, which Kocka identifies as "master craftsmen, small merchants, innkeepers and clerks" (Kocka, Jürgen 1993, 10), this is not the case in the Esch. On the contrary, this research will attest to the importance of some innkeepers and master craftsmen in the structures of local power, as well as to the esteem that these professions enjoy, not necessarily because of the wealth they carry, but because of the soft power that some of these innkeepers and master craftsmen exercise as prominent members of the local trade association. Esch is both a commercial and an industrial centre. In the Grand Duchy at the turn of the 20th century, such distinctions appear pertinent. Consequently, we argue for the necessity of a study that gives importance to the ways in which people relate to the land, thus justifying the significant space

it occupies in this research. Furthermore, we propose a differentiated examination of the significance of the petty bourgeoisie in the context of the industrial city.

2.3 Similarities and divisions within the bourgeoisie and middle-class

If we are set to study this class in the context of Esch-sur-Alzette, a differentiation between the propertied (*Wirtschaftsbürgertum*) and educated bourgeoisie (*Bildungsbürgertum*) imposes itself. Equally necessary is a distinction between professions of the private and public sectors, during a time in which the State institutions and its related professions and services grew exponentially. There was also an increased presence of professions related to the tertiary sector such as banking²³, insurance and large-scale retailing, resulting in a diverse bourgeois middle-class.

Finally, a distinction between small enterprise (petty bourgeoisie) and bigger entrepreneurship sees its sense in a city marked by an economic boom but also by economic crisis of major importance (Wey 1990; Kieffer 1993).

Did these different layers of the bourgeois middle classes mingle and if so where and how?

More important thus is to ask where the similarities lied, rather than the differences within the different middle-classes and bourgeoisie. Do they exist and are they consistent enough to justify its unity? Kocka (1995) contends that both a relational and cultural component contributed to unify it as a class and there is ground to concur with his view. As mentioned above, the development of the bourgeoisie translated also into specific ways of courtesy and good manners, ways of living and leisure. Foremost, it saw its unity build, through the sharing of a particular worldview that included a specific conception of rights and freedoms. We shall therefore concentrate specifically in factors relating to cultural interests, family, education and political beliefs. Of utter importance as the case in point of Esch will demonstrate, is also the altruism paid by the bourgeoisie in the interest of the well-being of the city. This interest came often hand in hand, with a competition with its quintessential rival city in importance, Luxembourg City, the capital. As this research will attempt to demonstrate, Esch aimed at a recognition that could go beyond, its economical weight in the development of the country. Furthermore, Esch strived for a recognition of its importance in other domains. Its bourgeois middle classes worked actively to get this message through,

²³ It is only in 1900 that the public banks with the purpose of offering credit for professional and agricultural needs, become widespread in Luxembourg, and it should be noted, mainly in rural locations. Before that, individuals relied mostly on the loans done through the local notaries' offices. This network of public banks was created to improve the situation of the lower middle-class and had farmers and artisans in mind as target clientele. The first *Caisses d'Epargne* had as goal the grant of small amounts of personal credit that typically could not exceed the 1000 francs (Kaufmann, 1909).

namely, through the commitment of some of its better-educated members. Education was thus an equal factor alongside wealth and political office that distinguished the middle class and the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, it had the paradoxical role of being both a vehicle for social advancement and a deterrent. We owe this interpretation to the work of the aforementioned sociologist and philosopher Edmond Goblot, and the way in which he saw the bourgeois middle class as both a driving force and a leveller in society, while at the same time constantly creating obstacles to the social advancement of the lower classes (Goblot 1925).

Some of the bourgeois middle classes' networks, in fact, were solely based on their educational capital. The disposition of property and/or education conferred certain qualities such as conscientiousness, enlightenment, sense of justice, independence and impartiality, which entitled (almost exclusively) men to participate in the life of the local administrations. Independent professionals and experts were also part of a middle-class, which, if not always well off financially, was undoubtedly an educated one.

The middle-classes and bourgeoisie shared the vision and values of meritocracy, education, modern and often (but not always) secularized society as well as a particular sense of family and morals. Their sense of class belonging should therefore be understood, in the light of such values. In addition, middle classes stood, also in the context of Esch sur Alzette, post 1870's for something inherently urban. We will nevertheless be referring to an existent agrarian élite as an "old middle-class", which will nevertheless, partly, remain living in Esch's soil. Therefore, it is first the once agrarian middle class and afterwards the bourgeoisie and middle-class in its urban environment that will here be under analysis. The urban environment as habitat of the bourgeoisie is taken into consideration in its most varied practices, from religion to politics and the central role of associations. The bourgeoisie in Luxembourg was far from being revolutionary, which does not mean there was no space for criticism and sometimes antagonism with the State and established order, such as the monarchy. If the unity of the bourgeoisie was defined by common denominators on some levels, this does not necessarily imply that within the bourgeoisie its members were articulated and deprived of cleavages in other spheres like politics and religion. This will all become tangible in the context of the cultural fights that will take place at the turn of the century namely in the field of views on education and religious interference on State and private affairs. Although mitigated in Esch-sur-Alzette, ethnic, cultural, gendered and religious distinctions still mattered.

Was it the relationship towards society's lower strata, the proletariat that best contributed to a sense of unity in the bourgeoisie?

As many distinctions as existed among major industrialists, other business people, academics in the liberal professions, senior civil servants, mid-level white-collar employees, school principals, engineers, and hotel proprietors – the critical, defensive self-segregation from the little guy, the people, the proletariat, and the worker’s movement was something that they [middle-class] shared as a rule (Kocka, 1999: 195).

Paradoxically, middle classes have stood for everything and its opposite. Belonging to the upper or middle classes involved differences in possessions and wealth. After all, Esch and its surroundings were industrial centres par excellence with its bourgeoisie “proper” making up for, presumably, not even 1% of the total population²⁴.

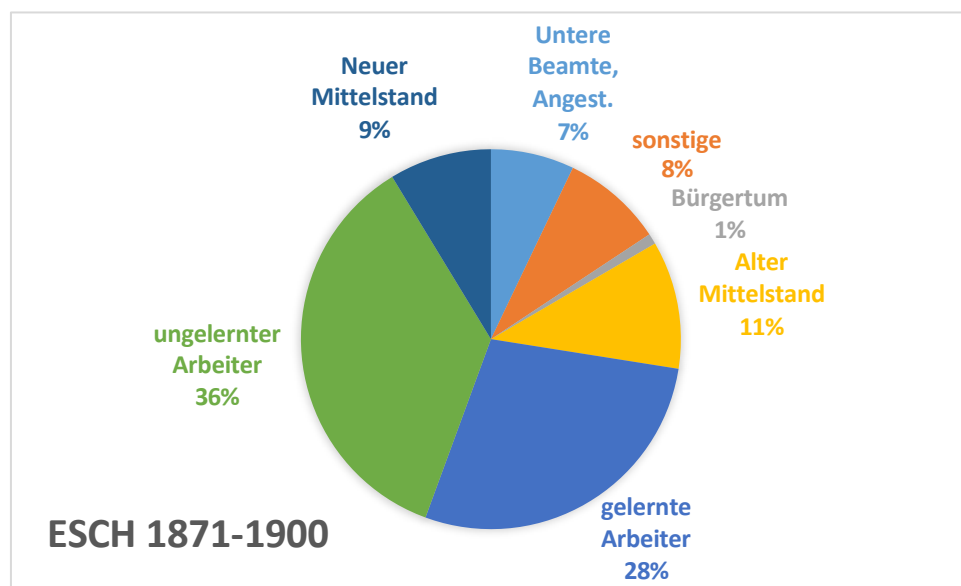


Figure 8 Socio- categorization of Esch’s population 1871-1900 (Leiner 1994, 109).

²⁴ A precise percentage is difficult to quantify, as already addressed, because of reasons relating to categorization of professions and on the multiple variables that could factor in a mathematical count of the bourgeoisie. Let us take for example the example of the taxpayers’ list of 1922 (Mémorial du Grand Duché, 1923), which will serve as basis for our own analysis. In it, we find, 652 taxpayers having an estimated revenue of more than 10000 francs/year, for the city of Esch-sur-Alzette, whose total population was then 20.045. A percentage is not possible to establish in relation to the overall active population, whose number we ignore. To pay taxes does not automatically make of an individual, at the time of the events, necessarily a bourgeois. Another limitation of these figures is that they may exclude for example educated professionals or clergy whose salaries were meagre. Conversely, on the one hand some of the reported revenues for 1922 even though taxable, were not necessarily high, on the other, professions with relatively high income/revenue such as butchers lacked the educational component that could “promote” them to a status of bourgeoisie. If we move backwards in time, the tax payer’s list for 1898 included 672 individuals for Esch, in a total population of 10.971 (in 1900). The same disclaimer in relation to a cautious interpretation of the figures is thus needed. As is the fact, that the tax administration itself warned against the many lacunae in this data. The reason being that not everyone provided the Administration with his tax declaration (Administration des contributions et du Cadastre, 1898). The population of Esch doubled in 20 years, with the number of taxpayers remaining roughly the same, which proves the increase in the population was not directly proportional with an increase in well-off taxpayers. Rather, such increase was directly linked to a need in labour force and hence a subsequent increase in (im)migration. For a thorough review on the evolution of the history of tax and its implications in Luxembourg see Scuto (2016) and for a criticism of taxes as source see Richter (Richter 2024).

In fact, the lifestyle of the middle classes could be quite moderate, and yet it was this very moderation that drove the middle classes to aspire to greater social advancement. It will undoubtedly be a Weberian view of class, in which power and prestige become more important regardless of the level of material wealth, that will prove essential in giving this very diverse bourgeoisie and middle class a sense of unity. We will see, however, how this fragile unity is undermined by other intersecting factors. The dichotomies of rurality versus urbanity, Esch versus Luxembourg city, clericalism versus secularisation among others will be ever-present during our analysis.

2.4 Luxembourg, a peculiar social space

Over the almost one century long period that spans in this research (1842-1922), two factors weigh in and contribute to the understanding of Luxembourg's peculiar circumstances in terms of its class structure. When compared to its closest neighbours, differences at both ends of the class structure are striking. On the one hand, a weak presence of the aristocracy (something already visible prior to the inception of a "proper" middle-class by self-made men, in the early 19th century).

Compared to other Western European historical realities Luxembourg diverges at both extremities of its class system. Luxembourg's noble class resulted debilitated after the different foreign rulers that followed throughout the centuries (Hudemann-Simon 1985) as well as a direct consequence of the French Revolution. Like elsewhere in the Grand-Duchy, in Esch-sur-Alzette, we seldom come across a locally established nobility.

No more Ancien Régime nobility or new nobility, since the sovereigns did not use the right of ennoblement conferred on them by the constitution (Trausch 1995, 393).²⁵

But those whose titles of Baron or Count endured, secured undoubtedly a position in society, be it by means of the land still in their possession, be it through the strategies put in place with marriage alliances or business ventures. Indeed, even though residual in Luxembourg, it is worth mentioning that by the late 19th century (Helbach 2009) a surface amounting to 14000 ha²⁶ was still detained by nobility²⁷. Trausch (Gilbert Trausch 1969) adds though that small and medium property surpass the big estates belonging to

²⁵ **In the original** : Plus de noblesse d'Ancien Régime ni de noblesse nouvelle, puisque les souverains n'ont pas utilisé la faculté d'anoblissement que la constitution leur conférait.

²⁶ 1ha=11960 square yards=2471 acres

²⁷ Helbach's (2009) study covered 14,000 ha of noble estates and over 26,000 ha of other large estates, i.e. about 15.50% of the total land area. In his research, he mentions the foreign origins of part of this nobility, often French. A glimpse into the notarial archives of Esch-sur-Alzette of the beginning of the 20th century illustrates well the significant instances in which French nobles sold land in Luxembourg to buyers of different social classes (ANLux, Charles Laval series, 1875-1920).

the clergy and the nobility²⁸, something he attributes to the French Revolutionary period. As mentioned, the quasi absence of nobility contributes to a sui generis class structure whereby the business bourgeoisie had by the early 19th century established itself as the ruling class. This is not to say that aristocracy did not exist at all, their titles, and their presence at the level of the central government attesting to that. In the circumscription of Esch, namely in Foetz, Differdange²⁹, Dudelange and Sanem the role of some families of noble descent was still influential³⁰. Some had entered the world of industrial production by owning small forging units. These were families among which, marriage alliances with the *bourgeoisie d'affaires* were frequent also across borders³¹. A social milieu described as having a claustrophobia feeling to it, given the restricted geography of the country³².

On the other end of the class ladder and its Luxembourgish peculiarities is the existence of an autochthonous working class with, to some extent, an access to land, whose belonging to a “proper” proletariat some scholars did not hesitate to question (P. Weber 1950; Quasten 1970). It is the so-called theory of the missed proletarianisation which sees in the relationship to landownership an explanation for a feeble proletarianization of the Luxembourgish working class. Was the importance placed on owning a symbolic patch of land overrated, as some authors claim?³³

At the beginning of the 20th century, half of the working population in Luxembourg was still employed in agriculture, where they mostly worked as owners, or assisting family members in small to very small farms. In fact, this reflects the main characteristic of the Luxembourgish agriculture, that is, that of an extremely fractioned soil. Of the 40,000 farms counted in 1907, 80% had less than 5 ha, only 3% over 20 ha (Fehlen 2009).

In fact, although the share of agriculture in the working population decreased significantly (in the second half-of the 20th century), Luxembourg remained a rural society, well into the 20th century for a number of

²⁸ See Wealer (Wealer 2010), for a longer term history of landscape in Luxembourg, namely in the Oesling and the Gutland and why the postulates of French Revolution were less than favourable or even adaptable to customary usage of land already in place.

²⁹ See namely the work of Stéphanie Kovacs (Kovacs 2012).

³⁰ The Baron Charles de Tornaco from Sanem, for example, was a Liberal (and later independent) deputy for Esch for a period of almost consecutive 24 years up until 1908. He was also one of the main landowners in the country. Dudelange had its equivalent in the count de Bertier (Ferreira Flores, 2022), but he was French and resided in the castle of Manom in Lorraine.

³¹ The daughter of Charles Laval, eminent Notary of Esch married the baron D’Huart from Longwy, the De Wacquand in Foetz had marriage ties with French nobility as well.

³² « Les vieilles familles étaient très liées entre elles, au point de se retrouver à maintes reprises devant l’autel entre cousins germains, et l’assemblée des invités était composée de villageois pour ainsi dire tous cousins entre eux à des degrés divers » (Wurth 2023).

³³ See namely the many definitions of peasant in Joyce (Joyce 2024, 22–23) and John Berger in his trilogy novels/essays of peasant life, *Into their Labours* (J. Berger 1992).

reasons. Because of the smallness of the country, only small-scale, internal migrations occurred. The majority of the population, thus, still lived in rural areas. Another important element: by the mid of the 20th century Luxembourg's autochthonous industrial workers maintain contact with their community of origin, and were very often still part-time farmers, in the parts of the country they came from (P. Weber 1950). Esch-sur-Alzette at the turn of the 20th century illustrates this point well.

If we turn our interest to the top of the social ladder instead, we are, in the mid-19th century, before a community where the traditional upper classes were mostly composed of an agrarian middle-class, whose power and influence appears not to have gone beyond the geographical borders of the city, or at most beyond the canton of Esch. Three key factors matter in terms of historical demography when studying the country of Luxembourg and the city of Esch-sur-Alzette in particular: the quasi-total absence of cities until the beginning of the 20th century, the late but rapid evolution of an agrarian society into an industrial one, and finally a fast succession of mass emigration phase to one of important immigration (Lehners 2011). For a brief period - between the late 19th and the early 20th century- inward and outward migration waves overlapped, as the work opportunities in the mining south did not always appeal to a work force used to agriculture and who preferred to emigrate overseas and to the promises and prospects of land ownership abroad. Until 1900, two thirds of the new Esch population came from the canton of Esch itself. It is only with the beginning of the twentieth century that the population from the North and Centre of the country became significant (Büchler et al., 2020). It was then that many Luxembourgers fled the North towards South in search for a better living. These circumstances are well described in Dr. Emile Colling's (1999) memories, himself a Northerner from Clervaux, who took service in Esch:

Many of the local labourers came from Oesling, where the number of jobs was dwindling due to the decline of the tanneries and the poor material situation of the farms. They went to the "Minett" (...) in search of work. Although the "Éiselécker Louklöppelen" had become "Minnetsdäpp", the umbilical cord with the native village was never completely cut, so that they were actually a middle ground between industrial workers and agricultural labourers (Colling 1999, 11).³⁴

In the early 20th century, several events disrupted established power structures. One such event was the introduction of universal suffrage in 1919, which weakened the power and representation of the male and wealthy ruling class. The other is the disruption caused by the First World War and the occupation of

³⁴ **In the original:** Die einheimischen Arbeiter stammten vielfach aus dem Oesling, wo durch den Niedergang der Gerbereien und die schlechte materielle Lage der landwirtschaftlichen Betriebe die Zahl der Arbeitsplätze in Schwinden war. Sie gingen zur Arbeitsuche in den "Minett" (...). Zwar waren aus den „Éiselécker Louklöppelen“ „Minnetsdäpp“ geworden, aber die Nabelschnur mit dem Geburtsdorf wurde nie ganz durchgeschnitten, so dass sie eigentlich ein Mittelding zwischen Industriearbeiter und Landarbeiter waren.

Luxembourg by Germany, with its impact on the international outlook on Luxembourg, its workforce, gender roles, and immigration figures in the country. Indeed, many Germans and Italians left the country to join their armies, some of whom did not return. The siding of Luxembourg with the Allies at the end of the conflict, ends with the neutral, however ambiguous, position of Luxembourg in the international scene during the First World War (Scuto 2014). If it did put an end to an era (Calmes 1972), it brought along renewed unrest amid threats of Belgian annexionism, the Grand Duchess Marie-Adelaide's abdication and the uncertainties of the economic and monetary future during a time of extreme economic ordeal post abandonment of the *Zollverein*. Stability and compromises were eventually found in the shape of the economic union of Belgium, in 1922.

With the industrial boom and the population explosion in the city of Esch, standards of living and consumers' needs were transformed. For many families, the settlement of the industry meant an improvement in their economic situation. Indeed, numerous property transactions between the new industrial players and the population took place³⁵. The lack of housing also concurred to the emergence of a real estate speculation market. Many individuals monetized with the sale of property and land.

The industrial development meant that more shops, more trades were needed to fulfill the industry's needs. Along with it came the necessity for more medical staff, more clergy and more schoolmasters and mistresses who could provide for a growing population's education. New professions arose in connection with the industrial development, such as engineers and railway employees. Their ranks varied in terms of social esteem, often dependent on the ranks the employer itself attributed to them. Data from the ARBED archives show that employees in the company rose from 57 in 1911 to 326 in 1930³⁶ (Kieffer 1993, 281). The housing shortage affected not only the working class but also part of the middle-classes, especially public sector employees (*fonctionnaires*) who did not enjoy the housing benefits³⁷ that the industry provided part of its workforce³⁸ with:

³⁵ An incursion into the notarial minutes of Charles Laval (ANLux Laval Charles - Esch-sur-Alzette, 1875-1920 (Series) testifies of the significant number of transactions on land sales that took place between Eschois, the Gelsenkirchener, the Aachener "Schmelz" (Aachener Hüttenverein Rothe Erde Aachen) and the ARBED, throughout that same period.

³⁶ The figures represent solely the ARBED Esch-Schiffange plant. In the Belval Terres Rouges site numbers, employees were 125 employees in 1911 and amounted to 413 in 1930. Data collected from the Human resources department of the ARBED (Kieffer, 1993).

³⁷ The construction of housing was the result of private initiative, foremost of the metallurgical companies, which had workers' housing estates built. The houses built being reserved, in general, only to qualified workers, resulted in accommodation conditions of the great majority of newcomers to remain particularly precarious (Lorang, 2019).

³⁸ In 1920, only 26% of the civil servants were a property owner in Esch-sur-Alzette (Kieffer, 1993).

It is not up to us to judge the attitude of building owners; in this case, heads of family have to choose between three solutions: 1° Pay exorbitant rents in order to win the benevolence of owners; 2° Move outside the towns, to fourth-rate houses; 3° Build their own house with borrowed money, which burdens their budget to such an extent that they have to impose real hardships on themselves³⁹ (*L'indépendance Luxembourgeoise* 1914).

Salaries were often higher within the industry as well, even though they did not provide individuals with the guarantee, for example, of a state pension. As Kieffer (ibid) also highlights in her work, public sector employees were thus more vulnerable and more exposed to economic crisis than their private employee peers⁴⁰. In fact, again, a glimpse into the minutes of Charles Laval's (1900-1919) one of Esch's most prominent notaries, allows to identify such patterns in transactions. Public agents such as police officers often happened to have to ask for credit to business owners. Loans among the working class were more likely to take place through credit Institutions (especially after the creation of the SNHBM⁴¹), rather than between working class peers. Miners also often borrowed from landowners from the surroundings areas such as Mondercange or Rumelange. If it was common practice for the working class and lower middle class to borrow from the propertied landowners, money lending took place also between members of the same class. Small business owners like butchers⁴² were often creditors to employees, railway services, police officers as well as to other self-employed or small entrepreneurs. This left the lower middle classes /petty bourgeoisie in a sometimes-paradoxical position whereby they were both dependent on credit but acted as creditors themselves. As Crossick (2004) exposes on his study of the European petty bourgeoisie:

Retailers relied increasingly on wholesalers' credit, not just for regular stock but often in the initial setting up of their shops. These shopkeepers were themselves bound up in credit ties with their customers, whether middle class or working class. The customer loyalty or dependency which accompanied credit secured trade for the retailer, but many a shopkeeper struggled between the conflicting pressures of credit advanced by them and to them, in a balancing act which often ended in failure (Crossick 2004, 94).

³⁹ In the original : Il ne nous appartient pas de juger l'attitude des propriétaires, d'immeubles ; en l'occurrence les chefs de famille ont à choisir entre trois solutions: 1° Payer des loyers exorbitants afin de capter la bienveillance des propriétaires; 2° Aller loger en dehors des villes, dans des maisons de quatrième ordre; 3° Faire construire une maison à eux avec de l'argent emprunté, ce qui charge leur budget à tel point qu'ils doivent s'imposer de réelles privations. In : L'indemnité de résidence et l'Association générale des fonctionnaires et employés de l'état, *L'Indépendance luxembourgeoise*, March 21, 1914.

⁴⁰ A survey conducted in 1910 on the economic situation of private employees suggests a robust situation with only a short percentage of short-term unemployment: "The result of the survey on employment [of private civil servants] shows that of the 1224 male private civil servants, 90 have been jobless at least once in the last five years. For each of these affected employees, the average annual duration of unemployment is 44.5 days "(Die Wirtschaftliche Lage der Privatbeamten in *Die Obermosel-Zeitung*, 14.10.1910, p.2).

⁴¹ Société Nationale d'Habitations à Bon Marché. Faced with the housing shortage emergency, the public authorities saw the need to react. A first step was taken in 1906 with the promulgation of the Low-Cost Housing Act. Under this law, the State authorized the *Caisse d'Epargne* to invest part of its funds in loans for the construction of inexpensive housing (Lorang, 2019).

⁴² Léon Cerf (1854-1926), a butcher of Jewish origin was among one of the most frequent creditors.

Other elements suggest a belonging to the petty bourgeoisie and that is the access to subsidized housing. With the introduction of the law on the SNHBM both working class and lower rang staff of the private industry and State apparatus, such as some teachers, police officers or railway workers benefited from its subsidized loan conditions.

Who were the members of the bourgeoisie and middle classes? Where did they come from? What were their professional occupations? What is known of their fortunes and landownership? Which space, whether social, commercial and residential did they occupy within the city? In which ways did they contribute to the urban development, improvement and embellishment of Esch-sur-Alzette? On a larger scale, how did they exert influence at the level of the central government?

Scarcely highlighted in the historiography of city, this research aims to shed light on the position of the bourgeois middle classes and the ways in which they created, sought and exerted their power and influence.

2.5 For a critical contribution to the history of class in Luxembourg

It is interesting to see how the national master narratives of countries that did not experience a great revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth century nevertheless related to France and its revolutionary tradition as the Other that is denied in their own histories. In these narratives, “class” is barely given a mention or is simply by-passed in a story line that methodologically brackets “off” class and instead focus on diplomacy, politics, war and powerful rulers. This silencing of class issues may even represent a denial of class – though perhaps not of its present existence, but certainly of its legitimacy as a political reference point for revolutionary moments and its inevitability as a structure reality in future society (Deneckere and Welskopp 2008, 140–41).

A significant part of Luxembourgish historiography can be said to have followed the logic above, as the work of Peporté et al., (2010) demonstrates with numerous examples. In such scholarly tradition of the like of historians Nicolas Ries⁴³ and André Heiderscheid⁴⁴ the Luxembourgish people know no class system, rather they see a presumed Luxembourgish determination inherited from the rural ascent of most Luxembourgers (Fehlen 2009). Luxembourg, being a very small nation, has seen its own debate on class, largely neglected in the context of the wider European historiography. This finds a justification in its small size and particular geographic position in the region. However, this state of research should not be taken to mean that Luxembourg simply shares the same history of class(es) with any of its neighbours.

⁴³ Nicolas Ries (1876-1941) was one of the best-known francophile Luxembourgish intellectuals and critics of the first half of the 20th century. He was a member of the Amitiés françaises, the Alliance française and the Association des professeurs de l'enseignement supérieur et moyen. He was a board member of the Association pour l'Education Populaire.

⁴⁴ André Heiderscheid (1926-2018) theologian, doctor of sociology and political scientist.

Nevertheless, similarities can be found, especially with southern Belgium, with which it shared a common history until the separation of the two countries in 1839.

A discourse of national identity and consciousness should not be completely separated from that of class, for in many ways it determined the way Luxembourgers thought of themselves. Also, the place each of the three [currently official] languages: French, German and Luxembourgish has had in each different social milieu, appears intrinsically connected to an understanding of the notion of class in the Grand Duchy, particularly at the turn of the century.

Different factors weigh in the Grand-Duchy's own lacunae in its historiography and sociology (Fehlen 2009) of social classes. In fact, social and historical research on the middle and upper classes in Luxembourg is residual, at least up until the de-industrialisation period (Kieffer, 1993).

If we add a social history that goes beyond the élites of the city of Luxembourg, we are left with virtually no research on the rest of the country's élites. So far, Luxembourgish historiography dedicated to the country's upper classes has only been the subject of social-historical analysis as a somewhat homogenous whole. The subdivision into an agrarian/landed middle class and a more business/liberal oriented conceptualization can here serve as a differentiated view of the bourgeois middle classes as a social group. In the same vein, themes of identity cannot be dissociated for what one and the other old and new upper classes stood for. One rooted in a) strong catholic, agrarian traditional lifestyle, the other b), very much (although not exclusively) anti-clericalist, secularist, "enlightened" bourgeoisie defending the ideals of progress and technic innovation and naturally, capital.

An often neglected but essential element in the history of class in the country remains the relationship to each of its (now official) three languages. It will seem anachronistic with today's eyes to acknowledge that the use of Luxembourgish was once unwelcomed in the *Chambre des Députés*. Or that it was through, for example the interventions of C.M. Spoo, deputy, writer and pioneer in the defense of the use of the language, that Luxembourgish made its first steps into an uncontested place of acceptance that enjoys in the present day. In the same vein, French was often an obstacle to many, from the most popular layers of society to the inner circles of power, both local and central. Even Michel Welter, known Francophile intervened in favour of the use of the German language that was not preconized in the *Chambre des Députés*:

[replied in the Chamber] that we were a German-speaking nation, that 9/10 of the population did not understand French (...) that it was abusive to use French in the courts. Finally, Welter pointed out that the priests gave their sermons in German, knowing that they would not be understood in any other language (Mersch 1966a).

None of these aspects is to be dismissed in the history of a country, which by the turn of the 20th century was still looking for its identity.

As to other perspectives, Jean Kill provided an alternative narrative of Luxembourgish history with a Marxist blueprint in which it is contended that “the burden of feudalism oppressed Luxembourgers until the French Revolution, which brought about the rise of capitalism and the emergence of the bourgeoisie” (Peporté et al., 2010). Wehenkel’s (1989) work, instead, regrets the prejudice faced by the Communist party, which hindered among other things, historiography written by and about the party:

The persistence of the communist heresy in Luxembourg poses a problem that goes beyond history and touches on deeper mental and social structures ⁴⁵ (Wehenkel 1989, 87).

It can be hypothesized that the country’s long-lasting political stability and a faint class struggle has disincentivized academic curiosity on the middle/upper-class, considered somehow trivial. Also, the fact that the university in Luxembourg was established only in 2003, explains the lack of widespread studies on demography and much needed comparisons, but also the lack of an actual academic historiography concerned with national consciousness (Lehners, 2011).

Concerning a national scale of history of the bourgeoisie, the gaps in historiographic research have admittedly other legitimate origins and explanations. One is related to the type of sources available, the other, the dimensions of the country itself that made it so that the only other fit to compare city for a study on its class composition would be Luxembourg city, the capital. The few existing studies done on the capital, on its 18th, early and late 19th centuries merit, nevertheless our attention. Although not prolific, the existent research is key for the understanding of a history of class in the country.

Research done on Luxembourg’s city bourgeoisie (Thewes, 1994; Jungblut, 1994; Franz, 2001; Weber, 2013) allow building a timeline of the evolution of this class. These studies analysed both the 18th and 19th centuries.

In his study of the city of Luxembourg of the period between the late 18th and the late 19th century, Norbert Franz (Franz 2001) divided the population into three strata, the lower, middle and upper classes. According to Franz, several characteristics determine whether a person belongs to the upper class: active participation in political rule, an economic or social leadership position, cultural influence and / or personal wealth. In doing so, he delimits the upper class by orienting himself towards personalities who have exercised leadership functions in the state, municipality, administration, economy and society and connects these

⁴⁵ **In the original** : La permanence de l’hérésie communiste au Luxembourg pose un problème qui au-delà de l’histoire touche à des structures mentales et sociales plus profondes.

criteria with their income. He concludes that for the year 1852 those people who paid more than 70 francs belonged to the upper class; in 1885 he set the lower limit for allocation to the upper class due to the increased tax rate at 105 francs (Franz, 2001 as cited in (J. Weber 2013, 26).

In Esch, if one starts looking at the first nominal rolls available in the 1850s, only Dominique-Léopold Brasseur was to be included in the upper class (Mémorial du Grand Duché, 1853). Should one want to rewind even backwards in time (early 19th century), no Eschois was to be found among the upper social strata⁴⁶. Should the same limits (>100 francs) be established for the Esch-sur Alzette for the period 1870s-1890s,⁴⁷ we identify in 1872, 20 industrialists, business owners and professionals who could be included on the upper strata, we are here at the very outset of the industrialisation with the implementation of the first industrial plants. They include Francois Kersch, entrepreneur, Hypollite Lacroix, a mining company operator, the Brasseur family and Leon Metz. The latter three, were all directors of either mines or pioneers of the steel industry in Esch. As for the 1879 nominal rolls, we see a slight increase in the tax payers having paid more than 100 francs, as well as a diversification of their professional profiles. In 1879 the first Jews appear in the top 25 taxpayers' list. They include the families, Kahn-Meyer (in the ironmongery trade) and Cerf (cattle trading). New entries are also a doctor (Nicolas Metzler) and a pharmacist (Etienne Welschbillig), now also part of the top 25 taxpayers's list. The Gillain family (owners of a hardware, lamps' business) also appears as well as Jacques Schmit Hamilius, farrier. The families Brasseur, Laval, Rousseau and Buchholtz also remain a constant throughout these two decades. Regrettably, it is impossible to establish with certainty who many of names on the nominal tax rolls referred to, as well as it was impossible to establish their professions.

In 1890, for the category taxed above 105 francs we also find Henri Brausch-Kayser (innkeeper?), Daniel Buchholtz (brewer), Lazard Cerf et fils (cattle commerce), Edmond Gillain veuve (hardware store), Jean-Baptiste Hamilius, Marx Hermann, André-Guillaume Hess, Jean-Pierre Kauth, Ferdinand Liesch, Charles Laval (notary), Jean-Pierre Massard (doctor), Fernand Mineur, Hubert Muller-Tesch (director of the Metz mines), Charles Saur, François Schmitz, M. Schockmel-Garçon, Jean-Pierre Tabary and Etienne Welschbillig (pharmacist). Some of these families like the Metz and the Muller-Tesch represented the quintessential bourgeois self-made men. Furthermore, not only did such families associate for business purposes as they also formed and

⁴⁶ A list of high society [sic] members 1814-1815 (Beterams, 1973), compiled when Luxembourg was still a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, already mentions some of these families' members (i.e, Collart, de la Fontaine, Pescatore, Servais and Wurth), who will keep their élite status throughout the whole 19th/early 20th century. The list makes no mention of any Esch residents, with the only represented families from the South being the nobility established at Sanem and Ansembourg.

⁴⁷ We based ourselves on the nominal rolls for 1872, 1879 and 1890.

held important marriage alliances in the pursuit of defending their commercial influence not only in Esch but also in Luxembourg City and Lorraine (Maas, 1997; 2008). By the late 19th century, the formation of the Luxembourg business bourgeoisie was complete. In connivance with the residual provincial nobility and cross-border business bourgeoisie (Maas 2008) plus through the alliances forged with both, this class was to form the powerful Luxembourg economic élite, on which the liberal project was to be based.

It should be reminded; nevertheless, that Esch-sur-Alzette was principally a rural setting at the outset of the industrialisation and that profound links to that rurality, in the shape of social and family links to its immediate neighbouring towns and villages, endured well into the 20th century.⁴⁸

Different works have attempted a comprehensive history of Esch. Joseph Flies' history of Esch (Flies, 1979) is commendable for the effort put into such a wide chronological span (from pre-history until the late 1970's). As rich as the sources on which it is based are, Flies' narrative is somewhat chaotic and scattered. Flies' intention of an all-encompassing Esch' history result in a rather fragmented social history. Given his academic background⁴⁹ and the year in which his comprehensive history of Esch was published, its shortcomings may sound surprising. Less so if one inscribes Flies under a national strand of historians who have written the narrative of the nation, by privileging the angle of politics, war and powerful rulers, in this instance the prominence given to the Catholic element and the different religious orders is palpable. In the case of Flies, one could add the role of the clergy, who clearly get the spotlight in detriment of the "people". Other works have attempted an all-round Esch's history. It is case the case of the two woks released on the occasion of the 50th (Goedert et al. 1956) and 100th (Biltgen et al. 2006) anniversaries of the city. The articles contained cover a wide range of topics, they are however brief and, for the most, of non- academic nature.

In sum, the tandem Esch-sur-Alzette of the early 20th century and its bourgeoisie and middle-classes appear as largely absent from the city's historiography, with a few exceptions. Industrialisation led to the emergence of a new conquering bourgeoisie: that of businessmen. This new class formation arises to the ranks of the locally established agrarian middle class and artisans. In Esch-sur-Alzette, along with the implementation of the first industrial plants, the city's social tissue changed, also in terms of whom this newly arrived upper class was to be composed of: a business-oriented bourgeoisie (Kieffer, Maas, and Scuto 1990) of different merchants and trades. From 1871 onwards, the directors of the Société Auguste

⁴⁸ I am grateful to the historian Jacques Maas for the insight he provided me into late 19th century Esch's social composition.

⁴⁹ Joseph Flies had obtained a PhD in 1940 at Louvain.

Metz & Co (owners by half of *Metzeschmelz*) company, Léon Metz and Hubert Muller-Tesch, lived in the castle of Bervart. The mining and construction companies gradually provided the existent middle class of farmers and tradesmen who still dominated Esch's political life in the mid-19th century, with new members.

The transition from agricultural town to urbanized centre is thus at the basis of Esch-sur-Alzette's singularity and one of the main elements that distinguishes the Esch bourgeois middle classes origins and formation from other contemporary "better families" (J. Weber 2013) based in and around the capital, Luxembourg city.

Furthermore, the growth of the city in population and economic importance brought along a series of new professionals, an educated upper class, highly specialized in their fields. This included technical professionals such as engineers, architects as well as doctors, veterinaries, schoolmasters, notaries, judges as well as lower and higher rank civil servants. Luxembourg was by then, still characterized by a low degree of social differentiation, which was reflected, for example, in the small percentage of the population with a university degree (Fehlen 2009). Those who received a formal higher-level education did it so in way that was like that of other European countries, the reason being also the fact that Luxembourg did not dispose of university or other higher education Institutions. Educated Luxembourgers, necessarily had to attend University in one of the three neighboring countries Belgium, France and Germany and, as was often the case, Switzerland as well. Among the new highly specialized staff of the industry, many had attended the Aachener Polytechnicum in Germany⁵⁰.

The present research also demonstrates how, despite their many facets, these old and new middle classes intersected, interacted, at times overlapped in different positions of prominence within the city and the country itself. The description of Esch's social space could be improved by distinguishing between the bourgeoisie and middle classes. It is worth noting that in Luxembourg, the middle classes have become increasingly disenfranchised since the beginning of the 20th century⁵¹.

⁵⁰ Its most famous pupil being Emil Mayrisch, the founder of the **ARBED S.A.**, the acronym for *Acieries Réunies de Burbach-Eich-Dudelange, Société Anonyme*. By 1911, the company reunited under the same shareholding company and merged the three largest local steel companies of the country: the *Société anonyme des Hauts Fourneaux et Forges de Dudelange*, the *Société anonyme des Mines du Luxembourg et Forges de Sarrebruck* and the *Société en commandite des Forges d'Eich, Le Gallais, Metz et Cie*.

⁵¹ This is also reflected in Luxembourg with the creation (from 1901 onwards) of a system of subsidies for the middle classes, by the Government. This comes as response to a growing dissatisfaction among small and medium business powers as well, on the side of the public employees a corporate organization by the civil servants, much like of what was happening in contemporary Germany and Belgium, countries to which Luxembourg tended to look up in the attempt of setting up a successful welfare state.

What is more, the distinction cuts across the periods before and after industrial settlement. What our findings suggest is that we are in the preindustrial period, before an agrarian middle class that was more at the bottom of the ladder, if we look only at income from landed property. It will also show that this same old middle class continued to rule through strategies that had more to do with influence than money. In fact, money, influence and land will often find and complement each other, but it is the new bourgeois middle classes after the turn of the century who can be considered financially affluent.

Another in-depth study of Esch's social structure deserves to be highlighted. In his exhaustive research, Stefan Leiner (1994) compared patterns of migration in connection with the urbanisation process in three industrial sites of the late 19th/ early 20th century: Burbach in Saarland, Thionville in Lorraine and Esch-sur-Alzette. His exhaustive and accurate research is, for the variedness and richness of its sources, considered a seminal demographic study of the turn of the century Esch-sur-Alzette. Leiner concludes that there was in Esch-sur-Alzette a high degree of socio-professional intermingling in all of its residential neighbourhoods. The extremely limited housing in the Esch prevented, according to Leiner (*ibid*) an "orderly" quarter formation in view of the rapid expansion of local industrial and industrial supply companies.

Leiner (*ibid*) also identified important demographical changes in the three industrial cities in the period between 1870-1910. Whereas in Thionville, across the French border, middle class settlements could be found in the city center already prior to the industrialisation, the existing middle-class in Esch-sur-Alzette gathered rather in the areas in and around the outskirts of the city. In Esch-sur-Alzette, its urban bourgeois classes settled in the course of urbanization, and they had to develop their own residential areas from scratch. These middle-class and bourgeois areas were subsequently reinforced by the construction of new quarters of Dellhöh (Dellhéicht) and Wobrecken during the 1920's and the 1930's. However, Leiner (*ibid*) argues that other tendencies towards urban spatial differentiation remained rather weak in the period covered by his own study.

Of particular interest to the present research is precisely the nationality of some of its bourgeois and middle-classes, namely the German work force employed by the ARBED and the Italian self-made men in the city's affairs and construction companies. Regrettably, there are scarcer sources on what may have been the social history (and not a history of the industry itself) of the German "managing" class of the steel plants, save for the exception of Hubert Hoff's⁵² biography. We can learn from this gap in the sources

⁵² Hubert Hoff (Essen 1860- 1964 Bad Merentheim), Engineer and Director of the ARBED (1912-1919). He left a precious account of his time spent at the ARBED (Hoff sine dato).

too and attribute this absence mainly to the temporary traits of their presence in the city, abruptly by the First World War. In fact, little is known about their social dynamics, their way of life, or the educational choices they made for their children.

Another seminal study in the history of class in Luxembourg is Josiane Weber's *Familien der Oberschicht in Luxemburg* (2013). This vast incursion into the private archives of upper-class families in Luxembourg represents the richest documented study on the (upper) class in Luxembourg. Weber's study, based on the material provided by family-owned archives, covers the period just before the turn of the century (1850-1900) and analyses the governing elites of the Grand Duchy at the time. The book is essential in the way it contributed to an insight into the private lives of a good number of Luxembourg's elite families, in particular their family relationships, women's roles and ways of perpetuating their dynasties of influence and power.

Unlocking the history of upper-class Luxembourgers, Weber's (2013) in-depth research provides but one important outlook into the dynamics of economic, social and political change between 1850 and 1900 and with it, the emergence of modern Luxembourg. However important in the understanding of the upper social strata in Luxembourg up until that period, the study limits itself, to the city of Luxembourg where the spheres of power and administration admittedly, counted more than elsewhere, up until 1900. According to Weber's (ibid) analysis, during the 19th century, political and economic power as well as cultural dominance lay in the hands of a few families composed of lawyers, notaries, propriety owners, bankers and industrialists. Among the countries' ruling dynasties of the 19th century Luxembourg the Metz, Pescatore, Brasseur, Collart, Servais, the Wurth and de Roebé can be named. Not only were they at the centre of economic life of the country as most have also held high government positions. They all had a leading role and got into such an overpowering position that they could dominate the political, economic, social and cultural life of Luxembourg for decades.

The study leaves aside other areas of the Grand-Duchy, admittedly, because they were not noteworthy. In Weber's words:

The society was largely rural; less than four percent of the population lived in an urban environment and apart from the capital Luxembourg, there were hardly any cities worth mentioning in the Grand Duchy. Between 1840 and 1870 there was at times oppressive poverty, which affected a large part of the population and which manifested itself in famine, begging and emigration, especially to America (J. Weber 2013, 17).

Nevertheless, it is drawing from Weber's (ibid) own quest for a conceptualization of class that the present work sets to pursue some of the same questions, this time applied to the bourgeoisie and middle-classes

in the Esch-sur- Alzette, of the decades that follow (1900-1920). It is thus important to summarize why Weber's (ibid) set of questions matter.

Firstly, because her study acknowledges that the last decade of the 19th century, represents for Luxembourg a turning point, a moment in which the emergence and subsequent success of the industrial sector dictates a change in the destiny of what was until then a poor country. Weber's findings demonstrate, in fact, that this upper class came very close to the aristocracy in its lifestyle, culture and not the least, wealth (intermarriage being one of the forms of intermingling between the two).

The historian (ibid) also goes on explaining why throughout the first half of 19th century, the economic, cultural and social capital are held in the hands of a limited group of people. Economic capital in the form of landed assets gave them the monopoly of political leadership thanks to the census suffrage. This voting reality remained unchallenged until the universal suffrage in 1919. Land ownership presupposed old family connections, which guaranteed membership of the elite, and which also facilitated access to job positions within the state apparatus and political careers.

However, towards the mid-19th century a shift in societal attitudes was imminent. A new bourgeoisie based on meritocracy rather than birthrights, was making its debut. This "new bourgeoisie's" right to existence and social promotion, came, in the course of a few decades to signify "normality", also in the public discourse. There is evidence that this new class formation sees its first foundations already in the Luxembourg of the 18th century and that "its ascension amounts to a description of modern Luxembourg" (Thewes 1994, 199).

An article in the newspaper *Courrier du Luxembourg* dating back to 1849 illustrates rather well this shift. It should however not come as surprise given that the brothers Charles and Norbert Metz, the quintessential representatives of that new class of self-made industrialists, founded this newspaper. The piece congratulates itself with the promotion of the bourgeoisie to the ranks of those who are entitled to actually greet and meet the Prince⁵³:

⁵³ In all likelihood, although not mentioned, the article referred to Prince Henri of the Netherlands, governor of Luxembourg between 1850-1879. Prince Henri was a much-cherished Royal in Luxembourg, for taking the situation of the country allegedly more at heart than his brother, King William III of the Netherlands, the actual sovereign of Luxembourg who set foot in Luxembourg only 5 times 41 years (Calmes, 1972).

May this happy disposition last forever! What was once the bourgeoisie, the middle class that actually makes up society? In Luxembourg, as elsewhere, it was ignored, and for favours of any kind, for that consideration which distinguishes all useful men, to be deemed a citizen, he had either to be a great lord, or a rich man, or a civil servant: to the others oblivion when not disdain. To these were the official festivities, paid for in large part by those who were excluded, and if by chance they appeared, their place was marked, it was the last one. Where in Luxembourg were the honest and industrious bourgeois who ever attended these banquets celebrating the birth or presence of Kings: you had to be a civil servant; (...) The Government rightly felt that to show the country to the Prince, it was not only ridiculously decorated clothes that had to be presented to him (...). What we have said has no other purpose than to prove that civil service is losing its hold in our country, and if it develops the system inaugurated by the princely invitations, the government will be acting wisely: it is in the middle class that society, the power of the state and the power of the state are to be found today (*Courrier du Luxembourg*, 17 October 1849, p.1).⁵⁴

The article highlights a “democratization” of the access of the bourgeoisie to the higher spheres. It does also seem to suggest a path similar to that of other Western European nations. In Kocka’s words:

This culture implied a post aristocratic, modern vision of life, frequently advocated with outright criticism of the old order and aristocracy. Out of this culture the programmes of liberalism grew and were translated into different demands and campaigns in local, regional and national politics. There were certainly non-liberal middle class people and non-bourgeois liberals; but there was beyond doubt a basic affinity between middle-class culture and liberalism in the first half of the 19th century. This middle-class was on the rise, and its main challenge was against what had survived of the old order of privilege and autocracy (Kocka 2004, 29).

However, class distinctions remained much demarcated in day-to-day life, and it was strictly speaking only with the arrival of the franc-maçonnerie, that a different type of association sees the light. An association that saw its *raison d’être* beyond the class, ethnic, national or religious divide (Thewes, 1994; Jungblut, 1994).

Unlike the far more heterogeneous composition of the bourgeoisie in the making, of the late nineteenth century, the élite class (*Oberschicht*) was up until that point easily recognisable:

Reputation and power, property and education were the decisive factors that made belonging to the upper class of Luxembourg in the 19th century. They were acquired through a selected upbringing and training, through a wise marriage and family alliances, through a leadership position in politics and business as well as through cultural dominance and an upscale lifestyle (J. Weber 2013, 31).

⁵⁴ **In the original :** Puisse cette heureuse disposition durer toujours! Qu’était une fois, ce que l’on appelle la bourgeoisie, cette classe moyenne qui constitue effectivement la société? À Luxembourg comme ailleurs, elle était méconnue, et pour que les faveurs, de quelqu’espèce qu’elles soient, pour que cette considération qui fait distinguer tous les hommes utiles, vinsent toucher un citoyen, il fallait ou qu’il fût grand seigneur, ou richard, ou fonctionnaire: aux autres l’oubli quand pas le dédain. À ceux-là les fêtes officielles, que payaient pour la grande part ceux qui en étaient exclus, et si par hasard ils y apparaissaient, leur place était marquée, c’était la dernière. Où sont à Luxembourg les honnêtes et industrieux bourgeois qui aient jamais assisté à ces banquets célébrant la naissance ou la présence des Rois : il fallait être fonctionnaire; (...) Le Gouvernement a senti avec justesse que pour montrer le pays au Prince, ce n’était pas seulement des habits ridiculement chamarrés qu’il fallait lui présenter (...). Ce que nous avons dit n’a d’autre but que de prouver que la fonctionnocratie perd de son empire chez nous, et s’il développe le système inauguré par les invitations princières, le gouvernement agira sagement : c’est dans la classe moyenne que se trouve aujourd’hui la société, le pouvoir.

Due to the census suffrage, the nobility shared the political monopoly with the rich citizens. Together with the propertied bourgeoisie, from the beginning of the 19th century, the ruling elite consisted of nobles with land ownership, family connections and political influence.

In the Luxembourg of the mid-19th century a new upper class emerges, one that has “deserved” its right to ascension of the social ladder, through meritocracy. Eventually, a part of this class aspired to a sense of nobility as well, namely through marriage practices.

In short, the nobility adapted to the times and “married down” as part of a survival strategy. Although they retained much power, they got involved with other classes and were changed by their relations with other classes and their involvement in new types of activities. The members of Luxembourg’s city élite of the 19th century hence owe their position to their education, their social position, their success, their work and personality and legitimate through the latter their right to economic compensations, social prestige and even political power (Jungblut, 1994).

Despite this mixity, which gave room for more heterogeneous generations to come in terms of social background, there is room to believe the nobility’s “make over” still represented the very opposite of what a new enlightened bourgeoisie aspired to: self-reliance, a distrust for old regime forms of power and sociability and, most importantly, secularity.

Both historians of the 18th and 19th centuries in Luxembourg highlight the importance of cultural practices in the process of distinction of these upper classes, nobility and non, against the working classes and admittedly the petty bourgeoisie. If it is true that “the victories of capitalism and democracy eroded what had been left of aristocratic entitlements and distinctions“ (Kocka 2004, 33) in most of Europe from the 1st World War onwards, a further incursion into the role and history of nobility in Luxembourg able to provide further insight is still needed. Another factor that deserves to be mentioned is the quasi absence of a proper nobility (Wehenkel, 2019), be it because its members already gave sign of decaying by the late 18th century⁵⁵ (Hudemann-Simon, 1985), be it because a *de facto* Luxembourg based, born and bred royal family only materialised by the late 19th century⁵⁶. Paradoxically, it was precisely with the ascension of the Nassau dynasty branch and the secession from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, that a true national

⁵⁵ Jean Mayer writes in his preface to the book: “(...) a nobility so diverse, so weak, so unsure of itself, with no real unity, with little ability to resist the powers of Vienna or Brussels, but firmly entrenched in its ancestral certainties, even if they were sometimes imaginary (...) » (Hudemann-Simon, 1985: VI).

⁵⁶ With the ascendance of the Nassau-Bragance branch to the throne and their establishment in Luxembourg, the ties with the Kingdom of the Netherlands (in the absence of male heirs) disappear.

consciousness began to take place. This was true also for historians, who, “partially liberated themselves from Orangeism”(B. Majerus and Beyen 2008, 286).

If the aristocracy in Luxembourg and the Royal Family in particular, in appearance have not, unlike what happened with other Western European monarchies, faced much antagonism, much can be attributed to the role of a glorifying historiography. It will be the post World War I period and with it Esch-sur-Alzette as a bastion of Republicanism, to demystify the consensus around the monarchy. There is reason to contend, according to some scholarship, that the memory of the republican revolution in November 1918/January 1919 has intentionally been wiped out from the mainstream historical narrative (Wehenkel 1989; 2019), thus resulting in a toned down acknowledgement of the importance the Republican movement had especially in the industrial south.

Any aspirations to form a republic were buried with the consensus role the Grand-Duchesse Charlotte has managed to gather around the Royal Family and which was consolidated during and post-World War II. As Fehlen (Fehlen 2009) puts it:

As the church was the only national institution to continue to exist during this time, it became a symbol of independence together with the Grand Duchess, who was exiled (Fehlen, *ibid*: 15)⁵⁷.

Its legitimacy remains little challenged with only very recent changes to its status quo⁵⁸, the whole going hand in hand with a compliant media landscape and a much reluctant attitude in advancing any type of criticism to the Royal Family⁵⁹. In his further work, Wehenkel (2019) thoroughly deconstructs a presumed historical and ethnic⁶⁰ legitimacy of the Luxembourgish Royal Family. The historian describes it as a “genealogical fiction” (*ibid*: 21) and compares the national feeling and the sovereign’s personality cult to a brainwashing of sorts:

Monarchism has become ingrained in people's minds and feelings. Monarchy has become self-evident, an inescapable horizon, second nature, something that goes without saying. Talk of a republic was inconceivable, unseemly, sacrilegious, ridiculous beyond belief (*ibid* : 11).

⁵⁷ **In the original:** Da die Kirche als einzige nationale Institution während dieser Zeit weiterbestand, wurde sie zusammen mit der ins Exil Großherzogin, zum Symbol der Unabhängigkeit.

⁵⁸ In early 2020, The Waringo Report, was compiled by former senior civil servant Jeannot Waringo at the request of Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel. It exposed some of the Grand Ducal’s Court issues and advocated for a reform to Luxembourg’s monarchy. Its criticism, in particular to the role of Grande-Duchesse Maria Teresa caused much controversy in the public opinion.

⁵⁹ Luxembourg lost three places in an annual ranking of freedom of press, compiled by the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) group.” A lack of government transparency caused Luxembourg to lose three places in an annual ranking of freedom of press. (...) It also criticised the fact that state agencies "still tend to refuse to provide information to journalists" (Luxembourg Times, 20.04.2021). Available at: <https://www.luxtimes.lu/en/luxembourg/transparency-luxembourg-drops-more-in-freedom-of-press-ranking-607eabfcde135b92367a0f91>.

⁶⁰ “(...) Grand Duchess Marie-Adelaide, born in Luxembourg but speaking not a word of Luxembourgish , and supported by a close guard of Bavarian councillors (Wehenkel 2019, 23)”.

Moving forward into the 20th century, in his social structure analysis of the Luxembourgish economy in the inter-war period, historian Claude Wey identifies further social structural patterns. Despite a decrease in agricultural occupations by 13% from 1907 to 1935⁶¹ - with an accompanying increase of professional activity in the industrial and tertiary sectors of 7% for the same period- these impact only slightly what he deems to be the fundamental structures of Luxembourgish society. One where that the rural world and the working class dominate at social structure level (Wey, 1990).

More striking is the overwhelming percentage of Luxembourgers, who although working class, owned a property (Hemmer, 1948 as cited in Wey, 1990; Fehlen, 2009) making it so that one in two was able to be his own “master”, regardless of his professional occupation, because owner of land, even if scarce. This perdured too as an argument for the conservatives in government since the late 19th century. Access to land joined by other factors, had kept in the opinion of many deputies Luxembourgers off the path and off the need for an organized proletarianization all together:

Our workers are not proletarians, like those in London and Sheffield, who, if they do not belong to a trade union [sic], have nothing to eat as soon as they are dismissed. In our country, the penetration of the various classes still exists to a degree that gives much more stability to society than where the classes are separated. Many Kleinbauern [sic] work for other landowners; they are half peasant labourers, half day labourers; their children are domestic servants, so that the Mittelstand [sic] and the working-class merge in our country (Intervention of deputy Brincour, 14 December 1898).⁶²

A phenomenon that geographer Heinz Quasten (Quasten, 1970 as cited in Wey, 1990) considers specific to Luxembourg⁶³. This narrative accompanied the evolution of Luxembourgish society through the post second War world:

These people know neither the wealth accumulated in the hands of a few privileged families nor the misery of the working classes in other countries. It would therefore be tempting to say that Luxembourgers all belong to the middle class, which is gradually becoming gentrified (Heiderscheid 1961 as cited in (Fehlen 2009, 14).

and held strong throughout the 1970's...

So we cannot speak in Luxembourg of an industrial proletariat of rootless and alienated workers. Very often, the worker simply transferred to the south [mining regions] his peasant qualities i.e. a strong sense of work, of social promotion and his sentimental quest for real property, a house with a garden in one of the quietly developing industrial towns of Esch-sur- Alzette (...) (Christophory 1978, 321).

⁶¹ This analysis was based on the professional censuses that took place in 1907 and 1935.

⁶² **In the original** : Nos ouvriers ne sont pas des prolétaires, comme on en trouve à Londres et à Sheffield, que s'ils ne font pas partie d'un Trade Union[sic], n'ont plus rien à manger dès qu'ils sont congédiés. Chez nous la pénétration des diverses classes existe encore à un degré qui donne beaucoup plus de stabilité à la société que là où les classes sont séparés, beaucoup de Kleinbauern qui travaillent chez d'autres propriétaires, ils sont moitié journaliers paysans, moitié journaliers ; leurs enfants sont domestiques, en sorte que le Mittelstand et la classe ouvrière se confondent chez nous. C. R. 1898-1899, p.78.

⁶³ Claude Wey regrets the fact that such a thesis could not be corroborated through quantitative data given the lacunae in the research of social history in Luxembourg at that point, to which we can add the quite restricted access to historical sources on landownership available on other regions of the country.

Sociologist Fernand Fehlen hints at similar conclusions on the absence of a true proletariat based mostly on the grounds of the existence of a paternalistic industry, which prevented a fate similar to that of workers in other parts of Europe:

Paternalistic entrepreneurship and a proud working class, which in the 1950s was often better paid than the old middle classes or middle-ranking civil servants, form the basis of a working culture that has never known "proletarianisation" (Fehlen 2009, 17).

This image can be said to be true for a part of Luxembourgish workers, although not for its totality especially if one takes into consideration its immigrant (and immigrant background) population.

However, such Luxembourgish peculiarities, at the level of its social structure, can furthermore be hypothesized as a valid reason for why a social revolution never found the grounds to take place.

Ben Fayot's analysis suggests other factors for this immobilism of the working classes:

Luxembourg's labour movement knew no such personalities [like the Belgian, the German or the French] who had provided a theoretical basis for political and social action. Had they existed, the milieu would have been too narrow and too small; in the provincial hinterland there were few links with other countries. The closed Luxembourg society, with its strong peasant character and Catholic predominance, did not become more open as a result of industrialisation; the monolithism of the iron industry gave the industrial lords- Luxembourgers and foreigners alike - such a dominant position that there could be no question of any social dynamism. The small scale of the industry made it possible for the rulers to keep track of things and made the flow of ideas and people between the various centres impossible. A national labour movement was not possible in over-liberalised Luxembourg; a new labour movement could not develop in a tightly knit society like Luxembourg's (Fayot 1979, 1:32)

On the contrary, Wehenkel-Frisch's (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978) research on the workers' mouvement origins is far less skeptical and tries to retrace in-depth the major enterprise of the, albeit isolated, Luxembourg socialists⁶⁴.

The end of the First World War provides a new elan to the worker's mouvement. The social issues of 1917-21 marked by a series of strikes, especially in the South "were only marginally exploited to build a new discourse over Luxembourgian history " (B. Majerus and Beyen 2008, 293). This view is contested by historian Denis Scuto who highlights the existence of a profoundly marginalized working class up until the 1st World War. Despite the progresses made in Luxembourg, as of the early years of the 20th century, in terms of social security, the latter had seldom contemplated the working class:

However, workers' living and working conditions remained catastrophic. Working hours in the factories are 12 hours a day. In the factory, there is also the "laangen tour", which lasts 24 hours in a row when tours change. Wages are too low to feed families (...) (Scuto 1999, 12).

Moreover, the historian renders justice to the social conquests of the Luxembourgish working class, particularly through their trade unionism in the mining and industrial South. He underlines the questions these trade unions faced after First World War:

⁶⁴ Namely by providing detailed biographies on trade unionists Georges Drossaert and Jacques Thilmány.

Don't the results achieved - the eight-hour working day, big pay rises, workers' delegations - prove the validity of this approach? Or should we interpret these successes differently? Don't they show that more radical reforms are possible? (...) The immediate post-war years gave rise to the wildest hopes in the working world. History was accelerating to the point where anything seemed possible (Scuto 1999, 15).

Despite there being no consensus on the question of whether such circumstances complied with the existence of an actual proletariat, there is no doubt that, the Luxembourgish working class (of which up until the inception of the welfare state foreigners are unequivocally excluded) remained one of the best paid, and with better access to social security in Europe, throughout the 20th century.

An aspect that resembled that of the rest of Western Europe – during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries- was that of an increase in specialized professions. Following the path of other Western European countries, where “a rising modernizing elite emphasized meritocratic standards of success and the idea of professional independence”(Kocka 2004, 29), Luxembourg too, saw a rise in its State apparatus and as a consequence in its job market. This employability process gave rise to members of the educated bourgeoisie, who were recruited on merit rather than “birth“. Civil servants and professionals put forward new claims and demands based on their education and training. Luxembourgers, having attended the Belgian, French, Germany, sometimes Swiss universities, were exposed to universal values of rationalism and secularism to grow. There can be however no simple correlation between social class and, ideology or political thinking, and the fierce Catholicism in Luxembourgish society is there to testify the difficulty in establishing an immediate link between bourgeois/middle-classes and an affiliation to a left or right liberalism. Undoubtedly, there existed in Luxembourg as well as in Esch sur Alzette a Catholic as well as liberal bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, a dominant rationale of Catholicism being a “an essential component of national identity” and the fact that to date such dominant narrative has been left unchallenged, leaves questions in the open regarding the place of other confessional/no-confessional groups in society. The result being a History of Luxembourg still deprived from a “critical apprehension of the role of the Catholic Church” (B. Majerus and Beyen 2008, 292).

A major sociological contribution to the understanding of the Luxembourgish social structure in historical perspective is provided by Fernand Fehlen (2009). In it, the sociologist delineates some of its society's landmark inner antagonisms:

Traditional Luxembourg society is characterised by the contrast between rural and urban areas, agriculture and (iron) industry, Catholicism and secularism. Political and cultural life is determined by the Catholic Church with its press organ *Luxemburger Wort*, and the right-wing party close to it, the later CSV. Together they formed a large Catholic camp, which even emerged stronger from the occupation during the Second World War (Fehlen 2009, 15).

Another trait Fehlen (ibid) touches upon is that of social mobility, a fundamental aspect in the study of class structures. The scholar states research has been possible into the urban agglomerations (Esch and

Luxembourg City) but not for the rest of the country. A “typical Luxembourgish family” biography is although possible to delineate: “grandfather = farmer; father = worker; son = Bank employee,⁶⁵ (Fehlen 2009, 19). Often, social positions will depend, as Fehlen argues further (ibid) on how early a family moved from the village (*Duerf*) to the bigger cities. His study also evokes when this social ascension takes place within the factory itself where often fathers would work as low rank employees whereas their respective sons would upgrade professionally into engineers. Social ambitions as well as the plethora of possibilities offered by a growing education system explain well the justified aspirations of the working class and the lower middle class in early twentieth century Luxembourg. The pride in achieving something better for one’s offspring is well described in this passage by Jean-Claude Juncker, former Prime Minister:

Like most Luxembourgers, the steel industry arouses very intense personal feelings in me. First of all, it's a reflexe which, I confess, is largely tinged with nostalgia. Like the sparks from a coal flow, it conjures up a whole sheaf of intimate memories dating back to the days when the horizon of the Basin Minier was lined with blast furnaces and the sky changed colour to the rhythm of the blasts at the steelworks. I then think of the street where I used to live - "my" street - through which passed every day that eternal tide of workers on bicycles on their way to the station to relieve those who, exhausted by eight hours of tiring but honest toil, were returning home for a well-deserved rest. I can also see the reappearance of that gate at the entrance to the factory, where I so often waited for my father, and which in a way formed an impassable boundary for us children. Behind it stretched the world of adults to which we had no access, but for which we were full of admiration and which we would have liked to imitate, if our parents hadn't had other plans. They wanted to reserve for their offspring a destiny that was both better and easier than the one that had been reserved for them (Juncker, 2009, 1:5).

How did the major late 19th/ early 20th century societal shifts take place in Luxembourg, during what was an intense period of identity questioning⁶⁶, the independence from Belgium (1839), a new sovereign⁶⁷, periods of economic crisis and of course the First World War? How did notions of class interplay with the nation, religion amidst these changes?

There is reason to believe that the assumption that the bourgeoisie was no “villain nor hero” (Charle, 1992), caused that in Luxembourg historical research in the middle/upper social strata has been neglected. In the same vein, contributing to the lack on historical research on the bourgeoisie, with exceptions (Kieffer et al, 1990) in the mining south, has been the concentration of historians on the working class, on the grounds of an understandable “numerical superiority“.

⁶⁵ Grossvater = Bauer; Vater = Arbeiter; Sohn bzw. Tochter= Bankangestellte.

⁶⁶ In a double referendum on September 1919, Luxembourgers were asked to vote on their preferred form of governance and whether there should be an economic union with either France or Belgium. The majority voted to retain Grand Duchess Charlotte as head of state, and for an economic union with France. Upon France’s disinterest, an economic union with Belgium was established in 1922.

⁶⁷ For a detailed insight into this troubled period in Luxembourgish history vide Scuto, 2014a and Scuto, 2014b.

The issues arising from the study of upper classes and élites in Luxembourg are no different from elsewhere, as the example of French historiography shows (Charle, 1992): short-time spans, national rather than local viewpoints, or in the case in point, the erroneous perception that Luxembourg city circumstances conflated to those of the rest of the country. The importance of the capital Luxembourg City appears to have overwhelmed that of the country itself. Finally, it should be noted that the preference for prosographical descriptions such as the one showcased in Weber's work (J. Weber 2013), presents advantages but also limitations as method. Other sources, such as censuses and notarial archives can elevate a study to more than just social biographies. This should leave no doubt as to the importance specific individuals and their biographies obviously have in illustrating ways of life in a given period.

How did Luxembourgish institutions perceive class distinctions in the early 20th century? How did people themselves experience their belonging to a given class? As we are about to see, the government's preoccupation and own understanding of the "problem of the middle classes was much in line with the contemporary vision of Belgium and Germany.

Léon Kaufmann, an expert sent on behalf of the Luxembourgish government to the "International Congress on the middle classes taking place in Brussels in 1905 presented a report on the subject. His exposé excluded civil servants but included farmers denoting thus a categorization that was deprived of any sociological assessment (Kieffer, 1993). It was, in fact, only in 1905 that the law made the categories of small business owners, small industrialists, civil servants, private employees and working class as equally eligible for "middle-class" credit (Kaufmann, 1909).

In fact, the extension of the possibility of credit, by the Caisse d'Epargne, to other professions and social categories represented a formal recognition of the difficulties in accessing credit by the lower middle classes and the working class.

Another important perspective on the structure of the bourgeoisie and middle class is that provided by research done into professional categories. Monique Kieffer's (1993) research on employees (State and private) in the period between 1880 and 1921 offers a view into how the public versus private job occupations distinction mattered in terms of salaries treatment and benefits. Furthermore, the historian's work (ibid) allows for a first attempt at where contemporary middle classes stood in terms of political affiliations and professional organization/unionization. More importantly, the latter also identifies, a correlation between a rise in the employees of the middle-classes and the continuously increasing number of students attending secondary education (Kieffer 1993, 282).

Class-consciousness matters also on the level of public versus private employees' distinction. Kieffer's research highlights that there was, at the turn of the 20th century, a true explosion in the civil servants'

careers, often by individuals who did not even possess “great intellectual capacity” (PM Eyschen as quoted by Kieffer (Kieffer 1993, 285). This was an opinion backed by many in the agrarian/clerical political camp. It should therefore not surprise the fact that some professional groups, belonging to the public administration, gathered to claim not only better career advancement but also to demand, intellectual respect in their regards:

Brought together by speciality, grouped by competence, civil servants have demanded the right to participate in the administration in a way other than as mute servants. If they are to serve, should they not, as a consequence, be able to propose, indicate, and have accepted the reforms that practice suggests to them almost every minute? [...]. Statement issued by the Allgemeiner Beamtenverein, dated 14.12.1909 (ANLux, CI-0268).

Likewise, the Statutes of the 1909 established Postal Trade Union demonstrate (ANLux FCI-0264), such requests were often merely those of the recognition of an intellectual value of the profession.

The perception of the civil servant’s job has historically been filled with a certain degree of distrust from the wider society. In his memoir on his life and work in Esch-sur-Alzette, GP Emile Colling illustrates this situation well with an amusing anecdote:

A little boy of 10-12 years old stands in front of the door and asks me to come to his sick father; (...) So I ask the boy: “Where does your dad work?”- “Oh” replies the boy somewhat reproachfully: “My dad does not work, he is an employee!” I have often told this little story in civil servant circles, but it has never provoked a roar of laughter (Colling 1999, 44).⁶⁸

Public discourse also certainly contributed for a widespread of class-consciousness. This was the case throughout Western Europe and Luxembourg was not an exception, as will be discussed. Not least important, was the institutional endorsement of the “problem” of the middle-classes, with the establishment on the course of the late 19th, early 20th century of dedicated associations, unions and ministries:

We can therefore foresee a period in the near future when the old parties, founded and developed on political bases, will have to give a large place to economic problems which they formerly considered to be of secondary importance (...) The Association for the Defence of the Middle Classes was created (...) Since these middle classes definitely want to live, why shouldn't we help them to help themselves? This is what we had to say to each other. And that was the purpose of this "Mittelstandspolitik", the programme of which was launched in the German-speaking countries almost 10 years ago. Belgium and Luxembourg followed.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Vor der Tür steht ein Kerlchen von 10-12 Jahren und bittet mich zu seinem kranken Vater zu kommen; (...) So fragte ich den Jungen: „Wou schafft däi Papp?“- „Oh“ antwortet der Bursche etwas vorwurfsvoll: „Mäi Papp schaff nët, hien as Beamten!“ Ich habe diese kleine Geschichte oft in Beamtenkreisen erzählt, habe aber nie eine Lachsalve ausgelöst.

⁶⁹ Les classes moyennes. Le programme d’organisation et de défense des petits commerçants et industriels. *L’indépendance Luxembourgeoise*. 20 & 21 November 1909, p.1.

A survey taken in Belgium in the period between 1902-1904, also points to the institutionalized interchangeability in the use of the terms bourgeoisie, petite bourgeoisie and middle classes. This was visible also on the population's self-perceptions of class since the vast majority of respondents defined themselves as either belonging to the bourgeoisie or *petite bourgeoisie* and made no clear distinctions between one another (Kurgan-Van Hentenryk, 1983). This serves to demonstrate that "bourgeoisie" was as much in the "eyes of the beholder", as within the individual's conception of self. As Kurgan-Van Hentenryk (*ibid*) commented concerning the survey:

The oral survey did nothing but confirm how much the contours of the petite bourgeoisie are blur, as well as the criteria used to demarcate it from other classes do not always correspond to the reality (...) (Kurgan-Van Hentenryk, *ibid*: 298).

The number in civil servants in Luxembourg grew exponentially at the turn of the century, however, in comparison to their German counterparts, salaries were lower (Kieffer, 1993) and demands for raise in salaries and housing indemnities grew grounded, on comparisons with the benefits cashed beyond the borders:

the demands of our Association are far behind what German civil servants and employees receive in "Wohnungsgeldzuschüsse" (L'Indépendance Luxembourgeoise, 21&22 March 1914, p. 1).⁷⁰

Much like its neighbours, Belgium and Germany, in contemporary Luxembourg, middle-class appeared more as synonym of petite bourgeoisie both in the political and public discourse:

Now, for the first time, the question has arisen as to whether the middle classes could defend themselves and whether they deserved to be defended against the growing powers of capitalism and organised proletariat. The middle classes were taken to mean small shopkeepers, small industrialists, craftsmen or entrepreneurs who themselves worked with their own capital. All social forces seemed to threaten them: on the one hand, the progress of big industry with its immense resources of tools and money, tending towards monopoly by lowering the cost price; then the development of department stores and bazaars extending the competition of their counters to all branches of commerce. On the other hand, working-class forces monopolised the attention of the public authorities and imposed on small employers all the burdens of social progress won at their expense (*L'indépendance Luxembourgeoise*, 20&21 Novembre, 1909, p.1).⁷¹

Luxembourg is then a crossroad for knowledge transfer; this is particularly visible in its trade unionism and organized working-class milieus:

In 1918, Luxembourg was extremely active both in terms of the movement of workers, through migration, and the transmission of ideas, through organisations. Trade union and workers' party leaders travelled to Berlin, Amsterdam, Berne, Moscow, Copenhagen, Paris, Düsseldorf, Antwerp and London to attend international workers' congresses or simply to obtain information from foreign workers' centres. The trade union press is full of articles taken from 17 foreign publications (Scuto 1990a, 15).

⁷⁰ L'indemnité de résidence et l'Association générale des fonctionnaires et employés de l'état, *L'Indépendance Luxembourgeoise* 21&22 March 1914, p.2.

⁷¹ Les classes moyennes, *L'indépendance Luxembourgeoise*, 20&21 November, 1909, p.1.

The Luxembourgish government followed with close attention the way Belgium and Germany⁷² managed the middle classes, namely by creating an institutional apparatus that devoted its work to address the “problem of the middle classes”. In the same vein, the Luxembourgish government monitored and was in touch with several German commercial unions and authorities in order to eventually emulate an approach with regards to Luxembourg’s own middle class. Archival material is rich by way of quantity and quality of documents testifying of the involvement of the government in such matters. This cooperation initiated by the Luxembourgish government and its PM Paul Eyschen took place under various shapes. For example, by inviting Hector Lambrechts, an expert from Belgium, for two public conferences, in March 1909. The conferences on “the social problem of the middle-classes” and “how to buy and sell”⁷³, were aimed at the members of the Luxembourgish Union of commerce (ANLux FCI 0210-0224). Sending envoys to meet foreign members of commercial unions and attend conferences on behalf of the government was also a common practice.

Raymond De Waha⁷⁴, an envoy of the Luxembourg government to the congress on the middle classes taking place in Munich in 1911 reported to PM Paul Eyschen his discontent with the same Hector Lambrecht’s formulations on the matter of the organization of commerce:

I can't say everything I have to object to Mr. Lambrechts in these remarks. Just a few words on this subject. It is unacceptable that no account should be taken of the fact that department stores are capitalist enterprises, we could say today big capital, whereas consumer cooperatives are means of defending the consumer, and precisely the consumer from the middle and working classes⁷⁵ (Raymond De Waha’s manuscript note to Minister Paul Eyschen, following the Congress of the middle-classes in Munich, 1911. ANLux FCI-0215).

Among his concerns, De Waha denoted also a tendency to radicalization from at least a part of the petite bourgeoisie in Germany:

⁷² Different factors may explain why Luxembourg’s social stratification is believed to have had more similarities to those of Belgium and Germany rather than with France. Indeed, there is no evidence of exchange of documentation /correspondence/ best practices, on the matter of middle-classes, between the Luxembourgish government and its French counterparts. Luxembourg had been politically bound to Belgium up until 1839, when it reached its independence. The fact that Luxembourg was also a member of the economic union with Germany, the Zollverein, until the end of WW1, should not be underestimated either.

⁷³ Two public conferences took place in March 1909 “Das Soziale Problem des Mittelstandes” and “Die Kunst zu kaufen und zu verkaufen”.

⁷⁴ Raymond de Waha (1877-1942), diplomat and politician, member of the Parti de la Droite.

⁷⁵ **In the original** : Je ne puis formuler, dans le cadre de ces observations, tout ce que j’aurais à objecter à M. Lambrechts. Quelques mots seulement à ce propos. Il est inadmissible qu’on ne tienne pas compte de ce que les grands magasins sont des entreprises capitalistes, on peut dire aujourd’hui du grand capital, tandis que les coopératives de consommation sont des moyens de défense du consommateur, et précisément du consommateur des classes moyenne et ouvrières.

I am pleased to acknowledge that a lot of excellent ideas were developed before the Congress (...) Nevertheless I have to make some reservations about the general tendencies of the majority of the Congress. First of all, this was not a Congress of the middle classes; it was an assembly dominated almost exclusively by the interests of small industry and commerce. The assembly was clearly imbued with the spirit of narrowness, exclusivism and legislative radicalism that characterised those of the towns of the Middle Ages, where the masters and jurands were in possession of power. The demand for the pure and simple abolition of department stores and consumer cooperatives and the demand for all prices to be set by the State were applauded (ibid).⁷⁶

It is posited that the lower middle classes or petty bourgeoisie were marginalised precisely because of the ever-present threat of slipping towards the working class. Conversely, it was not rare for members of the proletariat to have their own foot on the middle-classes by juggling the sale of their labour power, say at the factory, with the parallel running of a bar, café or pension. This not only allowed them to make ends meet as it often gave a professional status to their wives, who actually managed these “hospitality” businesses such as cafés and small hotels. As we are about to see, this was not unusual in Esch-sur-Alzette. In the same vein, to own “small-businesses” was not always a synonym for being on the edge or a sign of financial distress. As, the case of Esch-sur-Alzette demonstrates, some shop-owners, according to the taxpayers lists were among some of the wealthiest members of the city⁷⁷.

2.6 The emergence and development of Esch-sur-Alzette’s bourgeoisie

The “iron metropolis” constitutes without doubt an observation field favourable to dedicated research on the development of its own social structures, far from the logics of the capital. This research aims therefore at casting new light on the material position, the social networks, and political adherence of local bourgeois and middle-class élites.

Is there a reason to talk about a predominance of the same typology of upper class that the different scholarship on Luxembourg city above described, also in the Esch-sur-Alzette of the same period?

In sum, after taking into consideration the studies of the bourgeoisie and upper classes in Luxembourg of 18th and 19th centuries it results that these turn-of-the-century upper classes of Luxembourg city, albeit

⁷⁶**In the original:** Je me plais à reconnaître qu’un tas d’idées excellentes ont été développées devant le congrès (...) Néanmoins j’ai à faire des réserves à propos des tendances générales de la majorité du congrès. Tout d’abord ce n’était pas un congrès des classes moyennes, c’était une assemblée où dominaient à peu près exclusivement les intérêts de la petite industrie et du petit commerce. L’assemblée était nettement empreinte de cet esprit d’étroitesse, d’exclusivisme, de radicalisme législatif, qui caractérisait celles des villes du moyen Age, où les maîtrises et les jurandes étaient en possession du pouvoir. La demande de la suppression pure et simple des grands magasins et des coopératives de consommation et la demande de la fixation de tous les prix par l’Etat y ont été applaudies.

⁷⁷ According to the taxpayers list of 1922, the shoe retailer Henri Marnach, had an estimated revenue of 67.000 francs, well above the average of the taxpayers in Esch-sur-Alzette.

having been transformed in the course of time, are very different from the bourgeois middle classes present in Esch sur Alzette of the early 20th century. The latter was indeed a very different caste in the making. Industrialisation meant for Esch-sur-Alzette, that part of its workforce came from elsewhere in Luxembourg and abroad to take up managerial occupations at the industrial sites⁷⁸. It should be thus taken into consideration that the turn of the 20th century, sees a completely new category of supervisory staff, engineers, inspectors and the like emerge.

The urban and industrial character of Esch-sur-Alzette and its unprecedented societal setting in Luxembourg seems a useful and sound lenses to understand why the Esch-sur-Alzette bourgeois middle classes deserve a separate analysis. It is enough to look at the social backgrounds of the Esch-sur-Alzette's mayors for the period comprised between late 18th century and early 20th century (Buchler et al., 2020), whose social origins (with solely a few exceptions) were remarkably heterogeneous and deprived of privileges of birth when compared to those of Luxembourg city's administrators.⁷⁹

Indeed, the rivalry with Luxembourg City, as will be argued, will also play a role in the distinctiveness of the Esch bourgeoisie and through its municipal administration.

Esch-sur-Alzette presents a reality very different to the one of Luxembourg city, in fact, at least part of the former's bourgeoisie was in the period at stake, still in the process of formation and consolidation. Furthermore, Esch's bourgeoisie was undoubtedly urban, from the late 1890s onwards, and of more modest background, unlike most of the families presented in Weber's (2013) work, many of whom were landowners, industrialists and not least families with a longstanding grip on the national power and privileged by the accidents of birth. It is therefore because of its own specificities one of which, admittedly, its own aspiration at excelling through the comparison with Luxembourg City, a city in many ways its rival (Philippart, 2005), that Esch and its bourgeoisie differs.

Who belongs then to the bourgeoisie middle-classes in the Esch-sur-Alzette of the early 20th century?

Until the advent of banks and financial institutions in the mid-19th century, land was still one of the most important and secure capital investments. Land offered the owner the possibility of obtaining loans as well as mortgages, which was particularly important for industrialists at that time. Especially in the first half of the 19th century, the state and the former landed gentry were the sellers of land, while industrialists, especially from the iron industry, speculators from the ranks of French civil servants and real estate dealers were the buyers for a while during the French occupation (1795-1814) (Helbach 2009). The legacy of

⁷⁸ The Societe métallurgique des Terres Rouges (until 1919 part of the Gelsenkirchen group) counted in 1920 with 27% of foreign employees (Kieffer, 1993).

⁷⁹ See part IV for a detailed account on the origins of all members of Esch-sur-Alzette's local council.

such ownership was a case in point in Esch, if we take into consideration the amount of its land still owned by French nobles, bourgeois, small and bigger farmers alike, by the mid-19th century (Administration du cadastre et topographie 1845).

One French notary in particular, Henri Purnot from Metz owned more than 100 hectares as well as a brewery, flour mill, oil mill and a woodsaying factor, the latter in concomitance with a vast ownership of land parcels composed of woods. in Esch-sur-Alzette. In fact, by 1842, he was the biggest private owner of land in the Esch territory.

Land, as a resource, was accessible only through inheritance or the market. Because of the much-fractured nature of most land parcels in Luxembourg, it is therefore not surprising that families tried to hold to their possessions as well as attempted to enlarge their richness, more often than not by “marrying well”.

Moreover, industrialisation led to the emergence of a new conquering bourgeoisie: that of businessmen. In Esch-sur-Alzette, along the implementation of the first industrial plants, the city social tissue changed, also in terms of whom this newly arrived upper-class was to be composed of: a business oriented bourgeoisie (Kieffer, Maas, and Scuto 1990) of different merchants and trades. By the end of the 19th century, the formation of the Luxembourg business bourgeoisie was complete. In collaboration with the remaining provincial nobility and the cross-border business bourgeoisie (Maas 2008), or by forming alliances with both, this class was to form the powerful Luxembourg economic elite on which the liberal project was to be based. From 1871 onwards, the directors of the Société Auguste Metz & Co (owners by half of *Metzeschmelz*) company, Léon Metz and Hubert Muller-Tesch, lived in the castle of Bervart. The mining and construction companies gradually joined the existent upper middle class of farmers and tradesmen who still dominated Esch's political life in the mid-19th century.

Which place did this newly arrived diverse upper-class, whose occupations revolved around the management of the factories, mining, railway, public works and industry-dependent commerce, take in the context of Esch?

Finally, the growth of the city in population and economic importance brought along a series of new professionals, an educated upper class, highly specialized in their fields. This included technical professionals such as engineers, architects as well as doctors, veterinaries, schoolmasters, notaries, judges and higher rank civil servants. Luxembourg was by then, still characterized by a low degree of social differentiation, which was reflected, for example, in the small percentage of the population with a university degree (Fehlen 2009). Those who received a formal higher-level education did it so in way that was similar to that of other European countries, the reason being also the fact that Luxembourg did not dispose of university or other academic /higher education Institutions. Educated Luxembourgers,

necessarily had to attend University in one of the three neighboring countries Belgium, France and Germany and, as was often the case, Switzerland as well. Among the new highly specialized staff of the industry, many had attended the Aachener Polytechnicum in Germany, its most famous pupil being Emil Mayrisch, the founder of the ARBED⁸⁰. The latter reunited under the same shareholding company and merged the three largest local steel companies of the country: the *Société anonyme des Hauts Fourneaux et Forges de Dudelange*, the *Société anonyme des Mines du Luxembourg et Forges de Sarrebruck* and the *Société en commandite des Forges d'Eich, Le Gallais, Metz et Cie*.

As we are about to see, we will seldom come across a locally established nobility. However, even though residual in Luxembourg, it is worth mentioning that by the late 19th century (Helbach 2009) a surface amounting to 14000 ha was still detained by nobility⁸¹. In the canton of Esch, namely in Foetz, Differdange and Sanem there was still an influential nobility⁸². These were families among which, marriage alliances with the *bourgeoisie d'affaires* were frequent also across borders⁸³.

Given the social history nature of our enquiry, we acknowledge that despite an overwhelming presence of a working class in Esch (post 1870's), class structure suffered some disruption also at the level of its upper classes. An overarching theme runs through the three distinct period time span that is here under analysis, which is that of the city's early urban development and its consolidation.

Through three distinctively different but consecutive periods in history (1842-1872; 1872-1905; 1905-1922), three different angles that help define class will be at the centre of the analysis.

Class will, thus, be here "measured" through its many components: starting with landownership, professional occupations exerted and the manifestation of class belonging, namely through the structures of power. The latter comprise less quantitatively measurable methods such as sociability, membership in Associations, and potential other ways in which the bourgeois middle classes exerted influence and power.

⁸⁰ **ARBED S.A.**, the acronym for Aciéries Réunies de Burbach-Eich-Dudelange, Société Anonyme.

⁸¹ Helbach's (2009) study covered 14,000 hectares of noble estates and over 26,000 hectares of other large estates, i.e. about 15.50% of the total land area. In his research, he mentions the foreign origins of part of this nobility, often French. A glimpse into the notarial archives of Esch-sur-Alzette of the beginning of the 20th century illustrates well the significant instances in which French nobles sold land in Luxembourg to buyers of different classes (AN, Charles Laval series, 1875-1920)

⁸² The Baron Charles de Tornaco, for example, who was a Liberal MP for Esch for a period of almost consecutive 24 years up until 1908. He was also one of the main landowners in the country. But also, the count de Bertier in Dudelange and the Baron Alexandre De Gerlache in Differdange. Baron Alexandre-Jean-Joseph de Gerlache de Waillimont (1861-1908). The latter family, of Belgian background, were not only landowners but pioneer industrialists in the country, namey in Oberkorn/Differdange. Alexandre de Gerlache was also a member of the Chamber of deputies. He surprisingly only obtains his Luxembourgish naturalization in 1895 (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1895).

⁸³ The daughter of Charles Laval, eminent notary of Esch married the baron D'Huart from Longwy, the De Wacquand in Foetz had marriage ties with French nobility as well.

In it, we explore various forms of association, which provided the upper classes with a means of organizing their leisure and influence, creating a sense of class cohesion and expressing their individuality, their “respectability” and that is to say, often their “moral superiority”, but also the modalities through which they created links to the lower classes. The analysis will also draw on a two-level observation of the actions of the municipal council. On the one hand, by looking at internal meetings and discussions, in parallel, by taking into account the relationship of the municipal council with the central government, through the material available from the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (DGI, Direction Général de l’Intérieur) at the National Archives (ANLux). The former allows for an insight to events that is unfiltered, shedding light how decisions were taken within the inner circle of local power. The latter, instead, reflects the relation of the city of the Esch-sur-Alzette to the central government in matters where the higher instances permits and views were sought (Series *Dossiers Communaux - Esch-sur-Alzette*⁸⁴). Finally, for some instances, an analysis of the political demands from Esch’s members of Parliament⁸⁵ will also be included with a focus on their intervention at national decision-making process level.

How did upper middle classes and bourgeoisie evolve in a period that spans from an agrarian type of society through the age of capital (Hobsbawm 1984) to end up in the interwar period that sees the end to the monopoly of the traditional ruling classes (in Luxembourg , concretely, through the introduction of universal voting rights in 1919)?

We have a working-class population which, so to speak, has no political rights. We have found it expedient to exclude them from political life, we have denied them the right of suffrage, and we meet here, “tax poll” deputies, to make laws for or against the workers. If you exclude the great mass of the people from political life, what will you achieve? You will achieve the monopolisation of public powers by a small number, you will have a real plutocracy, a plutocracy which will monopolise political wealth by less avowed means. (...) If we exclude the great masses of the people from our political life, we will never be able to make good social legislation⁸⁶(Intervention of social democrat deputy Michel Welter, representing the canton of Esch, in the Luxembourgish Parliament, 25.03.1897).

There is no doubt that the implementation of the first modern industrial plants in the South, facilitated by the development of the railroad network, contributed to the spectacular development of the city. But in which terms did the local autochthonous upper classes interact with the industry, if they did at all? Did

⁸⁴ ANLux- INT ministère de l’Intérieur - Series Dossiers Communaux Esch-sur- Alzette INT 0605 – INT 0631 (1885-1925).

⁸⁵ Comptes-rendus des Chambres des Députés.

⁸⁶ A demand introduced some 20 years earlier by Esch- sur-Alzette’s socialist MPs, Michel Welter and C.M. Spoo: ”Nous avons une population ouvrière qui, pour ainsi dire, n’a pas de droit politiques. Nous avons trouvé bon d’exclure de la vie politique, nous avons refusé à l’ouvrier le droit de suffrage, et nous nous réunissons ici, députés censitaires, pour faire des lois pour ou contre les ouvriers. Il me semble que ce n’est pas là la bonne voie ; si vous excluez la grande masse du peuple de la vie politique, qu’est-ce que vous atteindrez alors ? Vous arriverez à l’accaparement des pouvoirs publics par un petit nombre, vous aurez une vraie ploutocratie, une ploutocratie qui accaparera la fortune politique par des moyens moins avouables. (...) Si donc nous excluons les grandes masses populaires de notre vie politique, nous n’arriverons jamais faire une bonne loi sociale.” C.R 1897-1898, 25.03.1897, p.1552.

they embrace development and look for a place where themselves they could reconvert successfully both economically and professionally? Alternatively, did they find other ways of maintaining their influence over the city? While the country and city became prosperous under a new urban and industrial “fairytale”, the place reserved to tradition and namely the way land use was transformed merits here our attention.

In brief, historiography has given major importance to economic the history of the country as whole, thus concentrating on companies as well as in its direct opposants, the working class. Although understandable given the quintessential role the iron and steel industry has had in shaping Luxembourg’s economy and society, the flaws of such vast research lie precisely in its very own exhaustiveness. Something that historian Paul Zahlen describes as if the iron industry had "absorbed all the energy and all the potential of researchers" (Zahlen 2018), while smaller industries, agriculture and the service sector have tended to be neglected in general historiography. It can be added that the history of the iron and its major personalities have been highlighted in detriment of a history of (other) individuals. The group of people fitting “in the middle” has surprisingly been left out of most extensive historiography. Whilst we will not underestimate the non-material sources of social power (to which we devote part of this thesis), we believe that the study of property, fortunes and landownership has been scarcely studied in the field of urban history in Luxembourg. This is particularly noteworthy in the context of industrial communities, where Marxian historical materialism would be expected to apply with the greatest force. Contemporary Luxembourgish historiography has produced little on the formation of its bourgeoisie and middle classes, with duly noteworthy exceptions (J. Weber 2013; Kieffer, Maas, and Scuto 1990; Kieffer 1993). Admittedly, this void may well be the result of a willingly neglect or abandonment of class as historical explanation, in favour of other trends and lenses altogether such as cultural or micro-history. Furthermore, the study of property, land ownership, revenues as well as their scarcity or absence can help reframe the very concept of class, leading towards a more Weberian assessment, highlighting those instances in which property or revenues do not on its own determine the position of an individual in society.

Despite these not being, neither the direct iron industry capital élites, nor necessarily the wealthiest nationwide, the new bourgeois middle classes have had an influence at the level of the city as well as of the country, in the way they shaped economic life, aesthetics of the city as well as ways of thinking and governing. Some of them, major figures of Luxembourgish and Esch history, appear to have been forsaken

and forgotten⁸⁷ in favour of a celebration of the liberal economic successful élite⁸⁸, who was given the spotlight by major biographical works (Weber 2013; Barthel 2022; Mersch 1972; 1963). Local historians wondered, in fact, why people such as Robert Schuman or Joseph Bech were celebrated with pomp whereas the 150th anniversary of Caspar Matthias Spoo's birth went unnoticed or somehow forgotten. This research thus is about the making and consolidation of a social class, in its own right: Esch-sur-Alzette's bourgeois middle classes.

2.6.1 Chapter organisation and methodology

A brief historical overview of the city was presented before a review of the relevant literature was undertaken. This review considered the concepts of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes from the perspective of the class lens and the associated problematics. Subsequently, the research design is outlined and the findings are presented in four sections.

The criteria for our analysis were enunciated above: an analysis that privileges a three-layered perspective on class structure based on (land)ownership, professional occupations, chances at political representation or that failing, a prestige status conferred by some form of active presence in the city.

The methodology takes into consideration the criticism of a categorization based solely on professional occupations, whilst acknowledging however, that the latter comes close to best in the illustration of one's social background as well as position in the social ladder. The analysis draws on similar studies performed on the bourgeoisie and middle-classes in the late 19th, early 20th century in France (Chaline 1982; Daumard 1970) and elsewhere in Europe (Johnson, 2020). It recognises, however, that Luxembourg and Esch-sur-Alzette, because of their particularities and the sources available, could only count on a certain *sui generis* research, which favoured some aspects to the detriment of others, aspects which are dear to other works of social research.

A combination of sources based on censuses, street directories, land registry, membership in associations, commercial registers and taxpayers' list seems to best suit the attempt of defining and portraying Esch's bourgeoisie and middle classes. By making use of mixed sources, findings can be further corroborated.

⁸⁷ Dës Fro stellt "Galerie" (...) Et as jiddenfalls opfälleg, dass zum Joresenn 1986 an zum Joresufank 1987 Leit ewéi de Robert Schuman oder de Joseph Bech mat Pomp gefeiert goufen – mä dass den 150. Gebuertsdag vum C.M. Spoo zesöe vergiess ginn as...(*Galerie - Revue Culturelle et Pédagogique* 1986).

⁸⁸ It is unfortunate to see how Esch personalities of all political camps are virtually absent from Jules Mersch's *biographie nationale*. Even Caspar Matthias Spoo is only briefly made reference to, in connection with other biographies (namely Michel Welter's) but does not seem to have deserved a dedicated biography.

Each chapter, split into PART I, II, III and IV includes a detailed information on the sources used. PART I introduces the Esch's bourgeois middle classes since inception (of our analysis in 1842) until the 1920s. PART II dedicates an exclusive focus on the aspects of landownership in the period of the industrial turn from the mid-19th onwards. A sample of 20 main landowners in Esch is used to interpret the shifting meanings and purposes of owning land. This includes the local elites prior to 1905 and the new owners who have profited from their land acquisitions, following that year. Part III portrays the business, commercial and social life in the city through the highlighting of the instances where the bourgeois middle classes are on the forefront of such social and commercial life. PART IV, despite concentrating on the political aspects of power in the life of the city manages to gather all the other latent aspects of social history ever present this period of major importance and cleavages in Luxembourgish society. Through the lens of the local council meetings, we see arise the tensions opposing countryside-urban setting; secularism-Catholicism; Esch-Lux city as well as plentiful other antagonisms that went beyond the mere notion of class, in a city and a nation still in search of its identity.

2.6.2 The sources

This research would not have been possible without the existence of a profusion of sources that had to be patiently unearthed, consulted, deciphered (particularly in the case of documents written in German cursive script, sometimes so illegible that we had to set aside the pursuit of certain files), translated and then arranged. Some of these documents provide an overview of Eschois society between 1840 and 1922, while others give an insight into some of the people involved, their occupations, their capital and their land holdings, others still provide an insight into local power and its relationship with central government. Much of this work owes to the digitised Luxembourg newspapers available on the website of the Bibliothèque nationale du Luxembourg (www.eluxemburgensia.lu) and also on the impresso.org interface. Each of the two sites offers slightly different possibilities for use and interaction, although eluxemburgensia was the one we privileged. Each part of this research draws on one or two main sources, the added value of which we have chosen to explain in further detail in each chapter. For part I, the main sources are the censuses for the year 1900, the only one we have consulted, for this period, providing an overview of the entire population of Esch. Other sources for part I include taxpayers/nominal rolls lists

for the years 1853⁸⁹, 1872⁹⁰, 1880⁹¹, 1898⁹² and 1922⁹³. Part I benefited also on sources relating to political eligibility, namely the unearthed electors lists for 1881⁹⁴ and another for circa 1900⁹⁵, the latter comprises the whole of the Esch canton (circumscription) regrettably leave aside Esch town itself, thus leaving in the open as to whom this more urban part of the canton was constituted of, in terms of its voters. The excursus on the Spoo family benefited from some (long forgotten?) letters of the Spoo family available in microfilms at the National Archives, possibly a part of a bigger Spoo family dossier once held by Cornel Meder (former and since deceased director of the AN) of which there is no trace of, save for an also long forgotten reference in a master thesis of the year 2005 (Faltz 2005).

Moreover, the cadastral sources of the *Administration du cadastre et de la topographie* are briefly alluded, to only delve more deeply into the details of the landownership of 20 individuals in part II. Part II being fundamentally about landownership bases itself on the data made available to myself and my colleague Daniel Richter by the same *Administration du cadastre* containing almost a century landowners' transactional information from Esch in the period comprised between 1842 and 1940s. The information on landownership was once again and whenever possible, contrasted with that of the nominal rolls, namely in the quest for signs of "wealth" and social status position'. The particular methodology followed on this chapter was developed within the chapter itself. Another source that was only superficially analysed to our regret, were the notarial archives referring to the acts performed by the notaries who exercised in Esch during the period here under analysis. The reasons for this lacuna are linked to a missed synchronicity, that is the timing at which the genealogic databases were rendered available, a missing piece of the "puzzle", that proved to be essential in the identification of individuals. It is our hope to redress this in view of an eventual future publication.

⁸⁹ Liste générale de tous les contribuables imposés par le conseil des expert-répartiteurs à la contribution mobilière de l'exercice 1852, dressée en conformité de l'art 28 de la loi du 26 novembre 1849, portant modification des impôts directs. Mémorial législatif et administratif du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, nr 78, 1853.

⁹⁰ Liste des contribuables ayant payé plus de francs en impôt mobilier - Esch sur-Alzette 1872. Publication de la liste des contribuables en relation avec l'impôt mobilier (1856 – 1928). ANLux FIN-01198.

⁹¹ Liste des contribuables imposés à 10 francs et plus à la contribution mobilière de l'année 1879. Mémorial législatif et administratif du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg. Annexe au nr. 67, 27 septembre 1880.

⁹² Liste nominative des contribuables : ayant payé en 1898 plus de 10 francs de contributions mobilières avec annotation, dans la mesure du possible, de leurs côtes foncières. Luxembourg, Th. Schroell, 1899. (Archive BNL).

⁹³ Liste des contribuables imposés pour 1922 à raison d'un revenu global supérieur à 12000 francs. Annexe 12 à l'avis du 28 Novembre 1923, publiée au nr. 61, p. 692, du Mémorial législatif et administratif du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1923

⁹⁴ Liste des électeurs pour la Chambre des Députés de l'année 1881 - Listes alphabétiques des citoyens (Révision) ; Districts de Luxembourg, Diekirch et Grevenmacher; (registres communaux). ANLUX- AE00168.

⁹⁵ Liste des électeurs du canton d'Esch-sur-Alzette, circa 1900, Bibliothèque nationale du Luxembourg.

PART III and IV feed from a much more varied number of sources, in the identification of the professional occupations in commercial activities of the bourgeois middle- classes, namely the commercial directories, street directories for 1900, the street directories for 1905/6, the commercial Registers (1909-1920), the catalogue of the 1923 industrial and commercial exhibition as well as the secondary literature on Italian and Austrian immigration and sociability based on the works of Benito Gallo, Maria Luisa Caldognetto, Philippe Blasen, and for the Jewish community on the work of Paul Cerf and Isi Finkelstein, among others. The sections on the associations and sociability greatly benefited from secondary literature available on each of the selected Associations: AEP (*Association pour l'Éducation Populaire, Harmonie Municipale, Alliance Française, Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso*) as well as on the available material at the municipal archives of Esch sur Alzette. In specific, the dossiers on the Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso and the Alliance Franco-Luxembourgeoise, proved particularly enlightening. Additionally, once again the press allowed to reconstitute an approximative calendar of the events at the center of such associations. An extra source, the files on the *Police des Étrangers* (Alien police) deserves being mentioned even though not used to its full potential, the reasons for which are here detailed. The Alien Police was set up by the law of 30 December 1893⁹⁶ so that any newcomer to Luxembourg territory must make a declaration of arrival as well as a declaration of departure when taking up residence in a Luxembourg municipality. The service served furthermore the purpose of surveillance of foreign suspects, residence permits and other miscellaneous administrative procedures.

However, the access to these sources still represents a major hindrance, even when such individuals have been long dead. Indeed, during the research documents on non-Luxembourger entrepreneurs' files from the *Police des étrangers* at the National Archives of Luxembourg (ANLux), were requested for consultation. Following the implementation of the archiving act in 2018, the conditions to access archives in the country have become very strict. Public documents containing personal data are protected by law for 75 years from the last file update. Files that are covered by fiscal secrecy are protected for 100 years from the last update. As a result, documents that were previously immediately available now require

⁹⁶ Extract from the law of 30 December 1893: "Any foreigner, not admitted to domicile, who intends to establish his residence in the Grand Duchy, must, within five days of his arrival, make a declaration to this effect to the local authority of the commune where he wishes to establish his residence. In the event of a change of residence, a new declaration will be made within the same period to the local authority of the commune where the foreign national will have established his new residence. These declarations will include all foreign persons living in the declarant's household or staying with him, including his foreign servants(Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1894).

special permission by way of a derogation, causing long waiting times and additional bureaucracy⁹⁷. Some of the families we intended to research on are therefore blocked for reasons of fiscal nature/secretcy.

PART IV being concerned exclusively with the imbrications at the level of the local and the national power, it recured primarily to the files stemming from the municipal archives of Esch-sur-Alzette, in specific the minutes of the meetings of the local council meetings between 1907 and 1922. A few sessions of the Chambre des Deputes (taking place between 1897 and 1901) were extremely useful to highlight some events such as that of the origins of Esch's Industrial and Commercial school. Unquestionably useful as well were the *dossiers communaux* (ANLux - INT 606 to INT 0631) which allowed to highlight the behind the scenes of the relationship between the Esch municipality with the central Government.

Secondary literature that strictly speaking would not stand as historiography but provided unvaluable insight include Jerome Quiqueret's (Quiqueret 2022) documentary/novel on the murder of the Kayser-Paulus couple in Esch in 1910; the memories of Dr. Émile Colling (Colling 1999) on his time as a doctor in the Grenz neighbourhood (albeit posterior to the period we focus on); as well as the memories of former ARBED's director Hubert Hoff (Hoff sine data) and the unmissable psychosocial analysis of Frantz Clement (F. Clement 1915). A numerous amount of other works was necessary to fulfill the immense task of understanding the historical period, the city and the country of Luxembourg. In order to keep an eye on the evolution of Luxembourg society up to the present day, consulting today's press has been an essential factor. I am particularly grateful to the excellent journalism practiced by the newspaper *D'Lëtzebuenger Land*, my weekend companion.

Finally, and not least the all-round source that permitted to stitch everything together, the genealogic databases a) Genea Pal (marriage index) and b) luxroots.org without whose assistance this research would not have reached the level of analysis it did, foremost thanks to the identification of individuals and connections between them that only the latter sources rendered possible.

⁹⁷ Discussions are currently ongoing to amend the law due to growing criticism of the legislation. However, due to the lengthy procedures and uncertainty regarding the relevance of the documents, they were not included in the research.

3 PART I - ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF THE ESCH'S BOURGEOIS AND MIDDLE-CLASSES (1842-1922)

3.1 On the limitation of the use of statistical sources

In Luxembourg, “after several unsuccessful attempts, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that a small statistical office was finally created“ (Kreins 2011). The socio-professional classifications used by public statistics, of which the tax the nominal rolls, and censuses are a case in point, were, at the time of this analysis, extremely diverse and not very stable.

Indeed, a socio-professional categorization does not follow, before the first official Report in 1907⁹⁸, any specific method or criteria.

Yet another cause of difficulty in determining one’s class, based on professional occupation, before the inception of professional statistical methods, is the interchangeable use of some professions making it difficult to establish on which “step of the ladder” an individual might have been placed. The censuses and any other nominative lists available at the end of the 19th century show the very heterogeneous nature of the socio-professional language, as well as its relative imprecision, with various titles, designating either the same job, very similar jobs, or even content that is not strictly speaking a profession⁹⁹. Furthermore, different titles can refer to the same job. To increase the complexity, French and German languages were used interchangeably¹⁰⁰ even in the same census, revealing also the sensitivity to the relationship between language and the cultural significations that come associated with a given profession.

In addition, it needs to be noted that this research tries to translate this cultural and social reality into the English language, which sometimes does not capture such nuances¹⁰¹.

⁹⁸ In terms of the main occupation [in the first socio-professional categorisation of 1907] (...), the importance of giving detailed information is stressed. Expressions such as manufacturer, trader, merchant, engineer, foreman, machinist, chauffeur, labourer are considered insufficient if the branch of trade, commerce or other activity in which the person is employed is not added (...) It is recommended that labourers and day labourers always indicate the branch of industry in which they are permanently or partially employed (...) and that domestic servants distinguish between personal service in agriculture, commerce, the hotel trade or any other industry (Kreins 2011, 173).

⁹⁹ For example in the case of tax nominal rolls, the use of “capitiaux”, in the column designating the professional occupation.

¹⁰⁰ An inherent trait to all research done in Luxembourg. In his overall praise for Jerome Quiqueret’s work (Quiqueret 2022), historian Henri Wehenkel warns though of a “translation of the German texts into French at the risk of distorting their meaning” (Wehenkel 2022).

¹⁰¹ Jürgen Kocka alerts for the same issues with the German terminology *Handwerker*, *Geselle* and *Arbeiter*, as untranslatable distinctions into English (Kocka, Jürgen 1984, 96).

Examples of interchangeability within the same economic sector include professions¹⁰² such as: *négociant*, *trafiquant*, *marchand*, *commerçant*, with perhaps, the only exception of the *industriel* which translates a major business/production unit, in short, a manufacturer. Interestingly, concepts such as *boutiquier* and *artisan*, very often employed in French sources and historiography are relatively rare in the Luxembourgish sources. With time, concepts also evolve even in the same language: the *cultivateur* of the mid and late 19th century gives place to a *fermier* in the 1940s. Both terms would translate as farmers, in the English language. Only by having access to information on the tax contributions paid by a given individual is it possible to obtain an indication of the income associated with the occupation in question. It is difficult to know whether those collecting information on taxes and censuses already had a pre-defined list of occupations provided by the statistical administration, or whether it was simply up to the individual to provide the information. This would explain why the same person could appear under different occupations in different sources. We cannot exclude the possibility of a change of occupation over the course of a lifetime, or even a status of pluriactivity¹⁰³, which was very common throughout the period under study.

Could it be that in Esch, the very informality of the procedure of tax collection, typically performed by someone known to the community has jeopardized the accurateness of the data? Or, on the contrary, the fact that in a small city of the size of Esch where everyone knew everyone, there should be less of a place for usurpation? The practice of having municipal agents in charge of gathering the information for the census remained in place even when the major 1907 socio-professional categorization survey took place.¹⁰⁴

The professional activity of women presents a particularly challenging issue in terms of its nomenclature. In nominal tax rolls, they are often referred to as the *widow of* with no mention of their actual name and maiden name, without making it explicit whether they participated or not actively in the production

¹⁰² HISCO categorization needs here to be mentioned not least, to state that, despite its many recent advances it remains challenging to standardize professions across different periods as well as geographical and historical contexts. “the HISCO scheme is currently based on the coding of the 1,000 most frequent male and female occupational titles in datasets from eight different countries: Belgium, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. The occupational data which were employed to develop the scheme span the period 1690-1970 but are mostly from the nineteenth century. (...) and an emphasis on variations within economies in sampling design, ensures that they provide a good mix of agricultural, industrial and commercial activities, of old and new technologies, of traditional and modern forms of organization” (“History of Work - HISCO,” n.d.).

¹⁰³ H. G. Haupt’s (2017) research demonstrates how pluriactivity was a subsistence strategy throughout the 19th century and although having decreased it never entirely disappeared.

¹⁰⁴ “In order to carry out the census, each enumerator receives five categories of form from the local authority, which he must give to each household or establishment (...) and which he must have filled in or complete himself if necessary” (Kreins 2011, 172–73).

activity of the family. Likewise, civil registers rarely reveal women's occupation other than the stereotypical 'housewife', or "sans état". Only at times, are café owners tagged under the mention “cabaretière” or “marchande”, hinting that they were employers and in charge of the business like any (male) other.

Hence, in light of establishing a social position of an individual, the importance of matching professions to their actual revenues and in comparison, to a wider sample of taxpayers¹⁰⁵. This too is however, not without limitations, something the Tax Administration itself, was adamant about:

The Administration has only wanted to provide these figures (contributions on land possessions) as additional information and would be very grateful to taxpayers who would like to point out the errors made (...) Although it is in the interest of taxpayers to make these declarations [on dividend/real estate tax], they hardly make use of this leeway, so that this information is not complete and has major gaps¹⁰⁶ (Administration des contributions et du cadastre, 1899).

Both the nominal rolls for 1852 and 1872¹⁰⁷ provide us with little information on the professional status of the taxpayers, something we tried to compensate for, by consulting other sources, ranging from local historiography (Flies 1979), to the Register of Deeds, the marriage registers database (Genea Pal LLC 2019)¹⁰⁸ and the genealogical databases (Luxroots.org).

In Luxembourg, it was only in 1898 that the nominal rolls (Administration des Contributions et du Cadastre 1899) started including status or profession, and it was the first time that the totality of the contributions paid was split into landed and non-landed related revenues (the latter standing for capital gains stemming from business profits, pensions, salaries, etc).

This situation calls, therefore, to the cautious use of such sources which nevertheless allow for a closer picture on which sectors the ruling class might have been active in Esch-sur-Alzette.

It is important to note that omissions and inaccurate data are not rare. The composition of the often-mobile foreign population, in which single people were numerous, is an example. This was a problem also faced by the municipal administration in Esch, sometimes at the detriment of securing a reliable statistic at all (Leiner 1994).

¹⁰⁵ Also in light of the absence on sources that could reveal their economic position, further such as the worth of their rents.

¹⁰⁶ The Administration only wanted to provide these figures (taxes on landed /real estate estates) as additional information and would be very grateful to taxpayers who would like to point out any errors made [...] Although taxpayers have every interest in making these declarations, they make little use of this latitude, with the result that this information is not complete and is very incomplete (Administration des contributions et du Cadastre 1899).

¹⁰⁷ Exception made of the agents who worked for the recently arrived blast furnaces and mining and still companies.

¹⁰⁸ Genea Pal is a genealogical research and consulting firm based in Salt Lake City, specialized in the records and families of Luxembourg and their migration to the United States, available at: <https://www.geneapal.com/luxembourg-marriage-indexes>. Marriage records are available for a significant number of Luxembourg's villages and municipalities.

To summarize, the production of public statistics, and more particularly the detailed results of the census as well as the nominal tax and poll lists, constitute an irreplaceable and often unique source for the history of the 19th century in Luxembourg. The use of these sources, as with any survey, however, requires a critical approach, whether these result from registration errors, from the use of categories that may not be well suited to our questions, or from the circumstances specific to a particular census or survey.

Finally, deciding on a threshold as to where the limit is set in terms of who is “well-off”, less “well-off” or even wealthy, meant that a choice had to be done. This came associated to the further challenge of a currency that fluctuated and changed over time (from the use of florins under the Dutch regime, at the start of our period to the later use of francs). If revenues and landownership in itself were not the only sign of class of belonging, it needs to be underlined that insofar as the 19th century goes, that was the rule rather than the exception.

It is therefore also the social status that we are trying to grasp, of which the profession is only one element among others. Admittedly, not even the most important, in a society where property remains the most important component of status. This is truer in Luxembourg, where, by the early stages of the establishment of a taxation system was calculated because of a “presumed” fortune rather than an objective estimation of how much an individual owned¹⁰⁹.

3.2 Origins and evolution of the Esch bourgeois middle classes

The rapid increase in the number of inhabitants in Esch was particularly significant from the middle of the 1850s to the beginning of the 1860s until around 1875. In which professional sectors the bourgeoisie and middle classes made their living, has not yet been sufficiently addressed by the historiography of the city. The existing contributions merit, nevertheless, our attention. As seen, the work of Kremer- Schmit (Kremer-Schmit 1986) sketched a first picture of the evolution of the professional landscape in Esch-sur-Alzette in the pre and early industrial period.

¹⁰⁹ ” For 1842, for example, the quota for Luxembourg alone was set at 100,000 florins and distributed among the communes on the following basis: 40% on property tax, 15% on business tax, 25% on population, 20% on doors and windows. Taxpayers in each commune were allocated according to their presumed wealth by a council of appointees set up in each commune (Administration des contributions directes 1995)”.

For the period that follows it, covering the beginning of industrialisation, we also draw on the work conducted by Veronique Schaber (Schaber 1984) on the effects of industrialisation on households and families.¹¹⁰

Schaber's research, based on the censuses of 1871, 1890, and 1916 provides further insight into the socio-categorization of the household masters, and the impact industrialisation might have had on the family structure. In her work, Schaber (ibid) demonstrates the drastic decrease in the Esch- born population from the period comprised between 1871 to 1890.

From 1871, only 43% of the heads of households were born in Esch. Among the 34.2% of Luxembourg migrants outside the canton of Esch, we could not discern a preferential emigration focus; the places of origin are scattered almost equally across the country. In 1890, only 22.6% of the heads of households were autochthonous. The share of foreign migrants had doubled since 1890, with nationals constituting the largest portion. The typical head of household in Esch is an immigrant!(Schaber 1984, 58–59)¹¹¹

Yet another source of socio-professional data for the Esch population exists for the period 1856-1910 and can be found in the detailed statistical work of Stefan Leiner (Leiner 1994), on which we will here majorly draw to illustrate important findings on the social structure of Esch's population.

Structural analysis of the Esch population of the late 19th and early 20th century allows thus for, at least, an attempt at identifying and characterizing its upper-middle classes. Our approach to defining an upper class draws, firstly on a logic of either or both landownership as well as revenues from other types of capital. Secondly, it draws on a different type of privilege, the access to vote. An access, at three different periods, to the list of individuals entitled to vote, allows an assessment of the evolution of voting rights¹¹². This is made possible by crossing data from censuses (1900), voters' lists (1858¹¹³ and 1881), taxpayers' nominal rolls (for 1852, 1872, 1898 and 1922), the register of Deeds (available for 1842, 1872, and 1905), and registers of Commerce¹¹⁴. Apart from the censuses available¹¹⁵, the other source that can provide a

¹¹⁰ *Familles et ménages à Esch-sur-Alzette étudiés en fonction des recensements de la population de 1871, 1890 et 1916*, master thesis (Schaber, 1984).

¹¹¹ « Des 1871, 43% seulement des chefs de ménage sont nés à Esch. Parmi les 34, 2% des migrants luxembourgeois en dehors du canton d'Esch, nous n'avons pas pu discerner un foyer d'émigration préférentiel; les lieux d'origine sont dispersés à peu près à égalité à travers le pays. En 1890, 22, 6% seulement des chefs de ménage sont sédentaires. La part des migrants étrangers a doublé par rapport à 1890, celle des nationaux constitue la fraction la plus importante. Le chef de ménage typique à Esch est l'immigrant! ». We assume "immigrant" here stands for both Luxembourgish born and foreigner born migrants.

¹¹² The poll tax nominal lists allow for a filter of whom, based on their tax contribution, could vote.

¹¹³ Arrêté portant publication de la liste des électeurs de canton. Luxembourg, le 13 novembre 1858, *Luxemburger Zeitung*, 20.11.1858.

¹¹⁴ Registration of a business activity in Luxembourg was made compulsory as of 1909 (*Loi du 23 décembre 1909, portant création d'un registre aux firmes*).

¹¹⁵ The censuses of 1900 are to date the source that has been better elaborated in a way that is readable for the totality of its population (CDMH, sine data) whereas 1910, 1922 and 1935 all present issues with consistency of the data throughout each of

reliable indication of the population's place of birth is the marriage, death or birth acts (available until 1920) as well as scattered data available at the Bureau de population d'Esch sur Alzette¹¹⁶. Marriage acts are available both through the civil register ¹¹⁷ (Archives Nationales de Luxembourg - ANLux) and, in the case of religious marriages, via the different parishes¹¹⁸. A marriage index created based on the civil register is available for the period 1798-1923 and provides the date of the act based on the surname of both the male and female spouse. This database provides rapid access to the date of the marriage act. Another source, made available to the public via a paywall in late 2022, is the website luxroots.org, where an impressive amount of civil registry data can be obtained. Luxroots.org contains a vast collection of genealogical records covering mainly the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and its neighbouring regions, spanning more than three centuries. The database currently contains over 3 million records, including over 2 million birth certificates, providing details such as date of birth, parents' names and place of birth; over 342,000 marriage certificates, including information on the couple's names, parents' names and witnesses; and over 686,000 death certificates, with details such as date of death, place of death, marital status and cause of death (Bibliothèque nationale du Luxembourg 2023)¹¹⁹.

A further source that may help to establish class belonging is the street and commerce directories. We dispose of such lists for the years 1900 (Kerschenmeyer 1900), 1905-6 (Leib 1905), and 1916 (Nimax 1916), which in some cases indicate the professional status of the individuals featured on that list.

The case of France where different historical research (Chaline 1982; Daumard 1970) relied on street directories as a quintessential indicator of (upper) class is emblematic: "It goes without saying that there are no servants on the almanac lists, and no workers either" (Chaline 1982, 23).

the different periods. Information on spouse's place for birth are, for example, not always available, nor is the job occupation of all the occupants of a household). Furthermore, census data has for the dates of 1910 onwards, not been consistently classified. They are available in microfilm format and need transcription, a task deemed immense, taking into consideration the considerable population increase as well as the goals of this research. Conscious of the fact that the sources available will produce less sturdy results, we nevertheless stand for our decision to proceed the analysis by making use of alternative sources.

¹¹⁶ The registry available consist of citizens 'registration cards, in alphabetical order, dating back, at times, to the late 19th century. These cards are problematic as many names are missing and are particularly inconsistent for the period we are looking at. We have nevertheless managed to identify some individuals through this register.

¹¹⁷ Luxembourg's archival law follows Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data does not allow access to personal data of individuals who might potentially still be alive. Both civil and catholic registers thus are not made public beyond the early 1920's.

¹¹⁸ The sources on the Catholic marriage acts are available for Luxembourg via the website <https://data.matricula-online.eu/de/LU/luxembourg/>. It presents as advantage, for example the fact, that conversions to Catholicism are rendered public, as this happened mostly with Protestant individuals. On the disadvantages' side there is the fact that not all parishes for Esch-sur-Alzette are available, for the time period this research is interested in. Unlike the information featured on the civil register acts, job occupations of spouses and parents are also seldom mentioned in Catholic registers.

¹¹⁹ The crowdsourced database has been ever since endorsed by the National library of Luxembourg (BNL).

Unlike its neighbour, the situation in Luxembourg differed. Interestingly, the Grand Duchy's Street directories focused on either businesses and official/administrations, without forgetting the liberal professions (1900) or as happened in the case of the directories for the years 1905-6 and 1916, a categorization based on class, did not seem to have played any role in the prioritization of individuals who were to figure on that listing. In fact, many working-class individuals were also listed in their quality of heads of household. The same for business owners, as there was no distinction between lower middle-class artisans and bigger businesses, a distinction that we can attempt to perform only by basing our analysis on other sources ¹²⁰. It could be here hypothesized that the only thing that really counted is the individual who enjoyed some independence, whether he or she is self-employed or lives off his or her income. What seems, however, more plausible is the fact that most directories had been based on information gathered from the official administration and censuses.¹²¹

From this point of view, it is now necessary to consider the social group in question from a long-term perspective and to consider its formation and how it evolved during the period at stake. Firstly, where did these bourgeois and upper middle-classes come from? The issue of its origins is here posed on a social and geographical level. It seems therefore reasonable to start with the latter.

¹²⁰ Figuring on the list simply meant, at times, that people owned a phone, often for business purposes. However, the ownership of a telephone was by the beginning of the 20th century no longer an indicator of greater material possessions, since the ownership of at least one telephone device became quickly widespread in Esch. In 1913, there were 250 telephone connections (Bodé 1985). It can also be assumed that it was primarily business owners who made use of the telephone.

¹²¹ The above-mentioned directories all come with the mention on front-page "edited according to official sources".

3.3 Geographic origins and professional categorization

One indisputable fact is that from the 1870s onwards, Esch was a town with a high level of immigration, both internal and external to the Grand Duchy. However, further research is required to ascertain the number of its upper-class members who were born outside Esch. It is also necessary to ascertain whether the new arrivals were predominantly from outside the town, which would indicate a notable renewal of the urban ruling class, an opening to newcomers, or whether they had a more Eschois character, being more rooted than average, which could result in the creation of a very closed environment. The threat of the outsider was manifested on different levels, economic, political, and social.

A possible answer to the question of geographical origins would imply comparing the total statistics concerning all the inhabitants of the city to the only elements that can be qualified as upper middle classes. This is a delicate comparison, moreover, given the gaps and disparity in the sources. Ideally, we would draw on a source document where information on both job occupation and birthplace would intersect. Another useful source is the taxpayers' nominal rolls list, which however does not mention the year of birth of individuals. To a certain extent, some names are crossed and checked in a marriage index source¹²² leading to the marriage act that can both testify of job occupation and birthplace of the supposed upper-class male individual. More interestingly, marriage acts can further provide information on each of the spouses' fathers' occupations as well as the spouse's birthplace.

In both cases, an analysis is possible, but the interpretations should remain cautious because the database is limited and often hardly comparable from one source to the other. The major limitation thus is the lack of homogeneity of the stratum itself and the absence of a consistent uniform source that could provide data on both landed and other forms of capital possessions throughout the entire 80-year time span we are here dealing with.¹²³

New families who arrived with the industrialisation process joined the deep-rooted old middle-class of the mid-19th century. Where do they come from? At the end of the century, they came from other towns and the countryside of Luxembourg, not forgetting Belgians and Germans who joined the industry as managers, engineers, and technical staff.

¹²² GeneaPal (geneapal.com).

¹²³ Information of birthplace according to social class has to date not been treated statistically, admittedly because of the limitations that the very meaning of class poses to statistics. See Richter (Richter 2024) for a first attempt of place of birth according to profession of fathers.

3.3.1 1842- 1872

By 1842, a group of small artisans and few tradesmen included everyone who did not work directly on the land and of course the few members of the liberal professions. According to Flies (Flies 1979) in 1842, Esch had 1,392¹²⁴ inhabitants and 225 buildings. Based on the register of deeds of 1842, the historian identified the owners of the buildings as such: “55 farmers, 43 day labourers, 26 bricklayers, 16 linen weavers, 9 tailors, 8 shoemakers, 8 innkeepers, 5 carpenters, 5 blacksmiths, 5 tanners, 5 carpenters, 3 carpenters, 2 foresters, 2 butchers, 2 merchants, 2 nailsmiths, 2 tradesmen, 2 border guards and one each of a messenger, a glazier, a gardener, a shepherd, a pensioner, a notary, a priest, a teacher, a dyer, and field warden (Flies 1979, 306). Furthermore, according to our analysis of the register of deeds, there were at least two millers, one in Esch and the other in Schiffflange (Administration du cadastre et topographie 1845). Another mill existed, owned by Henri Purnot - major landowner and notary in Metz (Lorraine, by then still French territory) - who also owned an oil mill, and a wood sawmill. A considerable amount of these owners group consisted mainly of journeymen and workers in more small-scale industries (stonemasons, bricklayers, transport workers, homeworkers, peddlers, etc.) Later this category (day labourers/journeymen)¹²⁵ came to include also as well workers in the public sector such as railway workers, telegraph workers, etc, (Leiner 1994). The latter argues the main characteristic of this category is the high proportion of unskilled and thus, in principle, universally replaceable workers¹²⁶.

Identifying the part of the population that then could stand for an upper-middle-class necessarily follows a logic of material possessions, professional background and naturally, status. The Register of Deeds for 1842 allows indeed establishing the top 50 landowners¹²⁷, mostly composed of farmers with residence in Esch and Schiffflange¹²⁸.

Another important outcome of the analysis we performed on the 1842 register of Deeds, is also that of the presence of six individuals who although owning considerable amounts of land in the city of Esch-sur-Alzette, did not inhabit it.

¹²⁴ The figure differs greatly from Esch-sur-Alzette’s municipal statistics which state 2041 inhabitants (Statistical note on the composition of municipal council 1841-1843, Archives Municipales de la Ville d’ Esch-sur-Alzette, sine dato).

¹²⁵ In our sources the terms in German *Tagelöhner*, in French *journalier* are used interchangeably.

¹²⁶ Some historians (Hobsbawm 1984; Crossick, Geoffrey (ed.) 1977) argue against the idea that “journeyman” was that precarious or even unskilled an occupation. Evidence from the Esch Register of deeds (Service du Cadastre 1845) also hints at the fact that some of these journeymen actually accumulated significant amounts of land, thus countering the idea they might not have had great means of subsistence.

¹²⁷ The top first 50 landowners in Esch-sur-Alzette, in 1842 had surfaces of land comprised between 8,5 hectares and 114 hectares. For the English/North American metric: 1 ha = 11960 square yards= 2,471 acres.

¹²⁸ Schiffflange was up until 1876 a section of the municipality of Esch sur Alzette, date in which the two parted.

Top 50 owners of land in the town of Esch-sur-Alzette, by place of residence

Audun-le-Tiche (Lorraine)	1
EsA	21
Lallange	1
Luxembourg	1
Metz (Lorraine)	1
Rumelange (Canton Esch)	1
Scheuerhof (Canton Esch)	1
Schifflange	23

Table 1. Source : Service du Cadastre, Administration du Cadastre et Topographie, 1845

It is precisely among these fifty individuals that a first attempt at the geographical origin of Esch’s “ruling class” can be traced. In our quest for who could belong to “the society that counts” we could add other noteworthy individuals who did not necessarily figure among the main landowners but who, because of the prestige of their profession could be included in Esch’s upper class. Examples were the notaries like Henri Motté, who was later to become magistrate, the priests, the vicars and the doctor. We will first analyse whom, among the main landowners by job occupation were born in Esch. To the top fifty landowners, among which the then mayor Dominique Stoffel, other few notables are added to the list, even if not as resourceful in land surface, which they nevertheless owned to an extent¹²⁹ (surfaces under 10 hectares). Their status allow them to be included in the list of an upper class, although not all would classify as a proper bourgeoisie. This includes, in 1842, a notary, a notary clerk, two Customs civil servants, the peace judge, the priest, and the five municipal council members, we managed to identify. The latter were all farmers except one (a bricklayer) as well as mid-range landowners, with surfaces ranging from 5 to 10 hectares. In 1842, no doctor holds official residence in Esch yet, Dr. Theodore de Wacquant¹³⁰ from Foetz being the one in charge. The vast majority of this predominantly landed middle class is indeed composed of farmers. With the exception of notary Henri Purnot, from Metz who ranks as the first private owner in Esch, all other landowners have their origins in Esch or its district. Among the first 50 owners of land with higher revenues associated to it, we find besides the municipality of Esch, one notary, three rentiers, three farriers, two cabaret owners and forty farmers.

¹²⁹ When compared to the surfaces comprised between 10 hectares and 113 hectares owned by the top fifty private owners.

¹³⁰ Born in 1815 in Foetz, since 1840 GP in the same town. From 1843-66 he was the only doctor in the canton of Esch, and from 1849-54 cantonal school inspector. A member of parliament since 1854, he later became president of the *Chambre des Députés* 1890-96 (Flies, 1979).

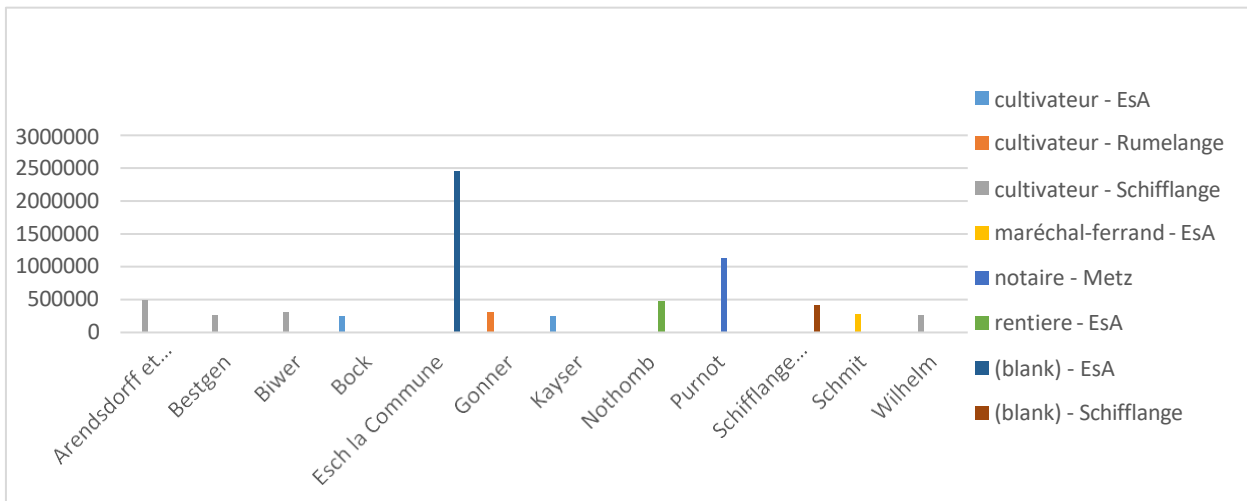


Table 2: 1842 - Top 12 landowners by m2 (municipalities of Esch and Schiffflange included). Source: *Administration du Cadastre et Topographie, 1845*

One notable aspect of the analysis of the register of deeds from 1842 is the almost equal distribution of land ownership between the residents of Esch-sur-Alzette and Schiffflange. Moreover, individuals who owned a considerable proportion of the land in Esch also resided in other locations, including Rumelange, Audun-le-Tiche and Metz.

From the analysis on birthplace, we managed to conduct on part of its members, most of this landowners had its birth origins in the canton of Esch¹³¹. The marriage patterns indicate again a geographical preference for a spouse originating in the city itself, at most coming from a 20 km ray, occasionally from another Luxemburgish region such as the Gutland or the Moselle.

Such marriage patterns seem to have remained unchanged throughout the following decades and across different classes as Schaber's (1984) work once again demonstrates across different socio-categories of the households 'masters. Indeed, in the analysis of the 1871 and 1890 censuses, Schaber's (ibid) findings demonstrate that Esch residents preferred to marry Esch women (district and town of Esch), national migrants prefer to marry Luxembourg women born outside the canton of Esch whereas foreigners prefer to marry foreigners. In 1890, Luxembourg migrants were slightly more likely to marry women from the canton than before. Two conclusions can be drawn, according to Schaber (ibid): firstly, that the

¹³¹ We traced the place of birth for half of the top 50 landowners. We need here to acknowledge the limitations of our sample for two reasons: a) Not knowing their precise age at the time of the Register of Deeds (1842) b) The existence of homonymous individuals from the same town (both in the case of Esch and Schiffflange) increases the difficulty in establishing who was who/attempting a name identification. Names spelled interchangeably with *y* or *i* or *v* or *w.*, as is the case for Kaiser/Kayser or Biwer/Biver also pose considerable challenges in verifying an individual's identity. c) Since we depart from marriage indexes for the place of birth we could well assume that some men were neither married, or that they married elsewhere in Luxembourg.

intermingling of Esch residents, Luxembourg migrants and foreign migrants was reduced in the households and secondly that most of the (im)migrants brought their families or at least their wives.

Recent research on the neighbour industrial town of Dudelange (Ferreira Flores 2022), also highlights the importance of “marrying well” in the hoarding of land and real estate resources. In fact, most of the land owned by *Dudelangeois* in 1842 remained in the local “hands”, through either inheritance or marriage by the time of 1872.

To summarize, the task presents itself complex if one wants to reach an even if approximate only percentage of this local elite, composed mostly of farmers, in the pre-industrial Esch-sur Alzette. If we would add to the residents in Esch-center (21), the Schiffflange (23) based major landowners plus the civil servants, the notary, the magistrate¹³², the priest, the teacher we would reach a number below sixty individuals. A number that we would, in any case need to relate to the total of the active population, which we do not dispose of. Furthermore, some professions pose problems as to how well off they might have been in terms of revenues such is the case of the two salespersons and commerce owners mentioned by Flies (1979). Sales clerks, would according to the social categorization used by Leiner (1994), be placed among a lower middle class. In which concerns the business owners there is no way of knowing for this decade, the revenue this activity could bring along. Again, this is not to say such professions were deprived of a certain social status. In some instances, education was all one needed in terms of social capital. In smaller provincial towns the very fact of being able to read and write, was to be perceived as somehow on top of the social ladder.

Establishing who in the commerce and liberal professions was among the higher ranks of society is a more challenging task. Not disposing of tax nominal rolls for before that period makes it virtually impossible to establish who might have had significant revenues, outside the revenues stemming from the ownership of land. However, the 1852 list of taxpayers (nominal rolls) helps shed more light on the diversification of revenues among the Esch population. The latter hints at an overwhelming absence of farmers from such nominal rolls. It makes sense in light of the 1849 taxation law reform and the separation of land/real-estate taxation (*foncière/immobilière*) and personal taxation on other forms of capital gains (*mobilière*)¹³³. More

¹³² Esch disposed of a police station and a magistrate since 1841. The first magistrate, Peter Schintgen, of Nörtzingen (1841-46), also resided in Nörtzingen. His office in Esch was taken over in 1847 by Henri Motté, in 1863 by Francois-Thomas Klein and in 1872 by Philippe Dupont (Flies, 1979).

¹³³ At the time of the first organic law on the administration of direct taxes in 1842 (which incidentally also coincides with the entry of Luxembourg in The German Customs Union, the *Zollverein*), the latter was responsible for the following three direct taxes:

importantly, it demonstrates that farmers (or at least the bigger ones) seldom engaged with side businesses or commercial ventures, land thus being, most likely, their only means of subsistence. As the industry emerges, a diversification will take place on the origins of revenues with some farmers taking parallel job occupations as well as it is only natural to state that the processes of industrial and urban growth presented a plethora of opportunities to landowners to grow rich (er).

Out of the 95 individuals listed as taxable for personal contributions-based wealth and income in 1853, we managed to identify the professions of 25 among them. These include merchants, blacksmiths, farriers, nailsmiths, linen weavers, innkeepers, a butcher, one miller, bricklayers, in one instance a small farmer. Included are also the liberal professions: one veterinary, one doctor, one notary, and two state employees (two customs officials) as well as one teacher. Among the latter, it is notary Dominique Léopold Brasseur who stands out with 120 francs contributions paid against a global average of only 6 francs.

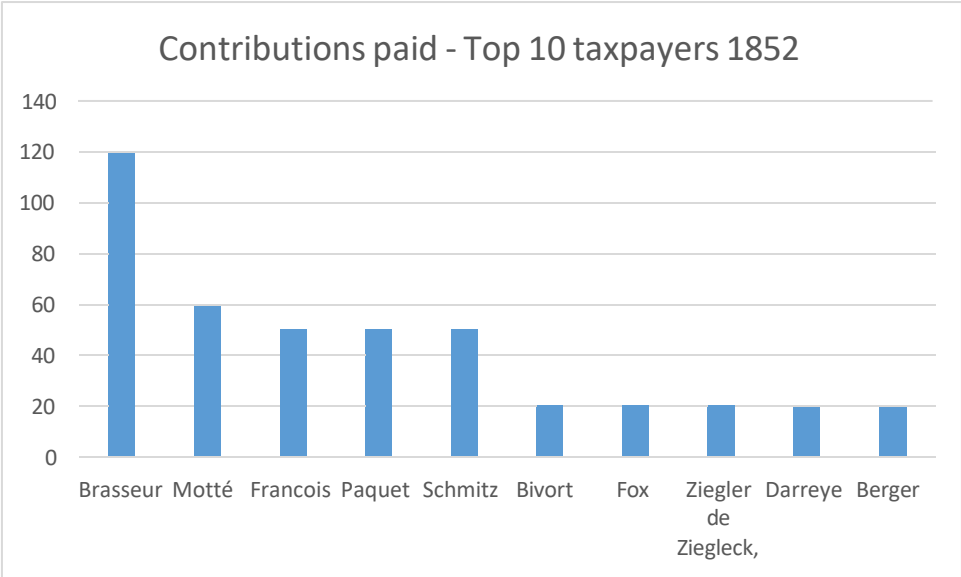


Table 3: Contributions paid in francs – Top 10 taxpayers 1852. Source: Mémorial législatif et administratif du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg. *Arrêté concernant la publication de la liste des contribuables de la contribution mobilière de l'exercice 1853.*

- the *contribution foncière* (landed wealth, land taxation), which was derived from a French law of 23 November 1798, and which was at that time the most important of the three direct taxes in Luxembourg. The landed wealth, which constituted the tax base of this tax, was calculated at four times the amount of the (personal) wealth or capital. This tax existed until 1919, when landed revenues became part of a global revenue system.
- the *droit de patente*, levied on industrial and commercial income, was based on the law of 21 May 1819 and was abolished by the law of 26 November 1849.
- the *personal contribution*, a French tax reorganized by a Dutch law of 28 June 1822, was a tax which the population perceived as too heavy a contribution. Together with *the droit de patente* it was replaced by a new personal wealth tax on 26 November 1849. The above-mentioned 1852 taxpayers list thus comprises this double taxation logic levied on both income and other forms of capital gains (Administration des Contributions Directes, 1995).

Just after Brasseur, his brother-in-law, Henri Motté, by then a notary clerk with a contribution of 60 francs. A trader, two tanners, a veterinary, another trader, an engineer/geometer, a tobacco trader as for the last one, a judicial officer, follow their position. Six out of these ten taxpayers were from Esch or its district. Two of the traders came from Luxembourg city and Victor Ziegler von Ziegleck, from Eich¹³⁴, the pioneer industrial centre of the country and a suburb of Luxembourg city.

Historian Norbert Franz (2001) delimited the upper class in Luxembourg city by orienting himself towards personalities who have exercised leadership functions in the state, municipality, administration, economy and society and connected these criteria with their income. He concludes that for the year 1852 those people who paid more than 70 francs belonged to the upper class; in 1885 he set the threshold (due to the increased tax rate) at 105 francs. Revenues, in Esch-sur-Alzette, with the exception of D.L. Brasseur were, as the chart shows, considerably more modest.

Without further sources that can add some information to the extent of their fortunes, we limit our analysis of this first decade 1842-1852 to the landed and non-landed assets. We also do not dispose of sources on which to base precise information on their income, the professional tax (*patente*)¹³⁵. It is not until the early 20th century that we can establish information about the size of commercial establishments, through a register of businesses enforced by law in 1909. Until then the nominal rolls provide us with useful information on revenues.

The marriages we managed to trace down, allow for stating that the trend was that of a high degree of social endogamy, with farmers/major landowners marrying into other landowning families. Unsurprising is also the fact that the Esch better families of the educated and liberal professions of the pre-industrialisation period mingled with other notables of the district. This was expressed in marriage alliances between the landed bourgeoisie and the notaries, the notaries with the doctors, etc. The *Mottés* married the *Nothombs*, the *Nothombs* into the *Laval* and the *Tesch*, the *Laval* with *de Schaefer*¹³⁶, the *Brasseurs* with the *De Wacquants*. All seven were influential families of the South of Luxembourg, most with origins in Belgium and some of which significantly influential in politics and business in Belgium

¹³⁴ The Ziegler van Ziegleck family had its aristocratic origins in the Württemberg. Victor Ziegler von Ziegleck was granted Luxembourgish nationality in 1868 and was the director of the *Societe des Mines de Kayl*. The family all held prominent positions within Luxembourgish society, in the government and even in the Belgian Congo colony throughout the late 19th and into the late 20th century. Their aristocratic origins were once mocked by Deputy Michel Welter, a known republican and socialist. During a heated discussion of the Parliament's sessions on the issue of the *majorat* around the succession of the Nassau family, he reproached another Ziegler van Ziegleck's (Guillaume) remarks: "You are competent in all these matters of equality of birth and conformity with the rank (...) you have one of those names" (Mersch 1966a).

¹³⁵ As mentioned, the tax ceased to exist (except for a few ambulant professions) in 1849 and we found no records for the previous period.

¹³⁶ Charles Laval married the daughter of a Schaefer, important business family in Luxembourg.

and in Luxembourg throughout the late 19th and the early 20th century. The extent of their influence did include Luxembourg city as well, for example the marriage of Pierre Brasseur with H el ene Wurth, daughter of one of the most influential industrialists of the late 19th century.

One first sign of change comes with the settling of a new variety of trades in the city as marriages ties between local landowners' daughters with successful tradesmen increase. The agricultural character of the city is still very much present in the dominant professions, in this first decade we are covering here. Besides the notaries and farmers, nailsmiths and tanners still occupy a prominent role in local society, something that the technological advances of industrialisation and mechanization will somehow slowly replace, even though the use of horses will not completely, and certainly not universally be set aside.

The city is still two decades away from a true transformation of its professional landscape as well as from a most diversified social and geographic origin of its upper classes.

3.3.2 1872-1898

What we learn from the analysis of the tax nominal rolls from 1852 to 1872 is that of an evolution of the different professional fields. We notice for the first time in 1872, the growing importance of the so called "agent d'affaires" (business agents) working for the mining and steel industries as well as the new "capitalists" who did not necessarily come from, or even settled their residence in Esch in the long term. A list of arrivals of the city of Esch-sur-Alzette¹³⁷ testifies of the high mobility of engineers and other technical staff. They rented rather than bought property due to the likelihood of changing their posts for other industrial sites. This was visible among foreigners, like Belgians but also Luxembourgers who moved from Esch to other industrial sites in mining south but also in France and Belgium. This tendency continued throughout the period that goes until the turn of the century, the censuses of 1900 demonstrating once again how numerous engineers and technical staff preferred to be hosted by people who came from their same region, or in actual hostels. It cannot be excluded that the fact that companies provided accommodation for their more qualified staff prevented them from investing in a city where housing was becoming scarce and extremely expensive. Speculation thus enabled real estate promoters and original autochthonous landowners to lead a comfortable, if not wealthy, way of life:

Like the workers he [Henri Kayser-Paulus, known restaurant owner, murdered in 1910] nurtured and the municipal officials he served, the entrepreneurs were invaluable allies. By buying up his land at a high price, they helped him to lead a comfortable life (Quiqueret 2022, 23).

¹³⁷ Liste d'arriv ees, A-K 1883-1897, Commune d'Esch-sur-Alzette, sine dato.

The year 1872 sees two important sources released: a) the updated Register of Deeds (Service du Cadastre 1872), where landed property for the totality of the owners in Esch can be traced and b) the nominal rolls for non-landed related tax contributions¹³⁸. The latter presents again the limitation that no mention of job occupations is made and at times, the only identification is an individual's surname. However, by cross analysing the two lists, we can attempt a distinction between land possessions and other types of capital, and whether its respective main actors were the same in each of the lists. Finally, we can verify whether some of the main landowners in 1842 remain so 30 years after. In fact, here we can witness both continuities and disruptions. Purnot, the notary from Metz, or rather his heirs still rank among the main landowners and continue to be well positioned as late as 1905:

The notarial deeds do not indicate the total size of the land acquired by Purnot, but it probably covered an area of about 200 hectares. In addition to the "Bervard" castle, this also included a meadow of 33.20 ha called "Langholzweier". After the death of Claude Purnot, the co-heir Jean-Pierre-Auguste Purnot (...) acquired the property for 215,000 francs. In 1870, the Purnot family came to sell an area of 27.45 ha to the Société Norbert Metz et Compagnie, Eich, including the castle of Bervard. As a result of this sale, the Purnot estate shrank to 85.73 ha (Helbach 2009, 145).

More parcels were sold to the *Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks-AG* in 1908, leaving the family with only a few hectares left. The major landowner families from Schifflange are still dominant despite a noticeable decrease in their owned surface (such is the case of the Arendsdorf, the Bestgen, the Biwer, from Schifflange and Gonner from Rumelange). The Lavals, both the branches from Luxembourg city and Esch also still own a significant land surface. New entries occur in terms of landownership, the brothers Collart, industrialists in the exploitation of mines, Victor Tesch, Belgian, governor of the Société Générale with participation in numerous banking, railway, mining and coal companies, founder of the Société des Mines d'Esch et des Forges de Sarrebruck, co-owner with the Metz et Cie of the steel plant Metzschmelz in Esch-sur-Alzette. In terms of entrepreneurs, we also see some new players: the Darreye (tobacco producer) Daniel Buchholtz (who most likely acquired land through marriage) as well as Tabary, a landowner from Kayl and mine director.

¹³⁸ The « contribution mobilière » comprised as of 1849 tax on income and other sources of capital gains. See also Scuto for a detailed introduction to the evolution on the history of tax in Luxembourg (Scuto 2021).

Total en m2	Revenues in francs	number of parcels owned	Name	type of owner	Residence
2451528	705701	63	Esch la comune	municipality	EsA
465808	106351	227	Société des mines à Esch	private company	EsA
426085	141435	48	Schiffflange la Commune	municipality	Schiffflange
298544	80345	114	Société de forges de Saarbrucken	private company	Saarbrucken
127430	25501	61	Société des frères Stumm	private company	Neunkirchen
105682	19172	62	Societe particuliere pour l'exploitation des terrains miniers du G.Duché (par Brasseur)	private company	EsA
67210	13441	19	Société des forges de Dill	private company	Dilligen

Table 4: 1872 – Main landowners (legal entities). Source: Service du Cadastre. Administration du Cadastre et Topographie, 1872.

Total en m2	Revenues in francs	number of parcels owned	Name	Prenom	type of owner	Residence
1104181	731279	109	Purnot et Purnot	Jean Pierre Auguste et Louis Prosper	banker	Metz
702312	328248	19	Tesch	Victor	(land) owner	Bruxelles
361802	237728	102	Gonner , l'ainé	Nicolas	(land) owner	Rumelange
260397	144112	167	Hardt	Jean Pierre	millier	Kayl
233666	146555	175	Nöel Biber	Michel, fils	farmer	Schiffflange
213860	90018	5	Arendsdorff	Charles et consorts	farmer	Schiffflange
202210	131840	61	Arend	Jean Laurent	farmer	Lallange
194078	99731	120	Bestgen (fils)	Michel	farmer	Schiffflange
165550	104221	64	Vandyck Schmit	Jean	farrier	EsA
159384	109996	107	Biwer Olinger (fils)	Jacques	farmer	Schiffflange
149806	99324	51	Franck	Jean	renter	Schiffflange
143794	37070	60	Collart	Charles Joseph et Jules	forge master	Dommeldange
142843	82958	120	Thill	Bernard	farmer	Schiffflange
141818	81712	57	Zeines	Michel (héritiers)	n/a	EsA
140915	91833	92	Frisch	Pierre	farmer	Schiffflange
140603	65505	68	Schmit Kieffer	Jacques	farmer	EsA
139922	88169	99	Marx	Georges	farmer	Schiffflange
137608	76686	95	Thill	Jean	farmer	Schiffflange
134485	90562	63	Schmit Clees	Jacques	municipal employee	EsA
129732	57722	69	Bock Rollinger	Pierre	farmer	EsA
129453	71085	91	Arendsdorff (père)	Nicolas	farmer	Schiffflange
128706	52878	49	Klensch	Pierre (La Veuve)	farmer	EsA
127995	82724	99	Kerschen	Nicolas	farmer	Schiffflange
117100	38062	6	Bauret	Francois	farmer	Audun-le-Tiche (FR)
114259	66009	56	Schmit	Jean	farmer	EsA
112615	62052	77	Bestgen	Jean	farmer	Schiffflange
110560	139149	31	Wacquant (de)	Veuve (Brasseur)	notary (heir)	EsA
107829	58604	55	Laux	Adam	farmer	EsA
106627	45471	65	Schmideler	Balthazar (Les héritiers)	bricklayer	EsA
104750	36983	6	Bray	Dominique	farmer	Audun-le-Tiche (FR)
103780	60168	57	Stoffel	Dominique	farmer	EsA
103280	75124	7	Laval	Auguste	judge	Luxembourg

Table 5: 1872 – Main private landowners with surfaces comprised between 10 and 110 hectares (EsA). Source: Service du Cadastre. Administration du Cadastre et Topographie, 1872.

The majority of the top 50 landowners, in 1872, were engaged in farming as their primary occupation. As for the Tesch/Nothomb family, who had significant revenues from their landownership in 1842, a first analysis shows that the land stayed within a branch of the family. Victor Tesch-Nothomb acquired a significant part of their surface for a total price of 75,200 francs. Another auction of the last remaining 8

hectares of land took place in 1861, which brought in, again the sum of 75,200 francs. The division of the Victor Tesch-Nothomb landed property took place in 1892, with the 71.66 ha property going to his son-in-law Hubert Müller-Tesch from Esch, co-founder of the ARBED in 1911. In 1917, his heirs sold all the properties they had inherited in the municipality of Esch, including an area of 62.50 ha, to the ARBED¹³⁹, at a price of 625,000 francs (Helbach 2009, 147). The interplay of marriage alliances thus outlines well the importance such families had in the destiny of the city and the country. The Belgian origins of the Tesch and the Nothomb, (some of whom were active during the Belgian Revolution and in high-level administration positions within the Belgian government) had a prominent role in the fate of the country even after industry's economic reorientation after the fall out of the *Zollverein*, post-World War One. Luxembourg may well have parted from Belgium some three decades before (1839), but thirty years did not seem to have hindered the ties that lingered for a long time to come.

The year 1872 marks a clear disruption with the previous decades; the influence of industrialisation in the city's main owners of land and capital is evident. Beyond the main industrial companies and its directors: the Brasseur and the Metz and Müller-Tesch – the latter are the new owner and inhabitants of Berwart castle, only notaries remain exceptionally visible in terms of their revenues, given the amount of their contributions. Outsiders also clearly make their entry in the economic and commercial life of Esch. They are, however, not necessarily residents in Esch, even though they have their fiscal residence there. Examples are Theodore de Roebe¹⁴⁰ and the Collart brothers for the *Société des Mines de Steinfort*, another important blast furnaces site in the southwest of Luxembourg. Agents working for the different mining and steel companies in Luxembourg as well as in Germany, France (Lorraine) and Belgium also become prominent players in Esch as they rush to gather as much mine ore rich land as possible.

Who were the individuals, benefiting from the presence of the blast furnaces, who were not directly involved in the industry? Notaries, notary clerks and their heirs still stand out: Jean-Baptiste Rousseau¹⁴¹, Victor Wolff and the D.L. Brasseur's widow (Marguerite De Wacquant) are a case in point. The amount of their contributions is revealing of their presumed revenues stemming from income and/or other type of capital gains. Small artisans and tradesmen also benefited from both the industrial boom and the exponential population growth.

¹³⁹ The Luxembourg Metz Group was merged in 1911 with the Luxemburgische Bergwerks- und Saarbrücker Hüttengesellschaft into ARBED (Aciéries réunies de Burbach, Esch et Dudelange), which resulted in, among other things, the Esch-Schifflingen ("Metze-Schmelz") and the Burbach ironworks being under joint management.

¹⁴⁰ Director of the Société des Hauts-fourneaux Luxembourgeois, took residence in Esch only briefly between 1886-1890.

¹⁴¹ J.B. Rousseau (1841-1920). Younger brother of Michel Rousseau, also a notary clerk. He will become a chief accountant/employee. Of the two, Michel will become a more prominent taxpayer and landowner in the two decades to come.

At the top of the 1872 list for direct taxation on individuals, (excluding companies), we find some newcomers to Esch, including a pharmacist and a notary from Echternach. We also find the Buchholtz family (by then established in Esch but originally from central Luxembourg, Moesdorf), whose business diversified into different branches, namely a brewery in Lallange and an important commerce of ironmongery. Meat traders, and bigger innkeepers, as well as higher rank employees of the industry also made significant revenues.

The liberal professions together with major business owners and trades now make the bulk of the most important taxpayers, with the traditional professions of the tannery now making up to only two of the top non-landed contributions. Alongside the Eschois, the new entries include individuals from Hollerich in the periphery of Luxembourg city, Echternach, Pintsch, in the North of Luxembourg, Belgium, and a Jewish trader. How long will such capitals and individuals stay within the city of Esch, how mobile are some professions is what we hope to learn with the help of sources on commercial registers.

SURNAME	Name	Contribution paid in francs	Profession
Wolff	Victor	625	notary
Brasseur (D.L)	Veuve et enfants	330	rentier
Klopp	Jean Baptiste	104	innkeeper
Brasseur	Pierre	100	notary
Francois	Ferdinand	86	heirs tobacco producer
Mai	Ch.	78	rentier
Schmitz	Francois	73	tanner/mayor
Rousseau	Jean-Baptiste	70	notary clerk
Buchholtz	Sebastian	69	trader/business owner
Gilain	Edouard	69	trader/business owner
Wellschbillig	Étienne	69	pharmacist
Buchholtz	Daniel	66	trader/business owner
Sartor	Michel	63	innkeeper
Bivort	Hypolite	60	veterinary
Rothermel	Francois	60	pharmacist
Paquet	Nicolas	55	tanner
Moutrier	Michel	54	geometrist
Cerf	Louis	50	cattle trader

Table 6- Esch-sur-Alzette 1872 Taxpayers contributions (on income, pensions and capital gains) over 50 francs. Source: Liste des contribuables ayant payé plus de 10 francs de contribution mobilière 1872 - ANLux - FIN-01198

It is notable that there is a scarcity of farmers, or at the very least individuals who would identify as landowners, making an appearance in the capital gains tax list. This should be a clear indicator that their

revenues derived primarily from landownership, rather than other forms of capital. The year 1872 also marks the entry of a Jewish tradesman among the major contributions, the cattle trader Louis Cerf. Among the people not employed by the industry, we find two tanners¹⁴², one notary, one clerk, one veterinary, two pharmacists, the heirs of tobacco trader, two innkeepers and one geometer. There was a visible increase in skilled professions like geometers and engineers as well as in private employees, both in the industry and private sector.

ESCH- SUR- ALZETTE	1871	1890	1900
Lower civil servants & Employees	32,8%	41,1%	53,6%
Mid civil servants & employees	65,5%	56%	44,3%
Higher civil servants & employees	1,8%	3%	2,1%

Table 7: Civil servants and private sector employees in Esch 1871-1900, in relation to the total population (Leiner 1994, 125).

The analysis of the nominal rolls of 1898 confirms the continuity of 1872, that is, of a city whose economic and commercial leadership was no longer dominated by blacksmiths, weavers and tanners, but rather by the main industrial managers and the professions linked to the sector: minette (iron ore) transporters, ironworkers, engineers, senior public and private employees. However, the income from landed property remained distinct from other forms of capital, and in 1898 this is finally visible in the same document, where the contributions are divided accordingly. The nominal rolls of 1898 include information on both land/property (*contribution foncière/immobilière*) and contributions to the property/income (*contribution mobilière*) tax paid within the same document. Daniel Buchholtz is one of the few who combines a significant income from the newly established business of his paternal family with a significant income from land ownership, which is explained by the fact that he married Thérèse Arendsdorff, the heiress of one of the main landowning families in Esch and Schiffflange.

The revenues of the liberal professions such as doctors, pharmacists and veterinaries, clearly stand out when compared to the revenues of the low middle classes and the working class. The distinction of contributions paid between the latter two are often thin. In fact, chief miners were very often more likely to pay more contributions on revenues than some established artisans.

¹⁴² Tannery had been a key industry in Luxembourg, its fabrication covering a versatile output production in the branches of clothing, shoe making, furniture and saddlery.

What the nominal rolls also show is the existence of well-paid engineers and senior employees who however did not pay any tax contribution on real estate/landownership, although it cannot be excluded that they did not provide the relevant authorities with that information ¹⁴³. Also, this does not mean they did not own any (but certainly not in Esch) but rather that they probably benefited either from subsidies to rent provided by the company or that directly benefited from the company's housing infrastructure widespread around the main industrial plants in the city. This was mostly the case for engineers and other high rank staff (Lorang 1991; 2009; Buchler et al. 2020). The fact that part of this “migrant” (foreigner and from elsewhere in Luxembourg) never settled long-term residence in Esch could also explain their little involvement in the local political and social life.

¹⁴³ The 1898 is the only of nominal rolls consulted which includes information on both land/real-estate and personal contributions on capital gains paid, within the same document.

Surname	Name	Job occupation	aggregated tax contributions (francs) on income and land (when applicable)
Muller	Hubert	Director blast furnaces (Metz et Cie)	5320
Laval	Charles	notary	1210
Metz	Léon	director	790
Brasseur	Pierre	notary	562,5
Bucholtz	Daniel	Ironmongery trader	290
Gillain	Edmond (Veuve et enfants)	Ironmongery trader	289
Seider	Robert	Director Aachener Hutten Verein	260
Francois	Léon	engineer	200
Schmitz	Francois	<i>capitaux</i>	198
Metzler	Nicolas (Widow)	<i>capitaux</i>	195
Mineur	Fernand	director (mines)	192,5
Bettendorf	Victor	retail grocer	190
Massard	Jean Pierre	judicial officer	190
Hoffmann- Bettendorf		business agent	187,5
Metzler	Pierre	doctor	186
Liesch	Ferdinand	pharmacist	175
Rousseau	Jean-Pierre	Accountant	175
Welschbilig	étienne (Widow)	pharmacist	175
Buchholtz	Daniel	brewer	173
Cahn-Mayer		cloth merchand	170
Gottlieb	Louis	grocer	170
Kauth	Jean-Pierre	judicial officer	170
Volkmann	G.A.	grocer	170
Wolter	Bernard	judicial officer	160
Keul	Jean	director (mines)	150
Peters	Joseph Makel	chief-accountant	145
Fisher	Frédéric	engineer	140
Peters	Joseph Makel	tax on dividends	139,35
Franck	Guillaume	manager	136
Koch	André	engineer	130
Hermann	Max	cloth merchand	125
Kleinberg	Souers	Bazar owner	125
Thiry	Adolphe	director (mines)	121
Nebelung	Jean	engineer	120
Steichen	Victor	doctor	120
Lentz	Martin	chef d'expedition	118
Olinger	Jean-Baptiste	Railway station (Head)	118
Kersch	Nicolas Thiry	Accountant	116
Kesseler	Joseph	tax collector	115
Rousseau	Michel	notary clerk	115
Rosenstiel	Jacques	Bazar owner	110
Kolbach	Pierre	casheer	104
Schockmel	Michel Garcon	butcher	101
Ries	Olivier	doctor	100
Welter	Michel	doctor	100

Table 8 - List of 45 persons who paid more than 100 francs in taxes - Esch, 1898

In 1898, there was a continuity in the presence of a few non-Luxembourgers (if we exclude the major industrial companies and their agents already present in 1872) as tax payers. Among those paying more than 100 francs are three Jewish¹⁴⁴ retail entrepreneurs.

In 1898, the appearance of two Italian restaurateurs/café owners in the list is also significant. Although more modest, with tax contributions of 31 and 20 francs respectively, Jacques Marabese, born in Masi (Veneto, Italy), a café owner married to a Luxembourger, and Moise Olivo, also from Veneto, appear on the list for the first time. The latter figures as cabaret owner and owner of pension in Brill Street but went on to build a successful trade of wines in the Brill quarter. He was also the owner of one of the most elegant Art Nouveau buildings in Esch (Buchler et al. 2020). Despite these successful business examples, immigration into Esch was largely made up of workers and employees. In the context of immigration, upper middle-class groups were only found at very low percentages (Leiner, 1994). As a result, the number of immigrants who managed to climb the social and economic ladder was anecdotal at the time, with the notable exception of Alfred Lefèvre¹⁴⁵, who will soon become the epitome of the self-made man.

3.3.3 The censuses of 1900 –a precious source

The analysis of the census of 1900¹⁴⁶ is particularly valuable in that it allows us to examine the professions of the entire Esch-sur-Alzette population. What professions can be identified? From which geographical areas do they originate? A cursory examination reveals that, in addition to the expected categories of owners/renters, mine managers, entrepreneurs and traders, there are numerous individuals engaged in less affluent occupations, such as shopkeepers and humble seamstresses. These individuals are predominantly manual workers with low incomes and are therefore situated close to the working class. Finally, in Esch-sur-Alzette, there was a dominant presence of small and large innkeepers and hoteliers, all of whom benefited from the glaring lack of places to live and consequent housing crisis. Employees, public or private, appear to be relegated to a lower degree of economic emancipation and social esteem. This appears to corroborate our sources on the increasing awareness at governmental level to come in the support of

¹⁴⁴ Many of whom will eventually opt for Luxembourgish nationality.

¹⁴⁵ According to the book registering arrivals, Lefèvre arrived in Esch 1889 as a mason in the Brasseur plant.

¹⁴⁶ Recensements Bassin Minier *BAMI* 1900, in the framework of a study initiated by the Centre de Recherche Public- Centre Universitaire, set up with the goal of the statistic creation and exploitation of a database on internal and external migrations in the Mining South, Centre de Documentations sur les Migrations (CDMH), Dudelange, sine dato.

these (lower) middle classes. Indeed, they frequently leased a room in the residence of a superior-ranking employee, frequently from the same occupational group, such as postal or railway employees, who often came from the same region. This phenomenon appears to have justified the presence of domestic staff in sometimes very small households, who, by accepting boarders, justified the need for a servant who could assist with domestic duties.

We need nevertheless to be cautious with the type of information a source such as the census can provide us with and eventual assumptions of class belonging based on the professions stated. The reasons being those stated above in connection with the limitations inherent to the very use of statistics and censuses at the time of their actual inception in Luxembourg. In his work, Stefan Leiner adapted and made sense of the Bielefeld school socio-categorization, for his comparison study of the three industrial cities of Thionville, Burbach and Esch. We ignore, however, how Leiner made sense of a hierarchy in the case of business owners, as their revenues differed even in cases where they self-identified under the same profession. Let us take the case of innkeepers: some owned establishments frequented by a better-off clientele, others provided accommodation for the seasonal miners, factory workers. In both cases, the number of rooms they disposed of also varied greatly. If in the case of technical professions, the accuracy of the distinctions used to describe them is not without flaws, the nomenclature of the 1900 censuses is highly hazardous, in the case of commercial professions, oversimplified in German by distinguish only between *Wirt*, *Gastwirt* or *Kaufmann* (in the case of commercial professions). In the occasions where French is used, between *marchand*, *négociant*, *entrepreneur* and *commerçant* remain extremely opened to nuanced usage. It is also important to note that socio-professional categorization, as envisaged in the censuses did not take into account the extent of one's capital, nor the revenues one made from real-estate and land ownership. The same could be said of Leiner's categorization, as we ignore the criteria used for his class categorization. It is known, for example, that even small innkeepers in Esch owned both buildable and non-buildable land (Service du Cadastre 1845), something that would have undoubtedly added to their financial well-being.

As Bouchard (1996) notes, as often happens in research, the criteria employed do not necessarily align with the specific purpose, survey, or discipline in question.

For example, few writers specify how the categories were defined and what criteria were used for classification. Even more rarely are there lists that allow the classification itself for validation or comparison purposes. Indeed, in addition to defining and choosing classification criteria, it is necessary to develop a rigorous and uniform method of assessing each profession in relation to each of the selected criteria (e.g. manual/non- manual, skilled/unskilled). Otherwise, there is a risk of arbitrariness and contradiction (Bouchard 1996, p. 12).

In fact, what the exercise of socio-categorization shows us is that the more emphasis is placed on rigour and consistency of classification, the greater the number of residual categories (undetermined, unclassifiable). Therefore, the need for a simplification imposes itself, which validates the simplification of the German terminology above.

We opted, because of the above-mentioned difficulties in establishing whose trades and businesses were noteworthy of being considered a *Wirtschaftsbürgertum*, to retain Kocka's simplified formula for our analysis of the 1900 censuses:

The concept "middle-class" comprises merchants, manufacturers, bankers, capitalists, entrepreneurs, and managers, as well as rentiers, together with their families (...), *Wirtschaftsbürgertum* [the economic middle-class in German]. It also comprises the families of doctors, lawyers, ministers, scientists and other professionals, professors, (...) including those who serve as administrators and officials in public and private bureaucracies (...), (*Bildungsbürgertum* [the educated middle class- in German] (Kocka 1995, 784).

The analysis of business ownership will be carried out in more detail in part III, using other types of sources that can provide further insight into the size of the enterprise.

It is therefore necessary to classify and analyse individuals, based only on the information provided by the 1900 census, which is clearly a limiting factor. In order to overcome this, and always only partially, the historian must use inference or other methods that allow him to approximate reality.

For example, as suggested by French research on different urban bourgeoisies (Chaline 1982; Daumard 1970) , we considered the presence of domestic servants in the household as a sign of the presence of an upper class.

Our source will be the nominal census of 1900, thus at a point where industrial development was well underway. Typically, the servants were attached to the family who employed them and at the same time housed them. This makes it possible to know the profession of the masters. Once again, nomenclatures can be hazardous as many small businesses and artisans employed staff who also lived with them. The distinction is not always clear between the terms *Magd* (maid), *Dienstmädchen* (maid servant), *Dienstmagd* or *Dienstknecht* (female and male farm labourers, respectively), *Lehrlinge* (apprentices) were also often present, in small to mid-size businesses and we will not here consider them as *strictu sensu*

domestic staff. Only rarely is the role of the said servant specified in a specific column, by defining a cook, nanny or by precisising “*Hilft der Hausfrau*” or “*hilft bei der Haushaltung*”¹⁴⁷. Because the results of any census need to be read carefully, we selected first whom, of the around 11000 registered people were identified as domestics and then proceeded to a further selection of whom might have been considered strictly domestic staff. We therefore left out of our count all households that stated the presence of staff but whose work was employed in the help of the business of the householder rather than at the exclusive service of one’s family. Therefore, butchers, bakers, innkeepers, business owners, pastry chefs and tanners, just to name a few where all considered to be hosting that staff solely for business assistance purposes.

There are however some 26 instances in which it is very difficult to determine whether that one individual categorized as “Magd” was there with the purpose of assisting in the family business, in the household tasks or in both. This is the case of some Jewish families, for example. The widowers sometimes inherited the family business and ran it, resulting unclear whether the staff they employed was used to help solely in the family’s business activity.

With certainty, sixty people leave no doubt as to the presence of domestic staff in their household being exclusively for the sake of the house keeping of a nuclear family, at times more numerous depending on the number of relatives present in the household. This figure would represent against the 1911 heads of household counted for the year of 1900, a tiny percentage of 3%¹⁴⁸. Should we include the families were there can be no certainty about the role of the staff present in the household that number would increase up to 4,4%. We are therefore speaking, in any case, of a minority of “privileged” people. So, who could afford domestic staff? Unsurprisingly, the notaries, the high rank civil servants (the judge), the engineers, the directors of the industry and mines but also the members of the liberal professions such as doctors, pharmacists, the veterinary or the architect.

More than three quarters of those having domestic staff have one person, two at most at their service. A true minority holds more than two domestics. If we want to have a look at those whose domestic exceed the number of two, one finds the Metz, the Müller-Tesch, administrators of the Metz & Cie and the *Société anonyme des mines du Luxembourg et des forges de Sarrebruck* (respectively), Rudolf Seidel¹⁴⁹, from Silesia, Léon Francois, an engineer from Mamer, and Charles Laval, the notary. The latter’s own house

¹⁴⁷ “Helps the housewife’ or “helps with housekeeping, respectively.

¹⁴⁸ Which is slightly above Leiner’s (Leiner 1994) estimations.

¹⁴⁹ Rudolf Seidel director of the Aachen Ironworks, Esch/Alzette, successfully campaigned for the construction of the Adolf Emil Ironworks in Esch – Belval.

took the shape and dimensions of what could stand for a small castle surrounded by a private (these days public) park. In the absence of a proper nobility, their lifestyle qualifies as that of grand bourgeoisie.

As for the domestic staff, they were recruited from all over Luxembourg, Lorraine, Belgium and Prussia. However, a significant number stemmed from the same villages, cities or districts as those of their masters, showing that they probably lived with the family since long, even before moving to Esch-sur-Alzette.

This does not seem to be yet the *momentum* of an “embourgeoisement” of some of Esch’s major entrepreneurs. Alfred Lefèvre, in the construction business entrepreneur, still lived, by 1900, modestly with his family. He remains absent from the 1898 taxpayers ‘nominal rolls, a sign that his business had not yet fully taken off nor reached the status of monopoly where many public and private works are outsourced to him¹⁵⁰. The Belgian entrepreneur was then still working towards building his major construction empire, and his own beautiful mansion in Rue d’Audun, and other constructions in the Rue Pasteur¹⁵¹ and in Luxembourg-city. A similar observation can be made of Nicolas Biwer, who first appears in the 1898 census with a tax contribution of 40 francs. This is a relatively modest amount, particularly given that he will soon become one of the wealthiest entrepreneurs in Esch, thanks to his real estate investments and, perhaps less directly, thanks to his marriage to the daughter of a prominent landowner. Yet, another prominent character of Esch’s upper class, C.M. Spoo, entrepreneur and member of the Parliament (Chamber of Deputies) did not, at the time of this census, host any domestic staff. The reasons may not only be down to some sort of frugality. The fact that, by 1900, his children had fled the nest could serve as explanation.

Conversely, the presence of domestic staff may have been strictly related to a family situation where young widowers needed some help with childcare, however from our analysis even in such cases, this was likely to take place among the households of the higher social milieu. Others knew no better than to count on the help of the extended family for such tasks, and such practices were present across classes¹⁵².

The absence of domestic staff, even within the higher spheres of society, therefore, highlights the limitations of such a criterion, which leaves behind those who may have gathered high social and political esteem, but who did not necessarily indulge into a “bourgeois” lifestyle. Furthermore, it needs to be

¹⁵⁰ The official figures on the number of staff Lefèvre employed are impressive. In fact, his staff rose from 152 in 1903 to 631 in 1911 (Association d’assurance contre les accidents 1908; 1911). The bookkeeping of the ARBED for 1912-13, leaves no doubt as to the importance the industry played for some entrepreneurs. In fact, during the construction of the new furn blastaces, silos and the electric central, the ARBED outsourced Alfred Lefèvre almost every month. The entrepreneur provided for both work force and materials (ANLux, AES- U1-30).

¹⁵¹ See also Guide Historique et Architectural d’Esch-sur-Alzette (Buchler et al. 2020).

¹⁵² One of the town’s doctors Dr. Olivier Ries had a cousin as servant and this was the case also among a few engineers.

stressed again that having but one complete overview of a population census (1900) does nothing but take a picture, no matter how neat, of an in-between moment of the different stages and time span we are here altogether looking at.

Another interesting ascertainment relates to the presence of farmers and an associated presence of domestic staff. One first realization imposes itself, whereas in the mid-19th century the nomenclature *cultivateur* dominated, by looking at the 1900 censuses, it decreases significantly. Whether this is because the percentage of population active in farming decreased indeed or because such farmers acquainted a class-consciousness and preferred to refer to themselves as *Eigentümer* or *Rentner*, (land) owners or rentiers, remains to be established¹⁵³. This shift can be attributed to a change in class-consciousness as land was now seen more as a commodity that provided rent rather than just a means of self-sufficiency. An in depth look into the Register of deeds, should be able to help answering this question, as the register will allow a further hierarchy on farmers' landownership. Not to exclude should also be the possibility, based on our analysis, that most farmers did not have servants (if big farmers they had help from "*Mägde/Knecht*"), but rather relied on the whole family who was involved in the farming activities and production. When they did, they were male individuals most likely involved in the agricultural exploration themselves. As some historiography of peasantry demonstrates, in Western Europe, the relationship to tenants is still an ambiguous one (Joyce 2024). Another sign, perhaps rooted in cultural traditions, that domestic staff were a lifestyle element inherent only to the urban upper classes?

3.3.4 1905- 1922

What the 1905 Register of deeds shows is that revenues from land and real estate are not necessarily equally proportional to the number of parcels or even square meters/hectares owned. In fact, the list of landowners in 1905 reveals that the most profitable property was now in the hands of Alfred Lefèvre. He stands out from the list for different reasons; he is a foreigner with no connections yet to the local landed élite nor to the business bourgeoisie. It was however, his first job at the Brasseurschmelz that propelled his career. Soon afterwards, indeed, he became Léon Metz's faithful business partner and to whom the soon to become ARBED trusted and outsourced a great deal of its industrial construction works. Lefèvre incarnates the epitome of the self-made man. Having arrived in the Esch with an expertise but as a simple mason, his careful investments in land made him the most successful entrepreneur in the city in a short

¹⁵³ The concept is not rigorous and, unless there are sources indicating the composition of the fortunes, " which we shall deal with separately, it is necessary to consider them in principle as individuals "living on income".

frame of time. His network with the industry tycoons served him well as he was deeply appreciated by old and new ruling classes alike as shows this comment by new director Hubert Hoff, in charge of the modernisation of the Metzschmelz in 1912:

For years, a small contractor based in Esch had been entrusted with the various construction works at the Esch works. He had also always carried out the repair work on the blast furnace masonry and the hot blast stoves to the complete satisfaction of the steel plant owners. He had their complete trust. This small entrepreneur Lefèvre came from the Belgian industry near Liège, where he had learnt his trade thoroughly. He now feared that he would be eliminated under the new management and turned to Mr. Hubert Muller for support. In agreement with Mr. Leon Metz, he gave him the assurance that everything would stay the same. I was informed of these events by Mr. Mayrisch. I was downright dismayed. If the old gentlemen, who lived in the castle in the immediate vicinity of steel plants, still wanted to deal with the details of the management and ultimately also with the new buildings, then the promised independence was an illusion. I told Mr. Mayrisch that frankly. (...) I got in touch with Mr. Lefèvre. He only spoke French but understood some German. I understood French, but my knowledge of French was very patchy. We agreed that he would speak French and I would speak German during our negotiations (Hoff sine dato, 82–83).

He enjoyed a high degree of social and political esteem. Despite not being directly involved in the municipal council (because a foreigner) this did not prevent him from having a prominent role in the decision making process of the construction of the Hospital (Maas 2022), at the inception of the negotiations in 1907, being the president of the local health insurance entity. Yet it was among the working class that perceptions of the Belgian entrepreneur were most controversial:

The bourgeois press recently reported that the building contractor Lefèvre of Esch sur Alz. had been attacked by workers for not issuing exit tickets, which they had demanded, and had been beaten severely. Last Sunday there was also a rumour that his comrade-in-arms Caffaro¹⁵⁴ had narrowly escaped a murder weapon on the evening of the workers' meeting; policeman Dopfeld had quickly taken a dagger from a worker, otherwise the entrepreneur Caffaro would simply have been bumped off. In such cases, the bourgeois newspapers merely report an assault and between the lines one can immediately read how bad the workers were. The front story, however, on the reasons why the worker assaults his employer, no, there is no mention of that. One knows only too well how the enterprise makes all sorts of impossible offers to capital, in order to obtain a large piece of work in the Clair-Chêne, in Galesloch¹⁵⁵, and then quickly make flourishing business. If, by chance, the labourers of the subcontracting class have taken over their piecework from capital too cheaply, then the worker must sweat or bleed, so that the latter still get their money. How often does it happen on the day of payment that the workers become indignant because they are not paid the wages that had been agreed upon. - The starvation wages that have already been paid at the new factories clearly show that riots could easily be a possibility (Arbeiter als Angreifer auf ihre Brotherren, *Der Arme Teufel*¹⁵⁶, 12.06.1910, p.1).

By 1905, the income from his investments in landed property will have made of Lefèvre, alongside fellow construction entrepreneur Nicolas Biwer, the wealthiest individuals in Esch.

Another interesting aspect of looking into revenues of the top 20 land /real estate owners was the fact that shopkeepers and (master) artisans still held some important assets in land and real estate. A further analysis into where in Esch their parcels and type of asset were located will certainly shed light on their

¹⁵⁴ Italian construction entrepreneur.

¹⁵⁵ Two Areas of Esch where the industrial plants were planning new settlements.

¹⁵⁶ Socialist publication edited by Jean Schaack-Wirth, master tailor and member of the local council: councillor 1906-1917, alderman 1917-1918, councillor again between 1921-1928 and 1933-1934.

peculiarities. A glance at the 1905 registers of landed property suggests that most profitable landed property remained largely in the hands of Eschois, or at least men who married into Esch.

Position	m2	Revenus en cts (francs)	Nombre de parcelles	Nom	Prénom	Profession	Residence	born in
1	16515	738554	33	Lefevre	Alfred	entrepreneur	Esch s/a	distric of Liege (BE)
2	81066	612449	26	Wecker	Jean	blacksmith/Industrialist	Esch s/a	Bergem
3	19105	440228	10	Kremer	Pierre	cabaret owner	Esch s/a	Berchem
4	729945	434907	11	Muller	Hubert	engineer	Esch s/a	(Langsur, DE)
5	54190	353963	27	Garcon	Jean Pierre	butcher	Esch s/a	EsA
6	87774	343043	33	Stoffel	Jaques	auctioneer/landowner	Esch s/a	EsA
7	60792	246503	17	Schockmel	Michel	butcher	Esch s/a	Differdange
8	36404	243078	35	Schreiner	Nicolas	cabaret owner	Esch s/a	Junglister
9	55977	238010	29	Liegeois	Nicolas fils et cons	farmer	Esch s/a	EsA
10	17727	234304	6	Hamilius	Jean Baptiste	(land) owner	Esch s/a	?
11	19607	231040	12	Buchholtz	Daniel	trader	Esch s/a	EsA
12	15633	230222	9	Reding	Dominique Georges	cabaret owner	Esch s/a	?
13	109935	225871	35	Tabary	Marie Anne	(land) owner	Esch s/a	?
14	25174	193610	10	Laval	Charles	notary	Esch s/a	EsA
15	68882	180727	3	Hamilius	Jaques	tinsmith	Esch s/a	EsA
16	17960	167567	10	Weinand	Jean Baptiste	cafe owner	Esch s/a	EsA
17	29422	158894	20	Mattes	Auguste	trader/merchant	Esch s/a	EsA
18	42837	148296	25	Hamilius	Jean Pierre	n/a	Esch s/a	?
19	15344	147404	11	Decker	Joseph	innkeeper	Esch s/a	?
20	42248	141729	8	Scheidweiler	Theodore	pastry chef	Esch s/a	Wiltz

Table 9: Top 20 individuals in revenues deriving from landed assets– 1905. Source: Service du Cadastre Esch-sur-Alzette, 1905

The next available source allowing for an inference of how wealth was shared in the city is that of the main taxpayers, in 1922¹⁵⁷. The list suggests a continuity of some dynamics of wealth in the city of Esch. Again, it leaves no doubt as to the importance of some (master) artisans like that of hostel owners and a pastry chef, as well as the entry of new business branches to the commercial scene of the city such as that of shoe merchants.

¹⁵⁷With the abolition of the *contribution foncière* in 1919, the contributions on landed property and property (income/capital gains) were merged into a single tax. In 1919, the direct taxes of the 19th century were grouped together to form a ‘general income tax (impôt general sur le revenu).

Surame	Name	Job occupation	net taxable income (francs)
Lefèvre	Alfred Reckinger	Entrepreneur	212.000
Metz	Léon	Administrator	194.800
Muller	Edmond	Engineer	190.990
Gantenbein	Alfred	Notary	167.650
Lefèvre et Ruckert	Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneur	140.000
Goerend	Jean	Professor	122.650
Lentz et Weis	Articles Industriels		85.850
Heynen	Eugene	Director (ARBED)	85.730
Laux	Jacques-Wilmes	Liquidateur	79.900
Marnach	Henri	Shoe merchant	67.000
Dossong	Aug.-Goedert	Shoe merchant	66.520
Nachbaum(?)	Eugene	Pastry chef	54.780
Metz	Auguste	Director	52.920
Cresto	Jean- Dondelinger	Hotelier	52.400
Groff	Ernest	Photographer	51.490
Heldenstein	Francois	Pharmacist	50.340
Charbant	Charles	Director (Terres Rouges)	50.230

Table 10: 1922 – Individuals with a net taxable income above 50.000 francs. Source: Liste des contribuables imposés pour 1922 à raison d'un revenu global supérieur à 12.000 Fr. , 1923.

A thorough review of the transactions that took place in-between 1905 and the 1920s, through the Register of deeds, will allow for a better understanding of how landownership evolved in the course of the two first decades of the 20th century. The potential impact of industrialisation on the dynamics of inheritance, succession and sales, as well as on the forms of survival and decline of the old agrarian middle class, will be at the centre of the analysis.

3.5 Political representation

It is impossible to conduct an analysis of class for the period in question without including an examination of individuals' chances at political representation. After having covered superficially, indicators of belonging to an upper class through an overview of their landownership and revenues, we now turn our attention to voting rights and who disposed of such privilege before the introduction of the universal suffrage in 1919.

The Constitution of 17 October 1868 set a maximum of 30 francs and a minimum of 10 francs for the electoral census (art. 52). The law of 30 June 1892 reduced the maximum from 30 francs to 15 francs and that of 22 June 1901 to 10 francs (Administration des Contributions Directes 1995). The first voters list we dispose of dates back to 1858 (*Luxemburger Zeitung* 1858). Esch-sur-Alzette is still a provincial town of relative significance. The list of men entitled to vote for the *Chambre des Députés* for the whole district of Esch-sur-Alzette totals 28 individuals (against a total of 68 for Luxembourg city and periphery). One finds there Collart, the mine director as well as mayor of Bettembourg, the Dr. de Wacquant from Foetz, the Baron de Tornaco from Sanem/Differdange as well as a handful of municipal agents of the main villages of the district. Esch, the town in itself contributes with four individual votes: Henri Motté and D.L. Brasseur, the notaries, Jacques Schmit, the mayor and M. Noël, a farmer in Schiffflange. With respect to the rest of district of Esch-sur-Alzette, it is the landowners, mayors, municipal administration agents, on two occasions, a trader, in another an innkeeper, who can vote in 1858¹⁵⁸. These “representatives” of the whole nation translated thus into a system that fed itself and allowed the longevity of the same type of structures in power. The list of 1881, more than two decades later, illustrates well the impressive change in both the number and professional sectors in which people who could vote were occupied in. Finally, it also reflects the diversity of the geographic origins of the new Esch voters. Out of the meagre number of 165 men who could vote in Esch (town) 42% were shopkeepers, artisans, innkeepers and cabaret owners, 12% were farmers, 8% were (land)owners, 12% were industrialists and 5% were represented by the liberal professions.

¹⁵⁸ Arrêté portant publication de la liste des électeurs de canton, (*Luxemburger Zeitung* 1858).

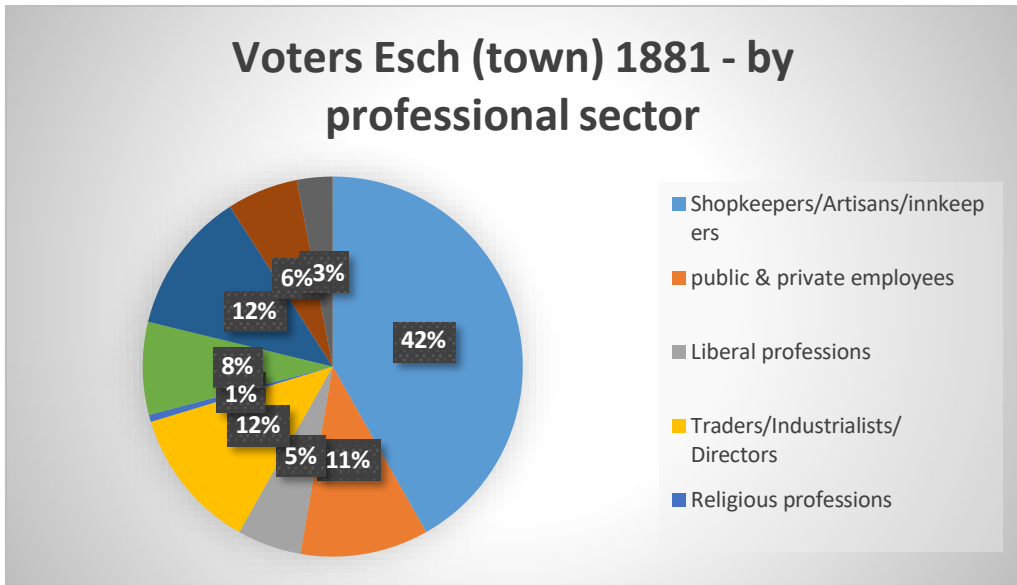


Figure 9 : Voters in Esch-sur-Alzette by professional sector. -Liste des électeurs pour la Chambre des Députés de l'année 1881 - Listes alphabétiques des citoyens. Source: ANLux, AE00168

We move forward by two decades to find another voters list of circa 1900¹⁵⁹, which although showing data only for the municipalities of the canton of Esch, excludes the listing of those voting within the city itself.

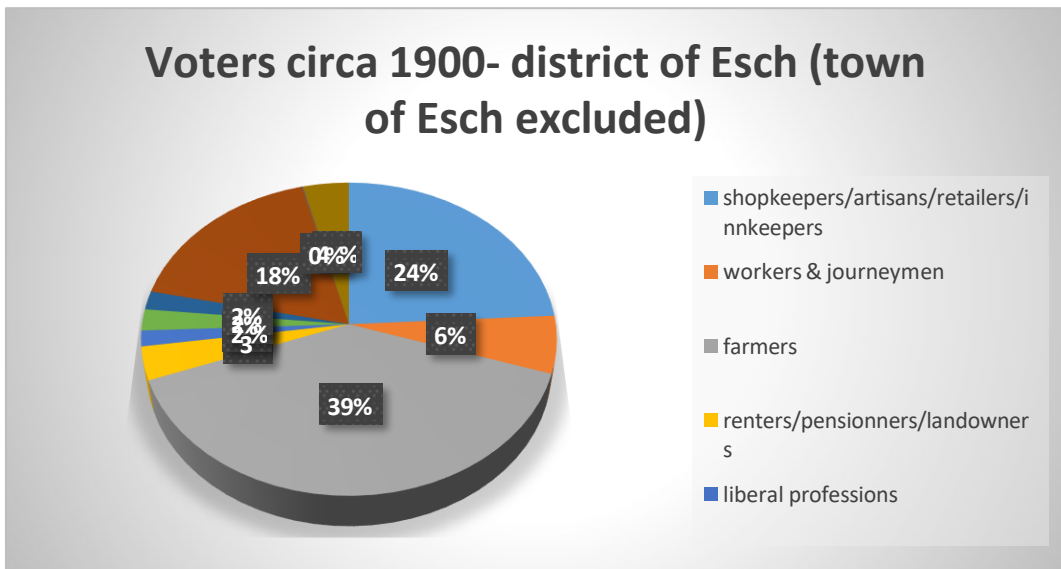


Figure 10: Voters in the district of Esch-sur-Alzette (city of Esch excluded), circa 1900. Source: Liste des électeurs du canton d'Esch (BNL).

¹⁵⁹ Liste des électeurs du canton d'Esch-sur-Alzette, circa 1900, Source : Bibliothèque Nationale du Luxembourg.

Of the 1050 identified voters, 39% are farmers, followed by 24% of a *petite bourgeoisie* comprising shopkeepers, artisans, retailers, café owners and innkeepers. Only then, follow public and private employees with 18%. The industrialists, managers and directors count for 2% of voters. We find the same percentage for the members of the liberal professions. Some workers and journeymen reach enough tax to vote and that can be down to the fact that many steadily worked as skilled force for the industry and the railway sector. Outside the city of Esch-sur-Alzette farmers still "rule". However, more light needs to be shed on the role of such farmers in the political arena as well as in their relationship both to the land and the industry. How could it be qualified? If we think specifically about those farmers still living within the enclosure of the town of Esch¹⁶⁰, an enquiry into the reasons of their adaptability to a change of system, and more importantly of traditions, is further due. It is however, the unneglectable presence of the lower and middle classes in the shape of innkeepers, café and cabaret owners as well as small artisans that strikes. The precarious conditions, among the lower middle-classes, may be hypothesized as having inspired (consciously or not) an upcoming fight at the level of the working class. More importantly, it explains how the South of Luxembourg provided for the ascension of a radical bourgeoisie¹⁶¹ to the central government, determined to promote social rights, well before the introduction of universal voting rights in 1919. The election of Deputies C.M. Spoo (1896) and later Michel Welter (1897), for the district of Esch, cannot fully be dissociated from this phenomenon:

Since 1892, the poll tax had been reduced from 30 to 15 francs, but despite this reduction, few working-class people were able to go to the polls. The two friends therefore relied on middle-class voters (Mersch 1966b).

In 1906, when Leon Metz (1842-1928) was elected mayor of Esch, only 683 of the town's 12,135 inhabitants had the right to vote. In 1919, with the introduction of universal suffrage, the electoral body increased from 683 to 7266 men and women.

At different instances we will be arguing that at the origins of an interclass solidarity may have been a political sympathy by the lower and middle classes for the ordeal of the working classes they knew so well because, among other reasons, they lived side by side.

A relationship that Leiner (1994) did not fall short of observing in his analysis of the population on the streets of Esch-sur-Alzette:

¹⁶⁰ Many farmers lived by the turn of the century in bustling streets such as the rue de Luxembourg or the Rue d'Audun, main trading arteries in Esch-sur-Alzette.

¹⁶¹ The change of name of their party, their "moderate" turn and their coalition with the Liberal Government will deserve our attention at a later stage.

(...) the residents of Audun¹⁶² Street seem in some respects, to have hardly less in common with the "citizens" of Luxembourg Street¹⁶³ than with the workers of the Grenz¹⁶⁴(Leiner 1994, 234).¹⁶⁵

The new but diverse urban upper class defied the idea of an industrial city having to be inevitably a bad place to live. Through private and public initiatives, it elevated Esch to the status of a modern city. In their diversity, old and new middle-classes remained nevertheless hegemonic but diverged in their respective agendas regarding their closest neighbours and core of the Esch population, the working class.

¹⁶² One of the commercial arteries of the city, and a "mingling" street. Although predominantly inhabited by the lower middle classes, it bustled with workers and commercial activities from different nationalities and confessions.

¹⁶³ The quintessential bourgeois street in Esch-sur-Alzette.

¹⁶⁴ Predominantly immigrant and working-class neighbourhood.

¹⁶⁵ **In the original:** „Dennoch scheinen die Bewohner der Other Straße in gewisser Hinsicht kaum weniger mit den "Bürgern" der Luxemburger Straße als mit den Arbeitern der Grenz gemein gehabt zu haben”.

So we see small hovels, modest houses, or craftsman's cottages from the good old days next to the big modern building, shop or bank, the huge commercial building and the rustic farmhouse of the old Eschois. These "descendants of the oldest families in the locality, deserve a few moments in their company. They form a special caste, jealously guarding their originality and traditions, isolated in a shady native pride, which barely conceals its muted hostility, a certain distrust of "outsiders" and their fortunes. Great bouncers and lovers of good food, or at least around their own café tables, where people speak big and clear, with a serious pronunciation, thick and shuffling, with heavy gestures, imposing fists on the table, scrutinising the interlocutor's intentions with a sly malicious look of a cunning and shrewd mischievous peasant look (Société d'Initiative et d'Embellissement 1926, 21–22).¹⁶⁶

3.6 Unity and diversity

Despite the industrial turn, Esch-sur-Alzette remained under many aspects a provincial society.

The grouping(s) that emerge from our analysis are not intended to be a rigid framework. As useful as it may be to take a first look at who makes up the upper classes in terms of occupational categories, the complexity and limitations of such a reality become clear. Hence the interest in exploring other sources exploring revenues, voting rights, land ownership and degree of well-being defined by the presence of domestic staff, the series of analysis that we have just performed.

At first glance, the tax lists indicate that it is between large and small companies, between shopkeepers and wholesale (traders/merchants) where there seems to be the major opposition in terms of the entrepreneurial life of the city. Only a more detailed analysis of the type of business will confirm this.

As for the liberal professions, both those independent and working within the industry, they transformed the life of the city. Part of these outsiders settled permanently in the city and performed a certain social and political power. Such is the case of doctors, veterinaries, pharmacists, architects, and engineers. It remains, nevertheless, clear from the sources that for different reasons some of the educated staff employed by the industry had no strings attached to the city of Esch.

¹⁶⁶ **In the original** : Ainsi on voit de petites mesures, de modestes maisonnettes de journalier ou d'artisan du bon vieux temps à côté du grand building moderne, magasin ou banque, l'immense bâtiment de rapport voisine avec la maison-ferme, d'aspect rustique, du vieil Eschois. Ces «vieux Eschois», descendants des plus anciennes familles de la localité, méritent bien que nous passions quelques moments en leur compagnie. Ils forment une caste à part, gardant jalousement son originalité et ses traditions, isolée dans une ombrageuse fierté autochtone, qui dissimule à peine sa sourde hostilité, une certaine méfiance vis-à-vis de « ceux venus du dehors » et de leurs fortunes rapides. Grands videurs de pots et amateurs de bonne chère, ils se réunissent dans des cafés, ou du moins autour de tables de café bien à eux, où l'on parle gros et clair, d'une prononciation grave, grasse et traînarde, avec des gestes lourds, d'imposants poings sur la table, scrutant les intentions de l'interlocuteur d'un regard sournois et malicieux de paysan cauteleux et finaud.

The different groupings mentioned so far are all characterized by some form of occupation. However, all three sources - the 1900 censuses, the different nominal taxpayers list, and the land registry (Register of deeds) - show the importance of those who do not work in this, by now industrial, city. Far from being a declining species, the farmer or rentier, remained until the eve of the 1920s a typical character in Esch-sur-Alzette. Of the two designations, the second is undoubtedly more prestigious because of its reference to landownership and real-estate, the essential basis, as we shall see, of a provincial world still firmly based on the land. Our third cluster/grouping of the upper class cannot thus dismiss the role of farmers-become rentiers. Our bourgeois middle classes have thus here been outlined, and we can now split them in three sublayers.

This triple-faced local élite was thus composed of a) the autochthonous landowners (old agrarian middle-class), and a few merchants b (new) business/industrial entrepreneurship, c) the liberal professions (most of which are outsiders/new arrivals). A contingent of the landed class remained, despite the arrival of newcomers, a stronghold in the context of the city and the district of Esch altogether. What were their occupations in the immediate aftermath of the industrialisation? Were they simply rentiers living off the revenues of estates sold? How did they reinvent themselves, what was their stance and contribution to the urban development? Did they resist and try to decelerate it somehow as was the case in neighbouring industrial towns like Dudelange (Ferreira Flores, 2022), or did they instead spouse the new bourgeoisie and welcome industrial development?

Did this layer of farmers and landowners evolve into new professional fields, like those provided by the mining and steel industry? Conversely, did the new outsider upper classes, also invest in land as a diversification of its assets? In the next chapters, a more detailed analysis will be provided with the assistance of an in-depth analysis of the Register of deeds transactions, the genealogic databases, and the commercial registers.

The diversity of this upper-class was thus naturally expressed in terms of the way it manifested in its relations to the means of production, the nature of their activities as well as of its wealth and rank in society. In their diversity, they shared at least one aspect in common, the fact they owned assets and the profits made, in one way or the other, thanks to the emergence of the steel works and mining industry. However other manifestations of class-consciousness need to be analysed, such as the interacting with other classes. Which shape took their involvement in the city's urban development and in which way did they co-habit with other social classes?

The 1900 censuses exposed forms of interethnic, interregional and interconfessional "solidarity", with people being employed and/or hosted by someone of the same regional, national, ethnic or religious

affinity. Which did not however mean that other forms of cooperation with “outsiders” were not possible. Jewish families employed often other Jewish staff but had Catholics as domestic staff in parallel. Mosellans hosted their peers in the same way Northern Luxembourgers tended to host and /or employ staff, tenants and apprentices from their own regions. The same happened among Prussians, Austrians, Belgians, northern or central Italians or Protestants in general. More interestingly, class solidarity often took over any ethnic, confessional, regional or national allegiance, as we will see over the next chapters. As Leiner (1994) demonstrated, intercultural and inter class mingling was very common, in the streets of the city centre up until 1910, but it remains to be proved whether that mingling did not merely happen because of the small dimensions of the city, which obliged to a sort of mere “convivial” co-existence. It is the period thereafter (post 1910) that we are interested in studying through the Register of deeds, namely with the objective of analysing whether spatial segregation was something actively pursued by the better off classes in Esch sur Alzette.

In sum, Esch-sur-Alzette’s upper class (es), was by the turn of the 20th century, a minority of privileged individuals. Esch’s core population were workers and the low-middle classes of shop owners, innkeepers and small artisans all in fierce competition with each other, in their quest for a space to live and make a living.

The analysis shows a profoundly diverse bourgeois/upper middle class. It rendered it clear that these subgroupings are not dissociated from one another, be it the industrialists, the farmers turned (land) owners, the merchants, the liberal professions or the renters. In Esch, the notaries, the managers/directors/engineers for the industrial plants and the big entrepreneurship are not a homogenous whole. They do not they relate similarly to the means of production, but they all benefited from the newly injected capital brought by the very same industrialisation process of the city. Their diversity also imposes itself as an angle of analysis. Their religion, their lifestyle, their political allegiances, their mentalities, their relationship to the working class all defeat the idea of homogeneity. Along the “capitalist” upper classes, we find those living off profit, off landed and real estate revenues. In conclusion, it can be posited that within this diversity, an upper class existed, comprising individuals who, despite their relatively high incomes, devoted their lives to improving the lives of the lower classes, even if not in an idealistic manner. The remainder of this dissertation will be devoted to an examination of the aforementioned diversity.

3.7 Excursus – The Spoo family

The epitome of a bourgeois middle class family through the lens of Hobsbawm

The bourgeois was not merely an employer, entrepreneur or capitalist but socially a master, (...) a “patron” or “chef”. The monopoly of command in his house, in his business, in his factory - was crucial to his self-definition” (Hobsbawm 1984, 239)

Hobsbawm offers an insight into the characteristics of a bourgeois middle-class environment in the mid-19th century. A home characterised by a tight family unit, a proper education, the respectability brought by work and influence in a small town, to name but a few. In some of the most influential Luxembourgish households, even those with a more liberal or left-wing orientation, a strong practice of Catholicism was frequently observed.

Caspar Mathias Spoo is a case of social ascension, he was indeed promoted from the lower social ranks. His father was a labourer in a porcelain factory, and as Spoo will admit himself, he was lucky enough to have had a school near his home in Echternach. Spoo’s father having died young, by the age of 18 he became the breadwinner for his family.¹⁶⁷

He was thus not only an educated man; he started his career as tax collector at the local Post office but also changed into capitalist enterprise through his association with André Duchscher¹⁶⁸. Together they founded the Société Duchscher Frères et Spoo in Wecker. He then founded the machine factory Spoo & Co. in Esch-sur-Alzette.

¹⁶⁷ Intervention at the Chamber of Deputies. C.R.1897-1898, 15 June 1897, pp.1905-1906.

¹⁶⁸ André Duchscher (1840-1911), industrialist. He opened an industrial site in Wecker in partnership with his brother Pierre, and Caspar Mathias Spoo. In 1882, a subsidiary managed by Pierre Duchscher under the supervision of C. M. Spoo was founded in Esch-sur-Alzette, but in 1888 André Duchscher and C. M. Spoo ended their collaboration. André Duchscher also embarked on a political career. He was in many ways the precursor of social welfare in Luxembourg. After the company was founded in Wecker, André Duchscher defined the rights and duties of employees in statutes that provided for safety and accident prevention measures, an eleven-hour working day and overtime pay. In 1875, he set up a savings bank for his workers and, in 1885, introduced group accident insurance. The following years saw the creation of the mutual support association (1891), the Wecker foundry workers' association (1892), which later became the Wecker foundry sickness and support fund (1894) and, finally, the pension fund for workers no longer able to work (1898). As a result of all these pioneering actions, André Duchscher was appointed by the government to the Commission supérieure d'encouragement des Sociétés de secours mutuels. He was also asked to draft opinions on various social bills (Mannes and Conter, n.d.).



Figure 10: Fonds Caspar Mathias Spoo CNL L-109 ; III.6.1

Clothes, home, family, language. They may well look superficial things and yet in them we recognize some patterns of a bourgeois attitude. The family was strongly knit around the figure of the pater-familias seen as “father, master, husband, guardian, guide and judge” (Hobsbawm 1984, 238) something perfectly palpable from Emma Spoo’s letters to her father. The meagre dossier on the Spoo family in the Luxembourgish National Archives¹⁶⁹, provides nevertheless enough a snapshot into their intimacy. For example, a newspaper clip stands out along with some letter exchanges with his daughter Emma (1864-?), during the period she attended a religious boarding school, in Pletre¹⁷⁰, Metz.

Give them a proper education. Teach them to cook a nourishing meal. Teach them to wash, iron, darn stockings, sew on heads, make their own clothes and a proper shirt. Teach them to bake bread and that a good cooking saves a lot in the pharmacy. (...) Teach them that a sandy, full face is worth more than fifty addicted beauties. Teach them to wear good strong shoes (...) ¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ ANLux - FMD-073, - Correspondance privée Emma Spoo. 1876-1910.

¹⁷⁰ The Sisters of Providence of Saint André de Peltre are a religious congregation of women teachers and hospital workers.

¹⁷¹ ANLux - FMD-073, - Correspondance privée Emma Spoo. *Einiges über Töchtererziehung* (sine dato). **In the original:** Gebt ihnen eine ordentliche Schulbildung. Lehrt sie ein nährtes Essen kochen. Lehrt sie wasche, bügeln, Strümpfe stopfen, Köpfe annähen, ihrem eigenen Kleide mache und ein ordentliches Hemd. Lehrt sie Brot bäcken und dass eine gute Küche viel in der Apotheke spart (...). Lehr ihnen das ein sandes, volles Gesicht mehr werth ist als fünfzig süchtige Schönheiten. Lehrt sie gute starke Schuhe tragen (...).

As was customary in bourgeois families of the time, daughters often attended a girls' boarding school in France. At that time, there was no girls' grammar school in the whole of Luxembourg and without a high school diploma, access to higher education was out of the question. Even if a higher education was not necessarily a goal, but rather, the impeccable mastering of the French language.

Education assumed a pivotal role in the destiny of the bourgeois family and offspring. Efforts were made in order for children to have access to the best education, which they were expected to succeed:

Je veux commencer, mes chers parents, la suite de mes devoirs. Tous les dimanches, le soir, notre digne mère nous lit nos notes, pour l'application, (...), la conduite, le maintien, l'ouvrage manuel (...). Je vous assure, de faire mes notes toujours plus bien [sic], parce que c'est nous seulement, qui font les notes. Si je ne suis pas appliquée, pas gentille, je ne peux pas avoir de bonnes notes. Jusque-là j'avais des notes qui étaient assez bonnes mais je veux m'appliquer de les faire toutes les semaines plus bonnes [sic].¹⁷² (Letter from Emma Spoo, 1st December 1878, ANLux - FMD-073).

Children naturally wanted to impress their parents, in return adults encouraged them:

My dear Joseph! I have received your and Anna's letter. You have given me much pleasure. Your school report for the past quarter has also satisfied me. It is above my expectations. Keep up the good work, my dear boy, and I will see if I can attend your prize-giving in the autumn. (Letter from C.M. Spoo to nephew Joseph, Wecker, 7.01.1879)¹⁷³

Given the circumstances of Luxembourg, mastering the official languages played an essential role in that effort. French was to be mastered, if learnt directly from the source in France, all the better:

C'est aujourd'hui que je vous envoie la première lettre française. Il faut que vous passez [sic] un bon nombre de fautes. Par mes lettres vous pouvez voir que je fais un peu de progrès dans la langue française. J'espère de vous faire une petite joie avec une lettre, car c'est pourquoi que je suis ici pour apprendre le français (Letter from Emma Spoo to her parents, Peltré, 21.11.1878).¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² I would like to begin, my dear parents, with the rest of my duties. Every Sunday, in the evening, our worthy mother reads us our notes, for application, (...), conduct, deportment, manual work (...). I assure you that I always do my notes better and better, because it's only us who do the notes. If I'm not diligent, if I'm not nice, I can't get good marks. So far, my grades have been pretty good, but I want to do my best to make them better every week [sic].

¹⁷³ CNL – Fonds C. M. Spoo. Correspondance expédiée – no 6 Cote: L0109/II.2/1

¹⁷⁴ **English translation:** Today, I am sending you the first French letter. You will have to get past quite a few mistakes. You can see from my letters that I am making some progress in the French language. I hope to delight you with a letter, for that is why I am here to learn French.

Progress was met with satisfaction and some advice from her father, C.M. Spoo¹⁷⁵:

Emma, ta belle lettre du 21 Novembre – qui s’est croisée avec la nôtre du même jour – ainsi que celles du 1er décembre à Maman (...) nous sont bien parvenues. Nous te félicitons et tes progrès dans la langue française et nous en sommes vivement satisfaits. À force de forger, on devient forgeron, dit-il le proverbe. Continue donc, mon enfant, et tu ne manqueras pas de cueillir les fruits de ton application (...) il faut percer jusqu’au fond, ainsi bien se faire raison des règles de la grammaire, notamment de la conjugaison des verbes réguliers et irréguliers (ainsi que la prononciation). Je suis sûr que tu aies au parfait ce que l’on appelle « l’accent », je suis déjà assez content si la prononciation est un tant soit peu « dégagée » (...) Je t’embrasse de tout mon cœur et je reste, ma brave Emma ton affectionné père.¹⁷⁶ (Letter of C.M. Spoo to his daughter Emma, Wecker, le 6 Décembre 1878)

Concern over parents’ well-being was returned to her father: “*O mon cher papa, garde toi bien! C’est si froid maintenant de faire tous les jours le chemin sur la fabrique*“, as well as to her mother :

Chère Maman, Quel bonheur pour votre enfant de voir arriver (...) votre fête. C’est un devoir pour moi, de vous exprimer les sentiments d’amour et de reconnaissance que j’éprouve pour vous. Tous vos désirs et toutes vos pensées étaient pour le bien de vos enfants. Comment pourrai-je vous rendre tout cela ! Je ne puis rien faire pour vous ce n’est est de la joie, par ma bonne conduite et application. C’est surtout en ce beau jour, que je redoublerai de ferveur dans mes prières, afin de demander au bon Dieu toutes les grâces, que vous désirez vous-mêmes, mais surtout une bonne santé, qui nous laissera encore un grand nombre d’années au milieu de vos enfants¹⁷⁷ (Letter from Emma Spoo to her parents, 1.12.1878).

¹⁷⁵ The preoccupations with a correct pronunciation in French perdured in time. In 1930 the Alliance Française in Luxembourg still highlighted the need for multiplying around the country courses of pronunciation and diction (Alliance Française 1930, 4).

¹⁷⁶ **English translation:** Emma, your beautiful letter of 21 November - which crossed with ours of the same day - and those of 1 December to Mum (...) have reached us. We congratulate you on your progress in the French language and are very pleased. The proverb says that by dint of forging, one becomes a blacksmith. Keep at it, my child, and you will not fail to reap the rewards of your hard work (...) you have to get to the bottom of the rules of grammar, especially the conjugation of regular and irregular verbs (as well as pronunciation). I'm sure you've got the accent just right, and I'm happy enough if your pronunciation is a little 'clear' (...) I kiss you from the bottom of my heart and I remain, my dear Emma, your affectionate father.

¹⁷⁷ **English translation:** Dear Mum, What happiness for your child to see (...) your birthday arrive. It is my duty to express the love and gratitude I feel for you. All your wishes and all your thoughts were for the good of your children. How can I ever repay you for all that! I can do nothing for you except bring you joy through my good behaviour and application. It is especially on this beautiful day that I will redouble my fervour in my prayers, in order to ask the good Lord for all the graces that you yourselves desire, but above all good health, which will leave us many more years in the midst of your children.

The home was the quintessential bourgeois world, for in it and only in it, could the problems and contradictions of his society be forgotten or artificially eliminated. Here and only here alone the bourgeois and even more the petty bourgeois family could maintain the illusion of a harmonious, hierarchic happiness (...) the dream life which is found its culmination expression in the domestic ritual systematically developed for this purpose, the celebration of Christmas (Hobsbawm 1984, 230–31).

Not least, bourgeois middle classes often distinguished themselves for the fact that they had at least one servants/nanny:

Everything about her life was strictly prescribed and because she lived in some meagerly furnished attic of the household, controllable. (...) there were a hundred country girls who passed briefly through the household to pregnancy, marriage, or another job, being treated merely as yet another instance of that “servant problem”¹⁷⁸ which filled the conversations of their mistresses (Hobsbawm 1984, 239).

C.M. Spoo himself dealt with the issue and went looking for suitable candidates:

Notre Anna va nous quitter à la nouvelle année. Ta mère dit qu’elle a l’intention se de placer à Luxembourg at m’avait chargé de lui chercher une autre fille¹⁷⁹. Je crois avoir trouvé son affaire à Irrel¹⁸⁰, une jeune fille de 18 années, d’une bonne maison. Je viens de recevoir une lettre du père qui m’annonce l’assentiment de sa fille. Là maintenant Maman est d’accord et cet incident-là est vidé¹⁸¹ (Letter from C.M. Spoo to Emma Spoo, 6.12.1878).

A bourgeois middle class family would also distinguish itself through the sturdiness of their house, its internal and external decorations of which the Christmas period was epitome. Also, in this occasion the exchange of the letters manifests the excitement round the holidays of Saint-Nicolas and Christmas:

¹⁷⁸ See also Josiane Weber (J. Weber 2013) on the concerns of the Luxembourg City’s elite and the trouble they went to find suitable domestic assistants.

¹⁷⁹ According to Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 1984, 192) this form of feminine rural exodus was “the post powerful agency of [such] modernization, as peasant girls migrated into domestic service with the urban middle and lower middle classes.

¹⁸⁰ German village across the border from Echternach.

¹⁸¹ English translation: Our Anna will be leaving us in the New Year. Your mother says she intends to place her in Luxembourg and asked me to look for another girl for her. I think I have found her case in Irrel, a young girl of 18, from a good family . I have just received a letter from her father announcing his daughter's agreement. Now Mum agrees and this incident is over.

(...) Je leur ai annoncé en même temps l'arrivée du panier et St. Nicolas qui a mis l'extase dans la maison. Wally et Trautschen¹⁸² avec leurs poupées et le petit berceau, réparé à cette occasion, sont au comble du bonheur. Les gamins se réjouissent et s'amuse à leur manière, qui comme tu sais bien, est parfois tapageuse. St Nicolas a remis (...) une bonne feuille de chocolat que j'apporterai moi-même lors de ma visite à nouvel an. (...) Il faut voir la surprise joyeuse sur toutes ces figures innocentes pour apprécier le bonheur qui remplit les cœurs. Avant de procéder à la distribution des dons étalés sur la table en dessous de l'arbre, je leur ai laissé quelques minutes pour regarder l'arbre et l'ensemble de l'arrangement. Wally a poussé le premier cri d'admiration. Ne sachant pas encore parler, elle ne faisait que : Oi !Oi !oi !. Puis, ayant assez vu par en bas, elle court tout-à coup au coin en face de l'arbre ; derrière la porte, elle voyait toute cette splendeur pour une perspective plus éloignée, elle recommence ses Oi !Oi !oi ! au plus grand amusement de toute l'assistance. (...) Ai-je besoin, mon enfant de te dire que nous avons pensé à nos deux absentes, à toi Emma à Peltre et à Thecla¹⁸³ au ciel ? Chrestkendchen [sic] ¹⁸⁴ t'a apporté quelque chose de beau et de bon dont pour le moment je ne veux rien (...) mais que j'aurai le plaisir de te remettre moi-même dans huit jours¹⁸⁵ (Letter of C.M Spoo to daughter Emma, December 1878).

Through these brief exchanges we see delineated the features overcharging a bourgeois education, the pivotal role of the father figure, the importance attributed to succeeding at school along with the efforts made at excelling at the French language, a must for the bourgeois milieu in Luxembourg of that time. Noticeable is also the importance of morals and religion in a family whose Catholicism will be put to doubt ¹⁸⁶ and suspected of not being enough. But also, the magic of the special occasions, to which undoubtedly only families with financial means could attend to and render special. Not least Emma's somewhat formal letters, most likely censored by the Sisters of the congregation, contrast with the affection and tenderness of letters by her father, thus defying the notion that in such bourgeois relationships there needed to be distance.

¹⁸² Walpurga (Wally) (1877-1918) and Gertrude (Trautschen) Spoo (1876-1900), Emma's younger sisters.

¹⁸³ Thecla Spoo, who died in young age just one year before (1870-1877).

¹⁸⁴ Baby Jesus.

¹⁸⁵ **English translation:** (...) At the same time, I announced the arrival of the basket and St Nicolas, who brought ecstasy to the house. Wally and Trautschen with their dolls and the little cradle, repaired on this occasion, are at the height of happiness. The children are rejoicing and having fun in their own way, which, as you know, is sometimes boisterous. St Nicolas gave (...) a good sheet of chocolate that I will bring myself when I visit on New Year's Eve (...) You have to see the joyful surprise on all these innocent faces to appreciate the happiness that fills their hearts. Before distributing the gifts spread out on the table below the tree, I gave them a few minutes to look at the tree and the whole arrangement. Wally gave the first cry of admiration. She couldn't speak yet, so all she could say was: Oi! oi! oi! oi! Then, having seen enough from below, she suddenly ran to the corner opposite the tree; behind the door, she could see all this splendour from a more distant perspective, and she began her Oi! oi! oi! again, to the great amusement of all present. (...) Do I need to tell you, my child, that we have been thinking of our two absentees of you Emma in Peltre and of Thecla in heaven? Chrestkendchen [sic] has brought you something beautiful and good, of which for the moment I want nothing (...) but which I shall have the pleasure of giving you myself in a week's time.

¹⁸⁶ See further how C.M Spoo was deemed not worthy of a Catholic funeral because of his political engagement with the Social Democrats.

4 PART II - LANDOWNERSHIP AND SOCIAL SPACE

Semi-detached on both sides, the Kayser-Paulus house is located in a densely populated area, set back a few metres from a busy artery, the rue d'Audun. From the outside, it says nothing of great wealth. The house is reminiscent of the Esch of craftsmen and farmers before industrialisation, wider than it is tall. It looks modest, if not sheepish, in the shadow of the neighbouring home of Belgian entrepreneur Alfred Lefèvre. The latter's richly sculpted cornices display his insolent success and bold aesthetic choices. Henri Kayser no doubt took no offence. It is not part of his culture to indulge in architectural ostentation. Like the workers he nurtured and the local authorities he served, the contractors were invaluable allies. By buying up his land at a high price, they helped him to lead a comfortable life (Quiqueret 2022, 23).¹⁸⁷

4.1 Esch-sur-Alzette as social space

The following chapter is concerned with the social and urban transformation brought by the influence of the mining and steel industry to a rural environment. To this date, when entering Esch-sur-Alzette from the village of Mondercange or any of its surrounding towns one cannot but be stunned at the abrupt clash between bucolic countryside and the emerging from afar, of the blast furnaces. But how did a bucolic landscape and rural population prepare for such a drastic change in landscape, noise, pollution, nature, and overwhelming flux of incoming population? As discussed in the previous chapter, despite the emergence of a proper industrial scene Luxembourg remained a rural society for several reasons. This characteristic has been recurrently evoked throughout the work of historian Gilbert Trausch:

Agriculture continues to permeate society's image. Its social importance goes far beyond its share of the working population. (...) The towns of the Minette are not completely cut off from the countryside (...) Yet the rural world is increasingly at odds with economic and social developments (Gilbert Trausch 1995, 400).¹⁸⁸

We believe thus the term agrarian middle class better describes the reality of the main landowners present in Esch prior to 1905. As for the top owners revealed in the post 1905 matrices (Etat de Mutation - Matrices, 1905), they are mostly members of the new middle classes, composed of entrepreneurs, business people, and liberal professions and of course the *bourgeoisie d'affaires* linked to the industry interests.

¹⁸⁷ **In the original:** « Mitoyenne des deux côtés, la maison des Kayser-Paulus est située dans un quartier densément peuplé, en retrait de quelques mètres d'une artère très fréquentée, la rue d'Audun. De l'extérieur, elle ne dit rien d'une grande richesse. La demeure évoque l'Esch des artisans et agriculteurs, d'avant l'industrialisation, plus large que haute. Elle paraît modeste, sinon penaude, à l'ombre de la demeure voisine de l'entrepreneur belge Alfred Lefèvre. Ce dernier expose en corniches richement sculptées son insolente réussite et ses choix esthétiques audacieux. Henri Kayser n'en prend sans doute pas ombrage. Il n'appartient pas à sa culture de verser ainsi dans l'ostentation architecturale. Les entrepreneurs ont été, autant que les ouvriers qu'il a nourris, et comme les responsables communaux qu'il a servis, de précieux alliés. En rachetant ses terrains à prix d'or, ils l'ont aidé à mener une vie confortable. »

¹⁸⁸ L'agriculture continue à imprégner l'image de la société. Son importance sociale va bien au-delà de sa part dans la population active. (...) Les villes de la Minette ne se coupent pas complètement de la campagne. (...) Le monde rural se trouve pourtant de plus en plus à contre-courant de l'évolution économique et sociale.

The liberal professions of the like of the notaries remain equally present in both periods, a first sign they adapted well to the changes occurring in the transformation from an agrarian type to that of an industrialised society.

Through two distinct but consecutive periods (1872-1905; 1905-1922), we will attempt mapping the social structures of those who owned the land in Esch-sur Alzette, based on the source of the Register of Deeds. Our analysis of the evolution of the landownership will provide examples of how different actors shaped their relationship to the space they owned.

4.1.1 The shifting meanings of owning land

Industrialisation seems by its very nature to be hostile to community and tradition. We stress “seems” because we cannot share this attitude. Industrialisation and industrial labour has until now been perceived and judged almost exclusively from the point of view of ‘uprooting, disruption and stereotyping’- and any discussion generally starts from hidebound assumptions and views: industrialisation and industrial work destroy old crafts, working patterns and associations; they displace, ancient folklore, long-lived customs and practices and traditional forms of community; there is a dynamism inherent to the industrial system of production which disregards human and material ties, and so on. (...) Let us assume only that our investigation will show how the life of the common people and their culture are altered under the influence of industrialisation, not in the sense of disruption and destruction, but in the sense of being given a new shape, one adjusted to the altered conditions of existence (Braun 1996: 2).

If ever there was a sense of disruption, as alluded to above, and common to many narratives of industrialisation across different times and space, then it was exploited to the advantage of the older inhabitants of Esch-sur-Alzette. The local agrarian and merchant elites did not simply disappear with the advent of industry, nor did the extent of their influence, for example in the way they partially dominated the town council, up until 1909. But in which ways did they evolve along the overwhelming presence of the industry and its new players? Can patterns of land transmission assist in assessing whether they opposed the industry or rather welcome it? The old Eschois were more homogenous than their "extra-muros" counterparts, which stemmed from different social and occupational backgrounds and were about to form the newly arrived bourgeois middle classes. By the 1870s, in Esch, the agrarian middle-class still had, in common its rural roots, the monopoly of resources, and the relationship with local political power. Through the analysis of genealogy and landownership, patterns relating to the social space emerge as well as the ways in which the city developed. The patterns of land transmission that will be examined serve to set the scene for the period prior to the beginning of the 20th century, during which time major changes in societal structures become visible in Esch-sur-Alzette. The aim of this part of the research is to shed light on the relationship of some of the wealthiest landed individuals and families, to the transformation

and development of the urban space of Esch-sur-Alzette since the inception of the first industrial plants until the late 1920s.

Many farmers who used to work the land across Luxembourg preferred to sail across the ocean to find their own piece of land, rather than staying in their home country doing a job that was alien to them, that of working in a factory. Authors like Kremer-Schmit (Kremer-Schmit 1996) claim that the emergence of the iron industry in Esch was the end to agriculture but a close look at different sources shows old ways of life did not disappear overnight. In his thoroughly researched history of the agrarian structures, historian Gilbert Trausch gives further insight as to some of the underlying reasons:

There is a remarkable persistence of old agrarian structures which explains why Luxembourg, on the eve of the First World War, still gave the impression of being an agricultural country, when in fact it had ceased to be so. Economic transformations only have sociological consequences with a time lag that often corresponds to a generation (and perhaps even more so in terms of mentalities) (Gilbert Trausch 1971, 401).¹⁸⁹

The mid-19th century also marks the beginning of skepticism surrounding the success stories of an emigration route overseas. The pitfalls of the hardship of many Luxembourgers reach the homeland, via the press:

But alongside these very tempting things, there are others, much less pleasant; the same person who indicated the fine results of her work nevertheless seemed to regret having left her country. The temptation of a high salary (...) in California, exposing oneself to all the dangers of a bad climate, to all the diseases that ravage the populations of these regions. More than once in 6 years, our compatriot found himself without resources, because the illnesses and journeys he had made had robbed him of all his savings (...)¹⁹⁰ (Courrier Du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1854)¹⁹¹.

It was indeed the small to medium farmers who were more likely to emigrate as land overseas became increasingly affordable and accessible. According to the same newspaper article above, 20.000 francs could buy 50 hectares of profitable land in the USA subject to little taxation¹⁹².

¹⁸⁹ **In the original** : Il y a une persistance remarquable des vieilles structures agraires qui explique pourquoi le Luxembourg, à la veille de la première guerre mondiale, donne encore l'impression d'un pays agricole, alors que pour le fond il a cessé de l'être. Les transformations économiques n'entraînent leurs conséquences sur le plan sociologique qu'avec un certain décalage qui souvent correspond au laps de temps d'une génération (et peut-être plus encore sur le plan des mentalités)

¹⁹⁰ **In the original** : Mais à côté de ces choses bien tentantes, il en est d'autres, beaucoup moins agréables ; la même personne qui indiquait les beaux résultats de son travail paraissait cependant regretter d'avoir quitté son pays. Que de peines n'a-t-elle pas eues à supporter, que de chagrins a-t-elle seule dû endurer, n'ayant personne pour la consoler ; la tentation d'un salaire élevé (...) en Californie, à s'exposer à tous les dangers d'un mauvais climat, à toutes les maladies qui ravagent les populations de ces contrées. Plus d'une fois en 6 années, notre compatriote s'est retrouvé sans ressource, parce que les maladies et les voyages qu'il avait faits, lui avaient enlevé toutes ses économies

¹⁹¹ Editorial, Courrier du *Grand-Duché* de Luxembourg, 20.05.1884, p.1.

¹⁹² It is about one decade later that "President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act on May 20, 1862. which gave citizens or future citizens up to 160 acres of public land provided they live on it, improve it, and pay a small registration fee"(National Archives, n.d.) <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act>

Auswanderung.
Ansiedlung von Laureto, Provinz Corrientes,
(Süd-Amerika).

Jeder Familie von wenigstens 5 Personen, die sich an den Unterzeichneten wenden wollen, wird in der Colonie von Laureto ein Flächenraum von 55 Morgen guten Landes als Eigenthum nebst nachstehender Ausstattung zugesichert :

1 Wohnung, 1200 Pfund Mehl oder 100 Franken monatlich während des ersten Jahres, 8 Kühe, 2 Ochsen, 2 Pferde, Samen für Getreide, Maïs, Baumwolle, Tabak und Zuckerrohr.

Reflektanten wollen sich franco wenden an M^r Félix WAGENER, propriétaire à Pépinster, près de Verviers (Belgique).

Auswanderung nach Brasilien.

Die Auswanderer haben vor der Abreise nichts zu zahlen.
 Die Ueberfahrt findet zweimal monatlich statt.
 Reflektanten wollen sich franco wenden an M^r Félix WAGENER, propriétaire à Pépinster, près de Verviers (Belgique).

9012

Figure 11: advertising tempting emigration conditions to Argentina and Brazil (*Courrier du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg* 1858).

In the Grand Duchy, until the advent of banks and financial institutions in the mid-19th century, land was still one of the most important and secure capital investments.

A characteristic feature of our rural populations is a love of property that could be described as excessive. It is the desire to own a piece of land at any price, which means that all the heirs want to have their share of the land left to them by their father, even if it only consists of 11 ares to be divided into five parts (...) Let it not be thought that the countryman's love of a piece of land is pure whim; on the contrary, this love finds its raison d'être in the circumstances surrounding the worker in the fields, which amply justify it. The only capital we know in the countryside is land capital, so to speak. Money, on the other hand, sits idle in the cupboard unless it disappears in the face of the many material needs it has to satisfy. Give two brothers, one a piece of land measuring 100 square metres and the other an equivalent sum in money, where will they be at the end of the year? (...) ¹⁹³ (*Courrier Du Grand- Duché de Luxembourg* 1860)¹⁹⁴.

Land, as a resource, was accessible only through inheritance or the market. Because of the much-fractured nature of most land parcels in Luxembourg, it is therefore not surprising that families tried to hold to their possessions as well as attempted to enlarge their richness, often by “marrying well”. Until the end of the 19th century, wood was the main source of energy. Therefore, the rotation of cultivation was accelerated, hardly any tree lived longer than 25 years (S. Majerus 2023). The extent of forest and woods in the

¹⁹³ **In the original** : Un trait caractéristique de nos populations campagnardes, c’est un amour qu’on pourrait qualifier d’excessif, pour la propriété. C’est le désir de posséder à tout prix un coin de terre, qui fait que tous les héritiers veulent avoir leur part du bien-fonds laissé par leur père, ce bien ne consistât-il qu’en 11 ares¹⁹³ à diviser en cinq parties (...) Qu’on n’aille pas croire que l’amour du campagnard pour une parcelle de terre soit un pur caprice ; cet amour trouve au contraire sa raison d’être dans les circonstances qui entourent l’ouvrier des champs, et qui le justifient amplement. En fait de capital, on ne connaît dans nos campagnes pour ainsi dire que le capital foncier. Celui-là rapporte chaque année quand on le cultive ; l’argent au contraire, reste inerte dans l’armoire s’il ne disparaît pas en face des nombreux besoins matériels auxquels il doit être satisfait. Donnez à deux frères à l’un une pièce de terre, mesurant 100 mètres carrés et à l’autre une somme équivalente en argent, où seront-ils à la fin de l’année ? (...).

¹⁹⁴ La divisibilité de la propriété- II, *Courrier du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, 14.09.1860, p.1.

possession of a nobility of sorts is a fundamental element to understand wealth in the 19th century. The proceedings of woodcutting for commercial and private activities, were also amongst the most successful businesses besides those which were connected in one way or the other to the iron and ore business. The Register of deeds is revealing of how woods had been kept in the hands of families of noble descent and the historic landowners. They included the Nothomb (in Esch and Pétange), the De Tornaco (in Sanem), the Metz family (who had been an early investor in Esch's land, presumably because of an early identification of the value of the iron ore, the Purnot (from Metz) but also the Arendsdorff ¹⁹⁵in Schiffflange. It is therefore unsurprising that their incomes were among the highest in the Esch district, as it can be inferred from the annual income rent the State estimated to tax them in proportion with their landed assets. Another important cluster of owners where the notaries such as the Laval, the Wolff and the Brasseur family and descendants who owned significant surfaces in Esch's territory.

Land ownership offered the owner the possibility of obtaining loans as well as mortgages, which was particularly important for industrialists at that time. Especially in the first half of the 19th century, "the state and the former landed gentry were the sellers of land, while industrialists, especially from the iron industry, speculators from the ranks of French civil servants, and real estate dealers were the buyers for a while during the French occupation" (1795-1814) (Helbach 2009). The legacy of such ownership was a case in point in Esch, if we take into consideration the amount of its surface still owned by French nobility, bourgeois, and small and bigger farmers alike, by the mid-19th century (Administration du cadastre et topographie 1845).

4.1.2 Landowners prior to the establishment of the iron industry 1842-1872.

Surface owned and annual rental income

French notary Henri Purnot from Metz owned more than 100 ha as well as a brewery and a brick factory in Esch-sur-Alzette. In fact, by 1842, he was the biggest private owner of land in the Esch territory. In 1842 the surface owned by the individuals presumed to make more annually (between 216 and in 2168 florins rental income), ranged from 13 to 110 hectares. By 1872 the average surfaces per individual would decrease.

¹⁹⁵ The Arendsdorf are known to have resided in the region since at least the 17th century (Wolter 1915).

The table below illustrates the principal landowners in Esch, with an annual rental income ranging from 200 to 2000 florins. The final name on the table, Nicolas Origer, earns an annual rental income that is one-tenth of what Purnot, the first on the list, does. This suggests, from the perspective of the pre-industrial era, a demarcated difference between a wealthy bourgeoisie and a (just) well-off agrarian middle class.¹⁹⁶

Family name	First Name	Job occupation	annual rental income_florins	hectares owned	Place of residence
Purnot	Claude	notary	2,168.79	113	Metz
Nothomb	Jean-Pierre (la Veuve)	rentier	905.95	48	EsA
Gonner	Michel	farmer	561.55	31	Rumelange
Schmit	Jacques	farrier	490.19	29	EsA
Biwer	Jacques	farmer	462.27	31	Schiffflange
Bestgen	Bernard	farmer	372.88	27	Schiffflange
Arendsdorff	Charles	farmer	355.40	38	Schiffflange
Bock	Nicolas	farmer	315.94	25	EsA
Kerchen	Jacques	farmer	306.31	21	Schiffflange
Wilhelm	Jean Felgen	farmer	293.06	26	Schiffflange
Kayser	Jacques	farmer	284.08	25	EsA
Arendsdorff	Charles	farmer	282.54	18	Schiffflange
Paulus	Pierre	farmer	271.34	17	EsA
Noel	Michel Biver	farmer	257.91	15,5	Schiffflange
Franck	Jean	rentier	257.28	16	Schiffflange
Kerschen	Nicolas	farmer	238.06	13	Schiffflange
Arend	Jean Laurent	farmer	235.46	13	Lallange
Kirsch	Michel	farmer	233.48	16	Schiffflange
Kaiser	Henri Schmatz	farmer	224.02	18	EsA
Origer	Nicolas	farmer	216.48	17	EsA

Table 12: Highest annual incomes (individual landowners) - Esch-sur-Alzette, 1842.

Thirty years later, in 1872 the Purnot family was still the main individual owner in Esch followed by the industrialist Victor Tesch, from Brussels with circa 70 hectares. All other landowners in the top 10 own a

¹⁹⁶ Only a thorough analysis of inventories at death could provide more clarity on the extent of wealth possessions among the agrarian middle classes. The few inventories accessed seem to prove this disparity between the extremely wealthy bourgeoisie and a middle class of farmers and innkeepers. Eugène de la Fontaine, widow of the industrialist Antoine Auguste Collart, who although living in Bettembourg owned land in Esch, disposed of fortunes of over 33000 francs in movable assets plus 32000 in cash in 1871 (Prussian Thalers) (ANLux- MCN-07211). On a much more modest scale, a family like the Hoferlin-Wilhelm, traditionally farmers and innkeepers in Esch-Schiffflange, besides owning some 6 ha of land (1872) had movable assets with an estimated value of 7500 francs and just 60 francs in cash, in 1874 (ANLux, MCN-07205,). For many farmers once their debts were cancelled, they were left with just a couple of thousand francs or less. Albeit somehow anecdotal these examples hint at a need for further exploration of such sources for a deeper understanding of financial resources available and their origins across the different social strata.

far less “outstanding” surface, ranging from 15 to 45 ha of land, including those residing outside Esch (Etat de mutation, 1872). Despite what may look like modest surfaces, it is in the revenues associated with their landed property that a hierarchy can be established.

Hectares owned	annual rental income (francs)	number of plots of land	Surname	Name	Professional occupation	Residence
110	7312,79	109	Purnot et Purnot	Jean Pierre Auguste et Louis Prosper	banker and rentier, respect.	Metz
70	3282,48	19	Tesch	Victor	rentier/landowner	Bruxelles
11	1391,49	31	Wacquant (de)	Veuve (Brasseur)	notary	EsA
16,5	1042,21	64	Vandyck Schmit	Jean	farrier	EsA
13	905,62	63	Schmit Clees	Jacques	municipal tax collector	EsA
14	817,12	57	Zeimes	Michel (héritiers)	farmer	EsA
2,6	781,46	14	Bach	Michel	miller	EsA
9	685,69	43	Jost, le jeune	Francois	farmer	EsA
11	660,09	56	Schmit	Jean	farmer	EsA
14	655,05	68	Schmit Kieffer	Jacques	farmer	EsA
5	635,97	11	Fox	Nicolas	merchant	EsA
6	628,99	39	Buchholtz	Veuve	innkeeper	EsA
10	601,68	57	Stoffel	Dominique	farmer	EsA
11	586,04	55	Laux	Adam	farmer	EsA
13	577,22	69	Bock Rollinger	Pierre	farmer	EsA
3	549,42	27	Sartor	Michel	hotel owner	EsA
7	542,88	59	Buchholtz	Daniel	innkeeper	EsA
4	532,33	18	Schmitz	Francois	tanner	EsA
13	528,78	49	Klensch	Pierre (La Veuve)	farmer	EsA
5	515,93	43	Kirsch	Nicolas	farmer	EsA
5	498,46	37	Weinand Pettinger	Jean	farmer	EsA
6,5	490,92	39	Péporté Vandyck	Pierre	innkeeper	EsA
0,1	476,96	4	Rothermel	Francois	pharmacist	EsA
5	474,01	50	Ries	Jean Pierre	wagoner	EsA
9	472,04	52	Weinand	Jacques	farmer	EsA
4	468,58	30	Paquet	Nicolas	tanner	EsA
8,5	466,38	53	Kayser Origer	Henri	farmer	EsA
0,09	456,84	2	Klopp	Jean Baptiste	hotel owner	EsA
10,5	454,71	65	Schmideler	Balthazar (the heirs)	mason	EsA

Table 13: Register of Deeds, 1872. The two top landowners Purnot and Tesch, followed by Esch resident landowners with an annual rental income superior to 450 francs (other residents outside Esch excluded).

As mentioned, the register of deeds gives us information on surface owned, type of surface and annual rental income¹⁹⁷ associated with such surface. What it is, nevertheless, complex to establish is how much “money” was worth¹⁹⁸ historically. The contemporary press comes in as useful when trying to establish how much the small/medium farmer needed to make ends meet:

¹⁹⁷ “From the cadastral matrix of 1842, the annual rental income of each parcel plot was indicated. As this income was used as a basis for calculating the property tax due, it made it possible to assess the relative value of different types of property” (Ferreira Flores 2022, 28).

¹⁹⁸ See also Trausch (Gilbert Trausch 1971, 407): “In 1839, a day labourer's salary was one and a half francs a day; if he was fed by his employer, his salary was reduced by a third or a half (at the time, a kg of butter cost 1.55 francs)“.

It is not so much the large as the small landowner who should be tempted to go to America. In France, the small landowner, even with a fortune of 20,000 francs, often finds it difficult to live adequately with his family, to educate some of his children, when his only industry is farming. Usually, a landowner in this position has only 6 to 7 hectares of land or so, and the rest of his small fortune is in agricultural furniture; however active a family in this situation may be, it will be difficult for them to get, on average, more than 10 p.c. gross income or 2,000 francs from this small fortune; will this sum be enough to meet all the needs of five or six people? In America, a fortune of 20,000 francs [sic] will allow the acquisition of 50 hectares of good land, plus all the farm equipment needed to farm it. Fifty hectares produce ten times as much as the 6 or 7 in our country, with little or no taxes and food prices almost as high as ours; all this goes some way to explaining the mania for emigration that is spreading among our small landowners¹⁹⁹(*Courrier Du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg* 1854, p.1) ²⁰⁰.

Esch-sur-Alzette reflects well this depiction and invites repeatedly for caution, when reflecting on and interpreting the importance of the total surfaced owned. What the data for 1872 reveals is that, indeed among the main landowners, with residence in Esch,²⁰¹ a third of them owned surfaces smaller or equaling 7 hectares.

Furthermore, when looking at the data referring to 1872, if we exclude the two main individual landowners²⁰² Victor Tesch and the Purnot brothers, with annual rental incomes of 3282 and 7313 francs, respectively, the remainder landowners included in our sample were estimated to perceive between 450 and 1390 francs in annual rental income. Admittedly we do not know how much the currency value fluctuated during those two decades but what seems clear is that the majority of old Eschois middle classes were far from being considered “rich”.

This is very far off the 2000 francs in revenues, deemed necessary to provide for a numerous family, well two decades before by our above-mentioned commentator/journalist. In fact, we will be seeing continuous examples of life choices that include a diversity of modalities, very typical of the 19th century, including a religious path, for some, emigration for others, and often amongst the first born, a wise marriage alliance,

¹⁹⁹ C'est moins le grand que le petit propriétaire qui doit être tenté d'aller en Amérique. Chez nous, le petit propriétaire, ayant même une fortune de 20.000 francs, a souvent de la peine à vivre convenablement avec sa famille, à donner de l'éducation à quelques-uns de ses enfants, lorsqu'il n'a d'autre industrie que l'industrie agricole. Ordinairement le propriétaire qui se trouve dans cette position n'a que 6 à 7 hectares de terres et près, et le restant de sa petite fortune est en mobilier agricole ; quelque active que puisse être la famille qui se trouve dans cette condition, il lui sera difficile retirer en moyenne, de cette petite fortune au-delà de 10 p.c de revenue brut ou 2000 francs ; cette somme suffira t-elle aux besoins de tous genres de cinq à six personnes. Et pour payer des contributions de toute nature s'élevant ordinairement au quinzième du revenu (...) En Amérique, une fortune de 20000 frs [sic], permettra l'acquisition de 50 hectares de bonnes terres, et encore tout le mobilier agricole nécessaire pour leur exploitation. Cinquante hectares produisent dix fois autant que les 6 ou 7 de notre pays, et avec cela peu ou pas de contributions et des prix pour les denrées presque aussi élevées que chez nous; tout cela est un peu fait pour expliquer la manie de l'émigration qui gagne nos petits propriétaires.

²⁰⁰ Editorial, *Courrier Du Grand- Duché de Luxembourg*, 20.05.1854, p.1.

²⁰¹ We considered for this purpose those perceiving an annual income comprised between 450-7000 francs.

²⁰² Henri Purnot and Victor Tesch- Nothomb, incidentally had prominent careers and did not even live in Esch.

if possible, to another landowner family. Another aspect needs to be taken into consideration when appraising such revenues, and that is that of how big a family was, “how many mouths needed to be fed”. We are thus reminded that an appalling number of babies, infants and teenagers still died in early age, at the doors of the 20th century.

In Esch, after having performed a statistic on the surface owned by the top 50 individual owners (companies excluded) in 1872 that average reaches 21 hectares to decrease drastically to an average of 4,4 ha when compared to the top 50 landowners in 1905²⁰³. If we care to look at the average of hectares owned by the totality of owners in 1872, the number is of 2,25 ha (949 private landowners) and does not even reach a hectare (0,87) in 1905 (totality of 1009 private owners considered). Averages, naturally, need to be taken into consideration, keeping in mind the immense disparity of the surface owned by a “lucky few”. Our sample represents a diversified group composed of farmers, innkeepers, notaries, merchants, but not limited to these professions. We are though reminded that many among them may have had other sources of revenue coming from movable assets, inherited fortunes and possibly from other side professional activities.

Given the outlined difficulty in establishing how much was money “worth”, it seems nevertheless plausible to state that these were owners whose wealth was well above the average revenues in Esch, whilst remaining modest when compared to the two top landowners and considering how much capital a family needed to make ends meet.

In fact, as we are about to see wealth does not always mean owning larger surfaces, in particular post 1905 wealth was concentrated in the hands of individuals who did not necessarily own many nor large parcels of land.

4.2 Landownership and its transmission as a signifier of social space

This part sets out to examine the slow decline of agricultural society in the city during the late nineteenth century and the extent to which its existence has been endangered by the arrival of the steel industry. It provides an insight on families and a social class rather than a statistical accurate picture of the extent or localization of their parcels.

The analysis is concerned with looking at land from two standpoints, that of its material function in terms of wealth and possession for these families as well as of its a symbolic way of displaying families’ values

²⁰³ Statistic based on the data provided by the Administration du cadastre et de la topographie, for the years of 1872 and 1905 respectively.

and identity and relationship to the social space occupied in the city throughout the decades of major industrial and urban development. We draw on the idea, backed by different historical research across different time periods and geographic contexts, that property can be revealing of a changing society and culture, not only its mere accumulation or acquisition but also its disposal and transmission (Stobart and Owens 2000). This part of research places the social relations within the family at its very core.

The lens of the city takes a central role in our study: through its coveted zones, for housing or business, through its location in relation to the industrial plants. An interest in landownership has resurfaced in recent years because of the availability of historical data on land registers in Luxembourg. Pioneer research on such historical data in neighbour industrial town Dudelange (Ferreira Flores 2022), provided detailed statistical analysis covering almost one century of transactions' worth data. The study results lay bare the influence of industrialisation in the town's urban development. Among other findings, the following finds parallels in Esch:

until 1872, undeveloped properties accounted for the majority of Dudelange's total annual rental income; by 1905, developed properties accounted for 84.4% of this income (Ferreira Flores, 2022, 80).

Why does landownership (still) matter? There had been scarce²⁰⁴ research in the study of landownership in Luxembourg. Recently however, there has been a resurfacing interest in the study on landownership with LISER²⁰⁵'s studies in combination with the *Observatoire pour l'habitat* of the Luxembourgish Government.

While studies on the impact of industrialisation and the decline of the steel industry on immigration, the economy and political life in Luxembourg are multiplying, land and property ownership in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg throughout the 19th and 20th centuries never seems to have captured the interest of researchers (Ferreira Flores 2022, 6).

In this instance, the analysis concentrates on specific processes associated with 1) inheritance, 2) space occupation and 3) land transmission. It explores the social and geographic context of inheritance practices and ventures into an interpretation of such dynamics. The pertinence of the study of landownership in identifying the social space of a determined class in the city imposes itself as an observation lens. Not only does it tell us about the amount of surface detained by key individuals as it is revealing of their relationship to the city, the family itself and outsiders.

Did the agrarian landowners antagonize businessmen and the industry or where they somehow involved in the economic development of the city? If we want to inquire into how the city's urban development

²⁰⁴ The few studies include Hellbach's study (2009) on private property and Flies' (1979) use of the 1842 cadaster to identify the owner of each house in the different Esch's 'streets of the town's center (Im Duerff).

²⁰⁵ Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research.

took place, we also need to take an interest in how and whether the newcomer middle classes invested in land or real estate.

By the middle and the late 1870's, with few exceptions the rural population still largely prevailed over the urban. So, for "by far the greater part of humanity, the fortunes of life still depended on what happened to and on the land (Hobsbawm 1984, 179)".

The fast, accomplished industrialisation in Luxembourg has been well-documented by historiography. Transformations at the level of the existent and emerging industries were indeed fast, accompanied of fast-paced technical and scientific innovation and marked a glorious economic period for the country, despite its occasional economic crisis. However, what seems to have faded, at times, escaped explanation from the historical narrative was that of a continuity in the ways of life, beliefs, values, and put simply as Trausch (Gilbert Trausch 1969), before us, the mentalities. These endured despite the process of industrialisation.

4.2.1 Contextualizing landownership in Luxembourg

Before we incur into the analysis of landed property of our sample, a travel back in time to the structure and issues surrounding landownership is due. For if accumulation of land still accounts, in the late 19th century, for a sign of wealth, the dimensions and partition of soil in Luxembourg remind us that a contextualization is needed before understanding what owning land in the Grand-Duchy meant in the late 19th century.

Any notion of "great" landownership suggesting an understating of dimensions like those of other European regions needs, for the sake of clarity, to be "scaled down" to the proportions of the Grand-Duchy and to its very own historical circumstances. Let us therefore start by stating what landownership in Luxembourg is not about. It is not about major estates of the like of contemporary regions in the UK, Central and Eastern Europe or even parts of Southern Europe. We shall thus not be referring to landowners of big estates but rather to a ranking of property owners whose principal revenues were associated with their land and real estate assets.

In an overview study of structures of agriculture, performed by historian Gilbert Trausch highlights major features and events leading to the partition of the soil as it remained by the mid-19th century. His work

(Tausch 1969; 1970; 1971)²⁰⁶ compiled a most complete overview on the agrarian structures of Luxembourg. In it, he labels the period of 1840-1914 of “revolutionary” because Luxembourgish agriculture had finally entered the path of progress. Indeed, the period can claim for itself many changes among which, that of the use of the Gilchrist-Thomas slag, a by-product of the Thomas innovation that revolutionized the fabrication and transformation of iron ore in the steel industry but which became widely used also for agricultural purposes. Such technical novelties along with mechanization allowed for an increase of production and revenues²⁰⁷.

Still according to Tausch, the censuses of 1871 depict, for the last time, the image of a preindustrial society (Gilbert Tausch 1971). With a vast majority of the population still employed fully or accessorially in agriculture, land remained the most valuable commodity in the country.

When it comes to the categorization of the agricultural population as a landed social stratum, identifying their level of wealth can be challenging. The 1907 professional censuses shed little light on what the nature of a profession related to agriculture might have been. As seen earlier, Esch had been rich in rye and hay as well as in wood, an asset which provided owners of lands with woods, and the municipality itself (Kremer-Schmit, 1986) with generous revenues. It was also not unusual that artisans and merchants would nevertheless not only own but also work the land, a bilateral activity that can be traced back to the mid-17th century, throughout Luxembourg.²⁰⁸

What we will be interested in here reflects also in terms of the type of occupation and ownership of both ploughable parcels and (developable) land for development. Did the presence of major new industries destroy the social tissue of big farmers and rentiers, or rather did it help strengthening it? The evidence from the analysis of our sample suggests that this may not have been the only factor contributing to its erosion. The way in which property is passed down from generation to generation will shed light on the existence of any such strategies.

At the beginning of the 20th century, half of the working population was still employed in agriculture, where they mostly worked as owners or assisted family members in small to very small farms. In fact, this

²⁰⁶ The historian dedicated a series of articles to the history of Luxembourgish agriculture in the journal *Hémécht* between 1967 and 1972.

²⁰⁷ Thomas and Gilchrist discovered the procedure allowing “to fix in a stable form the phosphoric acid produced by the oxidation of the phosphorus in pig iron (Carpenter 1936)”. This revolutionary invention enhanced the production of cheap steel on a large scale, in which Luxembourg and Lorraine’s industrial plants, were among the first to invest in. The derived phosphate calcium was also suitable as a fertilizer for agriculture.

²⁰⁸ The number of people actively employed in agriculture was of 53.184, with the addition of some 30.00 informally working the land as a bilateral activity, according to the survey of 1907 (Tausch, 1971).

reflects the main characteristic of Luxembourgish agriculture, that is, that of an extremely fractioned soil. Of the 40,000 farms counted in 1907, 80% had less than 5 ha, only 3% over 20 ha (Fehlen 2009).

Another important element: by the mid of the 20th century Luxembourg's autochthonous industrial workers maintain contact with their community of origin, and were very often still part-time farmers, in the parts of the country they came from (P. Weber 1950; Gilbert Trausch 1995). Esch-sur-Alzette at the turn of the 20th century illustrates this point well. During the lengthy parliamentary discussions, landownership and the meaning of property served as basis for heated ideological exchanges:

Does [socialism] want the Luxembourg worker to have a house and a garden? In that case it's perfect. But that already exists; the Luxembourg worker almost always has that here in the canton of Esch; if he is from the Ardennes, I believe so too²⁰⁹(Intervention of the Baron de Tornaco, liberal MP for the Esch canton, séance de la Chambre des Députés du 14.12.1898)²¹⁰.

If we turn our interest to the top of the social ladder instead, we are, in the mid-19th century, before a community where the traditional middle classes were mostly composed of a local élite, whose power and influence appears not to have gone beyond the geographical borders of the city, or at most beyond the canton of Esch.

4.2.2 The Register of deeds (*État de mutation*): methodology, challenges, and boundaries

Our sample is composed of 14 individuals figuring in the Register of landowners in 1872 and 6 from the same register dating 1905. This time span allows to identify changes in landownership, typology of owners, professions, family relationships as well as patterns of land use and transmission.

Before introducing our own analysis, it should be made clear what the analysis of the Esch Register of deeds is not about. It was not the aim to provide an accurate statistical analysis nor would that have seemed possible given the imperfection of the source. It was neither the objective to provide a spatialization and visualization of the precise location each of the individual parcels were situated. This relates to the difficulty of matching ancient land parcel numbers to current day maps/parcels' identification numbers. What can, nevertheless, be accounted for, are the areas of the city where such parcels were located (divided into A, B, C and D). Section A covered the wide city center (present day Esch North) whereas B covered the area of Lallange. Section C corresponded to Schiffflange, and D to present day Esch South including

²⁰⁹ Veut-il [le socialisme] que l'ouvrier luxembourgeois aît une maison et un jardin ? En ce cas c'est parfait. Mais cela existe déjà ; l'ouvrier luxembourgeois possède presque toujours cela chez nous dans le canton d'Esch ; s'il est des Ardennes, je le crois aussi.

²¹⁰ C.R 1898-1899, 14.12.1898, p.67

the Galgenberg park, towards Kayl and Rumelange an area known to be rich in iron ore. The latter was situated at the outskirts of the city and particularly coveted for land rich and iron ore as well as ideally placed for the Railway, premises of the industries and other infrastructure to settle. The sections have barely shifted over the century to come, except for Schiffflange which separated from Esch-sur-Alzette in 1876, to become an independent municipality.

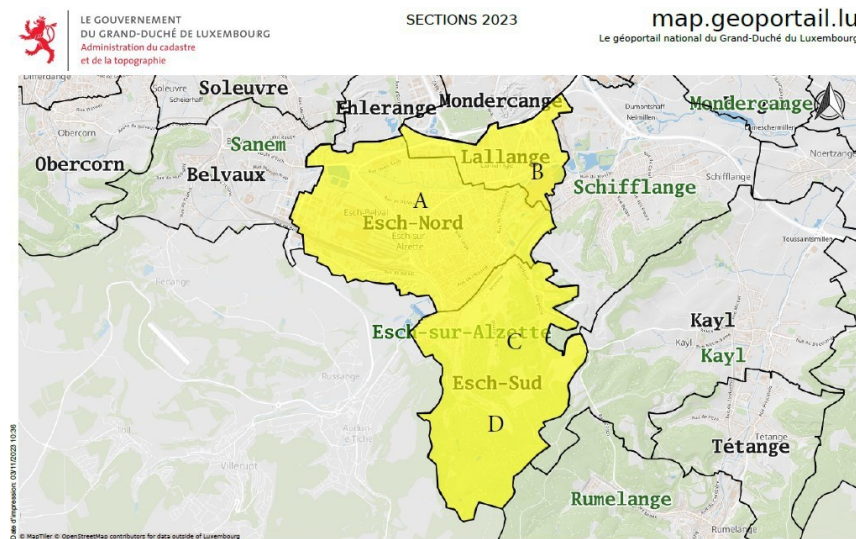


Figure 15: Caption of approximative overlap of historical sections with present day map of Esch. Source geoportail.lu²¹¹.

Another aspect of the methodology deserves attention. This time, on the selection of individual owners selected to be “traced down” for the analysis, that is, our sample of 20 landowners. The encoding and analysis of such files being extremely time consuming, a choice had to be made. We opted for leaving Schiffflange owners out, given that although inextricable from the social life of the city of Esch, Schiffflange had indeed been separated as a different municipality in 1876. The few families we superficially analysed in Schiffflange, allowed nevertheless to observe the extent of the importance of their land possessions, as seen in the previous chapter. After all, it will be in Schiffflange, that Metz et Cie will install its major plant in 1912. The area was strategically positioned for the building of the Railway which linked Bettembourg

²¹¹ For a detailed historical map see geoportail.lu with plentiful interactive possibilities for tailoring the maps according to needs.

to Esch-sur-Alzette and onwards to Belgium and France. Unsurprisingly, many Schiffflange owners sold land to the railway companies²¹².

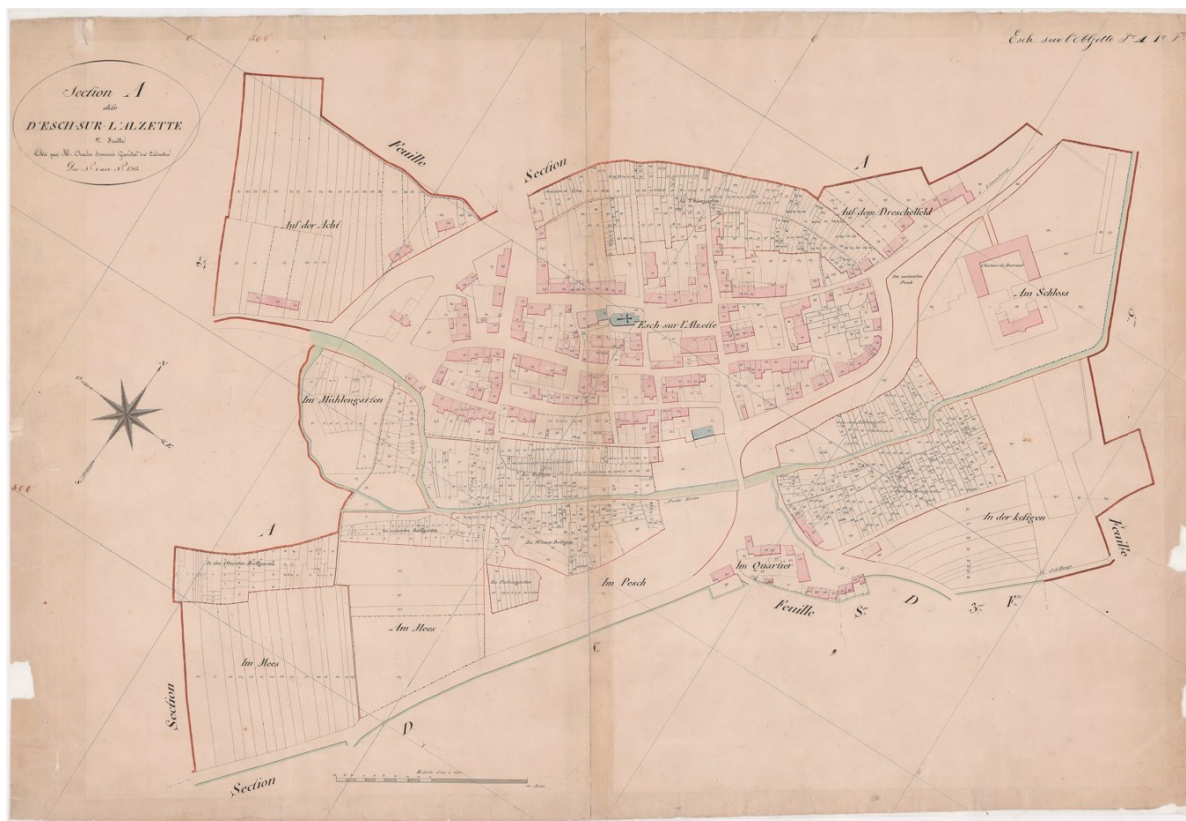


Figure16: Topographical map of Esch-sur-Alzette: 1823. Section A. Source : Administration du cadastre et topographie.

²¹² see Etat de Mutation 1863, for instance.

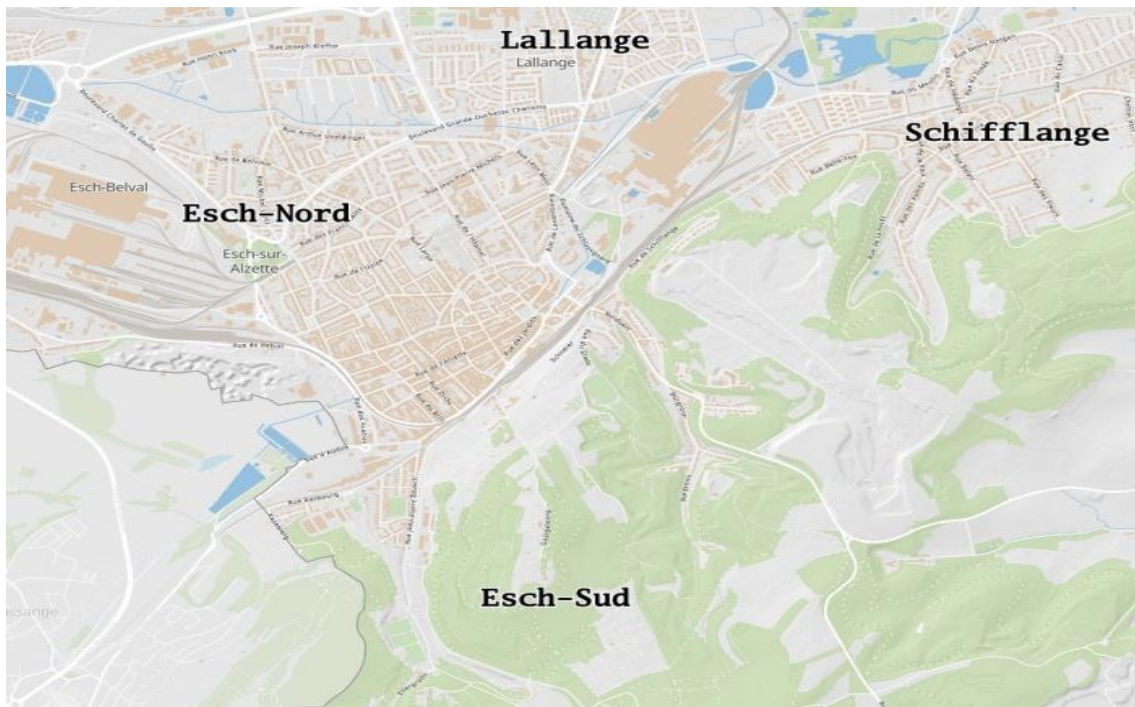


Figure 17: Esch sections and border municipalities, 2023. Source: Geoportail, 2023

For the sake of making the methodology as clear as possible we identify next the types of records we looked at: The cadastral records we use, the so-called "matrices", cover the following periods: from 1842 to 1872, from 1872 to 1905. These matrices contain both the names of the landowners, their landholdings in both the individual and the collective²¹³ ("consorts"). Further information was provided by the "états de mutation" registers, which supplemented the matrices with additional information. Finally, there are the registers of deeds (Relevé des actes), which, from the mid-19th century onwards, define the names of buyers and sellers, previous and subsequent owners, and (although less frequently than would be desirable) the price paid for the land.

The one file, on which we have based much of the analysis of the previous chapter is known as *Matrices*, a file which allows a complete overview of an individual's landed possessions (developed and undeveloped, including anything from, houses, woods, paths, meadows and ploughed land). This file which allows for a complete overview of the totality of land owned in Esch for everyone is available only for three specific dates: the years of 1842, 1872 and 1905. It thus presents the researcher with a precious overview of total amounts of surface owned for those specific years.

²¹³ Numerous entries refer to an individual "et consorts" (associates) or directly to "enfants" or "les héritiers".

The subsequent file contains the *État de mutation*, documenting, year by year the transactions entered by each individual in the city of Esch. Naturally, if an individual did not enter any type of transaction on a given year, he/she will not make part of this list for that year. Each individual is identified by an attributed article number. For the analysis of our transactions, we thus tried to accompany the individual's/article's transactions until their last appearance in the *État de Mutation*, typically this corresponded to the year following death of the individual, or this failing his widow's passing. In some cases, successions happened before death, an impending marriage in the family serving often as an excuse to split property beforehand. The *État de Mutation* is the only file which allows for a tracking of progressive investments, sales, acquisitions, and inheritances on an annual basis, for each of the individuals we are here interested in. In addition, the annual tax revenue (estimated by the State administration) for each parcel is shown, enabling the relative value of the properties to be assessed also with the help of a tax score applied on parcels which allows to identify which parcels were more profitable from 1 (most profitable) to 4 (least profitable); The cadastral matrix, indicated, already as of 1842 the annual rental income of each parcel was indicated.

We do not dispose of detailed information on individual transactions for the period between 1842-1868²¹⁴. This leaves a gap on the characteristics of transactions which took place during the period covering 1842-1872. One can only assume that land transmission took the rather natural course of passing on to the next generation through heritage or the usual networks of neighbours and relatives²¹⁵. In any case, it is the 1870's that bring novelty to the market of developable land with the real take-off of the industry in Esch-sur-Alzette, and with it the material prosperity brought by those who were lucky enough to own considerable amounts of land rich in iron ore. There are indeed no significant changes in types of property, profession of owner and surfaces deemed significant between the first 30-year period (1842-1872), although it is noticeable that from the early 1860s some industrial companies are already present (such as the Société des Forges de Dillingen and the Quint brothers). A presence naturally facilitated to them through the *Zollverein*, the customs union with Germany. Some Luxembourgish industrial families like the Metz, who had their business center up until then in Dommeldange and Eich also secured an early access to land in Esch (Kremer-Schmit 1986; Barthel 2022). The same for the Collart brothers, industrialists from Bettembourg who already owned a plant in Steinfort. Rivalries between iron ore directors were not visible yet. In fact, D.L. Brasseur (notary with interests in the iron ore business) sold

²¹⁴ They have in any case not been made available to us by the Administration du cadastre et topographie), with all likelihood, the state of the physical files did not allow for digitization.

²¹⁵ See Ferreira Flores (ibid) for Dudelange.

land parcels to Leon Metz, but it is later, as the first blast furnaces prepare to take-off, that friction begins between local competitors, Pierre Brasseur (Dominique Leopold's half -brother) founder of the Brasseur Schmelz, and Léon Metz, founder of Metz et Cie.

It is thus the period 1872 – 1905 that will provide more itemized information on the destiny of the land surface owned by our 20 individuals, their new owners and when noted, its cost.

We will examine the local landed “élite”, between 1872 and 1905, a group whose members were identified based on the combination of two indicators: (a) belonging to the group of the largest taxpayers in the city (tax-assessed elite) (b) belonging to the group of landowners with the major surfaces (the social players who controlled the land).

Information on revenues therefore helps to establish their wealth position in relation to the surface owned. However, this is something complex to establish given the sparse information we gathered on the nominal tax rolls for which we have detailed information for 1853, 1872, 1898 and then only in 1922. For the sake of the present analysis, we therefore refer only to revenues associated with their landownership.

The objective was, that of including not only farmers (eventually turned *rentiers* or *propriétaires* (landowners) but also merchants, representatives of different trades, entrepreneurs, and members of the liberal professions.

From the 1872 matrix we analysed the landed property of individuals whose tax contributions (associated with their landed assets) were estimated between 450-7000 (annual) francs. These figures alone allow to identify already a major gap in the revenues perceived by the top 15 landowners. In fact, they included a diversity of professions, ranging from farmers to industrialists as well as merchants and innkeepers.

As a final step of the analysis, we took interest in looking at another file: *The Relevé des Actes*, which contains the notarial information of former and current owner of the parcels as well as it very often indicates the price paid for it.

When following the transactions entered by a given individual/family, we first look at whether his/her name appears on the lists of “changes” (*État de mutation*) to the register for every available year. To follow a double-checking principle, the register of the deed (*Relevé des actes*) was checked for validation of the information. In it, one would ideally verify and confirm to whom the ownership of land was transferred, the type of transaction, the dimensions, and location of the land parcel and finally, the price.

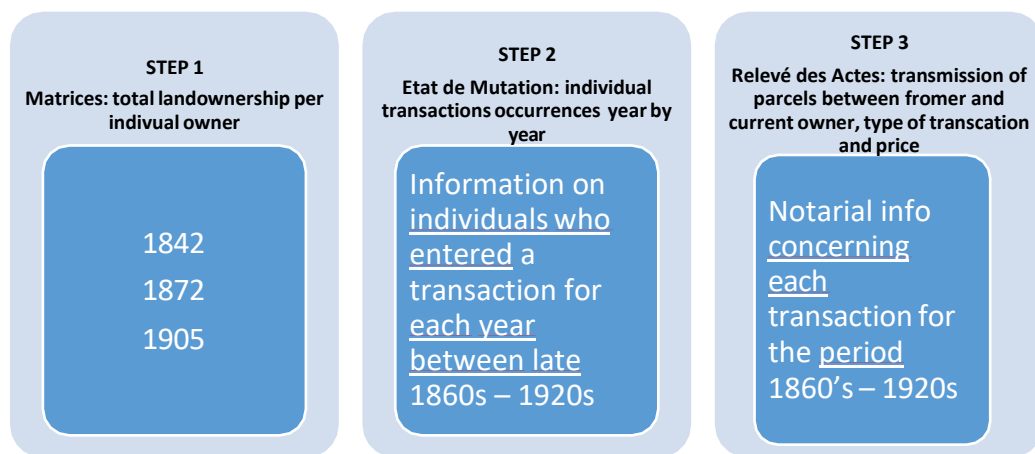


Figure 18: Methodological process

Yet, for the sake of transparency, an important remark about the imperfection of these sources urges. In fact, the (manually compiled) documents, contain discrepancies at the level of the two files supposed to carry the same information.

These issues arise regarding the dimensions of the parcel for example, which do not always coincide with the one on the file “de mutation”. When we look at the dimensions declared in the *État de mutation* and its respective register (the *relevé des actes*), the two frequently differ although not significantly (in terms, for example, of the registered dimensions declared in one and the other). This can have one of or two of the following plausible explanations: One is that the office dealing with the gathering of notarial information was centralized and not locally based, in this case in Esch-sur-Alzette²¹⁶. This would explain that the same person was not in charge of both transcriptions and that some of these transcriptions were hastened. The other has to do with recurrent attempts to evade tax as much as possible²¹⁷ and thus not declaring its real measurements or still the avoidance of any type of official register whatsoever. In the same vein, frequently, the sale price was, for some reason missing. It was also possible that a transaction on the Register of deeds was then not transposed as a notarial act, since a notarial record of deeds of purchase or sale of real estate was not required until the Second World War, and such deeds were quite often drawn up by private individuals (Helbach 2009). Other possible explanations relate to the financial burden of transactions performed with the assistance of the notary, which according to some of the local

²¹⁶ This was still the case in the late 20th century, according to the M. Georges Bestgen, a former director of the Esch cadaster.

²¹⁷ In her work, Kremer-Schmit also warns against the pitfalls of overrating land parcels’ prices: “Firstly, these prices are often lower than the actual prices, in order to save on registration fees; secondly, the extent of the land in question is often not in line with the land register “ (Kremer-Schmit 1986, 245).

press were unsustainable, especially for smaller farmers²¹⁸. The *relevé des actes* appears to have been handled by a different office, centralized rather than located in the centre of interest of the transaction. This can explain the many discrepancies in both, site measurements, names of the parties who represented the transaction and even the names of the *lieux dits* (named localities) of the said transactions. The analysis of the transaction, however inaccurate, still proves a precious insight into the strategies of land transmission dominant in the city at the industrial turn and throughout the years of the industrial boom. Even though we did encounter these discrepancies (or omissions)²¹⁹ often, in any event, the difference in measurements were not significant. Thus, we believe the sources do still give a rather accurate vision on the nature of the transactions, even when we do not have evidence on prices practiced or on the precise dimensions or nature of a plot of land.

A total of 1360 transactions were analysed for 20 individuals (families)²²⁰ between the period of 1860s and the late 1920s. When the information was available, for the 1905 landowners, a search into their property was made possible into the late 1940s.

To have an idea of how land possessions mutated across time and generations, we followed twenty major landowners split across 1872 (14) and 1905 (6). Instead of favouring a variable focusing on surface owned (vastness of m²) we opted for taking the approach of landowners with the most revenues (in fact, as mentioned, the two become increasingly disproportional as we approach the beginning of the century). The individuals in our sample are all placed among the 50 top landowners, both in 1872 and 1905. We acknowledge that simply being among the top 50 does not grant them any particular status of wealth. In fact, as we are about to see, some perceived rather modest revenues. A preliminary observation is that wealth does not always match equal grandeur in surface owned. As seen, this reflects the findings of neighbouring Dudelange.

This study intends to be as much qualitative as it is quantitative. Furthermore, it does not focus as much in the monetary value brought by the revenues of the parcels itself nor in precise locations in the city, but

²¹⁸ “ (...) le petit propriétaire ne peut, sans courir à ruine certaine, faire face aux emprunts des études de notaires, qui, avec les divers frais dont ils sont entourés avec l’obligation de payer les intérêts des intérêts lui reviennent jusqu’à 6% par an. Et grand bien lui en fasse encore ! Bienheureux s’il ne tombe pas entre les mains crochues de nos usuriers de village, de certains de nos marchands-capitalistes, les vampires de nos campagnes ! » in La propriété agricole dans le Grand-Duché, *L’Avenir*, 23.07, 1868 p.2.

²¹⁹ For the totality of the analysed transactions, there was the equivalent to 22% of “acts not found” in the correspondent year of the *Releve des actes*. Furthermore, what needs to be taken in consideration is that even when there is a correspondent register to the transaction in the *relevé, des actes*, the instances in which prices are not mentioned are significant. It should also be noted that many transactions were not officially registered, but the latter would not in any case be mentioned in the Etat de Mutation.

²²⁰ When significant the property left (because of death/inheritance) was analysed by following the new designated owner/main heir.

rather on transmission patterns and dynamics throughout the fifty years that span, from 1870s to the decade following 1920. As a result, this part of the analysis is as much concerned, admittedly more so, with the practices and processes associated with the ownership of land as with the actual land it was possessed. Did such processes help reproduce the social structures in place or rather led to the termination of a lifestyle?

While we realize and acknowledge this may present limitations, having privileged a perspective that focus exclusively on the wealthiest individuals, allows for an interpretation of class formation and (dis)continuities in their relation towards the land and space such families occupied in the city.

4.2.3 Combining data from the Register of deeds with genealogical sources

The information about owners in the *matrices* are regrettably scarce. In it we find: the name, the surname, place of residence, his/her profession (on most occasions) and the name of the spouse in case there is one. Moreover, the risk of coming across many homonymous occurrences in both first and family names, justified further the use of genealogical databases, which proved to be essential in identifying with precision who our individuals were.

Therefore, in a second step, information stemming from the more than thousand transactions examined, were matched with two important genealogic sources. The first database refers to a marriage index of Esch-sur-Alzette (1798-1923) (Geneapal, 2021). Using this database as a first exploration tool allows to identify in most cases the surnames of husband and wife as well as their respective dates of birth, maiden name of wife, family names for both parents and date when the marriage took place. From this first information we could then search for a wider family network with Luxroots (luxroots.org). In this more complete database one can trace back an individual's parents, place and date of birth and death as well as eventual children he/she may have had. In many cases professions are also available, allowing a thorough reconstitution of the members of a family as well as of marriage alliances in place. The use of genealogy was thus determinant in understanding some dynamics of heritage and land transmission in Esch-sur-Alzette.

These introductory remarks should already allow to set the scene of “our” landowners. Difficulties arise if one wishes to case such landowners into a precise class. Stefan Leiner's useful socio-professional categorization would seem a close to best solution as the author clearly set apart on his hierarchy a difference between small and medium farmer and a “proper” landowner, *Landwirt* (Leiner 1994, 348). How can the historian be assisted in that distinction? The register of Deeds provides the profession of each landowner. For the period comprised between 1842 and 1872 this variable (profession) is as frequently

evoked as it is elusive. A significant amount of such landowners was indeed or self-identified as farmers (*Cultivateur*²²¹), regardless of the amount of land surface they owned. Of the top 50 landowners in Esch in 1842 only 5 were not farmers (one notary, two cabaret owners, two *rentiers*). In 1872, all owners considered, there is a drastic drop in the number who self-identified as farmers. In fact, only 37% of the entrances in the Register of Deeds of the 950 owners (public, private and companies included). This could already hint at a shift in the professional activities, although many remained accessorially farmers, or “urban peasants” (Stobart and Owens 2000), a term used, namely in British historiography. Interestingly, the term *fermier* appears more often in use in the beginning and mid-20th century.

An explanation to this discretionary use of the term and identification with the profession is found in Trausch’s study:

(...) there are not many genuine "farmers"; on the other hand, there are more farmers who combine their property with plots of land taken on a leasehold basis (Trausch, 1969: 470).

Such remark supports the lack of statistic accuracy on the nature of their jobs as to whether they were “proper” owners or tenant farmers. More research into the relationship between the two is indeed needed to understand the nuances of economic revenues each of the two perceived.

As we will be seeing, in 1905 the number of top 50 individual owners who are or identify as farmers decreases drastically (1 in 50), as well as the overall number among the total landowners (110 out of 1014), whereas the terms *propriétaire* and *rentier* appear in 63 instances, in total.

Indeed, some of the old Esch’s traditional families are still represented in 1905 (and specifically in the city center) but they no longer identify as farmers but rather as “*propriétaires*”. This may mean that it was rather a question of prestige, but also that *de facto* such families had stopped working the land or using it for agricultural purposes all together. The Register of Deeds also reveals how, throughout their lives, farmers and even members of other professions switched to identify as a *rentiers* as they approached a certain age and terminated their active professional activities.

The iron industry being most favourable to property ownership, the sale of the minette land provided considerable income not only to the private owners of the land in question but also to the entire municipality. If on the one hand, historical accounts abound on how industrial companies took advantage of the smaller farmers and landowners alike (Kremer-Schmit 1986) there is no doubt that, conversely

²²¹ The Luxembourgish terminology (*Bauer*) also does not attribute any social hierarchy to the word, as *Bauer* can be translated into both *paysan*, and *agriculteur* (in French) or *Bauer* and *Landwirt* (in German) Source: Lëtzebuurger Online Dictionnaire LOD.lu).

many, among those who financially depended solely on agricultural, saw the interest of the steel industry in their land turn their meagre agricultural income into an investment.



Figure 19: postcard of 1908 sent to an acquaintance in the USA, with news from Esch, including that “Batty sold his land to the Aachener Schmelz for more than 30.000 francs!!!”. Source: Archives municipales de la ville d’Esch-sur-Alzette. sine dato.

A parenthesis urges here to introduce some background to the issue relating to the mining concessions (*concessions minières*). We saw that land in Esch was appealing to new actors for different uses and purposes, all directly or indirectly linked to the establishment of the industry among which: a) land to be developed for housing, b) land to be directly used for mineral/iron extraction, c) land needed for new premises and infrastructure of the industrial plants as well as municipal authorities d) land for the railway to develop.

Public intervention is essential in the context of mining concessions. Through the mining law, the state encouraged the establishment of factories in the south of the country, by granting concessions only if the ore was "consumed" locally. A first lot of 705 ha was granted to railway companies, as a way of encouraging them to build railways (Leiner 1994) . Most of this land was in fact resold to steel companies or to agents who traffic in ore (Faltz 2005).

According to Kremer-Schmit (Kremer-Schmit 1986) the population were caught unprepared at the beginning of the exploitation and were happy to be able to give up those parcels of land, which were generally not very favourable to agriculture and not very profitable. This pattern is also confirmed by Ferreira Flores (2022) in his study of Dudelange. In Esch, one of the main factors that led to a significant increase in the prices was the establishment of *Chemins de fer Luxembourgeois*. On the contrary, the lack of a railway connecting Dudelange directly to places where raw materials and finished goods could be

disposed of, seems to have been something that retarded the surge in prices of land in Dudelange Ferreira Flores (ibid).

When it comes to instances where private owners opposed or exerted pressure against selling and expropriations, it must be said that unlike what happened in Dudelange and Differdange²²² in Esch resistance was fainter (Kremer-Schmit 1986).

It is worth noting that not only private owners who speculated on prices. At times it was from the industrial actors themselves that complaints originated concerning the greediness of the municipalities. Pierre Brasseur, director of the *Brasseur Schmelz* in Esch addressed complaints to the Government on the matter of feeling he had been deceived when of the acquisition of land situated between Esch and Kayl

« (...) Our company was the only candidate for this route. On the other hand, the ores in this area are known to be of very poor quality. In our opinion, the offer made [to the two communes of Esch-sur-Alzette and Kayl] should have been taken into consideration and we think that the mayor exceeded [sic] his powers by acting in this way, i.e. by clearly refusing our offer without first submitting it to the local council for its opinion. In view of the fact that the price offered largely represents the value of this mining land of such a small area, it would be in the interest of the municipality to carry out the following in order not to suffer any loss of interest»²²³ (ANLux INT - 606, complaint letter of the manager of the Société des Mines d'Esch (Brasseur Schmelz) to the DG of Internal Affairs, 7 avril 1893)

The inhabitants of Esch soon realised that the profits to be made could be considerable and were determined to sell only to the highest bidder. Thus, given the large number of interested parties, the prices soon soared²²⁴. In fact, most small landowners considered mining exploitation as a secondary activity, a rather profitable activity as soon as the work in the fields left them with some free time (Gilbert Trausch 1971). This led many, among them to abandon agricultural work altogether (Kremer-Schmitt, ibid, 253) to become merchants or transporters of iron ore. Such was the situation until 1870 when the Eschois still ploughed the produce of their own land thus becoming self-employed. This was soon to be abandoned as small landowners did not dispose of either the financial or technical means to face their competitors. The big capital had won over the prospect of self-employability by small landowners.

Kremer Schmit's (ibid) view on, the greed of landowners versus the major benefits Esch would have reaped from conceding land at a low-price, sounds simplistic if one cares to look carefully at other sources:

The attitude of the owners shows a total lack of understanding of the real issue: for the moment, they are thinking only of reserving for themselves the profits they derive from ownership of the mining land. In no way do they foresee the

²²² In Differdange the matter was considered borderline expropriation, see Kovacs (Kovacs 2012).

²²³ **In the original** : Notre société était seule amateur pour ce chemin. D'un autre côté les minerais en cet endroit sont reconnus de très médiocre qualité. A notre avis l'offre faite [aux deux communes Esch-sur-Alzette et Kayl] aurait dû être prise en considération et nous pensons que Monsieur le bourgmestre a du beaucoup dépassé [sic] ses pouvoirs en agissant de la sorte c.a.d. en refusant nettement notre offre sans la transmettre au préalable à l'avis du conseil communal. Vu que le prix offert représente largement la valeur de ce terrain minier d'une si faible contenance il serait dans l'intérêt de la commune de réaliser pour ne pas subir des pertes d'intérêts

²²⁴ « Between 1850 and 1870, mining was carried out by open-cast methods (...) mining was so easy that even the smallest owner could afford to do it at his own expense (Kremer-Schmit 1986, 251).

benefits that will flow from mining on a larger scale, from the establishment of large-scale industry and large factories on the territory of the municipality. This industry will promote the development of the commune and at the same time employ a considerable workforce (Kremer-Schmit, 1986, 382-383).

In fact, public good, by means of job creation, was repeatedly evoked as an argument by some of the major industrial plants²²⁵, the Aachener Hütten Verein in 1908 to get land a derisory prices (Buchler et al. 2020; Quiqueret 2022) and destroy namely, a whole natural site, the *bois du Clair-Chêne* in the centre of Esch:

As far as the price issue is concerned, (...), I would ask you to consider the sale in terms of the community. The value that may be realized that may result from this must be given to you be given by the subsequent benefits that the plant will bring to the municipality, I do not want to determine here whether through a greater yield of communal services or through the development of trade and industry, you know that better, the citizens of the city know that as well as I do (...) The matter is just as much in the interest of Esch as it is for us. I do not think I need to add anything (...) So look at the matter from the point of view of the seller as a municipality and not from the point of view of the seller as a private citizen (Intervention of Rudolf Seidel, director of the *Rothe Erde A.G* during his plea to the local council in view of buying most of the Clair Chêne green area.)²²⁶

Municipal councils general propension to agreeing to it, came after the 1880s and not without significant exceptions in Dudelange and Differdange for example²²⁷. But it was only once the government forbade the transport of iron outside of the country and made it compulsory that it be transformed in national territory²²⁸, that municipalities saw their reservations completely disappear. It should also be noted that such persuasion from industrial companies was accompanied by threats (see bluff) that if municipal authorities would not cooperate, industrial plants would simply relocate elsewhere.

Emboldened by the mining concession laws of 1882 and 1892, which required raw materials to be processed on national territory, the new professions of industrial capitalism imposed themselves as mediators par excellence between industry and the local population.

Their importance (forgery directors, and agents (...)) was undeniable, as it was they who popularised the new industry. They travelled and canvassed the country. They were in constant contact with the farmers and did business with them. They tried to acquire as much land as possible, and in this way concentrated mining land in the hands of the various companies that employed (Kremer Schmit, *ibid*, 247).

We have concentrated so far on an analysis that takes into consideration the relationship between small farmers and industrial players. But what about industrial players and main landowners? Was there the same appeal to sell, or did other factors play a role? Was there, as it was the case for Dudelange, a greater

²²⁵ See Ferreira Flores (2022) also in relation to Dudelange.

²²⁶ Local council meeting minutes, Esch-sur-Alzette, 6.11.1908, pp. 195-199.

²²⁷ See Ferreira Torres (*ibid*) and Kovacs, for a detailed account of how each of the two young industrial centres reacted differently to the prospect of having major companies establishing themselves.

²²⁸ See the work of Stephanie Kovacs and Denis Klein for a thorough understanding of the mining concessions (Kovacs 2012; Klein 2005).

social homogeneity of some areas, in contrast with the idea that mixed, undesirable and poor-quality housing would destroy a protected environment?

What our analysis shows is that it was not necessarily with the industrial actors, that our 20 landowners entered most of their transactions with. Different landowners display indeed different investments and succession strategies. Whereas some made most of their revenues from sales to the industry the same is not true for others. There are two flagrant occasions where assets were passed on to the industrial companies: the Purnot family from Metz who ended up selling the vast majority of its land assets in Esch to the Metz (family) & Cie, and the Nothomb²²⁹, who through the marriage of one of the daughters virtually transmitted all of their landed possessions to Victor Tesch²³⁰, whose future son-in-law Hubert Muller-Tesch, was to become co-founder and main shareholder of the Metz & Cie. Such exceptions matter because even though these are only two individuals, the surface sold is significant and came to mean, ultimately, the fusion of the almost totality of both the Purnot and the Nothomb land surface under the possession of the Metz & Cie.

It can be claimed, following the outcome of our sample analysis, however, that the main landowners exerted some influence in the process of which areas of the city were to be reserved to the appetite of newcomers, namely, real estate promoters and those seeking to establish a commercial activity. Some key areas of the city centre (Dellhéicht (Dellhöh), Wobrecken, Aal Esch, Thiergarten) had been safeguarded from exploitation and kept in the families of traditional Eschois families. Dellhöh and Wobrecken would become much coveted areas of the city. Historian Jacques Maas describes the feeling of wellbeing associated with living in one of those neighbourhoods:

For the more affluent population, the location on the northern edge of the town was an ideal residential area. The working-class neighbourhoods near the industrial plants and the commercial centre with its dense perimeter block development did not offer the environment that an aspiring middle class expected for living. In the yet undeveloped 'Dellhöh' district, (...) [was], ideal building land, close to the centre, well-ventilated and sunny on a slight hill, far away from the polluted exhaust fumes of the industrial plants. Resourceful citizens had probably kept an eye on this area and its (financial) potential for a long time and acquired farmland at the right time, which would sooner or later be converted into valuable building land (Maas 2022, 90).²³¹

²²⁹J.P. Nothomb, from Niederkorn, (then) canton of Messancy (Belgium), had risen from bailiff to Notaire Royal, had married the daughter of the notary of Mondercange's daughter Maria-Katharina Motté. He quickly became rich and was able to acquire the Pesselbusch, the Weierwous and extensive estates on the Breitenweg (Section A, Esch Centre)] (Flies, 1979). Nothomb died young on 25 April 1821, at the age of 45 years old. His notary's office was taken over by his brother-in-law Henri Motté.

²³⁰ Among other prominent managerial positions, Victor Tesch had been one of the founders of the Société des Forges de Saarbruck in 1856, plant which "fed" exclusively on Luxembourgish iron ore. At the offset of the industrial development, both the latter and Metz et Cie detained most land rich in iron ore in Esch. Both companies were allied both in business as well as through family relationships.

²³¹ In the original: „Für die wohlhabendere Bevölkerung stellte die Lage am nördlichen Ortsrand ein ideales Wohngebiet dar. Die Arbeiterviertel in der Nähe der Industriewerke sowie das Geschäftszentrum mit seiner dichten Blockrandbebauung boten

A more accurate reflection of the agrarian middle classes in Esch can be gained by examining the land that was not sold, or if it was, the manner in which it was transferred. This can be done by examining the succession of land ownership, direct sales, or auctions. Their transactions are explanatory of dynamics that failed to disappear despite or just because of the emergence of the industry.

The interest in land and real estate post 1870s was also linked to a city exploding in population in dire need for a suitable place to live. Furthermore, real estate development and space were needed for all types of businesses to flourish. The rush to buy a place in the Brill Street, at the very beginning of the 20th century, is proof of the increasing interest in securing a business, preferably one's own, in the vicinity of the commercial heart of the city. The growing demand for rental properties suitable for workers and the emergence of the lower middle class as a typical investor in this sector are also reflected in the register of deeds, although the available data on tenantry are limited.²³²

In the following pages we will be looking closely into two different periods: 1) from the late 1860's to 1905 and 2) from 1905 to the late 1920s (in some instances we could enquire as far as 1930s/1940s), to describe the continuities and changes in ownership through the analysis of the Register of Deeds. To better illustrate the circumstances, beyond some statistics, some study cases have been chosen to highlight the diversity of family preferences as to how they disposed of their landed property.

nicht die Umgebung, die sich ein aufstrebendes Bürgertum zum Wohnen erwartete. In dem noch nicht bebauten ‚Dellhö-
Viertel lagen die urbanistischen ‚Filet-Stücke‘, ideales Bauland, in Zentrumsnähe, gut durchlüftet und besonnt auf leichter
Anhöhe gelegen, fern von den verschmutzten Abgasen der Industriebetriebe. Findige Bürger hatten wohl schon lange ein Auge
auf dieses Areal und sein (finanzielles) Potential gerichtet und zur richtigen Zeit Ackerland erworben, das früher oder später in
wertvolles Bauland umgewandelt werden würde.“

²³² For an insight into Esch's rental market see, namely, the work of Daniel Richter "Grüne Mauern und der Mythos der
„ausgebliebenen Proletarisierung“. Peripherie Arbeiterstrassen in der Industrialisierten Kleinstadt Esch/Alzette (Luxemburg)
zwischen urbanität und rurälitat (1890-1935) (Richter 2024).

Name	surname	profession	m2 at inception	year	m2 passed on to family by death/sucession/last entry	Remaining percentage % of original surface
Victor	Tesch	lawyer/industrialist	701932	1868	717699	>100%
Jean	Vandyck Schmit	farmer	161550	1869	105960	65%
Pierre	Peporte Vandyck (his children)	farmer	202538	1906	202538	17%
Henri & Auguste	Purnot & Purnot	Notary and Banker	1103961	1871	332040	1,90%
Marguerite	De Wacquand (widow Brasseur)	widow (notary)	95925	1887	58025	0%
Jacques	Schmit-Clees	municipal tax collector	128845	1868	55790	12%
Michel	Zeimes	farmer	145266	1868	46343	0%
Charles	Laval	notary	780	1868	21343	>100%
Nicolas	Fox	merchant/rentier	54210	1868	13020	0%
Daniel	Buchholtz	merchant	67407	1870	59716	88,50%
Dominique	Stoffel	farmer	101520	1872	101520	100%
Michel	Sartor	Innkeeper	29684	1870	9504	0%
Jean	Weinand Pettinger	farmer	89502	1868	38020	42,5
Adam	Laux	farmer	115219	1869	96368	83%
Michel	Rousseau	notary clerk	1300	1873	39780	>100%
Jacques	Schmit-Kieffer	farmer	140153	1869	135830	97%
Francois	Rothermel	pharmacist	2682	1868	1026	38%
Alfred	Lefevre	construction entrepreneur	3758	1898	8246	>100%
Nicolas	Biwer	construction entrepreneur	930	1896	16235	>100%
Jean	Wecker- Hartz	tinsmith	187	1879	74416	>100%
owners from 1872						
owners from 1905						

Table 15: Sample with 20 owners from both the 1872 and 1905 matrices. Totals of land surface remaining in the family.

The fact that in four occasions (see table 15 above), land seems to remain for its most part in the hands of the family should not induce one to believe this situation endured for long. For example, both the descendants of Rousseau and Laval, notary clerk and notary respectively sold promptly in the months or couple of years following their respective fathers' deaths and thus dissolving the almost totality of the family's landed possessions. The same with Dominique Stoffel's family. In the year following his death, his grandchildren split the property, although in this case the fact they were married into other landowner families such as the Claude and the Origer, meant much of their assets stayed in Esch. If Laval and Rousseau's death and partition would initially lead into thinking they sold little to the industry, the truth is their heirs did so as soon as they got hold of the landed property. Again, likely for reasons linked to their own relationship to the city of Esch. Not being resident in Esch (the case for Laval's daughters as well as three out of four of the Rousseau's descendants may have influenced their decision of selling most

of their landed assets²³³). The fact that they safeguarded parcels of land in the city center which still provided some of their offspring with considerable revenues in 1905, meets the thesis that even owning one house only meant being a “major landowner” (Ferreira Flores, 2022).

²³³ Which did not prevent some of them to do their own investments. See that for example with one of Michel’s Rousseau’s sons (Daniel), who although owning only 950 m2 and 4 parcels of land, was still placed among the top 20 (private) landowners in Esch in 1905.

4.3 1st phase late 1860's – early 1900s.

Farmers, innkeepers, merchants and Eschois

The analysis of the single transactions starts, in the late 1860s, the list of landowners being mostly composed of farmers. The main landowners are then mostly composed of locals or individuals coming from surrounding villages, with a few exceptions: Henri Purnot, a notary from Metz, and Victor Tesch, industrialist who alternated his residency between Brussels and Messancy (Belgium). This sample excluded those individuals from surrounding villages, namely Kayl, Rumelange and Schifflange.

By the outset of industrialization, in the early 1870s very few landowners, self-identify as “rentiers” or (*propriétaires*), which would translate as someone who has some source of income (typically from landed property). It was rendered clear from the registers of the Etat de Mutation that for some, reaching a given amount of land surface and revenues required a change in their professional status from whatever was their previous profession into “propriétaire”. It may well have been an imagined status of someone who had accumulated enough to live off his profits²³⁴ or just simply the setting in stone of a change into the status of *rentier* once one had retired from active life. In the first part of our analysis we investigated the transmission of property by the most prominent owners in Esch from the late 1860's until, in some cases the late 1920's. This depended on how soon property was split among the different heirs or fractioned (if at all) through different buyers. Succession of property happened on different occasions, be it the death of the owner, the passing of all assets to a spouse (often upon disease or an imminent death), or the marriage of a child. On many occasions, property was sold through public auctions. Patterns of transmission of ownership emerge when partitions occur. If, in appearance, all siblings tended to be treated equally three factors, recurrently influenced the way transmission of land was done. One was the undeniable importance of either first son or daughter, who traditionally were meant to look after parents and land assets (Gilbert Trausch 1969). The other was the importance of securing that any other siblings could either, marry well into some noteworthy family, emigrate to a place where they could have land of their own, such as the USA, Brazil, or Argentina). Alternatively, there could be the pursuit of the religious life for both male and female members of the family. Only more rarely, do we see landowner families recur to a future based on a higher education path for farmers' sons. In our sample, this was something to be more commonly found among the families of notaries or families who already had some sort of relationship to a career within the

²³⁴ Max Weber argued in favour of a distinction of different types of property which, even among wealthy individuals, would distinguish a “class of rentiers” from a class of entrepreneurs (Gerth and Mills 1991).

State professions. More common, as well, was to see daughters of farmers who married civil servants, teachers or merchants.

According to Kremer Schmit (Kremer-Schmit 1996, 395) most of those Eschois who were neither landowners of land rich in iron ore, nor were professionally occupied in the steel industry had to resort to emigrating to the USA or France. However, emigration was a signifier of last resource to those deprived of landownership as Trausch's (ibid) work well describes and as our own analysis is about to clarify. Furthermore, individual agency cannot be excluded from the allure of a departure overseas, a path that even the offspring of *the élites* of the industrial bourgeoisie at some point took.²³⁵ Our analysis also took interest on actors who may not have been major landowners but who nevertheless represented interesting examples of how power and class were exerted in the city. These include members of the liberal professionals but also merchants, civil servants, and the notaries. The analysis shows that family dynamics present elsewhere in the country and throughout part of Western Europe (Arrizabalaga 2005) remained true for Esch as well. These included the presence of emigrants, members of clergy or religious orders in the families and the part they took in the destiny of their landed property without forgetting the role of the first-born son or failing that, the son in law married to the first daughter. Finally, the analysis reveals, not without the outstanding assistance of the genealogical database the tragical destiny of an appalling number of children dead at birth or young age, proof again of the aggressiveness of diseases such as cholera²³⁶ and typhus, ill medical care and hygiene that still decimated entire families' offspring. There is perhaps no way to describe scientifically the ordeal of bereaved families watching as children died at young age, some within days, few years old, or in their teens. The theories of childhood being perceived as "negligible" (Baudon 2017; Eggerickx, Debuisson, and Sanderson 2012) in the early 19th century endured into the early 20th century²³⁷ and cast a light to birth-death-birth cycle dynamics. However, with few personal accounts left as testimony which could account for a new narrative to give perspective on how children's premature death was felt. Silences too speak in History and the lack of announcements, obituaries, diaries, impressions of what a child's departure leaves behind speaks more than statistics. In one of the rare testimonies left, by a member of Luxemburg's city bourgeoisie and inner circle of power one gets a sense of what kind of pain and devastation high and lower classes alike faced upon the loss of

²³⁵ See the letters sent from Gustave Metz from the USA (J. Weber 2013).

²³⁶ The Esch and other southern Luxembourg regions had been particularly hit (Massard 1986; Theisen 1936), as a result of a mix of lack of medical personnel and little knowledge on how the disease spread. "The disease had spared no age, no gender, nor class groups (Theisen, ibid, 9) "

²³⁷ "A statistic just published by Dr Aug Ulveling, the dedicated promoter of child protection in Luxembourg, shows that of the five hundred children born every year in our city, no less than one hundred die before reaching the age of one". Une nouvelle œuvre de protection de l'enfance, *L'Indépendance luxembourgeoise*, 23.08.1907, p.2)

a child, that no catholic ²³⁸, religious sense of destiny could make up for. Bereavement can thus not have been solely a trait of the upper classes²³⁹. All these circumstances had an inevitable and pragmatic impact on succession outcomes.

4.3.1 Chance, family, savvy marriages, and kinship

The particular acceleration in the tempo of life cycles during the first two-thirds of the 19th century - numerous births but the death of almost half the children, early marriages, deaths of young adults, remarriages of widowers giving birth to third-born children - made inheritance arrangements complex throughout the century (Pingaud 2015).

The analysis of the individual transactions for the first part of the period here under scrutiny reveal very diverse forms of relating to one's landed property. Moreover, it shows that such diversity was independent of the attractiveness of the prices paid by industrial companies. Unlike what happened in Dudelange, the main landowners did not seem to have manifested any wish to prevent the implantation the industries which is not to say they did not find strategies to continue to exert their forms of power in the city and through their land. Decisions on land transmission have, in any case, primarily, followed "logics" external to any influence the industry may have had. In the same way, decisions on land distribution translated circumstances which simply went beyond the *pater familiae*' control. These included having too many or no children at all, their premature deaths', or whichever professional turn their life might take that excluded the possibility of a future in Esch. In our sample these professional outcomes were rare, especially in families, of agrarian stock, whose first son gave continuity to the dynasty. But if we turn our attention to daughters, it is noticeable how many married outside Esch, to men who were not farmers. It is foremost noticeable that family played the cardinal role when it came to land. Assets were typically equally split among surviving children. In some instances, some siblings appear to be missing from the partition. This was admittedly common practice before the 19th century, albeit "forbidden" by the civil code and one can assume that the children missing from the partition have been given an equivalent sum in money. Some of the descendants were advantaged with more square metres but a less profitable plot of land. However, the effort to split in equal parts is visible for the almost totality of the transactions we looked at.

²³⁸ In an rare account of the pain caused by the loss of his older daughter the minister De Roebé confides his distress to a priest: "God took the best from me, may he protect the others" (J. Weber 2013, 57).

²³⁹ The emotional history of the impact on death of children among families is seldom accounted for. Regarded and widely accepted as an ordeal of many families, their death went mostly "unannounced". A visit to Esch's old cemetery of Saint Joseph suffices to witness how families remembered and mourned their children. Among the well-off families for example, where angels like the ones of the family Barblé were sculpted in the family tombs (Buchler et al. 2020).

At the turn of the century what this equal partition reveals that is interesting, is sometimes not in plain sight. Surfaces were split equally but first son/or daughter got to receive the most valuable parcels (Class 1) sometimes at the detriment of a bigger surface. In some families, like the Tesch and the Laval the almost totality of their landed assets ended in the hands of the first son in law (other siblings opted out by donating or selling their shares). Admittedly these were families with major commercial interests in Esch-sur-Alzette with links to the Metz “empire” and thus concentrated their wealth in the hands of a few. The son in law of Victor Tesch, Hubert Muller, founding shareholder of the ARBED (among others), became heir of the former’s assets. His own son, the engineer Rene Muller Laval came to marry a Charles Laval’s (notary) daughter, thus inheriting the almost totality of the landed assets Laval had gathered in his lifetime. The Baron de Tornaco, independent MP and defender of a certain old-world order intervened at the Chamber of Deputies in shock to what the civil code was doing to landed property in Luxembourg:

It is a profound error, in my opinion, to believe that large property is something useless, if not harmful. The large property owner is very rare in this country but let us say the properties (...) those under 50 hectares. The owner of such property can and almost always does create a huge estate around him. He manages it well, he is well educated, he has seen foreign countries. (...) A country is rich because of what it produces. It is not rich because of the number of its[land]owners. If it produces a lot, the country is rich and so are its inhabitants. You must be very narrow-minded to attack big property. And gentlemen, if it is an evil, rest assured, it is disappearing, it will disappear in a short time, we do not need a new law for that, the Civil Code takes charge of it. This article of the Civil Code, which obliges parents to leave their property, except for certain insignificant advantages, in equal shares to their children, was the condemnation of large-scale property ownership. I much prefer the American system, the land of progress and the future, which gives parents absolute freedom to dispose of their property. If this article of the Civil Code survives, which is very likely, in fifty years' time, another two generations, large-scale property will have lived: so give it some more time, let it die its beautiful death (Intervention at the Chamber of Deputies, 14 December 1898).²⁴⁰

If such was the sentiment of dismay with regards to the destiny of the big property in the Grand-Duchy, one can assume that small property was to go down the same path. Not surprisingly, some families in Esch dissolved themselves into disappearance, or barely held to some hundreds of square metres in the city centre. Other families developed strategies to pursue some influence at the level of the developable estate market.

²⁴⁰ C. R. 1898-1899, 14.12.1898, pp. 64-65. **In the original** : C'est une profonde erreur, à mon avis de croire que la grande propriété est une chose inutile, sinon nuisible. Le grand propriétaire est très rare dans ce pays-ci, mais mettons les propriétés(...) celles au-dessous de 50 hectares. Le propriétaire de ces biens peut faire et fait presque toujours un immense bien au tour de lui. Il l'exploite bien, il est instruit, il a vu des pays étrangers. (...) Un pays est riche par ce qu'il produit. Il n'est pas riche par le nombre de ses propriétaires. S'il produit beaucoup, les pays est riche et ses habitants le sont aussi. Il faut avoir des vues bien étroites pour attaquer la grande propriété. Et Messieurs, si elle est un mal, rassurez-vous, elle disparaît, elle disparaîtra d'ici à peu de temps, nous n'avons pas besoin d'une nouvelle loi pour cela, le Code civil s'en charge. Cet article du code civil qui oblige les parents à laisser leur bien, sauf certains avantages insignifiants, par parts égales à leurs enfants, a été la condamnation de la grande propriété. Je préfère infiniment à cet article le système américain, pays du progrès et de l'avenir cependant qui laisse aux parents la liberté absolue de disposer de leurs biens. Si cet article du Code civil subsiste, ce qui est très probable, d'ici cinquante ans, deux générations encore, et la grande propriété aura vécu: laissez lui donc encore ce temps, laissez la mourir sa belle mort.

In a similar vein to those of the big families, also in old middle class Eschois, marriage strategies followed the logic of marrying into other landed families. With the principle of the equal split being enforced by law, it seemed only natural to try to secure their space in the city. To that end they would recur to marrying daughters of other major farmers. The role of the first born, and especially if male remains rather ambiguous. In principle the civil code required an equal split and a lottery draw of the parcels during the notarial act. It seems visible from some transactions that the first born usually got away with the most profitable land, at times with more than half in terms of surface and value (see the two heirs of Jacques Schmit Kieffer for example). This occurred often amongst families where one of the siblings was single, living elsewhere in Luxembourg or abroad. It was only understandable that the latter tried to sell their part of land as soon as the inheritance partition took place.

Industrial companies inevitably took advantage of such hastened licitations (exs: daughter of Schmitt - Clees, daughter of Schmitt - Kieffer). These patterns continue also in the case of the death of a first partner, the second choice of spouse having had to ensure a certain “social status” continuity. There is therefore nothing very surprising in the social order of the “old Eschois”. Farmers, innkeepers, merchants, occasionally a teacher therefore intermarried.

Only more rarely did someone in our sample of old Eschois move to other surrounding villages to marry there. This was more common among women who could go on and marry someone with a good position elsewhere. Chance played a role in the sense that it could happen that with the alarming number of deaths among babies, children, and youngsters sometimes there was only one heir or none. On the contrary, some families like all the Zeimes heirs (unlike their unlucky parents) survived to live rather long lives. Even among “wealthy” families, assets were not enough to ensure everyone with a future. Reversely, a man like Jean Vandyck- Schmit who remarkably lived until 97 years of age (1805-1902), saw only two in eight of his children survive him. A wealthy farrier, Jean Vandyck- Schmit left his landed property to his older daughter, a nun in France who, instead passed all assets to her brother-in-law Pierre Péporté -Vandyck, a cabaret owner who was married to two of the Vandyck sisters in a row.

The fact that many land sales were initiated by people living abroad or elsewhere in Luxembourg is a sign of the prospect of not wishing to return to Esch. Yet another path that was common in larger families was the undertaking of a religious life. This was not only about vocation. Both men and women would enter a convent or seminar to make a living and lift off some financial weight from the family. In some instances, these family members either donated or sold their inherited parcels to their siblings. Among those who were no longer living in Esch, money from land sales was more frequently raised from sales or auctions to companies. Moreover, what the analysis of the sales transactions demonstrates is that in some traditional

Eschois families there was in as much the wish of keeping some assets in Esch as there was, to make profit of sales to industrial companies. What a macro look at our sample also shows is that sales and transfers of land among extended family and fellow Eschois rewarded, in some cases, more profits than sales to the industry. This may of course have been a strategy similar to that of Dudelange (Ferreira Flores, 2022) whereby less valuable land was sold to the industrial actors, whereas assets, for example in the city centre were kept within the families. Such findings need in any event to be interpreted in the light of the many lacunae in mentions of price in the registers, as only the instances where prices were mentioned were taken into consideration.

The overall statistics²⁴¹ also show that sales between farmer landowners and fellow private landowners from Esch were more lucrative than the sales to the companies, with only a couple of exceptions. If it is true this must be interpreted, within the limitations posed by the many gaps in our source, it hints nevertheless at a conscious effort to keep land if not in the hands of the immediate family, at least inside Esch. Keeping land in Esch meant both entering transactions within the (enlarged) family, at most within the kinship. On the contrary, families' whose offspring had no "center of interest" in Esch, sold almost all their assets. In the case of the Dominique Leopold Brasseur's²⁴² children, for example - one son was a professor in Brussels, whereas his daughter was married to an industrialist of the Longwy- all their property was dismantled. A symbol of the success of the previous generations Motté Brasseur, their manor house was sold to the Elizabethan sisters' Congregation in 1897 for the price of 43000 francs.

One other aspect strikes when looking at this first phase of Esch's urban development. It is the almost complete lack of transactions, between this late century agrarian middle classes and the working class. The instances in which members of the better off class enter a sale of land or houses to members of the lower classes are rare. Out of the totality of transactions analysed only in four instances is land sold to workers, by Sartor (innkeeper), Purnot (the banker), Zeimes (farmer) and Rousseau (notary clerk) respectively.

As we are about to see, it is only with the entry of property developers into the real estate scene that a tentative 'democratic' access to housing will be possible. Evidence from the next decades will show how dire the housing conditions will be for the vast majority of workers (see part IV). This state of play has certainly stimulated a speculative market whereby those who depended on their labour as capital had to either expect some sort of paternalistic support from the companies themselves (Lorang 1991; 2009) or,

²⁴¹ To take into consideration with caution given the amount of information missing in surfaces and prices.

²⁴² Notary in office in the period comprised between 1846-1865

as remains to be verified preferred rather to invest in other parts of the country where they had originally come from²⁴³

Name	surname	profession	sold to outsiders (m2)	sold to Eschers (m2)	bought/inherited in Esch*	sold to companies (m2)
Victor	Tesch	lawyer/industrialist	480	679	9724	1370
Jean	Vandyck Schmit	farmer	2690	146709	4770	14249
Pierre	Peporte Vandyck (his children)	farmer	0	225282	0	34690
Henri & Auguste	Purnot & Purnot	Notary and Banker	2990	164985	1200	423489
Marguerite	De Wacquand (widow Brasseur)	widow (notary)	0	63630	0	12640
Jacques	Schmit-Clees	municipal tax collector	0	101294	38806	49782
Michel	Zeimes	farmer	0	324745	4370	46028
Charles	Laval	notary	0	4690	31598	4500
Nicolas	Fox	merchant/rentier	13020	0	1320	17400
Daniel	Buchholtz	merchant	0	28660	38475	2000
Dominique	Stoffel	farmer	2140	96660	0	2720
Michel	Sartor	Innkeeper	9750	13290	7500	5910
Jean	Weinand Pettinger	farmer	1000	1495	27860	10320
Adam	Laux	farmer	3070	78524	16460	31080
Michel	Rousseau	notary clerk	n/a	13515	104111	1180
Jacques	Schmit-Kieffer	farmer	0	12249	10610	8800
Francois	Rothermel	pharmacist	360	2620	1130	0
Alfred	Lefevre	construction entrepreneur	1062	29266	40813	31521
Nicolas	Biwer	construction entrepreneur	181	19728	24255	6646
Jean	Wecker- Hartz	tinsmith	0	3025	98362	560
owners from 1872						
owners from 1905						

Table 16: Sample of 20 owners. M² distribution. Sales and acquisitions.

²⁴³ This thesis has been supported by geographers , economists, and sociologists (Quasten 1970; P. Weber 1950). An intervention by the Baron de Tornaco on 1899/1900 at the Parliament alludes to the supposed wellbeing of the southern working class with assets in the North. Only a thorough analysis of the source of the Register of deeds for the Northern/Western/ Eastern regions would allow to confirm such hypothesis.

Name	surname	profession	total investment in land (frcs) when data available	Revenues from total land sales	Revenues from sales to companies	Revenues from sales to privates	Revenues from sales to municipality/state	Revenues from sales to religious orders/ congregations
Victor	Tesch	lawyer/industrialist	7000,00	17122,00	10560,00	6262,00	N/A	
Jean	Vandyck Schmit	farmer	N/A	26450,00	11793,00	14657,00		0,00
Pierre	Peporte Vandyck (his children)	farmer	0,00	184045,00	9283,00	174762,00	N/A	
Henri & Auguste	Purnot & Purnot	Notary and Banker	2920,00	861555,00	726375,00	64987,00	70193,00	
Marguerite	De Wacquant (widow Brasseur)	widow (notary)	n/a	170860,00	5400,00	108760,00		0,00 56700,00
Jacques	Schmit-Clees	municipal tax collector	5405,00	93186,00	72907,00	20279,00		0,00 n/a
Michel	Zeimes	farmer	4350,00	96790,00	43721,00	53069,00		0,00 n/a
Charles	Laval	notary	80360,00	56293,00	18793,00	37500,00		0,00
Nicolas	Fox	merchant/rentier	n/a	19100,00	11000,00	8100,00		0,00 n/a
Daniel	Buchholtz	merchant	32195,00	30216,00	4000,00	26216,00		0,00
Dominique	Stoffel	farmer	n/a	108057,00	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Michel	Sartor	Innkeeper	1000,00	48627,00	9637,00	38990,00		
Jean	Weinand Pettinger	farmer	4892,00	23192,00	13192,00	10000,00		0,00 0,00
Adam	Laux	farmer	4470,00	73207,00	28689,00	44518,00		0,00 0,00
Michel	Rousseau	notary clerk	46177,00	43880,00	200,00	43680,00		0,00 0,00
Jacques	Schmit-Kieffer	farmer	N/A	12618,00	5022,00	7157,00		439,00 0,00
Francois	Rothermel	pharmacist	N/A	29000,00	0,00	29000,00		0,00 0,00
Alfred	Lefevre	construction entrepreneur	178136,00	2168272,00	61700,00	2099597,00		6975,00 0,00
Nicolas	Biwer	construction entrepreneur	78600,00	940775,00	54500,00	818275,00		68000,00 0,00
Jean	Wecker- Hartz	tinsmith	12326,00	19080,00	13800,00	5280,00		0,00 0,00
owners from 1872								
owners from 1905								

Table 17: Sample of 20 owners. Origins and revenues from land sales.

4.4 2nd phase 1900s - late 1920's.

The rise of a new middle-class

Despite focusing here only on a sample including 20 owners, our analysis reflects some of the findings from neighbouring Dudelange (Ferreira Flores 2022). One of the most tangible social changes that came with the industrial development of Esch-sur-Alzette during this period was the increase in the number of people who disposed of private property.

In Esch, a similar transformation in the structure of land ownership is noticeable: the relative value of built properties is, because of the shift into an industrial setting, greater than that of undeveloped properties. Ferreira Flores (2022) is cautious in implying that this means that undeveloped land loses its value but rather suggests that:

In other words, in most cases, owning a house means owning a lot of land. (...) This change in the structure of land ownership, although it has enabled many people to become homeowners, has not put an end to the concentration of land ownership. [In Dudelange] In fact, it has created a small number of owners who share a tiny proportion of the total land available between them (Ferreira Flores 2022, 34).²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ **In the original:** «autrement dit , être propriétaire d'une maison signifiait dans la grande majorité des cas être un important propriétaire foncier. (...) Ce changement de la structure foncière, bien qu'il ait permis à de nombreuses personnes à devenir propriétaires, n'a pas mis fin à la concentration du foncier. En effet elle a créé des petits propriétaires qui se partagent entre eux une infime partie du foncier totale disponible. »

We are, because of the different nature of our enquiry, in the impossibility of stating whether the same was true for Esch. Only a look at the total population of owners and respective detention of land would allow such comparison. However, our sample of main landowners albeit indicating very different trajectories between them, hints at a diminishment, sometimes total dissipation of their owned surfaces. It is furthermore evident that by the early 20th century, the ideal of owning land had assumed a new role. Firstly, it was the ownership of a house which represented the bourgeois ideal of success. Secondly, land was regarded as an investment, less for its dimensions and profitability in terms what it could render as produce but rather for the possibilities of a real estate development, namely housing to sell or rent in a city craving for solutions to a housing crisis. Landowners, although the owning smaller surfaces, in 1905, controlled, nevertheless the urbanisation of a city as their property could at any time, if the geographical situation allowed, become developed property. This indicates above all the transition from an agricultural and livestock economy to an industrial economy (Ferreira Flores 2022, 28)²⁴⁵. This private property was also translated in the shape of workshops, stables, tileries, shops, mills, and places for storage of machinery used in many of the new professions.

The change of actors in terms of ownership of land reflects, the growth of city in population and economic importance brought along a series of new professionals, an educated upper-class with purchasing power. This was not restricted to the new middle classes who arrived in Esch, but also to a new subset of members of the working classes, who because specialized in their skills, earned salaries above the average unqualified worker. The sales of plots of land and built houses by Alfred Lefèvre and Nicolas Biver illustrates well the increasing standards of living that some qualified workers ascended to. In the period of our analysis, they sold around over 250 houses, and buildable plots to the most varied professionals, including artisans and skilled workers. From Lefèvre's transactions we see that he sold 170 parcels (mostly developable land and key-in-hand houses) to a varied clientele, mostly skilled workers, shopowners and innkeepers in the streets Victor Hugo, Brill, Rue de la Poste, Rue des Champs, Rue des Argentins, all streets surrounding the commercial centre but also in the proximity of the industrial sites. In-depth research into the identities of these buyers could help, at a further stage, identifying their social and geographical origins.

The notaries and notary clerk, in our sample, play an interesting role, as they were among those who, *against the tide* and tendency to sell, most invested in land by slowly gathering assets. Whereas farmers

²⁴⁵**In the original :** « Les détenteurs de foncier, bien que la valeur relative de leurs propriétés ait diminué, contrôlent l'urbanisation d'une ville et leurs biens peuvent à tout moment, si la situation géographique le permet, devenir des propriétés aménagées. Ceci indique surtout le passage d'une économie agricole et d'élevage vers une économie basée sur l'industrie »

slowly dissolved their landed assets, notaries took rather the (opposite) investment path. This countertendency was likely facilitated by the nature of their profession and connections which granted them an exclusive access to the intimacy of families as well as an eye for the property and development market. Charles Laval, and Michel Rousseau are two examples which we will be looking into detail. Victor Wolff the notary who preceded Charles Laval in Esch (in office between 1865-1874) retired to Diekirch his hometown. His children sold all his assets in Esch, upon his death namely to Charles Laval, Michel Rousseau (notary and notary clerk respectively) and François Rothermel, the pharmacist.

With generations passing, the tendency, however, even among traditional Eschois, was to sell parcels further. Although it would have been an impossible task to follow the fate of each parcel divided among members of the same family, it is enough to follow the main heir to see how the property in the hands of the family gradually shrinks. By way of example, the case of the heirs Peporté- Vandyck (Pierre Peporté-Vandyck). Their inherited land parcels were fractioned and sold among other farmers in Esch, which meant a considerable amount of land stayed in the hand of Eschois.

We then observe individuals who not only invested in land over the decades that span from the mid-19th to the early 20th century but who also resisted selling to the industry. This is the case of the Buchholtz²⁴⁶ family, who managed to gather significant landed assets and hold to them, up until as late as 1924. In the same vein, the construction entrepreneurs Lefèvre and Biver, new middle-class “outsiders”²⁴⁷ also made spectacular profits, principally, from sales to private owners. Lefèvre, had rather modest professional and landownership *debuts*, but he rised quickly to be one of the wealthiest entrepreneurs in Esch-sur-Alzette, if not in the whole country. Nicolas Biver came from a merchant family in the north of Luxembourg had benefited without doubt of his marriage to the daughter of Jacques Weinand, a farmer/landowner of considerable resources. However, it needs to be acknowledged that both Buchholtz and Lefèvre largely made their fortunes also thanks to side business with the iron industry. Buchholtz, through the wholesale or ironmongery goods and Lefèvre for being no less than the number one contractor to whom the newly built ARBED outsourced a great deal of their smaller and bigger infrastructure works.

²⁴⁶ The Buchholtz initially arrived in Esch from Moesdorf (Northeastern Luxembourg). Antoine Buchholtz was a border control agent.

²⁴⁷ Lefèvre came from near Liège in Belgium and Biver from Vianden, in northern Luxembourg.

m2	annual rental income (francs)	Number of plots of land	Surname	Name	Profession
7526	887506	16	Biwer	Nicolas	construction entrepreneur
16515	738554	33	Lefevre	Alfred	construction entrepreneur
81066	612449	26	Wecker	Jean	tinsmith
2764	455751	11	Bettendorf	Victor	merchant
19105	440228	10	Kremer	Pierre	innkeeper
729945	434907	11	Muller	Hubert	engineer/director steel plant
54190	353963	27	Garcon	Jean Pierre	butcher
270	350256	1	Muller	Lodewyck et Edward	millers
87774	343043	33	Stoffel	Jaques	?
994	325970	9	Leyder	Jean	merchant
3348	320673	9	Schuler	Henri (the widow)	merchant
473	320449	3	Folschette	Nicolas	entrpeneur
515	305489	3	Cresto	Jean	innkeeper
1975	279375	6	Stoltz	Jean Pierre	butcher
3006	268253	10	Origer	Joseph	printer
390	255370 ?		Gillain	Edmond	merchant
910	250947	4	Rousseau	Daniel	judge
60792	246503	17	Schockmel	Michel	butcher
1800	245709	5	Olivo	Moise	innkeeper
36404	243078	35	Schreiner	Nicolas	innkeeper

Table 18: 1905 - Top 20 private owners in Esch-sur-Alzette, based on annual rental income deriving from landed assets.

4.4.1 Analysis of the aggregated data on totality of sales and partition transactions

The aggregated data for the overall period here under analysis provides still with another set of interesting data.

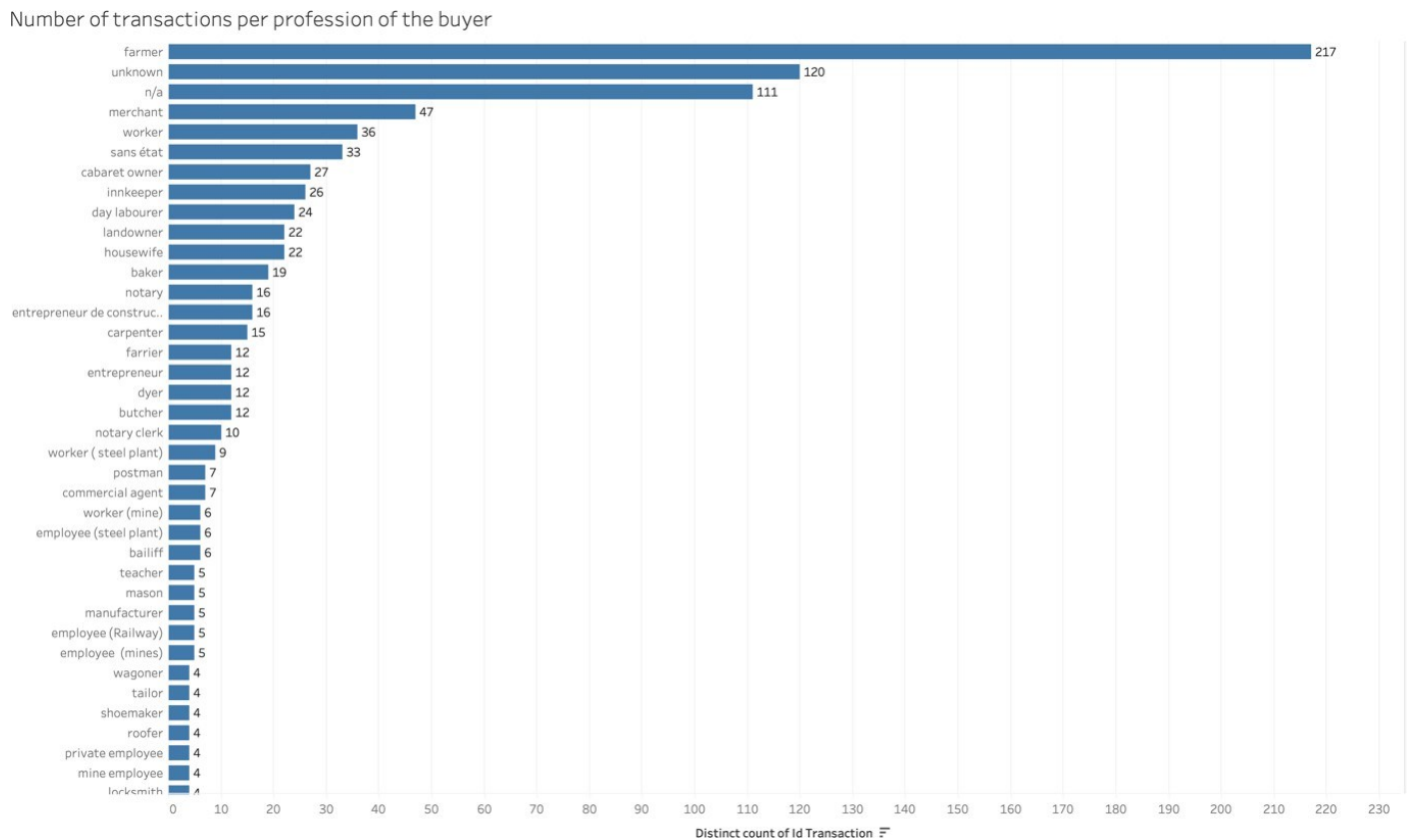


Figure 9: Most represented professional backgrounds in sales/acquisitions/partitions (period 1842-1905).

The count of the most represented professional occupations throughout our analysis period shows that farmers were involved in a significant number of transactions. This is also due to the fact that we looked into more transactions taking place during the first phase. The graph clearly shows the difficulty in ascertaining the profession of many individuals, at times not stated, at times performed by individuals whose identity was not possible to identify on the basis of the little extra information given about him/her. The instances (111) where professions were non applicable (n/a) appears, refer to transactions registered

in the name of companies. We denote indeed how the lower and middle cases are less represented, fact that we can also attribute to having focused more on the first phase of transactions.

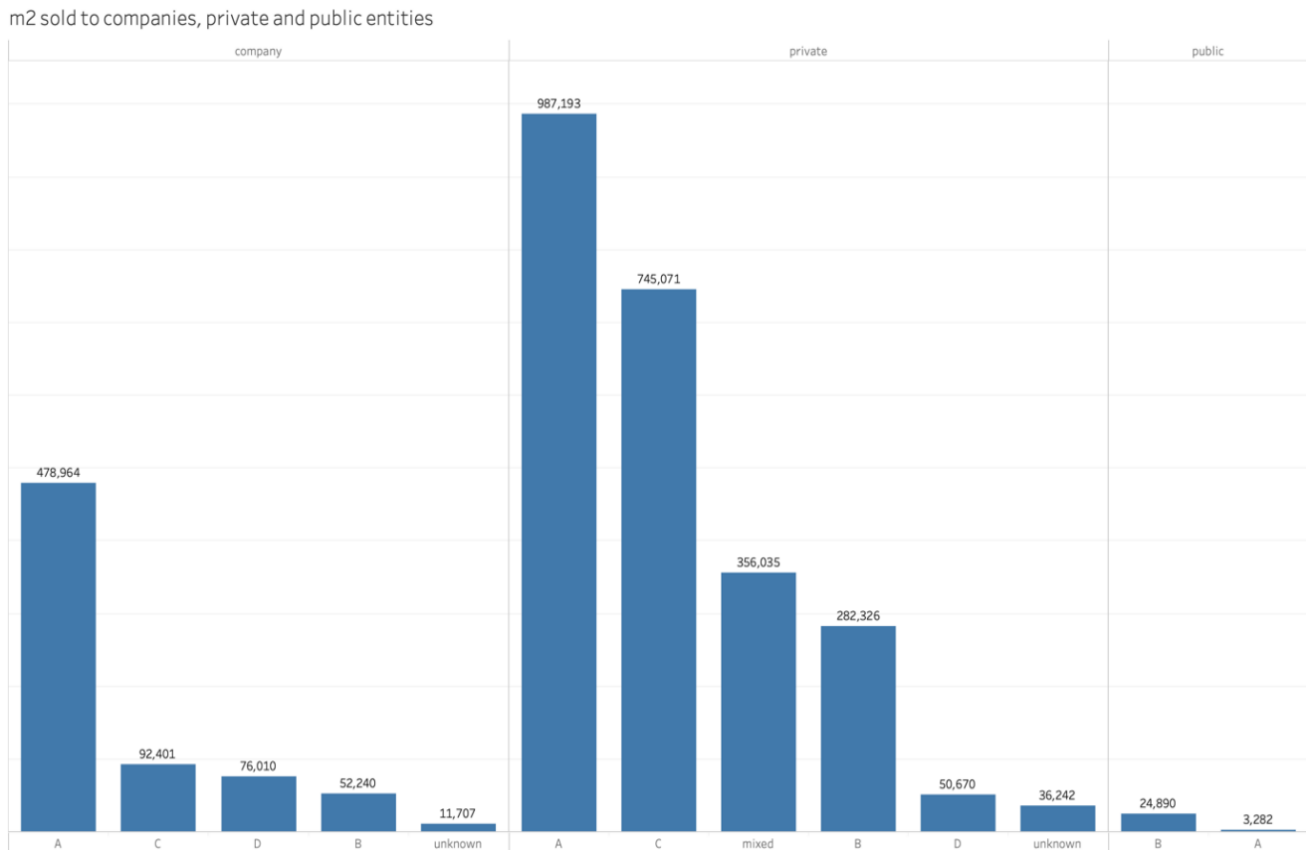


Figure 10- Sum of square meters per section for partitions and sales, incurred by the sample of 20 landowners.

We see from the above-mentioned graph a clear demarcation of section A in which concerns the total number of square meters involved in sales and partitions. It serves to demonstrate as well that sales and partitions transactions took place mostly in Section A, especially in which concerns transactions between private individuals. “Mixed” refers to partitions where it was not possible to establish in which of the sections each of the parcels were located at. It is at this stage difficult to establish whether ownership on section C and D (in the outskirts of the city center), was indeed “safeguarded” in the hands of individual owners because more profitable (in the case of labourable land, woods, or iron ore) and thus meeting the Dudelage hypothesis as well, or whether simply most land detained, was irrespective of its value, placed on section A to begin with. In fact, section A was the densest. The total area of the Esch sections was 2158 hectares in 1842, 2146 hectares in 1872 and 1380 hectares in 1905. The fact that the area shrinks

considerably between 1872 and 1905 is certainly due to the "loss" of land to Schiffflange, which became an independent commune and section in 1876. Since transactions among private owner dominated the sales/acquisition scene it is also not surprising that most square meters were accumulated in section A, also for transactions between private owners. Another remark relates to the almost insignificant square meters sold from our top landowners to public institutions (The State or the municipality) which comes also to corroborate the narrative of the difficulty the municipality had in finding land in the decades to come (see Part IV).

The following bar chart comes shed further light on the above, demonstrating that an overwhelming number of sales and partitions took place chiefly among private individuals.

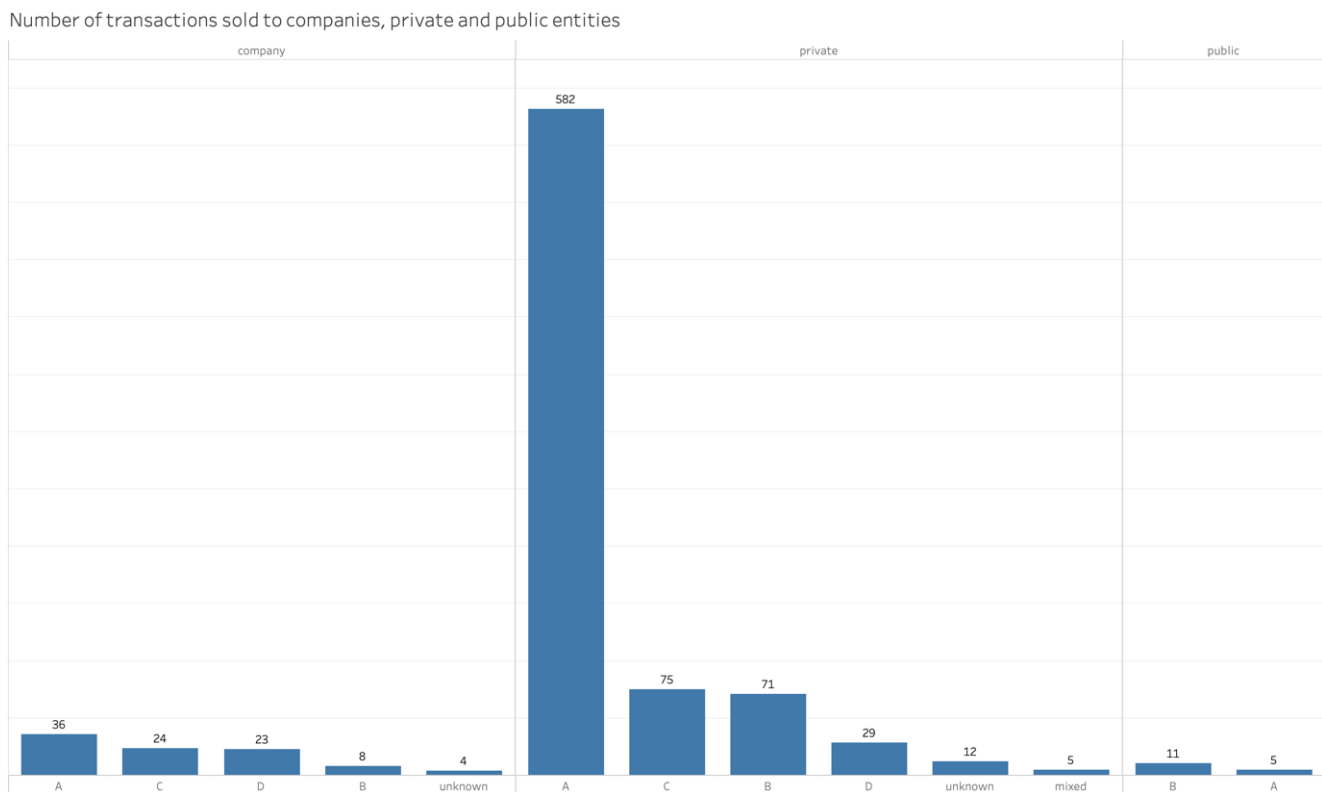


Figure 11: Count of transactions behind partitions and sales, in each section by type of transaction.

4.5 Families' case studies

The interpretation of macro statistics with the complementarity of micro histories, allows for an understanding of the diversity of decisions related to landownership and its transmission. In fact, it can be claimed there are no linear patterns but rather clues which allow to conjecture why different families took different directions and decisions with regards with their landed ownership.

The *Etat de mutation* files reveal that transactions between private owners and industrial companies were already in place in the period prior to the 1870's. Such is the case of companies like the Metz & Cie., who had been already well implanted in Eich²⁴⁸ and who can be said to have the percussors of the transformation of iron and steel in the country. Their eastern sparing partners were the Collart brothers, a family of industrialists from Bettembourg who had already a plant in Steinfort, right at the border with Belgium. German companies, like Dilligen and the Société de Forges de Saarbrücken were also naturally present in the country, presence facilitated for being members of the *Zollverein*, the economic union with Germany then in place. Rivalries between iron ore directors were not visible yet. In fact, Dominique Léopold Brasseur²⁴⁹ himself (notary with interests in the iron ore business) sold land parcels to Leon Metz.

Transactions with the industrial players were also obviously a natural way of making more income, but the analysis of our source hints this might have been a more widespread a practice more common among by lower-income owners rather than “by” the historical families in Esch.

It was thus not unusual that traditional farmer families sold to the extended family, while making concessions to some industrial actors as well (there seems to have been no preference for Luxembourgish, German or Belgian companies).

SCHMIT-CLEES (HAMILIUS), Jacques, municipal tax collector (1824 - 1908)

The son of a farrier, and twice a widower, Jacques Schmit had 8 children from his first wife (Maria Clees) of which, only two survived him. Upon J. Schmit Clees (Hamilius) death in 1908, both his children sold part of their heritage soon after he passed away. Another part of land, belonging to his second wife,

²⁴⁸ A pioneer industrial district of Luxembourg city.

²⁴⁹ His half-brother Pierre Brasseur was to become the founder of the Brasseur Schmelz

Catherine Hamilius, was split among her family, since no children resulted from her marriage with Jacques Schmit.

One of his heirs was Nicolas Schmit, merchant in Cologne and the other Mathilde Schmitz, widow of merchant Charles Schmitz with residence in Luxembourg. Whereas Mathilde Schmitz inherited mostly land in Section A (city center) without selling it, she immediately proceeded to the sale of more than 1 hectare of land in Lallange (Section B) for 1 cent/centiare to the Société Metz et Compagnie.

Nicolas Schmit, for his part, sold most of the inherited land from the C section to farmers, merchants and forest wardens and one parcel in the A section (auf Brouch) to the *Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks A.G.* The fact both heirs they resided outside of Esch may have contributed to the decision to sell most of their assets.

ZEIMES (Michel, 1806-1866 et Nicolas, 1815-1866), les héritiers

Their total surface in 1868 amounted to 217082 square meters (141818 Michel and 75264, Nicolas respectively) with revenues amounting to 1005 francs (total of the two). Farmers in Esch, the brothers Michel and Nicolas, die just days away from each other in September 1866 (with all likelihood of cholera, which decimated the Esch and Schiffflange population in the years of 1866 and 1867). Michel had been the wealthiest but left no children. Nicolas' wife, Anne Hubert also succumbed (the same year). The inheritance passed (in straight line of succession) to their five (out of seven) surviving children. Some of the children were still minors at the time, and thus placed under the tutoring of J. P. Laux another well-off farmer. A closer look into the way the division of landed property was done reveals that one child was left out the inheritance. Louise Zeimes, who at the time was no longer a minor was the only married sibling. It could thus be hypothesized that the existence of a husband would be enough to "cater for her".

All the other children received a portion of land that did not differ meaningfully in terms of value (annual income), with one exception. One brother, an emigrant in the USA, got considerably less surface of lesser value, but took the occasion to sell to other private owners in the same month in which the succession act took place. All the surviving children slowly sold their landed property (probably advised by their legal tutor either because the, in the case of Marie and Catherine they got married around the same time). The last trace of their respective transactions show they remained with equal shares of land in both surface and revenues (around 3000 m² each). Catherine Zeimes moved back to Luxembourg with her primary teacher husband, Adam Molitor whereas Marie probably also moved to her husband's village of Steinfort.

The Zeimes family evolution of land transmission contains in it the different fates of land in Esch. To start with, the sadly common tragedy of a family hit by cholera. It was luck, rather than any other merit that made the nephews and nieces of Michel Zeimes (the most affluent of the two brothers) inherit their share

of land, but their “luck” too came accompanied by the early death of both parents. Whereas one Zeimes son emigrated to the USA, to the commercial artery of Chicago²⁵⁰, to trade musical instruments, the other male survivors stayed on become farmers and continue in the family’s traditional trades. The females all married men from outside Esch.

This is one of the cases where children seem to have inherited a fair split, proportionally but also concrete evidence of how the land left for the most the Zeimes family to go into the hands of other Eschois families, some of which with whom they had ties. To a lesser extent, the family also sold to the industrial companies.

The Laval Family – Charles Léon Laval, notary (1846-1920)

At the beginning of the industrialisation in Esch-sur-Alzette the eminent Laval family from Luxembourg city owned circa 10 hectares of land, sited in section A, in and around the city center and in what would become one of the most coveted areas of the city, *im Mees* (in the Brill neighbourhood). This area is about to become among the most interesting both for commercial and residential purposes, for its strategic positioning in the city. Auguste Laval was the brother of Charles Laval, notary to be in residence in Esch. Their respective transactions develop in different directions though. Whereas Auguste Laval, prominent lawyer and, not least, president of the Chamber of Deputies in Luxembourg City, slowly sold the totality of his land surface throughout the next 50 years. On the contrary, Charles Laval focused rather on buying land.

Auguste and Charles were both the sons of the President of Luxembourg’s civil court, Jean Antoine Laval²⁵¹. Their father owned an extensive surface of land in Esch. By the time of Jean Antoine’s death in 1868, surprisingly, the totality of his property owned in Esch passed on, exclusively, to his older son, Jean Auguste.

Within a family, differences could be made between the siblings, although in this instance one cannot know whether Charles, the youngest, also inherited land, from his father, perhaps elsewhere. It is all the most incomprehensible that Charles Laval did not inherit any parcel in Esch-sur-Alzette, given that he would eventually set an office and build his life in Esch, where his elder brother already owned a surface the equivalent of circa 10 hectares.

It cannot be excluded either that he may have benefited from some sort of financial compensation instead. In any event, upon his arrival to take office in Esch, Charles Laval starts off with just 780 m². He initially

²⁵⁰ (Chicago’s Independent Research Library 2023)

²⁵¹ He was also to become the first Chief Magistrate of the *Department des Forêts* under Napoleon’s rule.

invested in the acquisition of the landed assets of his predecessor, the notary Victor Wolff, by then dead and whose heirs, based in Mondorf, sold most of their remaining property to Charles Laval. The parcels included a park and the house of his predecessor. The house was named Laval “castle”, a pompous building in a typical architectural exercise of emulation of the nobility:

With its turret, rusticated stone facade, and picturesque silhouette, Villa Laval had the appearance of a small chateau. At the time, it was one of the last houses in Bredewee. (...) introducing a new architectural style compared with the traditional town buildings, it was bound to make a strong impression on the people of Esch. It should not be forgotten that, alongside the priest, mayor and schoolmaster, the notary enjoyed great authority, which was also reflected in the architecture of his home and his office (Buchler et al. 2020, 219).²⁵²

Charles Laval inherited thus his predecessor’s clientele but insured he would buy the house and park around it (Chateau Laval, 1950m²). Small dimensions but major revenues, as in 1870 his 780 square meters rendered him, 408 francs. Charles Laval built up his own fortune and invested more than he perceived in land sales, although his profits were not neglectable.

But it is without doubt his brother, president of the Chambre des Députés and resident in Luxembourg city who had the monopoly of the family’s landownership in Esch and who made most of his profits through sales to the municipality and to a variety of merchants and business owners in the Brill Street.²⁵³ Whereas Auguste Laval left his inheritance to be split among his male sons (one engineer in Eich, the other Secretary General at the ARBED Dudelange), his brother Charles Laval had two daughters. Both were suitably married to industrial heirs, his daughter Marthe, to the Baron d’Huart, who owned porcelain industries in Longwy and Paris, his youngest daughter equally well married into the Müller-Tesch family and their youngest heir René. Marthe ceded her rights to the land for 250000 francs on the same year of the death of the father (1920) to her sister and brother-in-law.

Whereas the heirs of Auguste Laval in both Eich and Dudelange slowly sold a big part of their land surface to different merchants, artisans and construction entrepreneurs, René Müller Laval appears to have left his inherited land intact at least up until the 1930s where our analysis stops, as the records show no action from his side.

²⁵² Auguste Laval-Metz, lawyer, and industrialist (member of the board of Directors of the ARBED) was first elected to the Chamber in 1878, In 1902, he became President of the Civil Court, like his father before him. He was elected President of the Chamber in 1905.

²⁵³ The beginning of the 1910s decade marks the big rush to secure a commercial place at the heart of the city (Rue de l’Alzette, later split into Rue de l’Alzette and Rue de la Poste). Artisans and merchants all looked at buying or increasing their surface place in the commercial artery of the city.

The Buchholtz brothers, merchants

Daniel (1841-1910) and Sébastien Buchholtz (1846-1926) both married into families with a long history of property ownership, one from Esch (Sébastien married Hélène Jost) and the other from Schiffflange (Daniele Buchholtz married Thérèse Arendsdorff). These marriages were unquestionably contributed to their success, as it was their land holdings that enabled them to develop their investments in their respective businesses.

It is interesting to note that, of the two, Daniel Buchholtz was the one with more investments and financial returns, based on their transactions and property income. In fact, Sébastien Buchholtz first appeared as a baker in the early 1870s, but it was not until 1884 that he became officially documented as a "merchant". Their fortunes were built around brewing and the ironmongery trade, where the presence of the different industrial plants can only have had a positive impact on business. Unlike so many other Eschois families, they rarely sold land to industry. In more than half a century of transactions analysed, for Daniel Buchholtz, there was only one transaction in which a plot of land and a house were sold to the Aachener Hütten Verein for the sum of 4,000 francs. The latter took place in 1894. This would seem to be in line with the hypothesis of certain families being able to have grown rich thanks to the presence of industry, but without ever directly engaging in finding jobs in the factories. The 'social ascent' of the Buchholtz's continued through the successful marriages of Daniel Buchholtz's children (namely with the sons of notaries, doctors, and merchants).

Albert Buchholtz, Daniel's eldest son, sold all his plots of land to his sisters and brothers-in-law in 1924 for a total of 450,000 francs. Revenues associated with his landed assets were estimated at 11,190,90 francs, in 1924.

Jean Weinand-Pettinger, farmer (1839-1882)

At the death of his father in 1847, the partition only takes place in 1868. His mother married twice, second time with Balthasar Schmiedler a mason who already figured as a mid-range landowner, according to the records of the matrice in 1872.—Jean Weinand Pettinger first appears as owner in 1868 and is the only surviving child of the couple Hilgert-Weinand. He starts off with a surface of 4.92,04 hectares. His half siblings got less in terms of inherited land 1,5 hectares and by then they were both emigrated in the USA, Kansas and Missouri respectively. In fact, in 1870, the Schmiedler brothers (half siblings to Weinand Pettinger) through an auction and a donation conceded more land to Jean Weinand.

His investments show that most of the land sold by him was directed at either the Railway companies²⁵⁴ and three of the most prominent industrial companies present in Esch at the time, the *Société de Quint*, les *Hauts Forneaux Luxembourgeois* and later the *Aachener Hutten Verein*.

Jean-Adam Laux, farmer (1797-1872)

Jean Adam Laux was among the top landowners both in terms of surface and revenues in the 1870's. The Laux property was split equally among the surviving children, which were all women by the time of his death in 1872.

His daughters were married to: Françoise Laux to Pierre Niclou another Esch farmer, Anne Marie Laux to Jean Mattes a teacher of German origin and finally Caroline Laux was unmarried but mother of an illegitimate son.

The destiny of their property was like many of the others here under scrutiny that a of landed property that gradually became more fractioned, even though it stayed in Esch. There were also a few sales to the industry. According to our analysis all the surface Laux owned at inception, was eventually auctioned to smaller Esch farmers and merchants.

Michel Rousseau, notary clerk (1838-1908)

Michel Rousseau was a notary clerk who married twice. First to Louise Klopp, daughter of a wealthy hotelier in Esch and then to a daughter of farmer (Klensch). His children all had access to an education path and eventually established themselves as liberal professionals: Auguste Rousseau was notary in Clervaux, Daniel Rousseau was a judge, in Luxembourg city and Remich Charles was an accountant in Esch. Only Léon became a merchant and married into a family of agrarian stock in Esch (Kayser). By the time of his death, in 1908 Michel Rousseau had “steadily” gathered almost 4,5 hectares of land (and estimated annual rental income of 20.877 francs), land that his children sold in public auction two years after his death.

²⁵⁴ Most of the land transactions involving the Railway Companies, be it Chemins de Fer Prince Henri or Guillaume were either not registered or when registered price was seldom mentioned. This may be because such transactions were tax exempted and hence of no interest for the administration to register.

Jean Wecker-Hartz (1855-1914), tinsmith

Jean Wecker Hartz represents the successful self-made man tale. In 1879 he starts off with buying two plots of land of 187 m² which included a house, a garden, and a warehouse. Throughout the following 30 years his investments in houses and plots of land for development are steady as he buys from other farmers, artisans, and traders of the old Esch. Occasionally he sells as well, equally to others artisans, to family and members of the lower middle classes with such as teachers.

His business fortune certainly allowed for his subsequent investments in land. In 1905 in a major auction “blitz” he accumulates up to 5 hectares by buying up from smaller farmers, artisans, day labourers and merchants . These parcels were composed of houses and developable land his family would later (post 1930s) put up for sale in coveted areas of the city, for residential development such as the *Nonnenwisen* neighbourhood, the Route de Belvaux, Rue du Parc, Rue Large, Rue du Brouch, the *auf der Acht*. Other assets in the very heart of the city, such as the charming Rue du Parc and Im Doff, the old city centre was kept within the children of the family.

Some of his investments were particularly fruitful, take an 1840 m² plot he had bought from a farmer family for 2500 francs and resold to a commercial agent (probably acting on behalf of company), only 5 years after, in 1909, for a profit of 138000 (fivefold what he had bought it for). Aside from this exceptional transaction, Wecker Hartz’s investment history is characterized by an exclusive preference for engaging with private individuals rather than companies. Moreover, rare were the traditional Esch families who managed not only to accumulate such an outstanding dimension (by 1936 the Wecker Harz’s heirs still owned 74416m² of land) but who also held tight to their assets for over half a century. By the time of succession and partition, the almost totality of their assets was split among the surviving children. His children gave, furthermore, continuity to a business of ironmongery, another was an engineer whereas the female daughters married other landed families in Esch.

Alfred Lefèvre, construction entrepreneur (1866-1958)

The words Quiqueret (Quiqueret 2022) used to describe Alfred Lefèvre’s success resonate just right when confronted to any other wealthy Eschois: “insolent”, a slap in the face to all those seeking success and new business ventures in the industrial city.

Alfred Lefèvre arrives in Esch to work as a mason for the Brasseur plant in 1889, for the next 50 years he will build a construction empire in Esch and Luxembourg city. His masonry skills and contact network

made him undoubtedly the most successful businessman in Esch and Luxembourg of the time. He started with modest landed assets, by 1898, first time he appears as an owner in the Register of Deeds he owns 37.58m², 1 plots of land and 3 houses bought from his farmer neighbours.

For the purposes of this analysis we dealt only with the landed assets registered under his name. From the Register of deeds, however, we learn that he had a sister company with business partner Nicolas Folschette as well other entries under his and his family's name.

Alfred Lefèvre prospected land from farmers, merchants, and innkeepers. His total investment in land (1,781,36 francs) paid off quickly, by 1909 he had amortized such investment with gains of 1,819,40 francs in sales. In the period between 1909-1923 his sales skyrocket to an impressive figure 21,462,97 francs.

Alfred Lefèvre incarnates a new way to relate to the land, during the period under analysis. In fact, he never accumulated a surface bigger than 4 hectares and virtually all land he bought was set aside for investments, namely housing. His clientele was varied, from qualified workers (the ones who could afford a housing solution of their own and not one provided by the company itself), low and upper middle classes professions, businessmen, tradesmen and the bourgeoisie. By way of example, the notary Gantenbein's house, an example of sophisticated architecture that one can still appreciate in Esch today. In the span of 25 years, he made housing accessible to hundreds of people from the working class to the local bourgeoisie. After a un understandable stagnant activity during the 2nd World War years, by 1945 he still owned 8861 m² in Esch and had an annual rental income estimated at 12, 990,80 francs.

4.5.1 Continuity and change

Traditional forms of landownership may have seemed threatened with extinction by industrialisation, but a closer look shows that strategies were put in place to save existent lifestyles and influence from disappearing. We saw above how the industrial companies were interested in specific areas of the city rich in iron ore. Moreover, it was not only the richness of the soil that interested the industry. As the population grew, so did the need for housing and land for development to meet the needs of the workforce. One aspect that emerges from the analysis is that there is no reason to believe that owners tried to take advantage of their position to speculate on prices, based on the increasing appetite for land shown by the industrial actors. The prices they got paid for, were, for the most, in line with the average prices practiced with private citizens for the same amounts of land surface, and proportional to their revenue potential as indicated by the tax class of each parcel. What had also been sometimes suggested by historiography, that

owners were unaware of the real value of their land also does not seem to correspond to the truth. The discussions at the level of the Parliament and the many petitions circulating are evidence. On the contrary, as the recent research in Dudelange as shown (Ferreira Flores, 2022), the major landowners tended to sell their least valuable (in terms of rental income) land possessions to industrial companies, safeguarding for themselves the land that was still arable and productive for agriculture, cattle feeding and wood cutting purposes. Industrial companies unquestionably disrupted traditional forms of relating to the land, however not completely. Their emergence rather provided a new source of capital to traditional landowners and did not encounter resistance, for most of the owners on our sample. This was the case for the first phase which also conflated with the implementation of the first blast furnaces in the city.

Undoubtedly the *intra muros* Eschois also, tended to ensure that land in the city centre remained in the hands of the near, extended family or at most within their acquaintances. What is more, the investigation demonstrates is that it was principally the process of industrialisation which guarantees some of the agrarian middle classes of the population a continuity in their revenues. Indeed, industrialisation provides people, with the possibility of “staying put” along with other strategies, as may have been the right marriage. What may come across as paradoxical is that, among the agrarian middle class this relationship did not entail having to go and work in the factories (even if white-collar). Instead, the industry allowed them to reinvent some of their old jobs, or in fact resort to a side activity. These findings do not wish to challenge Fehlen’s (Fehlen 2009) paradigm of the *farmer- turned industrial worker- turned employee*. They rather bring only if slight, some novelty to it since, they serve as evidence that the same process did not occur within the better off agrarian middle classes or at least not at the same pace as that of their lower agrarian counterparts from elsewhere in the Grand-Duchy. The Baron de Tornaco’s views bring useful insight again on the distinctions among the agrarian substrata.

Does Mr. Prüm²⁵⁵ want to turn them into small farmers, into Kreutzbauer [sic]? But this is the most pitiful class in our country, our fellahs [sic]. Every day, we see them selling their property to become more mobile, to be able to become industrial workers more easily, who earn much more, who are in a much better position than the Kreutzbauer [sic]²⁵⁶ (Intervention of Baron de Tornaco at the Chamber of Deputies, 14 December 1898).²⁵⁷

Among traditional owners, the relationship towards the industrial shift did not necessarily take the shape of an active resistance but was neither that of an attitude that, we argue, was based on the idea (I) of the

²⁵⁵ Émile Prüm, industrialist and mayor, MP for the circumscription of Clervaux (North).

²⁵⁶ **In the original:** M.Prüm veut-il en faire des petits cultivateurs, des Kreutzbauer. Mais c'est là la classe la plus à plaindre de notre pays, c'est notre fellah. Chaque jour, on en voit vendre leur bien pour devenir plus mobilier, pour pouvoir plus à leur aise devenir ouvriers d'industrie, qui gagnent bien plus, qui sont dans une position bien plus aisé que le Kreutzbauer.

²⁵⁷ C. R., 1898-1899, 14 December 1898, p.67.

acceptance of a presumable common good that everyone would benefit from. It was rather a process that they, in the period comprised the 1870s and the early 20th century, embraced to their own individual as well as family's benefit. They ceded enough land to the industrial companies, admittedly those which were less profitable. And they went on benefiting from a hybrid form of capitalism which allowed them to a) make enough money from their sales on the one hand, whilst perpetuating marriage strategies which would compensate for land lost in the succession processes and b) add secondary activities and trades that became available to them through the presence of industrial companies. These took the shape of innkeeping, renting rooms, houses or simply by selling them to a new population with enough purchase power. Last but not the least some of our farmers and merchants also resorted to economic side activities like innkeeping, selling coal, ironmongery, or still by becoming mechanics, waggoners, transporters (something for which the use of horses was essential). The turn of the century marked the shift into new or transformed professions:

We have seen trades transformed in the country, with great benefits. The carpenter has become a cabinetmaker, and cabinetmaking is, so to speak, a Luxembourg career (...) The mechanic is the old locksmith. We no longer make locks, we manufacture them. But alongside this, there is a mass of other work. Go out into the countryside and you'll be amazed to see that the old blacksmiths have become mechanics. Thanks to the fact that agricultural machinery is multiplying in the Grand Duchy, mechanics have found a job here that they might not have found elsewhere. This is a trade that is making a comeback. (Intervention of C.M.Spoo, 16 February 1897²⁵⁸ at the Parliament).²⁵⁹

Such capacity to reinvent themselves did not prevent other landed families from simply dying out. This happened because either they left no offspring or, when did, on the contrary, land had to be shared between several siblings. There is evidence of individuals choosing other environments, places to live, without it being possible to here establish a pattern on what may have been decisions of different nature. But it is the marriage alliances that better proof the intention to keep on living the way they always had, by marrying families of the same "pedigree", families who could add land to their own, in some cases - as it had already been the case in a pre-industrial setting- marrying outsiders who could offer a continuity in social status (such as teachers). Farmers and merchants therefore explored ways of perpetuating their wealth and status either by marrying into other landowner families of the region or by marrying newcomers to Esch stemming from the new middle class of civil servants or the liberal professions such as notaries and doctors or individuals whose businesses were successful. Another noticeable aspect at the

²⁵⁸ CR. 1897-1898, 16 February 1897, p.1961.

²⁵⁹ **In the original** : Nous avons vu des métiers se transformer dans le pays et donner de grands bénéfices. Le menuisier est devenu ébéniste, l'ébénisterie est pour ainsi dire une carrière luxembourgeoise (...) Le mécanicien est l'ancien serrurier. On ne fait plus de serrures, on les fabrique. Mais à côté, il y a une masse d'autres travaux. Passez un peu dans les campagnes ; vous serez étonnés de voir que les anciens forgerons sont devenus des mécaniciens. Il y a des machines à vapeur, des appareils multiples, grâce à cette circonstance que les machines agricoles se multiplient dans le Grand-Duché, le mécanicien a trouvé chez nous un emploi qu'il n'aurait peut-être pas rencontré ailleurs. Voilà un métier qui remonte.

level of family relationships is a slow shift into marrying families of state employees (like teachers). Furthermore, what our analysis shows is that very rarely did landowners, and their offspring have to engage with professions within the industry, exception made, in our sample, of sons of notaries and notaries clerk who accessed the higher ranks of the industry, by becoming engineers or managers in the plants. Nevertheless, they already belonged to a higher educated stratum before the industrial turn. Notaries were among the prestigious type of profession whose allure did not fade, and who happened to be the ones who better adapted to a new social order. Among the upper classes the families of notaries totally absorbed the new liberal industrial order, not only did they invest in the industry as they married into families stemming from the industrial world. Finally, they also allowed for their own male sons to be educated with the prospect of a profession within the managing circles of the industrial south, often accompanied by a fruitful marriage as well. They had to adapt to an era where their own services and profession was more and more threatened by the emergence and ubiquity of banks. They also faced an increasingly backlash from public opinion. The notaries appear to have managed the transition from *community* to *society* better. Their contacts, networks and prestige were simply transferred from the old to the new players. As much as farmers and people used to work the land across Luxembourg preferred to sail across the ocean to find their own piece of land, rather than staying in the home country doing a job that was totally foreign to them, the Esch population who lived off agriculture, especially landowners took to strategies of land transmission which allowed to keep their status and standards of living. The price to pay was, nevertheless an ever-growing fractioning of the already small estates they owned. Landowners did not hinder urban nor industrial development, but they were not lured either by immediate fortunes. Their selling strategies varied from one to another. Those whose descendants had no longer a “foot” in Esch reached more revenues with sales to the industrial companies, something which a no longer existent connection to Esch’s territory may help explain why. This also does not exclude the fact that many of them secured, even if small, some real estate in city’s section A, a secure investment for future sales or renting.

Within our sample there was a rather equilibrated share of sales (in profits made! but not in the number of transactions nor in square meters) to the companies and to other Eschois, proof that they did not resist the presence of the industry but resorted to set aside land that could remain accessible to their kin and family. The parcels which stayed in the city tended to be the more valuable although only an in-depth quantification exercise could verify this further. Among the newcomer top owners (post 1905) the relationship to land was different. There is evidence of a long-term investment cycle which involved a great turnover of land. They bought, built upon, and promptly resold, a strategy some of them kept until

the post Second World War. The success stories of Biwer and Lefèvre are the demonstration that they only indirectly need the industry, which provided them with clients for their homes in coveted areas of the city. Wecker-Harz, another self-made business man, exemplifies how the land accumulated over the years proved to be a spectacular investment.

The professional opportunities arising elsewhere led to both a social and geographic mobility, outside Esch and thus the decision of leaving (also) their land behind. We saw how in the 1st phase of analysis emigration was also responsible for hastened sales of land. The realm of agriculture is thus dissipated by the arrival of modernity in the shape of an education system which quickly spread to cater for an increasing wider population. Professions and different worlds mingle more easily as a result of the urbanization process.

It will be argued that the agrarian middle class, played an active role in the urban development, together with the new middle classes, as the former allowed through its proactive sales to construction entrepreneurs, to the development of the Brill neighbourhood and its subsequent transformation into the commercial heart of the city. The Brill and the Brouch (section A, city center) also where the lower, albeit qualified working classes secured a living place and the *bourgeois* ideal of owning a house. More research would be needed into whether this classifies as a democratization of a universal access to housing, which our data seems to insufficiently attend. Indeed, farmers sold to construction entrepreneurs who developed housing, but housing which was undoubtedly not affordable to anyone. Could this come in the direction of what Ferreira Flores advances as a refusal to concede land for development for fear of an “invasion” of the working class? Without more quantifiable data it is not possible to contend whether Esch obeyed to the same logic. What is nevertheless revealing is that houses of a dignified dimension (139 m²²⁶⁰ in the case of those sold by Nicolas Biwer), were made available mostly to Luxembourgers or even immigrants with enough purchase power. With regards to whether there was an intentional obstruction to the development of specific areas for housing development is something that only more research could assist in verifying. Neighborhoods like the Brill, but also other streets in Esch in fact demonstrate that in many streets mingling of different social strata happened (as also demonstrated by Leiner (Leiner 1994)). There is no doubt that even in areas of the city where it happened individuals found their way of socially distinguishing themselves from their peers, namely by means of the architectural choices. In Esch the

²⁶⁰ Average of all registered sales by Nicolas Biwer throughout the period 1898-1924 and taking into consideration houses of all standings sold to different population strata and professions.

latest in terms of architecture and decoration aesthetics often stood side by side or in any case close to the less prestigious housing and neighbourhoods.

Another important factor remains an open question. Could the old and the new middle classes have owned or invested in land in other parts of the country, thus contributing further to their affluence? Without access to the same source of the Land Registers to other parts of the country it is difficult to affirm it with certainty. With all likelihood, those from outside Esch already owned some land in their part of the country. A likelihood even more increased in those who were married outside Esch, as marriage brought, as seen, an automatic inheritance, safe for predispositions in the marriage contract defending against it. Occasionally the source of the Land Register let us glimpse that land was owned also elsewhere. By way of example, the partition act of notary Laval mentions that more land was owned in “Sanem, Differdange and Pontpierre”.²⁶¹

Finally, it was admittedly a silent player, more than the presence of the industry, which was responsible for the decay of the agrarian lifestyle and landed possessions. The civil code and the obligation of an equal partition among the sometimes, many siblings, determined- as much as the changes and challenges brought forward by industrialisation- the end of vaster concentrations of land. The shrinking of the average owned surface by 1905 being its ultimate manifestation.

Our landowners' sales in land help explain how they may have been as much dependent on the industry to monetize as they were on kinship and convenient marriage alliances to guarantee a continued landed capital. The latter, as insightfully observed by one of the journalists earlier on this chapter, remained “the true love” of the agrarian middle classes. These mixed origins of their capital sufficed for a period that was enough for the agrarian middle classes to avoid direct job occupations in the industrial plants.

This trend meant the end of a way of life in Esch, allowing however the former major landowners to benefit from profits/sales that could secure them a comfortable life without ever having to engage with or search for a job within the industry. Some of these landowners were too the reminiscent of an intransigent Catholicism, increasingly surrounded by left wing, socialist and republican ideals. Like their mentalities, the shift of *intramuros* into modernity took the time of two generations to follow suit. The old landowners continued to represent the interests of such families at the level of local power for a long time to come. At most, in terms of their social mobility they aspired to become respectable owners (*propriétaires*). Their existent wealth, however modest, resisted well the appearance of the industry. With aimed sales and

²⁶¹ Relevé des Actes nr.69.21. Relevé des Actes de Mutations contenant, contenant tous les actes translatifs de propriétés foncières enregistrés pendant l'année 1921, I trimestre, Administration du Cadastre et Topographie)

acquisitions, they continued securing some landed assets, particularly, in key areas of the city centre such as the Brill neighbourhood, Dellhöh, Wobrecken, areas known to be coveted by an increasing need for housing and business spaces. The state of play of the landowners in Esch, at the doors of the 20th century denotes a state of liminality, of an opportunist acceptance of the industry, albeit remaining reluctant in accepting many of the social changes arising from the urbanization process that came with it.

Change happened unquestionably but some continuity in traditional ways of life endured. It is therefore no surprise that landowners prior to the 1870's, also hung to traditional beliefs, political affiliations and religious allegiances, trying as much as they could to find a way to represent an old-world order both in the local and national institutions. This old order, struggled to survive in the context of the fast-growing industrial south. It is however undeniable that such order held a long grip on the rest of the (mostly rural) country for many decades to come. And thus, the difficulties in having some changes and laws passed such as the educational law of 1912²⁶² and an immense resistance to change in anything that could touch or alter the influence of the Church. By looking closer at other sources there is evidence that as political and local élite, for some of these landowners the industry did not mean the end to their "ruling". Some members, of this group adapted particularly well. A focus on landownership changes, spanning over fifty years is just a snippet of a wider reality that the figures alone cannot completely capture. How were daily lives shaped by the process of industrialisation is the question we will be dealing with in part IV, namely through an analysis of local power, relation of the city to the central power and sociability practices, among others.

Strategies in landownership may well explain why there was no need for a, at least direct involvement with the industry, but it is rather their involvement in local society and a strong sense of their identity that kept making *old Eschois* count. They had to make space to newcomers, who, albeit "outsiders" managed to make of their local involvement and investments their best ally in the path to become true respectable Eschois, thus creating a climate of intense social competition.

²⁶² The question of the teaching of Catholic religion in primary schools was bitterly debated between Catholic, Liberal and social-democratic political forces (see part III and IV).

The social identities of marriage partners [...] are among the most sensitive and acute indicators of community or class feelings. Who marries whom, without courting alienation or rejection from a social set, is an acid test of the horizons and boundaries of what each particular social set regards as tolerable and acceptable, and a sure indication of where that set draws the line of membership (Thompson 1990).

4.6 Analysing social (im)mobility and intergenerational trends

What emerges from the previous chapter is that although the study of land ownership hints at possible levels of wealth, a significant gap remains in research yet to be conducted on modalities of the relationship to the land, particularly in the South of Luxembourg. A more comprehensive understanding of the circumstances surrounding farming families in the south of Luxembourg is needed and can only be achieved through a more detailed analysis of land ownership patterns and the role of landed capital prior to the 1840s. The knowledge we have on how agriculture in Esch adapted to new markets, of supply-demand, what their production is also still insufficient.

Once again, the press sources reveal precious information as to how agriculture developed during the second half of the 19th century/beginning of the 20th century. This stems from an article on the 50th anniversary of the Esch Agricultural Association in 1935. Created in 1885, some of his founding members are familiar names from the land register, even though first names are not always mentioned, and surnames pose the ever-recurrent issue of linking them to the right branch of these families, whose names were frequent in Esch. The number of registered members at that time was 45, among which veterinary Bivort himself, the veterinary, Claude, Becker, Stoffel, Kayser, H, Pierre Bock, Charles Dams, P. Péporté, A. Thiry, Schmid, Nas, Hoffmann, Muller-Schmit, Servais, N. Paquet, Michel Schockmel, Leesberg, Schmal, N. Proth, Pierre Wolsfeld, Johann Becker-Paulin, Jacques Weisgerber, Charles Leclerc, Dom. Kersch, Pierre Schmit, Tabary, Nau, Peporte-Moes, Fr. Heß, Hoferlin, Rousseau, Wilh. Noesen. An extract from these statutes highlights the objectives of the association. Article 1 stated: "The purpose of the Agricultural and Horticultural Association is to improve agriculture and horticulture in the municipality of Esch-sur-Alzette (...)", whereas Art. 9 mentioned that only matters relating to agriculture and horticulture may be discussed at the association's meetings. As for article 14, it tells us that the money collected was to be used to purchase useful farming equipment.

Bivort, a veterinary surgeon, who was very concerned about the fate of the Esch farmers who were toiling away under the arduous conditions of the time. He foresaw that only a co-operative system and rational soil cultivation could improve the results achieved so far. At the meeting on 15 October 1885, Bivort set

to show the members of the association 16 different types of soil from the Esch's surroundings and explained the nature of each type. An excerpt from the minutes of this meeting is reproduced below because it is particularly revealing of the priorities of the Association:

The speaker divided the fertiliser into different types and gave a brief but comprehensible explanation of each type. He explained what substances the different types of fertiliser consist of and in which soil they produce the best effect. Cattle manure is the best; it lasts a long time and works excellently in all types of soil. It is significantly improved with horse manure. Horse manure on its own is soon consumed; not all fields and plants can tolerate it. It is very good in cold soil. Pig manure does not easily go into fermentation; it works particularly well in light soil. (...) It is really a sign of great negligence, the speaker continued, that most farmers in our locality do not yet have a cistern. There are barely half a dozen cisterns in the whole of Esch. Farmers let the best fertiliser run down the road. (...) A good farmer does not leave his manure outside the house for long but takes it to the field as soon as possible. Nor should he leave the manure in the open field for long, otherwise it will lose its strength" (*Escher Tageblatt* 1935).²⁶³

From the above one can deduce how rudimentary agriculture was in Esch at that time. It surprises also that an association of farmers was only created in 1885, when the industrialisation process was already underway. The board had made it their task to teach the farmers both practically and theoretically. Due to the unexpected boom in the iron industry, the area to be cultivated in Esch and its surroundings was reduced by a large amount. "Prosperity moved into Esch", the newspaper article concludes. The number of arable land and farmers continued to shrink and the activities of the Esch local association soon became redundant. Even though the Esch Farmers' Association had, at all lost its agricultural character, its members still liked to gather from time to time as true "old Eschois to rummage around in the old traditions", the newspaper added.

This piece of information meets the hypothesis that agriculture was already struggling before the industrialisation and that farmers inexperience and incapacity with dealing with the maintenance of their labouring land may have well been an added reason to sell the land altogether. As we will further be seeing, the dependence of Esch by now industrial city, from the countryside will be great, hitting a peak during the First World War.

Indeed, the quantitative approach relating to landownership can only prove to be more convincing when combined with qualitative methods for the achievement of new insights. It can be argued that landownership in Esch rendered profits that were for the most, little concerned with agricultural produce

²⁶³ 50 Jahre Escher Bauernverein, *Escher Tageblatt*, 13.08.1935, p.3.

but rather with real estate development²⁶⁴. Deprived of its once agrarian middle class, what happened to the subsequent generations?

Tracing social mobility proves to be useful not only in relation to modern industrial society but also on the agrarian sector as well as for the lower and the upper middle classes. There is indeed scarce historical research on the mobility in the agrarian sector, of the white-collar employees as well as in the lower middle class.

The study of social mobility has nevertheless overwhelmingly been applied to the working classes. Theories of modernization and industrialisation frequently assume that industrialisation and the economic development that comes with it imply a greater social mobility, namely because among others of “the removal of important pre-industrial obstacles to geographical and occupational mobility” (Kaelble, 1981), and not least, because of fundamental changes in attitudes towards social mobility.

In this brief section we will deal with mobility from the point of view of the descendants of our selected sample of 20 landowners. One factor needs to be highlighted, that these are 20 landowners who are far from representing a social group who is homogenous, or with similar origins, but rather grouped together for what was their common denominator, their landed assets. Such differences will necessarily lead to life paths that can be very varied.

The industrial revolution is regarded to have been in both Europe and the USA a period of great social and occupation mobility. Reasons for it being: “the emergence of a working class and of industrialists, the decline of the peasantry and the *petite bourgeoisie*, the transatlantic migration of Europeans (...)” (Kaelble 1981, 15), all trends perfectly applicable to Esch at the turn of the century.

In fact, one should perhaps not even think of these descendants of the wealthier landowners as subject to any type or need for mobility, nor facing any type of barriers in terms of social ascension. Nor should a direct link with industrialisation necessarily be found. In fact, the results of our incursion into their marriage choices and professional outcomes hint at a certain stagnation which we hypothesize more linked to questions of mentalities rather than purely economic determinants. Furthermore, the size and time span of our sample does not allow any “rates” to be established. There is yet one factor in the relation to the

²⁶⁴ In the interest of the new industrial workers, a hectic construction activity unfolded. The built-up area of the town of Esch increased from 30 hectares in 1900 to 105 hectares in 1905 (Schengen 1956).

social space of Esch, that has not been fully developed yet. Education as a weighing factor in social positioning/mobility marks its shy departure as well.

Moreover, an education path increasingly more available to male sons and male spouses of agrarian families triggered the move of some family members to other areas of the country. This was certainly more the case among women married to merchants, business owners, and employees who moved elsewhere.

How did the subsequent generations evolve professionally? Did they keep benefiting from the families' assets, did they move towards a path where education determined shifts in their social position and professions? What were the differences between sons and daughters? What evolution patterns can be observed stemming from our initial sample of landowners?

On a more structural scale, Fehlen's (Fehlen 2009) work remains to date the one explaining the longitudinal "picture" on the evolution of Luxembourgish society. Research also contended an enduring repetition of the distribution of opportunities, stagnated at the level of the élites, of which for example the case of the notaries and judges are an example of (Fritz, Scuto, and Wingerter 2022), but also other élite families outside Luxembourg city (Wurth 2023). This had been well highlighted by the social history of the elite families of Luxembourg city in Josiane Weber's work and which conflate with the notion of national élite *tout court*. Class formation simultaneously closes some barriers between certain social groups and blurs the same barriers between others (Kocka, 1984). It is where such barriers are laid that patterns of social reproduction can be revealed. In this instance we are concerned with both marital choices and professions of our landowners and their descendants (respectively 1st and second generations). We will be here considering two aspects together, mobility in terms of opportunities at change of profession/social status/education as well as mobility acquired through marriage ties.

The topic of geographical mobility will only be superficially analyzed as it needs to keep in mind the restricted geography of the Grand-Duchy. It is this same geography that helps justify some marriage choices, simply dictated by the closeness of spatial connections, and Esch-sur-Alzette is a case in point. A varied set of research across the world has shown that most people tend to marry someone living close by (van Leeuwen and Maas 2005). Indeed, the likelihood of encountering a marriage partner in each locality, influenced the decisions on suitability and reduced the need look elsewhere. Esch-sur-Alzette not being a major urban centre, certainly not at the turn of the century, however made it so that some choices, precisely to reflect the wish for a maintenance of a status position, had to look elsewhere. The geographical dislocation of the marriage market could have been a factor in increasing contacts between different social classes and thus bring more exogamy. The contrary was also true though, that leaving Esch-sur-Alzette

may have been the only resort driven by the desire to preserve the family's property and social status, thus overriding preferences for local candidates.

One aspect stands out from the previous chapter: On the one hand, that some of the landowners in Esch, preindustrial turn were far from being affluent economically, but they nevertheless found ways of keeping their status of local *élites*. For the lesser affluent ones, they quickly tuned into side trades which allowed them to survive economically without having to engage in direct relationships with the steel plants. Other options for the peasantry and even better off landowners and tenants involved, as seen, going down the emigration path where they hoped to find land of their own.

The resilience of local landowners in keeping a lifestyle did thus not directly oppose the presence of the factories, but agriculture as a means of subsistence soon became a bygone reality. Their conversion/adoption into the trades of innkeeping, cabarets and other types of small to medium business ownership marks clearly that transition. This transmutation into being landlords while holding commercial activities represent the buffer zone, a passage of sorts, between traditional agrarian society and the industrial urban world. Esch was thus not only an industrial town, but also a commercial town. The agrarian middle class had been from inception complicit with the world of merchants, master artisans and even a white-collar low middle class.

We saw how landlords quickly adapted to the presence of the industry and how the two worlds of agriculture and industry did not necessarily turn their back to each other. It is noticeable how there seems to exist a hiatus in historiography as well as in the sources as to what happened to farming life in Esch, be it in the peasantry as well as landowners. We believe the social mobility or rather its stagnation by means of endogamy and professional transformation helps understand and explain how living off their revenues for some families helped them maintain their status quo. For others we saw in different causes the reasons for their "extinction", having no children left, or whose offspring simply moved outside Esch as well as the increasing opportunities provided by the educational offer in the country.

With in view to retrace what the subsequent generations of the above analysed 20 landowners became, we resorted to a genealogical database to understand what their professional endeavours and marriage strategies reveal about their positioning in the Esch's social structure of before and after the industrial turn.

Also, revealing is the fact that in terms of landownership, the entrepreneurs, merchants of the "old" and "new" middle-class in Esch took over the once farmers and traditional owners' monopoly of land, either through buying from the former or by directly inheriting land because they married into landed families, this is the case for example for the Buchholtz and Nicolas Biwer. Another example would be the Claude

family who although not major landowners themselves (and not included in this small sample) will own parcels in those parts of the city with real estate development prospects (Brill, Dellheicht, Wobrecken, Brouch) made of them the new decision makers. All this was aligned to prestigious political positions, Pierre Claude was a mayor and member of the local council (1852-1877), his sons employed in profitable businesses, and the most “famous”, Jean-Pierre, longtime secretary of the municipal council proved to be someone who was incredibly well connected (see Part IV).

We moved on to analyse the marriage strategies of the 20 landowners (1st generation) and of 52 of their children (second generation).²⁶⁵ Given the high number of dead children in infancy or young age we are here working with a reduced number of cases. This sample wishes only to take a picture of these families and has no pretension of demonstrating any trends. Furthermore, many criteria would be needed in terms of establishing ages, year of marriage and not least of “social mobility” actually entails, whether it is change of occupation or changes in income.

Choices based on religious, nationality and ethnic based divisions are of course not to be underrated in Esch-sur-Alzette. This was a city like, where, as well established by Leiner (Leiner 1994) the degree of heterogenization of social space occupation was high, because highly concentrated around the commercial heart of the city, social mingling may have likely played a role in the choice of a partner’s choices. Mixed marriages increased as population did (Schaber 1984) but exerted barely any influence on our sample, except for nationality (in total 9 descendants married Belgian, French or Germans).

To start with, of the 20 landowners examined, they unsurprisingly married within their “rank”, Victor Tesch and D.L. Brasseur both married into important landowner (at not least politically prominent) families of the South of Luxembourg, the Nothomb and the De Wacquant respectively. The remaining landowners not only married within their same socio-economic status as some also did marry women whose fathers were in their [husbands] same professional field, a way of naturally preserve and enlarge a market/clientele. This was for example the case of farriers, and the wider ironmongery/plumber business. This was also the case for innkeepers, merchants and farmers. This need not mean that they necessarily restrict themselves to the same professional status.

²⁶⁵ In as much as it was possible to establish their professions and considering of course the event that some did not marry at all. As one gradually approaches the 1920’s the harder it is for data protection reasons to find information about the 3rd generation.

Name	Surname	Occupation	Profession_father_spouse	geo_origin_spouse	country
Tesch	Victor	Industrialist	notary	EsA	LUX
Vandyck-Schmit	Jean	Merchant	farrier	EsA	LUX
Peporté-Vandyck	Pierre	Merchant	farrier	EsA	LUX
Brasseur	Leopold.D.	Notary	rentier/proprietaire	Foetz	LUX
Schmit-Clees/Hamilius	Jacques	Landowner	farmer	Lischert, Thiaumont	BEL
Zeimes	Nicolas	Landowner	farmer	Tetange	LUX
Laval	Charles	Notary	merchand	Lux city	LUX
Buchholz	Daniel	Merchant	farmer	Schiffflange	LUX
Stoffel	Dominique	Landowner	farmer	Bergem	LUX
Sartor	Michel	Innkeeper	civil servant (douanes et accises)	Burmerange	LUX
Weynand-Pettinger	Jean	Landowner	farmer	Alzingen	LUX
Laux	Jean Adam	Landowner	miller	Lamesch (Reckange-sur-Mess)	LUX
Schmit-Kieffer	Jacques	Landowner	unknown	unknown	unknown
Klop	J.B.	Innkeeper	innkeeper	Hollerich	LUX
Rousseau	Michel	Notary	innkeeper	EsA	LUX
Lefevre	Alfred	Entrepreneur	Railway employee	Bettembourg	LUX
Biwer	Nicolas	Entrepreneur	Innkeeper	EsA	LUX
Jost	Franz	Landowner	farmer	Junglinster	LUX
Wecker-Harz	Jean	Merchant	plumber	Kayl	LUX
Fox	Nicolas	Merchant	merchant	EsA	LUX

Table 19: Sample of 20 landowners, their respective occupations and occupation of their spouse's fathers. Only first marriages were taken into consideration.

The generational continuity of our initial landowners highlights three aspects:

We see indeed most landowners of our sample marrying into families of merchants, and in just instance, one of them, Sartor, marries a partner whose father works as a customs agent, thus a profession, nevertheless carrying the prestige of being an employee of the State, albeit not particularly well paid.

Another indicator cannot be removed from the analysis which is the extent to which education choices weighed in the success of second-generation careers. Not least the fact that the educational standards of sons depended much on the social status of fathers. We believe this has also insufficiently analyzed in Luxembourgish historiography.

Only three sons become farmers and incidentally move out of Esch, one can suppose, to give continuity to a proper farming activity, something rendered difficult in Esch-sur-Alzette, by its unrestrained urbanisation. From the sons of the first generation of landowners (17), and assuming they were married at all, only 4 married daughters of farmers and only one was a farmer himself. Another aspect stands out from the second generation; that those men who truly wished to continue to work the land moved and married into farming families in other parts of the country (Beckerich, Junglinster, Hellange) more propitious to agriculture.

It is through the male (sons) choices that some hypothesis can be delineated as their paths diverge greatly. There are those who give continuity to a trade while staying Esch-sur-Alzette and (while keeping some landowning) whereas others take up professions made possible only through a (good) education path. It

is, moreover, difficult to ascertain whether some of the sons stayed living in Esch or, we know at least 9 of them did so, others established themselves elsewhere in Luxembourg, France, one in Germany another in the USA. If we look at sons, we see emerge mixed paths. Those who found a future abroad (one Zeimes in the USA and one Schmit-Clees in Cologne (Germany)); those who in all likelihood stayed in farming but outside Esch (two of the Zeimes sons and the Laux) and those who either married into landowner/merchant families within Esch and stayed put, to those who married into merchant families outside Esch, sometimes moving their businesses with them (see Fox in Villerupt). Three of the Rousseaus stayed in Esch, with one moving elsewhere in Luxembourg and eventually becoming State prosecutor, indisputably, a high function within State apparatus.

Surname_father	Name_father	Name_son	Surname	Profession_son	Profession_spouse's_father	geo_origin_wife	country
Schmit-Clees/Hamilius	Jacques	Nicolas	Schmit	merchant	unknown	unknown	unknown
Zeimes	Nicolas	Nicolas	Zeimes	farmer	farmer	Frisange	LUX
Zeimes	Nicolas	Jean	Zeimes	piano merchant	unknown	unknown	unknown
Zeimes	Nicolas	J.B	Zeimes	farmer	unknown	unknown	unknown
Buchholz	Daniel	Albert	Buchholz	brewer owner	merchant	Grevenmacher	LUX
Buchholz	Daniel	Sebastien	Buchholz	merchant	merchant	EsA	LUX
Sartor	Michel	Ernest	Sartor	butcher	merchant	Villerupt	FR
Weynand-Pettinger	Jean	J.B	Weynand	liquor trader	farmer	EsA	LUX
Laux	Jean Adam	Jean	Laux	farmer	farmer	Beckerich	LUX
Rousseau	Michel	Jean-Daniel	Rousseau	State prosecutor	innkeeper	EsA	LUX
Rousseau	Michel	Charles	Rousseau	civil servant	unknown	EsA	LUX
Rousseau	Michel	Léo	Rousseau	commercant	police officer	Wiltz	LUX
Rousseau	Michel	J.P.	Rousseau	notary	non applicable	non applicable	non applicable
Lefevre	Alfred	Joseph	Lefevre	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
Lefevre	Alfred	Julien	Lefevre	sculptor	unknown	Tashkent	former URSS
Biwier	Nicolas	Norbert	Biwier	engineer	unknown	unknown	unknown
Wecker-Harz	Jean	Jacques	Wecker	plumber	farmer	Steinsel	LUX

Table 20: Landowner's sons (second generation), their occupations and professional background of their spouse's fathers.

The importance of landowning becomes blurred as we accompany the evolution of our second generations. In order to maintain agricultural activity, the farm would have, typically (although as seen the civil code did not foresee it) been inherited by first born son, alternatively, one could marry the daughter of a farmer who had no son as heir (van Leeuwen and Maas 2005) which may have been the case of two of the Zeimes and the Laux heirs.

In this light, it can be argued that industrialisation did little to influence social mobility amongst the descendants of the first generation of 20 landowners, in terms at least of their marriage choices. It cannot be excluded that money from land sales serve precisely to turn some of the offspring more attractive to a marriage by bringing some money into the marriage. Industrialisation, may have, on the contrary, assisted

in a wider geographic “search for a partner” but such a small sample barely allows for generalisations about what may have been a trend for the agrarian/landowner groups of this and other parts of the country. Do such marriage choices and occupational outcomes even help explaining the disappearance of a part of the Esch’s ruling “agrarian/merchant/notary” class at the inception of the industrial settlement? They certainly do not explain it all, but they hint at the reasons behind the disappearance of some of these landowners. The origins of the husbands of the landowners ‘daughters can further indicate a move out of Esch although in some cases that can hardly be established via the genealogic databases. Moving out of Esch also did not necessarily accompany, as seen in the previous chapter, abandoning landed assets altogether, thus allowing some of these families to still profit from the parcels left behind.

We now turn our attention to daughters and see how partners were carefully sought/selected to match their social origins and wealth. From the 35 daughters of our sample (second generation) only four married farmers, two in Esch, 1 in Dudelange, 1 in Mondercange.

When looking at daughters of landowners, the pattern shows they married within a lower to upper middle-class stratum. On a few occasions they married “upwards”: doctors, industrialists, judges, in one instance a State prosecutor. It should here be highlighted that at least in two instances, these were already daughters of notaries and a notary clerk themselves. For most of the other women, they married successful merchants, mid to higher rank civil servants, thus married someone of, it can be argued, approximately the same status. In three instances only could there be space for an argument of three having “married down” namely a baker, a post officer and lower rank teacher. Again, such reasoning tries to make sense of the Leiner categorization but cannot with certainty determine their position in terms of economic affluence. We know that teachers and even lower rank white collars, employed with the State came with an allure of respectability that cannot be underrated, but also that they were underpaid. At this stage only one of these daughters has a formal professional status herself, Helene Buchholtz who was a composer and musician²⁶⁶. We know little about the other women’s educational path, education which was certainly available to women, in Esch, through Lycee des jeunes filles (*Mädchenlyzeum*)²⁶⁷, even if generally the goal of such school was not to orient them towards a career.

²⁶⁶ Helène Buchholtz (1877-1953) Helen Buchholtz was born into the Buchholtz-Ettinger family in Esch. After finishing primary school, she attended a girls' boarding school in Longwy. Her father, Daniel Buchholtz, was a merchant in ironmongery, household goods and building materials, and founder of the successful Buchholtz brewery. As a child, she received lessons in piano, violin, solfeggio and composition. She spent her youth playing music and composing at her parents' home in Esch/Alzette. At the age of thirty-six, she married the German doctor Bernhard Geiger and moved with him to Wiesbaden. After her husband's unexpected death in 1921, she returned to Luxembourg as a childless widow. She devoted the last thirty-six years of her life to playing, studying and composing (CID Fraen & Gender, n.d.).

²⁶⁷ As of 1911.

Surname_father	Name_father	Name_daughter	Surname_maiden	Profession	Profession_spouse	geo_origin_husband	country
Tesch	Victor	Caroline	Tesch	housewife	engineer	Langsur	DE
Tesch	Victor	Edmée	Tesch	housewife	director	Eich	LUX
Tesch	Victor	Léonie	Tesch	housewife	director	Brussels	BEL
Tesch	Victor	Victoire	Tesch	housewife	magistrate	Lux ville	LUX
Vandyck-Schmit	Jean	Margaretha	Vandyck	Sister in religious congregation	non applicable	non applicable	non applicable
Vandyck-Schmit	Jean	Catherine	Vandyck	housewife	farmer	EsA	LUX
Vandyck-Schmit	Jean	Lucie	Vandyck	housewife	farmer	EsA	LUX
Vandyck-Schmit	Jean	Jeanette	Vandyck	housewife	doctor	Hollerich	LUX
Peporté-Vandyck	Pierre	Amalia	Peporte	housewife	landowner	Kayl	LUX
Peporté-Vandyck	Pierre	Margaretha	Peporte	housewife	wood merchant	Habay-La-Neuve	BEL
Brasseur	Leopold.D.	Amélie Therese	Brasseur	housewife	judge	Grevenmacher	LUX
Schmit-Clees/Hamilus	Jacques	Mathilde	Schmitz	housewife	lawyer	Lux city	LUX
Zeimes	Nicolas	Louise	Zeimes	housewife	farmer	Dudelange	LUX
Zeimes	Nicolas	Catherine	Zeimes	housewife	(school) teacher	Medernach	LUX
Zeimes	Nicolas	Marie	Zeimes	housewife	civil servant	Steinfort	LUX
Laval	Charles	Marthe	Laval	housewife	industrialist	Longwy	FR
Laval	Charles	Marie Therese	Laval	housewife	engineer	EsA	LUX
Buchholz	Daniel	Marguerite	Buchholz	housewife	merchant	Junglinster	LUX
Buchholz	Daniel	Marie Therese	Buchholz	housewife	merchant	Junglinster	LUX
Buchholz	Daniel	Helene	Buchholz	musician/composer	doctor	Wiesbaden	DE
Stoffel	Dominique	Francoise	Stoffel	housewife	merchant	EsA	LUX
Sartor	Michel	Marie Josephine	Sartor	housewife	innkeeper	EsA	LUX
Sartor	Michel	Francoise	Sartor	housewife	baker	Luxembourg city	LUX
Sartor	Michel	Mathilde	Sartor	housewife	engineer	Mainz	DE
Sartor	Michel	Aline	Sartor	housewife	expert comptable	Paris	FR
Weynand-Pettinger	Jean	Marie	Weynand	housewife	Construction entrepreneur	Vianden	LUX
Laux	Jean Adam	Amalia	Laux	housewife	Head teacher	Marxheim	DE
Laux	Jean Adam	Francoise	Laux	housewife	unknown	EsA	LUX
Schmit-Kieffer	Jacques	Marie Mathilde	Schmit-Muller	housewife	farmer	Mondercange	LUX
Klop	J.B.	Louise	Klop	housewife	State prosecutor	EsA	LUX
Rousseau	Michel	Catherine	Rousseau	housewife	Book printer	EsA	LUX
Biwer	Nicolas	Anna	Biwer	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
Jost	Franz	Helene	Jost	housewife	merchant	EsA	LUX
Wecker-Harz	Jean	Maria	Wecker	housewife	civil servant (POST)	Grevenmacher	LUX
Wecker-Harz	Jean	Anna-Maria	Wecker	housewife	industrialist	EsA	LUX

Table 21: Landowners' daughters (second generation), their occupations and professional background of husbands.

The analysis of such a restricted sample should naturally not lead to generalizations but goes a little way in showing the social endogamy of the once agrarian/merchant society from Esch throughout the turn of the century and its reluctance from entering the industrial job sector. Irrespective of its limitations, these patterns highlight a change in the occupational structure of these old middle classes, and above all the emergence of a white collar lower middle class, in the shape of teachers, civil servants and employees both in the private and public sector, although this is primarily visible in the marriage choices of daughters, rather than in the employment choices of sons. Furthermore, it highlights the geographical relocation of those wishing to continue a proper farming activity to the “greener” areas of the Gutland and or Belgium. It further evokes the move of daughters outside of town in their choice of husbands. Any attempt to explain the reasons for the “dissolution” or disappearance of some of Esch’s landowner families from the local ruling scene cannot be dissociated from the marriage choices, educational opportunities (for males), personal agency and of course on mentalities alone, but rather to a mix in more than one of these possible indicators. What the genealogic sources show is thus a continuity in the trend to marry within the same, wealth/prestige rank.

4.7 Excursus

Esch's middle classes through the historical novel of Jerome Quiqueret (Quiqueret 2022), Prix Servais 2022²⁶⁸

Luxembourg's historiography is rich in research devoted to its social classes. As far as the elites are concerned, the best-known study is undoubtedly *Familien der Oberschicht in Luxemburg. Elitenbildung & Lebenswelten 1850-1900*, by Josiane Weber. It traces the careers of the great families of the golden age of industrial development and liberalism. The middle-classes seem to have been somehow more neglected by historical research. A new book contributes to a radical new look into not only the "forgotten middle classes" but also the city of Esch-sur-Alzette.

Jérôme Quiqueret's *Tout devait disparaître - Histoire d'un double meurtre commis à Esch-sur-Alzette à la fin de l'été de 1910* (capybarabooks) demonstrates that history is not only the realm of academic historians. Quiqueret's storytelling and eye for detail contain all the ingredients needed to understand the complexities of fin-de-siècle Luxembourg society. The book is indeed for the most non-fiction, however it reads as a novel, or rather a mystery. We might add that the class struggle is one of the main characters of his novel. Starting off with the murder of a petty-bourgeois couple, the Kayser-Paulus, several elements of Luxembourg's history at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries stand out as essential keys to understanding this murder.

Starting with the "physiological" features of what the British historian Eric Hobsbawm called the "long 19th century": capitalism, technical progress, sanitation, urban development, but also this world divided into two classes, capital versus labour, not forgetting what the same author called bourgeois respectability. A distinguishing feature of the affluent classes, with the others inevitably wanting to emulate it.

Bourgeois respectability implied that a presumed moral superiority watched over the morals of a society that was otherwise doomed to fall into decadence through assimilation to the working class, its subversive ideas, or its excessive consumption of alcohol. This was all the truer in Luxembourg, where the turn of the century was marked by the presence of a Catholic world hostile to any form of advancement and progress as much in morals as in other fronts.

Quiqueret's story gives us an almost complete picture of Esch society at the beginning of the 20th century. This journey through time and all the dimensions of daily life in Esch is written like a detective story that keeps us on the edge of our seats right up to the outcome.

²⁶⁸ Based on the article published in *Tageblatt*, 29-30 October 2022 (Cascao 2022).

The murder of the Kayser-Paulus family in late summer 1910, in the middle of the Rue d'Audun and just a few metres from the Rue du Brill, the heart of Esch-sur-Alzette's working and lower middle classes and business center, sent shockwaves through the town and the country.

Let us go back to the situation in the town in 1910: two factories with several blast furnaces had already been operating there for almost forty years, the Metz factory was about to be enlarged, and the Metz et Cie, Forges d'Eich company was to merge with those of Burbach and Dudelange to form ARBED (Aciéries Réunies Burbach-Eich-Dudelange) in 1911, setting up on the town's outskirts. Also, in Esch, the Bois du Clair-Chêne, the local recreation area, had just been sold for a derisory price to the Germans of Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks-AG. A gigantic new site is emerging to the west of the town, the Adolf-Emil-Hütte, the future Belval factory. The migrant and floating population is flocking there by the thousands in search of bread to earn. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that in the space of twenty years the population of Esch more than doubled, from 7,000 in 1890 to 15,000 in 1910.

The Rue d'Audun and the Brill and Grenz districts are a *melting pot* par excellence in Esch. Different classes and nationalities mixed in exchanges that were not always friendly. Quiqueret comes back to this: "It was a period of intense political conflict. (...) There was also a lot of economic and social competition, which encouraged xenophobia" (Interview in *Letzebuenger Land*, 27.05.2022).

It may not be ethnicity or nationality that causes so much division and tension, even if the press would have us believe so. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that the search for the murderer immediately leads to suspicion of a foreigner. But in Esch, a small shopkeeper probably shared more in common with the worker than with the upper middle class. The worker is never far away, either by his physical presence or by the personification of the threat of what might happen to the shopkeeper should his business go bankrupt.

The low middle classes result more similar, after all, to their working-class next-door neighbour, regardless of nationality than to the wealthier class living around Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, Place Norbert Metz and Rue du Luxembourg, who in the decades to come will occupy the new upper-middle-class district of Dellhoeh.

So, what is there in the book about this Esch bourgeoisie? If we're talking about the grande bourgeoisie, we can find traces of it in Quiqueret's book. For example, in the words of the notary Brasseur, still a witness to a time when his profession was one of the most important in the town. Brasseur was astonished at the fact that the Kayser-Paulus couple, who still owed him money, kept 2,000 francs in cash inside a cupboard (not excluding what the murderers and thieves had managed to take with them during the burglary and murder).

And yet, at that time, there was nothing strange about keeping large amounts of cash at home, a practice that was still widespread at the beginning of the 20th century, despite the growing presence of banks. For the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie of traditional farming stock in Esch, it was still the notary who was preferred: he knew the families and their intimacy and was supposed to keep their secrets.

But let us get back to the Esch bourgeoisie. Partly local, rooted in tradition and wary of new arrivals, partly made up of newcomers from all over, from Luxembourg and elsewhere, who came in search of an ever-growing clientele. They included members of the liberal professions as well as entrepreneurs and merchants, not forgetting all the staff needed for these major employers, such as the iron and steel industries and the railways, but also for a new local administrative machine made up of schools, post offices, municipal services and so on. The latter represented a *breeding ground* for small civil servants. Small civil servants whose frustrations, despite the security of their jobs, were very similar to those of the working class. Moreover, salaries were often higher in industry, even though they did not offer employees the guarantee of, for example, a state pension (yet). A survey carried out in 1910 on the economic situation of private sector employees suggests a robust situation with only a small percentage of short-term unemployment. Public sector employees were therefore more vulnerable and more exposed to the economic crisis than their private sector counterparts. This was reflected in the difficulty of finding decent accommodation, a recurring complaint on the pages of the *Bürger und Beamten Zeitung*.

This bourgeoisie expressed itself through interventions in the Chamber of Deputies by elected representatives for Esch. This was the case for the former mayor of Esch (1906-1909) and industrialist Léon Metz, the factory manager, and his nephew and business partner Edmond Muller-Tesch, the mining manager. In 1910, they both argued in favour of reinforcing the security forces in Esch-sur-Alzette, in view of the large floating foreign population. Those undesirable foreigners again. Armand Spoo's father, Casper. M. Spoo, a social-democrat deputy, was accused of remaining silent on the matter, by the aldermen's assembly, which Armand Spoo chaired as mayor at the time.

The new bourgeoisie also includes Alfred Lefèvre, an entrepreneur and symbol of the self-made man, who had joined the Brasseur factory as a bricklayer in 1889, only to become the wealthiest entrepreneur in Esch. He happened to live next door to the murdered couple. Lefèvre also grew rich through speculation on the property market.

The shadow of another bourgeois man looms large over the end of this century, that of Louis de Wacquant, a member of one of the most prestigious families in southern Luxembourg and brother of the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Théodore de Wacquant. His murder in the middle of the night in 1895, also in

Esch, more precisely in the otherwise quiet and bourgeois Rue du Luxembourg, remained unsolved, unlike the murder of the Kayser-Paulus family.

The petty bourgeoisie in search of its place

"Having money when you're supposed to be paid less. Wearing new clothes when you should only be wearing rags. In a period marked by determinism and social repetition, any trace, even fantasized, of upward mobility is suspect" (p.90).

More than these great bourgeois, the municipal ruling class and the petty bourgeoisie, of which some of the latter are members, are the real key players in this story. This petty bourgeoisie, trapped between the fear of falling into moral and economic decline and their thirst for social advancement, sometimes saved only by joining an association of some kind. Ultimately, the long 19th century was also the century of associations and all kinds of charitable societies that gave an air (albeit superficial) of respectability and importance to an individual.

Respectability is sought and shown in the smallest details, such as the way a funeral is held (the ostentatious choice of the Kayser Paulus family takes the city by surprise), something to which Esch families of good stock used to think about long before they died.

But there is also modesty, the fear of tarnishing a family's image. "The strong bonds of solidarity and the many intermarriages in the Kayser-Paulus neighbourhood prevent tongues from wagging" (p.212). Nevertheless, suspicions about this or that individual emerge only after the death of the *pater familias*, because, after all, it was a good family and "a nice guy". Better to die without having one's image denigrated by the weight of accusations. Respectability acts as a veneer too: see all the proclaimed qualities of the perfect couple, the Kayser-Paulus, quickly unmasked by less flattering testimonies calling for scandal.

And then there are the police, also somewhere between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie, oscillating between the ideal of guardians of public and moral order whilst playing the dirty cops (corrupt, sex offenders, thieves...) behind the scenes.

Respectability is also important to the killer. A worthy representative of the petty bourgeoisie, incensed by his perfect behaviour, he has reinvented himself through his many trades and functions.

A “big” yet small, industrial town

Quiqueret's book personifies social history by giving detailed biographies, and sometimes even faces, to these representatives of the middle and working classes, sprinkled with their desires for upward mobility, economic success, and a dignified social position within society.

Through his gripping account, we discover all the features of this historical period, the role of women relegated to the home in the case of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie and the other less flattering role reserved for the other female mass, belonging to the working class, forever suspected of easy morals because they were poor.

The fear of being judged by one's neighbour, of being downgraded, of losing one's merit and social esteem, as well as the supreme judgment, that of God, through the intermediary of the priest, the bishop, and his main acolytes, including the pen of the *Luxemburger Wort*, are all palpable.

To Catholic fatalism, the other pole, that of the socialist and secular world, opposes and proposes education as a universal antidote, but not without often falling into the trap of their own propaganda and ideology.

Some of Quiqueret's passages also reveal the contradictions of a socialist world, *ma non troppo*, given that foreigners remain as much responsible for their miseries and ordeal as capital itself. Dr Joerg²⁶⁹, the book's central character, although known as *Dr Rouge*, fights almost exclusively for the working poor, if they are Luxembourgers. Nationalist tones are never far away, either on the right or the left.

Nevertheless, there is one common place where social classes dissipate in this Esch anno 1910. These were the cafés and cabarets (excluding perhaps the ill-famed ones) where workers, small shopkeepers, professionals, and bosses mingled. Here you could have a drink, hear the latest news, do business and, above all, lend and borrow money. This practice has enabled several small entrepreneurs to survive and reveals the interesting networks of the people living in the Brill and Grenz. Money and the lack of it are at the root of the crime. But it's not the only reason, in a case that invites us to read the historical context as a key to the range of possible motives for the murder of the Kayser-Paulus couple.

"Life in a small town is like a shop window" (Quiqueret 2022, 387). Frantz Clément, who was to become editor-in-chief of the Escher *Tageblatt* from 1913 onwards, portrayed these class manifestations in the town of Esch better than anyone else. His gift for observation - he came from the countryside but was a

²⁶⁹ Dr Jules Jörg (1871-1915), studied medicine in Strasbourg, established as a doctor since 1900 in Esch/Alzette. Freethinker, member of the board of the Esch People's Education Association, radical-socialist municipal councillor, member of the Esch Aldermen's Council from 1909 to 1911 and then again briefly in 1912 (as serving mayor). Member of the Esch hospital commission.

man of the world with an academic education and a deep knowledge of the urban realities of neighbouring countries - is put to marvelous use in these chronicles of the 'Kleinstadt', quoted by Quiqueret.

Esch-sur-Alzette has always been relegated to second place, despite its economic success, and has typically been a victim of prejudice. You come away from reading this with the feeling, confirmed by many instances, that, in the end, being from Esch is like being in a class of your own, incomprehensible to anyone who has not lived there.

Irrespective of which perspective is favoured by the reader - that of the class struggle, the struggle of a town against external prejudices, that of a detective or criminologist - Quiqueret's book is a tour de force about the end of an era in Luxembourg's history. But also, a precious testimony of the beginning of its identity formation as a nation.

5.1 An industrial and commercial city

Esch-sur-Alzette underwent a significant transformation during the industrialisation period. In addition to an increase in the population, the city also witnessed the emergence of new shops, taverns, inns, and other services. This growth also attracted various state-run services to settle in Esch. The city's urbanity was further evidenced by the establishment of numerous flourishing clubs and societies.

The mining, construction, wholesale of building materials and machinery, as well as the transport of minerals such as iron ore, experienced a significant growth with the advent of industrialisation, particularly in the construction sector and the supply sector. By 1900, 70.5% of the population was employed in the commercial and industrial sector, 15% in the service sector, and only 4.5% in agriculture. This evidence suggests that Esch was a city with a strong commercial orientation.

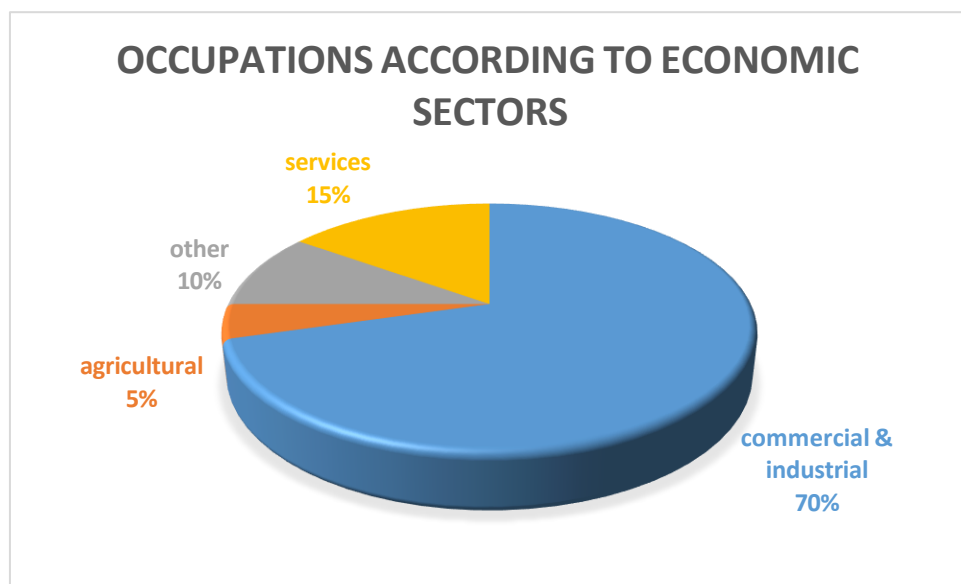


Figure 23: Economic sectors according to the total population 1871- 1900 in Esch. Source: (Leiner 1994, 104).

In the initial phase of its development, the steelworks primarily recruited its labour force from the rural-agrarian hinterland. However, long-distance migration became more visible from the 1890s onwards. In addition to the establishment of permanent settlements in urban areas, commuting also played an important role. A significant number of industrial workers remained in their rural home villages and commuted on a daily or weekly basis.

By 1900, Esch had begun to reap the benefits of industrial modernisation. Private enterprise was flourishing, and the population, particularly the urban working class, was growing rapidly.

Given that Esch was, throughout the first decades of the 20th century, a city in a state of permanent construction, there were ample opportunities for businesses to flourish. The emergence of a new middle-class clientele presented opportunities for businesses, which in turn led to a greater diversification of goods on offer. These transformations occurred during an era of economic growth and optimistic ideas of progress, yet also one of increasing social conflict. A significant aspect of this development was the introduction of novel forms of infrastructure, including road pavements, gas, electricity, telephone networks and public tramways. Such innovations were frequently initiated by private entrepreneurs, resulting in a significant transformation of the urban landscape.

A variety of sources, including the nominal tax rolls, the censuses, personal and commercial directories, as well as lists of employers in different branches of industry, the commercial registers and the catalogues with advertisements for local businesses, permit the reconstruction of the existing business scene in Esch at the beginning of the 20th century. If an exact picture cannot be obtained from the available sources, they can certainly provide us with sufficient information about the consumption trends in the city. Furthermore, the directories are useful for providing information on individual companies. The sources in question are not consistent or standard for the entire period under consideration, yet they offer a truthful picture of commercial life at the beginning of the 20th century.

In addition to the already invaluable insights that the nominal rolls may offer, the gap (a 24-year hiatus between 1898 and 1922) between the tax lists available can be addressed by examining sources that provide supplementary information. Of particular interest are the sources pertaining to companies that were obliged to insure their employees against accidents.

The Directory for Commercial Activities of 1900 (Kerschenmeyer 1900)²⁷⁰ shows the market is dominated by companies engaged in the sale of goods and services related to the needs of the main industries. These include 21 firms active in the mining and steel industry; 14 in the ironmongery (goods and installation of iron); six contractors in construction; four companies in the wholesale of construction materials; and one brick factory. In the beverage and food sector, the city had by then 40 grocers, 14 butchers, 21 bakers (3 pastry shops), 1 brewery, 3 soft drink shops, 2 wine shops and 6 businessmen active in the trade of spirits and liqueurs.

²⁷⁰ Esch-sur-Alzette counted approximately 11000 inhabitants in 1900.

Additionally, the number of firms active in the hospitality sector was noteworthy, with 126 inns listed for the year 1900 (taverns, inns, hostels, cafés, and restaurants included) in addition to three hotels.

The emergence of a new middle class was evidenced by the expansion of various services. Nine hairdressers, seven decoration shops, and the advent of more exclusive products on offer that were only affordable to a select few. A further 12 charcuteries and delicatessen shops, one business dealing with colonial goods, two jewellers, four watchmakers, 15 tailors, five stylists and six shops dealing with tobacco derivatives were also listed.

In order to navigate the complexities of public and private bureaucracy, the necessity for intermediaries increased, leading to the emergence of insurance companies, commercial agencies, and solicitors. In 1900, there were 23 such entities in Esch.

We now move forward to 1906. The address list for 1905-1906 (Leib 1905) is less of a commercial directory but professions usefully accompany individual addresses for 2379 individuals. The details on the occupational denomination of certain individuals provide interesting insight. A multiplicity of dual activities was observed within the same establishment. In the 1905/06 period, 14 self-identified bakers were recorded, with only two identifying as solely bakers. The remaining 12 were identified as bakers and owners of a specialty bakery, Baker & Spezerei-handlung. Mr. Wester Perquin's shop, located on the Avenue de la Gare, nr 14, was simultaneously identified as a baker and a colonial goods store.

However, the category that is more open to side activities is that of the innkeeper (*Wirth*)²⁷¹. Of the 157 café and innkeepers in 1906²⁷², 38 state a side activity as well. Mr. Peter Beder is both an innkeeper and a ropemaker at nr. 7, Rue du Commerce (Handelstrasse); Joseph Decker sides his innkeeping with meat selling, Franz Faltenstein at the Otherstrasse, nr 10 (Rue d'Audun) is an innkeeper and hairdresser, whereas further down the street Johann Grommesch is an innkeeper and shoemaker in number 53. Mr.s. Sieg, in Gartenstrassen, nr .23 (Rue des Jardins) is both an innkeeper and a midwife. 16 men are listed as entrepreneurs, mainly in the mining, construction, and transport sectors.

Esch now counts on 5 doctors, 3 pharmacies, 13 hairdressers, 4 pastry shops and the unmissable *Monopol*, a department store in Rue de l'Alzette, property of Jewish entrepreneur Alfred Seligman, and percussor

²⁷¹ *Wirth* (orthography before 1901) lends itself to an array of meanings within the hospitality sector: a pub owner, a pub landlord and/or a person who serves food and drink in a pub, or still: someone who, where applicable, entertains guests privately or commercially or a host who rents out and/or accommodates; also a person who acts as a provider, landlord of accommodation. Synonyms may refer to the different meanings: 1) host, landlord, restaurateur, pub owner, tavern keeper, restaurant owner, tavern keeper, tavern keeper 3) Landlord, house owner, landlord, flat owner, flat owner (<https://www.wortbedeutung.info/Wirth/>).

²⁷² By 1909 they will be 210, according to local councillor Jean Schaack (see local council meetings, 8.01.1909).

to the *Monopol Warenhaus* later managed by Dutch businessmen Lodewijk and Edouard Müller²⁷³. There are now 8 liquor and beer related businesses as well as spectacular increase in the offer of colonial good stores, which are now 10.

Modernity is also characterized by new types of consumption in the shape of entertainments that entered the city through the trades of the carousel (2 in 1908), the cinematograph (2 in 1908) and photography, with one photographer registered, Pierre Thorn, active in the Rue de l'Alzette, where his shop *Grande Photographie Parisienne* can be found. It is not the first instance where Paris will exert its appeal.

Publicity translates the desires of consumption of the better off classes, different shops sell "articles from Paris" whereas others evoke the sophistication of the French capital in the very name of the shop. *Au printemps de Paris*, is the name of the hat and clothing shop of J.P. Pierrard²⁷⁴ tailor, member of the local municipal council and later mayor (1919-1920) in the very central Rue de l'Alzette. The *Magasins Modernes/Galleries de France* also advertised sales of articles "from Paris", novelties and house articles in 1919. Another hat shop by Jean Victor Kremer-Bertrang is founded in 1920 under the name *Chapellerie Parisienne*.²⁷⁵ This vital commercial life is described as influencing the surrounding peasantry, who came twice a month to sell their poultry, dairy and eggs at the Market:

This square [Place de l'Hôtel de Ville] is also the venue for a fair held on the last Tuesday of each month, and every Friday a vegetable market, where the young peasant women of the Mess²⁷⁶, Catherine, Suzanne or Marie, "light and short-clothed" like Lafontaine's Perrette, come to offer products of the cowshed, henhouse and garden. Using their earnings to more immediate achievements (...), they scatter their large empty baskets around the town's shops to buy every variety of household utilities, not forgetting of course to choose from a wide range of products in keeping with their very personal beauty, the coloured ribbon, the pair of stockings, the latest blouse or hat which, at Sunday mass, will earn them the wrath of the parish priest's, the devil's tricks and the complacent looks of some Jean-Pierre or Nicolas on the men's side, deeply moved by this new charm of their village beauties (Société d'Initiative et d'Embellissement 1926, 20–21).

A parenthesis here to remind that the ultimate appeal of Paris can be seen in the desire for an embellishment and city planning that emulates that of the French capital. In 1910, after having asked the *Wiesbadener Städtereinigungs-Gesellschaft* with a development and sewage plan, Mayor Armand Spoo comments:

²⁷³ See Guide Historique et Architectural de la ville D'Esch (Buchler et al. 2020, 175–77) on the *Magasin Belle Jardinière* which opens its doors in 1921.

²⁷⁴ J. P. Pierrard, also local councillor (1913-1916), alderman (1917-1919) and mayor (1. 8. 1919-18. 9. 1920), member of the right-wing party (Parti de la Droite).

²⁷⁵ Extraits du registre aux firmes publiés en exécution de l'art 2 de la loi 23 décembre 1909, nr.84. Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 8.11.1920.

²⁷⁶ Mess is a stream in Luxembourg, flowing in the cantons of Capellen and Esch-sur-Alzette, and a tributary of the Alzette. It rises in the municipality of Dippach, to flow through the villages of Sprinkange, Bettange-sur-Mess, Reckange-sur-Mess and the villages of Ehlang-sur-Mess, Wickrange and Pontpierre, before emptying into the Alzette.

Mayor Spoo: We have just received our development plan, it's like a little Paris. (...) It's just a preliminary project²⁷⁷ (Intervention of Mayor Spoo at the local council, 29.12.1910, p.7).

The plan will, in fact, never see the light, but municipal architect Paul Flesch²⁷⁸, much influenced by his apprenticeship in France will nevertheless give a French touch to several public and private architecture in the city of Esch, to which some of the bourgeoisie will adhere to²⁷⁹.

A further source is employed to map the dimensions of the various industries. The lists were compiled for insurance purposes and were accessible for the years 1908 and 1911. Both lists provide specific information on the number of employees in each industry present in the city, as recorded by the *Association d'assurance contre les accidents* for the years 1908 and 1911. (Association d'assurance contre les accidents 1908; 1911)²⁸⁰. Such lists allow also to see which companies may have increased, decreased in number of employees, or disappeared altogether from the commercial scene. Moreover, these lists indicate a size of the business and the distinction between very small, almost familiar enterprises to those of medium to bigger size.

Of the 154 firms listed in 1908, 46% employed one single person. Of the 71 businesses employing one person in 1908, 22 kept the same number of employees in 1911. 8 firms had increased slightly the number of employees from 1 up to 4. One entrepreneur, Venuto Bregoli²⁸¹, increased his employee force by 8 employees in this three-year time span.

30,5% of the industries listed in 1908, had between 2 to 10 employees, 8,5% 11 to 50 employees, 7,8% 50 - 200 employees, 3,2% 201- 450 employees (these were all five mine and steelworks), and 0.6% the major employer industry, the Gelsenkirchen with 1492 workers in 1908.

²⁷⁷ **In the original:** Wir haben soeben unsern Bebauungsplan erhalten, es ist ein kleines Paris. (...) Es ist nur ein Vorprojekt.

²⁷⁸ Paul Flesch (1870-1955). Architect from Diekirch, after studies and apprenticeships in France, he moved to Esch around 1900. Member of the Free Thinkers Movement formed in 1904 in Esch-sur-Alzette.³ As a Freemason he was affiliated in December 1905 to the *Loge des Enfants de la Concorde fortifiée*. Fierce Anti-clerical and member of the Radical-Socialist Party. See (Scuto 2006) for a complete biography.

²⁷⁹ Besides his projects of public and industrial infrastructure, Paul Flesch was commissioned with numerous projects of private housing of which three, were in show at the occasion of the National Exhibition of 1923 in Esch-sur-Alzette: in Louis XVI style, the house of the Director of the Société des Ciments Luxembourgeois (Édouard Hastert?/Edmond Müller?); the commercial building of entrepreneur S. Cerf in Luxembourg city (in rue Monterey, style Louis XV); in style Louis XVI, was also the manor house built for Jacques Péporté- Réding in the Avenue Victor Hugo in Esch-sur-Alzette (Municipalité d'Esch-sur-Alzette 1923).

²⁸⁰ This list was compiled by the Accident Insurance Association. It concerned compulsory accident insurance for workers and comprised the "industries", in this case any small to medium and large enterprise, which employed more than 1 individual. "In the districts of the mining south, the industrial section is subdivided into categories: metallurgy and machinery, mines and pits, land, construction and lighting. There are therefore consequently hundreds of delegates, drawn by lot from separate lists drawn up every three years for each canton(Scuto 2012, 52–53)".

²⁸¹ Venuto Bregoli (1873-1947). Italian entrepreneur working namely on cement constructions.

It is striking how it is, primarily, the entrepreneurs in the construction sector who have significant proportional increases of employees in those 3 years 1908-1911. Venuto Bregoli from 1 to 8, Francois Lazzeri²⁸² from 7 to 13, Antoine Caffaro²⁸³ from 52 to 78 and Alfred Lefèvre²⁸⁴ from 152 to 631!

It is also remarkable how 55% of those who employed 1 person in 1908, disappear from the registers in 1911. This may signify an unviability of their business; another interpretation could be that they kept managing the business themselves without need to employ and insure employees.

It is nevertheless noticeable the predominance of the business units that are nevertheless very small or run as family type of businesses, confirming thus the predominance of a petty bourgeoisie in the city.

Another source shedding light into the vitality of the business life of the city is the commercial register of firms ²⁸⁵. Based on such register we traced 85 business activities from 1910 until 1920 which allow a glimpse into the type of business emerging as well as those closing doors during the same period. Exceptionally, some businesses completely transform their main activity, we see for example as a Mr.. Stoltz-Theisen ceases his butcher business to become a real estate promoter²⁸⁶.

The fashion sector is thriving during the second decade of the 20th century with more clothing shops, fashion houses, haberdashery, shoe traders and jewelers adding to the existing offer. Among these, many are owned by Jewish families. There is also an increase in bakers, hairdressers, grocers, and soft drinks trade. In 1915, the Mattes brothers and Leon Cerf open separately, similar businesses to the one they had once owned together (active at least since 1900) hinting at the fierce competition environment present in the city and possible dissent between business partners (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1916).

New businesses will also be established in the mining sector. Jacques Müller and Émile Deloos, in 1915, open a mine exploitation office (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1916); Oktav Reckinger and Joseph Massard open a wholesale of mine and steel articles (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1914), whilst Henri François Lamock, inaugurates a mechanic engineering company also in 1914.

Seldom did these registers offer information on the social capital of the companies, drinks trades and grocers often relied on very small amounts of capital between 1000 and 2000 francs, whereas the big

²⁸² Francois Lazzeri (1890-1924), Tirolean entrepreneur active in the construction business.

²⁸³ Antoine Caffaro (1875-?), construction entrepreneur.

²⁸⁴ Alfred Lefèvre (1866-1958) construction entrepreneur.

²⁸⁵ It became compulsory for any new business as of 1909 (*Loi du 23 décembre 1909, portant création d'un registre aux firmes*).

²⁸⁶ Extraits du registre aux firmes publiés en exécution de l'art 2 de la loi 23 décembre 1909, nr.84. Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 16.12.1916.

corporations are immediately recognized by the social capital they held. The Maison Sichel²⁸⁷ is an example of how German capital also made their entry to the city commercial life through the opening of the first bazars, a quintessential landmark of the presence of a well-off middle class in the city. Everything could be found there. In 1918, the department store will retrieve its original name *Quincaillerie d'Esch*, with a social capital of 1.500.000 francs (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1918).

From the different business sources, the activities of some members of the local council can also be traced: J.P. Michels (mayor between 1912-1917) and his tobacco and liquor trade (registered in 1910²⁸⁸), Nicolas Hoffmann- Schaedgen (councillor and alderman between 1909-1912), whose company in the whole trade of wood, had, in 1919 an initial a social capital of 240.000 francs (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1920). Nicolas Biwer, construction entrepreneur who registers his firm in 1910, under the label “speculation in buildings, construction company”.

J.P. Pierrard who ceases his hat and tailoring trade activity it after a decade (1910-1920), to be resumed by another tailor, Jean Baumann (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg 1920).

The businesses of three of the city's mayors (J.P. Michels, J.P. Pierrard and Nicolas Biwer) are situated in and the around the commercial artery of the city, the Rue de l'Alzette. A sign of their prosperity is certainly that of the sumptuous exteriors and decorations of their shops and private houses, as traced in Esch's historical and architectural guide (Buchler et al. 2020). The combination of stone and iron conveys the message of economic success among the merchant class. Other commodities are included in the list of commodities that comprise a modern city. In order to meet the demands of the newly emerging upper-middle classes, new shops and department stores opened in the Alzette street, the city's principal commercial thoroughfare. The new clientele is composed of families with the financial means to engage in certain luxuries, such as attending the theatre, owning a vehicle, undergoing annual thermal treatments at Mondorf-les-Bains²⁸⁹, or even travelling to Switzerland²⁹⁰ for those who could afford it.

It was expected of the local council that they would espouse local patriotism in the defence of such small businesses. This manifested in lobbying the government against excessive taxation on cabarets, with a

²⁸⁷In 1910 managers Ferdinand Sichel and Alfred Ganz take over the Quincaillerie of E. & L. Gillain, the building will face a major renovation and is to date one of the most impressive (inspired in the 18th century/Louis XVI architectural style) in Esch-sur-Alzette still standing in the city (Buchler et al. 2020, 122–24).

²⁸⁸ His son Léon Michels and J-B. Decker will take over the activity after J.P. Michels death (Municipalité d'Esch-sur-Alzette 1923).

²⁸⁹ Mondorf-les Bains, a thermal estate in Eastern Luxembourg known for its curative water. A 2-week-stay in Mondorf, was according to MP Spoo beyond the price range, ordinary people could afford, and he thus pleaded for allowing free access for people in need of a cure. See C.R. 1896-1897, 3 February 1897.

²⁹⁰ According to censuses 1910, the wife of Esch's most successful entrepreneur of the time, Alfred Lefèvre absent for a fortnight over the Christmas period in Arosa, famous for its thermal cure centre.

particular focus on those businesses that were struggling to make ends meet. These included establishments that offered additional entertainment, such as dancing soirees. Despite the challenges posed by bureaucracy and legislation²⁹¹, cafés and cabarets were among the most prevalent businesses in Esch. Furthermore, the local council was expected to engage in protectionism of local businesses by ensuring that any necessary supplies were procured from Esch businesses in the first instance. Conversely, it would frequently receive complaints from business owners whenever this "tacit law" was not observed.

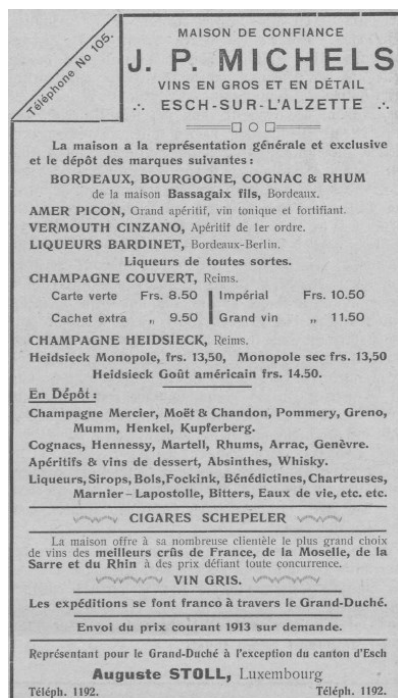


Figure 24: Publicity to J.P. Michels business in the press, *Die Neue Zeit*, 10.08.1913.

Not all members of the local council were major entrepreneurs, some were more modest shop owners and artisans. A cursory examination of the taxes paid in 1898 by some of the future members of the local council is sufficient to illustrate the disparities on the extent of their wealth. Nicolas Biwer, who had recently arrived in Esch and was married to a prominent farmer's daughter, paid 40 francs in property/capital tax and a mere 0.72 francs of real estate/landed assets. This may appear surprising at first glance, given that he had just inherited a significant surface area (1898). This information becomes

²⁹¹ At the turn of the century, the existence and modalities of cabarets were a matter of significant concern to the Parliament. Given the perception of alcoholism as a societal problem, the government enacted legislation to regulate cabaret opening hours and impose significant taxation. Socialist MP Spoo perceived this as a law targeting the working class, a view that was corroborated by the local council, which acknowledged that the introduction of some taxes had forced innkeepers out of business." How can an innkeeper pay 100 Fr.[tax], then pay for his drinks and the dance and pay the dance girls?" (Intervention of councillor Jean Schaack during the local council meeting in 8.1.1909).

plausible when one considers that the first year of a newly acquired or built plot was exempt from taxation. When combined with the information on his presumed annual rental income from the Register of Deeds in 1905 and his first place as taxpayer in the nominal rolls of 1922, it is evident that his fortune was on the rise.

In 1898, his political colleague J.P. Pierrard, a master tailor, paid slightly more tax (43 francs) and 22.56 francs for real estate assets.

In addition to the prominent businessmen, the local council will also be composed of men whose businesses were more family-managed. Jean Schaack was also a master tailor, like Pierrard, and his tax contributions were more modest in 1898 (16 francs). He owned no landed assets, as evidenced by the fact that he paid no tax on land/real estate. This was also the case of butchers Nicolas Weisgerber, J.P Origer and Eugene Hamilius whose businesses will be under most pressure during 1st World War's strict regulations on the maximum food prices. The despair hitting the butchers had some of them try to take advantage of their position as councillors, earning them distrust from both the mayor and the public. Because perceived as a "profit-seeking councillor", J.P. Origer²⁹² was under accusation after having been caught by the police in the practice of exceeding the maximum prices instituted by law. The narrative of a stained honour was never far from the mixed emotions of being simultaneously a councillor and a businessman:

Councillor Origer: (...) I'm happy to be "greedy", I'm a businessman, after all. **Mayor Biwer**²⁹³: I could not allow him [Origer] to do this, because otherwise the other butchers, and rightly so, would have demanded the same. Although Mr. Origer had reproached me in a municipal council meeting that that I had no right to allow the butchers to sell above the maximum price, he was the only butcher who made this request to me. **Mr. Origer.** So, it is my duty to be out of profit. I am the father of a child and I owe it to him to do my duty as a father. (...) I must make a profit on my business. What's that got to do with the council? (...) You wanted to ruin my business, but you won't succeed. (...) Rest assured that when the sale becomes free again then everyone will come back to Origer in Poststrasse again. They'll do the advertising for me. The war will soon be over. **Councillor Kapp**²⁹⁴: And so will the clerical rule (Intervention at the local council meeting, 9.11.1918, p.234).²⁹⁵

In a small town, the speed at which news and rumours spread could have a significant impact on the viability of businesses and careers.

²⁹² J.P. Origer was the brother of Jean Origer (See footnote nr. 385), a priest and Holy See "eminence" in the country, reason for the allusion to his clerical connections in the local council, we thus assumed J.P. Origer was on the clerical camp.

²⁹³ Nicolas Biwer was also a member of the Parti de la Droite. In 1920, he is one of the founders in Esch, of a list called Freie Ordnungspartei. See Flies (Flies 1979) and (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978).

²⁹⁴ Théodore Kapp (1881-1965). After university studies in Paris and Berlin he became a teacher (1910-1932) and director (1932-1946) of the Girls Highschool. Liberal (?) member of the local council (1917-1919).

²⁹⁵ **In the original:** Hr. Origer. Sie wollten mein Geschäft zugrunde richten, aber das wird Ihnen nicht gelingen. (...) seien Sie überzeugt, daß, wenn der Verkauf wieder frei fein wird, dann wird jedermann wieder zu Origer in die Poststraße kommen. Sie machen Reklame für mich. Der Krieg wird bald vorüber sein. Hr. Kapp. Und die klerikale Herrschaft auch.

The conclusion of the war will usher in a period of economic prosperity, as evidenced by the National Exhibition of Industry, Commerce, Arts, Work and Agriculture held in 1923 (Municipalité d'Esch-sur-Alzette 1923). The variety of commercial activities on display at the exhibition serves to illustrate Esch's aspirations to demonstrate its pivotal role in the boom in industry, trade, arts and crafts through the hosting of such an event. The multitude of businesses present at the exhibition, numbering in excess of one hundred, demonstrate the city's full commercial expansion, with a population of approximately 20,000 inhabitants, encompassing a vast array of modern commodities. The exhibition was intended to contribute to the city's new image as a successful and dynamic centre. Esch's 1923 exhibition appears to be an assertion of its status as a city that is in no way inferior to others of a similar standing.

5.1.1 Immigrant entrepreneurship

Luxembourg and also Esch had the most important entrepreneurs: in Luxembourg, the large public and private buildings in particular generated a lot of employment, while in Esch the important entrepreneurs were also employed mostly for the account of the large steel plants. Some entrepreneurs in the capital were also involved in large state enterprises (road construction, road maintenance, tram construction, etc.). Because of the great differences between the individual incomes, it is not possible to calculate an average sum. The relatively large number of foreign names (Italian, French and Belgian) is all the more striking as the most important entrepreneurs were foreigners. In the smaller rural villages, the trade yielded more modest sums and some entrepreneurs were happy (...) to be able to run a small side business at the same time (a commercial activity, agriculture, etc.) - Article commenting the nominal tax rolls for 1922 (*Obermosel-Zeitung* 1924)²⁹⁶.

It is also in the first decade of the 20th century that we see foreigners appear as an active force in the domain of small and medium entrepreneurship. There is no way of establishing a clear picture of who was a foreigner²⁹⁷ and for how long. Some of these bigger and smaller entrepreneurs eventually claimed and were granted Luxembourgish nationality, for which we are cautious in the use of the concept "immigrant". Family names are hardly ever a "guarantee" of nationality either. Leiner's monumental work on migration in the Saar-Lor-Lux region (Leiner 1994) was regrettably not able to establish statistics on the type of occupation of the migrants contingent of the population, for the city of Esch-sur-Alzette. Furthermore, if one limits immigration to its strict perception by outsiders, it can be argued that some of the foreign contingents barely passed for immigrants. As Noiriel (Noiriel 1986) well remarks in his study of immigrants during the interwar period in Lorraine, this was the case for the Belgians and Luxembourgers established in the north of Luxembourg's neighboring region. They were not perceived as foreigners tout

²⁹⁶ Interessantes über die Einkommensteuer von 1922, *Obermosel Zeitung*, 2.01.1924, p.1.

²⁹⁷ Except for the census of 1900, which indicate nationality, and within the limit of our other sources on commercial activities.

court because they “belonged to the same cultural universe of its own [autochthonous] population” (Noiriel 1986, 610). Another reading is possible, that is the different ways how both Italians and Germans were negatively perceived but for different reasons:

Both the German and Italian presence (albeit for different reasons) gradually gave rise to xenophobic feelings. In 1906, the Luxemburger Wort described German immigration as a "peaceful penetration" and argued in favour of maintaining Luxembourg's identity. The Francophile newspaper L'Indépendance luxembourgeoise had no hesitation in referring to "undesirables", German "racaille", to stigmatise the engineers and managers who had taken the best jobs in the steel industry (Scuto 2012, 93).

This was going to be the case in the post-World War I, when Germans, altered the modalities of their presence in Esch. Many started commuting to and from Germany, creating a new problem from the city management point of view. On the one hand, their commuting avoided the already cumbersome housing problem²⁹⁸, on the other hand, and paradoxically, the fact that Germans²⁹⁹ were now commuting made local commerce lose part of what had once been a vital clientele.

Councillor Beck: Every day we see Germans in particular, settling here like the Italians used to. They get themselves a room and if they are not from too far away from home, they even bring their food with them and drive home on Saturdays. It used to be it was these people who kept the shops alive here today it's the exact opposite. Rarely you see one of them in a shop, everything here is too expensive and it is precisely these people who are the ones driving down wages here (Intervention of councillor Beck at the local council meeting, 21, July 1922, p.6).³⁰⁰

Another element to take into account, and admittedly a methodological flaw, is the way in which foreigners were labelled and counted. Once again, we will firstly here make use of the most complete census available, that of 1900, as it is the most reliable source for inquiring on nationalities of the population. The issue arises as soon as the subjects are filtered as French or Germans. Many hundreds of Germans are labelled under their region or province of origin only: Bayern, Prussia, Württemberg, Hessen, Nassau, etc. This easily solved by concentrating them in a general “German” contingent. It seems to have been more complex for whoever was in charge of census to record the regions or Alsace and Lorraine³⁰¹, which sometimes are classified under Germany, others under France, in other instances still as standalone “nationalities”. Should these interchangeable labeling perhaps not meet the argument of Noiriel above?

²⁹⁸ As of 1918 this was closely linked to an aggravated influx of foreigners.

²⁹⁹ In fact, German presence in terms of overall population soon picked up again during the interwar period, with an actual increase taking place from 15.501 in 1922 to 23.576 in 1930 (STATEC 1990, 33).

³⁰⁰ **In the original:** Täglich sehen wir besonders Deutsche sich hier niederlassen, wie früher die Italiener. Sie verschaffen sich ein Zimmer und wenn sie nicht von zu weither sind, bringen sie sogar ihr Essen mit und fahren Samstags nach Hause. Früher waren es gerade diese Leute, die hier die Geschäfte leben ließen, heute ist es das gerade Gegenteil. Selten sehen Sie einen davon in einem Laden, für ihre Valuta ist alles hier zu teuer und gerade diese Leute sind es, die die Löhne hier drücken.

³⁰¹ Following the Franco-Prussian (1870-1871) war the two regions were under German Imperial rule until 1919.

We opted thus for treating the whole of the above-mentioned regions as single contingent with origins in (today's) France and Germany. Together, the French and German households who held a business were 62 in a total of 1912, barely a significant percentage of the overall households (3,9%) and certainly short from being significant within the overwhelming job occupations of their co-nationals, mostly active in the steelworks and mining. Indicatively, we find 15³⁰² Jewish families in some trade or craftsmanship, sometimes registered as German, others as French, others as simply Alsatians or as being originally from Lorraine:

These old families were all very prolific, having between three and nine children, most of whom married in Esch and stayed there. They came either from the vicinity of Trier or from Lorraine, which was particularly the case from 1871 onwards, as this province came under German rule (Lehrmann 1956, 199).

From the 1900 census, we can see the latter are active in commercial activities (not always explicit which). An attempt was made thus to match this information with the commercial directories of 1900 which provide more information as to the nature of their business activities. We know that the Rosenstiel family owns a haberdashery shop, the Feiners a bakery and grocers, the Kahns manufactured and sold clothes. The Cerfs were primarily in the meat and cattle trade business. Of the 40 Cerf registered family members, 31 were, by 1900, already Luxembourg nationals.

The world of the German and French communities' small enterprise was otherwise dominated by grocers, innkeepers, hairdressers, tailors. The information present in the 1900 census on job occupations does not imply an advertisement in the commercial directories which may well indicate that their clientele was principally a local, word-of-mouth one.

We find furthermore 16 Belgians, active as artisans or business owners. Some of these families seek publicity in the directory and are owners of well know businesses in Esch. They too are active in varied activities from hairdressers to innkeepers to brick entrepreneurs. To name just a few of the more enduring Belgian-owned business activities in Esch: The Gilniat and Gillain families in the ironmongery, hardware and lamp business, Gérard Willems, in printing/publishing and the Aerts, originally from Antwerp who started in the business of leather which in time evolved into a bicycle and automobile trade.

In all three Belgian, French and German communities, women appear as owning commerce in their capacity of "widowers of". Some state they are stylists, seamstresses or ironers although it cannot be known with certainty whether these were actual businesses established or simply informal activities. Rarely we find solo women in other professions in 1900. The exceptions are Ms. Rosalie Bastin, a French

³⁰² The number of Jewish families had doubled since 1849. Dostert traces back the establishment of the first Jewish family in Esch to the arrival of Simon Cerf, a butcher, in 1836 (Dostert 2006).

music teacher living solo, and two other women singers, admittedly a less respectable category, in the eyes of the contemporary society. Another household strikes for the exotism of its composition in the Rue de Canal, three singers are listed as living together, one Dutch male Lorenz, one German female, Ms. Louise Barthelmann, from Erfurt and, Ms Eva Rockenbrod a 15-year Luxemburger born in Paris. Two are women of which, one a single 19-year-old mother with a son. They were presumably occupied in one of the many city's cabarets and whether this could be considered a commercial activity is rather debatable as they were most likely employed by innkeepers. Prostitution in these cases is also not to be underrated although authorities turned blind eye to some of these occupations disguised as entertainment.

We relied thus on a few cases where we could establish small artisans and business owners' with origins in other countries, without being able to, in most cases to know when or whether they have claimed Luxembourgish nationality at all, post 1900. We have evidence of some elements stemming from the first established Jewish families having asked and being granted nationality through the archives of the Luxembourg State official newspaper, the *Mémorial*, shows that many Jews took on Luxembourg citizenship before the First World War, many of which had been born in Luxembourgish soil. We find evidence of some Italians have been granted nationality prior to World War 1. It is noteworthy that at least up until 1918, naturalisations were conceded invariably to merchants, traders and the like of the more educated middle classes, in the case of Italians the professional occupation that dominated the naturalization requests was that of the innkeepers (Scuto 2012). Therefore, evidence that demands of nationality came with the respectability conceded by a considerable amount of accumulated wealth. Demands were sometimes met with intransigence from the local council, a demand from a Luxembourgish woman would have become Italian by marriage, to retrieve her nationality after the husband had left, was refused with a majority of votes.³⁰³

Having Luxembourgish nationality did notwithstanding not change a perception of "otherness" associated with some communities. Jews, for example, to which an almost exclusive number of endogamic marriages between Jewish families in Esch during the decades under consideration may have contributed. Jewish ethnicity in Luxembourg included both natives and immigrants. Unlike other communities³⁰⁴ the fact of being a Jew, rather than being an immigrant, represents the catalysing force behind the development of the community. The establishment of a synagogue being thus also fundamental for the consolidation of a

³⁰³Naturalisation Moriconi wife - Art. 8. - Naturalisationsgesuch der Ehefrau Moriconi. See local council meeting, 22.02.1913, p.47.

³⁰⁴Intermarriage between Protestants and Catholics were not uncommon in Esch.

community.³⁰⁵ This is, nevertheless, also true for the other groups, the creation of a Church for Italians and for the Protestant communities in Esch being other examples.³⁰⁶

Whereas, for example, the Jewish families present in Esch in the late 19th century were almost exclusively involved in the slaughter, butcher and cattle trade business, the earlier 20th century sees other Jewish families³⁰⁷ widely engaged in the business of clothing and shoe trade, draping, haberdashery and bazars. Many of these families had escaped severer life circumstances in Lorraine and Germany before establishing themselves in what was regarded as a more open Luxembourg³⁰⁸. The Jewish population's integration was facilitated by the fact that Luxembourg had then smooth immigration laws as well as requirements and short delays to attain nationality (Cerf and Finkelstein 1999, 25). Many Jews had fled France and Germany in the aftermath of the Franco German war (1870) in the direction of Belgium and Luxembourg. However, most Jewish traders were not members of the city's commercial association, supposedly because of the relationship with other retailers who considered their competition disloyal (Cerf and Finkelstein 1999, 33).

Business partnerships were common both inside one's ethnic background group as well as outside. Jewish partnered with non-Jewish, admittedly less often³⁰⁹ than what was the case of for nationalities. Some partnerships, demonstrate, furthermore, the existence of interethnic business ventures, with Italians and Luxembourgers often working together.

In Esch, the migration surpluses of the years 1871, 1892 to 1894 and 1897 to 1899 were marked by first the creation of the two steel plants Brasseur and Metz et Cie, and subsequently by the inflow of foreign capital and considerable plant expansions after the purchase of the "Brasseur- Schmelz" by the Aachener Hütten -Actien -Verein and subsequent merger of the latter (in 1907) with the Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks, AG. It is also the construction of the Adolf Emil complex by the Gelsenkirchen, that brought with it a

³⁰⁵ Even though, in Esch there were tensions between old and newcomer Jewish communities according to Esch's police officer Nicolas Ries: „Die Juden im hiesiger Stadt [sic] stehen sich in zwei Gruppen feindlich gegenüber und teilen sich in "lange Zeit ansässige" und „vor Kurzem zugezogene“. See file *Difficultés survenues au sein de communauté israélite*. ANLux - INT 615.

³⁰⁶ The foundations of the first synagogue had been first laid in 1898. As for the Italian church, in 1901, the first missionary of the Opera Bonomelli arrived in the Grand Duchy, Luigi Zavattaro, who - with the help of Jean-Pierre Claude, who offered him the land - built at Boulevard Prince Henri, in the heart of the Grenz neighbourhood of Esch-sur-Alzette, the Italian Chapel in 1902 (Gallo 1992).

³⁰⁷ See the work of Cerf and Finkelstein (Cerf and Finkelstein 1999) for insight also on the later commercial activities by Jewish families in Esch-sur-Alzette as well as Blandine Landau's doctoral thesis on the spoliation of Jews in Luxembourg (Landau 2024) for a mapping of the commercial activities held by Jewish families until the Nazi occupation in 1940.

³⁰⁸ See Laurent Moyse (Moyse 2011) for a comprehensive history of Jews in Luxembourg.

³⁰⁹ One of the reasons advanced by Cerf and Finkelstein (Cerf and Finkelstein 1999) in their work is that of a presumed fear of competition that kept Jewish business men mostly between themselves. Another element to this hypothesis is also the fact that Jewish businessmen never took part of the Commercial Association.

renewed influx of migrant labour force³¹⁰. According to Leiner (Leiner 1994), the company Gelsenkirchen was at that time - after Krupp in Essen - the second largest coal and steel producer in Germany (Leiner, *ibid*).

The nuclear families of immigrants often formed, still according to Leiner, crystallization points for mobile family members of all degrees of kinship, for young relatives with high labour mobility as well as old, widowed relatives with poor opportunities on the labour market. In addition, it was not uncommon for people who had no family connections in the area to be often taken into the household, so that in Esch an average of seven to eight people joined the circle of extended nuclear families (Leiner 1994, 96) .

In addition to the sibling migration, there were of course, community migration of all kinds, ranging from family to regional group migrations. Occasionally, the uncles or aunts with their nieces or nephews as well as cousins were identified in the censuses. It was no different process for the self-made man who often started their empires as simple workers as well. It is also in the first decade of the 20th century that we see foreigners emerge as an active force in the domain of small and medium entrepreneurship.

The Brill of the inter-war period was also a place of social mixing: not only were there workers, but also representatives of the lower and middle classes, shopkeepers, craftsmen and the liberal professions (Reuter 2007b, 263).

Like their Belgian, German, and French merchant/shopkeeper counterparts they were principally active in the trades of innkeeping, grocers, butchers, tailors, hairdressers but also some bigger entrepreneurs follow the same dynamics, providing personalized services to cater for their compatriots. The arrival of the workers was followed by that of the shopkeepers and entrepreneurs. Many of these businesses, as their presence on the commercial directory of 1900 attests, catered no doubt to a wider clientele. This is the case of Moise Olivo, who owned a wine, spirit shop but who was also an innkeeper, Ignazio Alcadre³¹¹, Thomas Martellotto, Jacques Marabese, Stefan Cresto, Guido Vanucchi, and of course the unmissable construction entrepreneurs whose expertise was much coveted for, in an expanding real estate development market. Among these men, who almost exclusively came from the Northern regions of Italy, some kept to smaller businesses, aimed at the clientele of their neighbourhood only, with no pretensions of defying the borders of their immigrant community. Among them, the ones in the “sleep business” who owned enough space to rent, and often explore their less lucky compatriots, and those who made their meagre ends meet by pursuing a side activity. This could be opening a small grocery, renting rooms,

³¹⁰ In the words of R. Seidel when of his plea to the local council on the acquisition of the Clair-Chêne Forest, this move would bring an immigration of the “decent type”. See Rudolf Seidel’s intervention at the local council meeting of 6.11.1908.

³¹¹ One of the first Italians (1852- ?) we were able to trace in Esch. An orphan born Turin, in 1875 he is registered as a miner in Esch, 10 years later he already owned an inn.

opening cafes. The census of 1900 even lists, anecdotic, as it may be, one miner who is also a hairdresser! His name was Johan Castagna, from Salto, Italy.

Others ventured into the trades in the fields of construction, masonry, terracing, and cement, often after starting as simple masons. Italians with a solid experience in masonry flocked to Esch by the late 19th and early 20th century. Some family names remain to this date associated with such business activities in the domain of the construction entrepreneurship, road pavement, etc (Bonaria, Brevaco, in Esch-sur-Alzette, the Delizotti in Bettembourg, and one of the major construction companies in the country the Giorgetti, in Luxembourg city).

The Northeastern Italian regions of Carnia and Friuli³¹² which had provided employment and kept hundreds of families within its borders, following the decline of the textile factories witnessed the swarming of its men to “the Germanies”³¹³(Menegon and Dri 2016). The last remaining of these regions’ weavers and millwrights had to convert to bricklayers. The family economy, which drew meagre sustenance from the field, the vegetable garden and the stable, was not enough to feed the family, and so they emigrated to the countries where the building “fever” had broken out, requiring large numbers of workers.

This is something also widely documented by Leiner (Leiner 1994) in his study which highlights already the existence of migration agencies of sorts organized to find their way to the industrialised regions on the other side of the Alps.³¹⁴

In the 50th anniversary of the homonymous construction company in Esch, widely covered by the local press, Jean Moia recalled how his own father had travelled first as a 13-year-old from Italy to find a job in Switzerland:

In 1893, at the age of 13, he [his father] went to work in Switzerland. In 1898, he came to the Grand Duchy as a journeyman, passing through Dudelange, Tétange and Kayl before settling permanently as a bricklayer in Esch in 1900. For a number of years, he was head mason at Alfred Lefèvre, before setting up his own company in 1912.³¹⁵

³¹² During the Third War of Italian Independence on 21 October 1866, Friuli and Carnia were annexed to Italy. During the First World War, Carnia, on the border between the Kingdom of Italy and the then Empire of Austria, became a war zone. See also Blasen (Blasen 2021a) for an in-depth account on the contested regions and its implications for the immigrant communities in Esch-sur-Alzette.

³¹³ A quick look into the history of the Lazzari show they had work experiences in Germany before settling in Luxembourg.

³¹⁴ Leiner also offers an explanation of this phenomenon, which can be attributed to the Italian people's inherent disposition towards migration, influenced by the existence of two major migration routes. One of these routes led from Chiasso in Lombardy by rail through Switzerland, then via Basel and Strasbourg to the Saar-Lor-Lux region, with a preference for the route via Metz railway station. This was a particularly sought-after route for Lombards and Piemontese.

³¹⁵ Entreprises de Construction Moia - Newspaper clip - Article in *Le Lorrain Républicain*, 31.12.1962 – Archives Municipales de la Ville d’Esch-sur-Alzette- 735.1.

Other Italian regions provided Esch with labour force. Some regions like and communities in the Northeast and Northwest will provide masons in particular. These masons had often learnt their trade, in particular the cement trade (Caldognetto 2007), along their migration road. Some had made stopovers in Switzerland, Germany and France along their way before making their final stop in Luxembourg. One of them was Antoine Caffaro, entrepreneur who had been born in Maxéville, in France, where his father had been first employed. Other families following more or less the same trajectories were the Bonaria and Moia (Orino/Turin) and the Crolla from Oleggio in the Piemonte region.

The Murero³¹⁶ family, among the first to have reached Esch as masons, came from Friuli, from a little village called Osoppo. The D'Ambros family, also in the masonry business was originally from Seren del Grappa (Belluno), not far in the province of Venice.

The history of immigrant entrepreneurship, in Luxembourg, is for the most, an unknown one. Despite urges from immigration scholars (Caldognetto 2007) to make the latter widely known, there are many factors obstructing this into becoming a reality. To start with, there is the lack of sources detained by these entrepreneurial families themselves. In addition, one of the most precious sources containing information on foreigner individuals are the files on the *Police des Étrangers* (Alien police), the difficulties of its access have been alluded to in our introduction.

As well documented by Stefan Leiner, the census of the year 1890 does not yet show contingents of Umbrians, nor the striking percentages from central Italy that would soon form the main stock of Italian labourers in Esch. On the contrary, it shows that in the early phase of Italian immigration, mainly northern Italians had come to Esch-sur-Alzette.

Their businesses may have started small, indeed they lived often with one another upon their arrival to Esch³¹⁷, but quickly crated solid businesses out of their know—how. Among them were men with little to no literacy. When of a process against Venuto Bregoli - regarding the wrong type of cement his company had used - arose in the municipal council, Mayor J.P. Michels quickly advised that the matter not be transformed into something bigger. He acknowledged any of Bregoli's wrongdoings could have not been intentional as the man could not even read:

³¹⁶ Jean Murero's (1874-1927) emigration path denotes again the errant and precarious vicissitudes of going where there where job opportunities presented themselves. Since his arrival in Hollerich in 1900, he goes from masonry works in Luxembourg city (1903), Martelange (by the Belgian border), until he joins Antoine Caffaro, in 1909, for whom he will work in Differdange before establishing himself solo in Esch-sur-Alzette (ANLux, Dossier Jean Murero, Police des Étrangers, J-108-0088906).

³¹⁷ The Bregoli came to Esch as miners. The census of 1900 shows they lived in 19 (!) into a single household in the Rue des Boers.

Mayor Michels: I am of the opinion not to bring him directly to court. He should give us back what he has received. (...) We don't need a trial. The entrepreneur can't really help it, he can't even read³¹⁸ (intervention during the local council meeting, 9.03.1912, p.33).

The proof of his presumed innocence was that he continued to be outsourced and entrusted with work, by the local council for the years to come.

The municipality alternated their outsourcing of roadworks and other infrastructure which often fell with companies owned by Italians at least one south Tyrolean³¹⁹. Philippe Blasen's work (Blasen 2021a) traced the history of the Austro-Hungarian community in Esch. In it, the historian demonstrates Tyroleans were mostly occupied in mining, and thus overwhelmingly working-class, but over the years, the Tyrolean pub trade also flourished. Innkeepers to have started such trade were Cipriano Casagrande in 1883, the brothers Carlo and Valentino Lazzeri³²⁰ in 1890 (Carlo had a side occupation as also a grocer and Valentino as a construction entrepreneur) and in 1900³²¹. Very attended by locals was also the Café of Alfonso Dalago which faced the Italian owned Café Marabese in the Brill neighbourhood.

The Italian-speaking Tyroleans and the Italians were mainly unskilled miners, so they undoubtedly worked side by side in the mines. The censuses of 1880, 1890 and 1900 show that the Tyrolean men and women also lived among the Italians, not only in the same streets, but even in the same houses or flats. Some were boarders with Italian landlords (Blasen 2021a, 41).

Just like Tyrolean families, families from the Italian Northern regions, who settled in Esch happened to have origins in the same regions or even villages, the Bonaria joined the Moia and the Papa in Esch, from Orino in the province of Varese (Italy). Very likely they had connections from before and worked in networks. The families Murero, Bregoli, Papa, Lazzeri, Moia, D'Ambros, Crolla or Bonaria were among the most frequently subcontracted for municipal works and infrastructure throughout the period here examined. Such choice results in an interesting form of local patriotism demonstrated by the local council. Esch based entrepreneurs tended to be prioritized over others from surrounding or Luxembourg city and

³¹⁸ In the original: **H. Michels.** Ich bin der Ansicht, den Mann nicht direkt vor den Kadi zu holen. Er soll uns wiedergeben, was er zu diel bezogen hat. (...) wir brauchen dazu keinen Prozeß. Der Unternehmer kann ja eigentlich nicht dafür, er kann nicht einmal lesen.

³¹⁹ Leiner denotes the significant proportion of Italians with Austrian citizenship as striking (Leiner p.,178). This will be widely covered by the subsequent work of Philippe Blasen on the Tyrolean community which was overwhelming composed of miners. Blasen also demonstrates how the emigration paths of Tyroleans had often transited via Germany and Switzerland, before settling in Esch.

³²⁰ Their linguistic affinity with Italians may have caused misunderstanding as to their origins. Benito Gallo, includes the Lazzeri in his history of Italians (Gallo 1992). Either that or a nationalistic stance from the author in insisting on their "Italianness", given that those territories (now Trentino-Alto Adige) were returned to Italy in the post-World War 1.

³²¹ The Tyrolean population in Esch tripled in the years between 1880 to 1900, from 108 to 343 individuals (Blasen 2021a).

here nationality played no role. It is interesting to confront such attitude with that of an otherwise much discredited foreign working class, from the perspective of the municipality save very few exceptions.³²² These entrepreneurs tended to be defended within the majorities of the local council, apart from an initially skeptical Jean Schaack³²³ who furthermore used his newspaper, *Der Arme Teufel*, to denounce the workers exploitation by Lefèvre and business partner Caffaro. One of the entrepreneurs accused of contracting workers straight from abroad and bypassing the local ones (because more expensive) was indeed Murero. Although some entrepreneurs like Murero denied such accusations³²⁴ it was clear that many (resident in Esch) workers were losing their jobs opportunities, to the illegally recruited workforce from abroad. It is thus easy to understand why many among the construction entrepreneurs became wealthy and how they could bid work, among others, to the municipality so cheaply. In 1922, councillor Pierre Bukovac³²⁵ stated that the tendency of the municipality to retain and outsource work to the cheapest bidding entrepreneurs came with the high price paid by the labourers working for them.

Councillor Bukovac: I do not agree with this proposal [of hiring cheapest bidder] This is the first case where one is cheaper than the other, because he [entrepreneur] has the intention of bringing in labour from abroad, to whom he pays 10-12 francs. Several workers have come to me and have told me that they have been to Murero to get work. The latter had told them that other workers were coming here now. He didn't hire ours. This is proof that the labourers brought in from outside not receive the daily price, but at least 4 or 6 Fr. less. **Councillor Kieffer:** (...) On the other hand, Bukovac is right with his reasoning. The positions where Murero is cheaper than its competitors are precisely those-where labour plays the first role. (...) Many Luxembourgers have to go to work in France and everyone has to make sure that they get their compatriots-first. (...) **Mr. Thilmann:** I am in favour of assigning the work to Murero; he has told us that he will comply exactly with our wishes. If he does not, nevertheless, he may rest assured that he does not get any more work from us. (...) **Councillor Bukovac:** (...) Councillor Berg has pointed out that the Escher taxpayers would have to pay for the price difference. The biggest tax is paid by the worker, who is deprived of the opportunity to earn more than 5 francs per day, [this] deprives them of the opportunity to survive at all. Who gives us the guarantee that when the labour is transferred to Murero, he will pay the wages that are customary today. I am therefore categorically against it (Local council meeting, 8 April 1922, p.6).³²⁶

³²² Councillors Kieffer and Bukovac, both working - class were of the few expressing an international worker's solidarity.

³²³ Emblematic personality at the origins of organized Socialism in Luxembourg and longstanding Esch-sur-Alzette's local councillor (almost uninterruptedly between 1906-1934). For an in-depth explanation of his far from straightforward political path and turns see (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978) as well as (Bodry and Fayot 2016) for a complete biography.-

³²⁴ A file on his name of the Alien police contradicts his defense as he was in different occasions fined for recruiting illegal migrant labourers (ANLux, Dossier Jean Murero, Police des Étrangers, J-108-0088906).

³²⁵ Pierre Bukovac (1890-?), miner and communist local councillor from 1921 to 1925. One of 13 siblings and incidentally the son of a Tyrolean miner.

³²⁶ **In the original:** Ich bin mit diesem Vorschlag nicht einverstanden. Hier bietet sich bereits der erste Fall, wo einer billiger ist als der andere, weil er die Absicht hat, Arbeitskräfte von auswärts kommen zu lassen, denen er 10—12 Frk bezahlt. Mehrere Arbeiter sind zu mir gekommen und haben mir mitgeteilt, sie seien bei Murero gewesen um Arbeit zu bekommen. Dieser habe ihnen erklärt, es kämen jetzt andere Arbeiter hierhin. Die unsrigen hat er nicht eingestellt. Das ist also ein Beweis dafür, daß die von auswärts herangezogenen nicht den Tagespreis erhalten, sondern wenigstens 4 oder 6 Fr. weniger. Wenn übrigens der Unterschied groß ist, so ist das ein Beweis, daß dieser Unternehmer gut gerechnet hat und für eine gute Arbeit müssen wir auch anständige Preise zahlen. Hr. Berg. Ich weiß nicht, ob der zweite, der weit teurer ist, seinen Arbeitern mehr bezahlt. Übrigens sind wir hier um in erster Linie die Interessen der Stadtkasse zu wahren und deshalb schlage ich den billigsten vor. (...) Hr. Kieffer: (...) Andererseits aber hat Bukovac Recht mit seinem Raisonement. Diejenigen Posten, auf denen Murero billiger ist all seine Konkurrenten, das sind gerade die, wo die Arbeitskräfte btc erste Rolle spielen. Und dazu sieht das Lastenheft keinerlei

We see thus how the case was different for entrepreneurs who disposed of esteem and respect from local authorities, as well as they played a role of intermediators and key actors in the defense of the interests of their co nationals, namely, with the creation of the *Associazioni Mutuo Soccorso*³²⁷, The Mutual Aid Associations for deprived working-class Italians³²⁸ .

Remarkably, the initial assurances [1901] applied to Luxembourgers and foreigners alike: the Eyschen [PM] era was a liberal era, not yet a national era (Scuto 2012, 50).

Notwithstanding, the numbers of Italians in “informal”, seasonal and non-declared job occupations certainly justified the existence of extra safety nets and support, in the intimacy of their ethnic community. In many ways indeed this “business” stratum will distinguish themselves from their co-national working classes. They will build on their own prestige as businessmen, create their own mutual societies thus providing for fellow Italians in case of accidents, sudden death, and other vicissitudes. Within the immigrant areas numerous cultural and sporting associations also sprung up. They will be at the origin of numerous, clubs, music, literature, theater associations and thus gain the respect of both their community of origin and that of their host country.

Proportionally and with respect to other non-Luxembourgers in the census of 1900, Italians were the most overwhelmingly employed in unskilled work (Leiner 1994; Centre de Recherche Public- Centre Universitaire, sine dato). The socio-economic distribution remained relatively consistent across the groups, although a homogeneous minority was rarely observed.

Bestimmung vor über die Einstellung der Arbeitskräfte. Allerdings bin ich der Ansicht, daß er auch ohnehin solche von hier nehmen muß, aber er hat diese Absicht keineswegs. Die Leute, die soeben im Schöffensratsszimmer waren, haben doch nicht geträumt. Viele Luxemburger müssen nach Frankreich arbeiten gehen und ein jeder muß doch dafür sorgen, daß er zuerst seine Landsleute unterbekommt (...) Hr. Thilmann: Ich bin dafür, Murero die Arbeit zu übertragen; er hat uns erklärt, sich unseren Wünschen genau zu fügen. Tut er das dennoch nicht, so mag er versichert sein, daß er von uns keine Arbeit mehr bekommt. Das nächste Mal werden wir im Lastenheft eine Bestimmung vorsehen, die für die Einstelluug der Arbeitskräfte den Gebrauch des Arbeitsnachweises obligatorisch macht. (...) Hr. Bukovac. Kamerad Berg hat darauf hingewiesen, daß die Escher Steuerzahler für den Preisunterschied aufkommen müßten. Die größte Steuer bezahlt der Arbeiter, dem durch den Lohnabbau von 5 Frk. pro Tag die Möglichkeit genommen wird, überhaupt noch zu bestehen. Wer gibt uns die Garantie, daß wenn die Arbeit Murero übertragen wird, dieser die heute üblichen Lohnsätze bezahlt. Ich bin deshalb kategorisch dagegen.

³²⁷ Before the creation of such Associations, Italians depended on the assistance of Consul Joseph Weber (1856-1908). See Gallo (Gallo 1992) and Philippe Blasen (Blasen 2021a) for a detailed history of tis diplomatic relationship. Jean-Pierre Claude took to overseeing the interests of the community in Esch-sur-Alzette. He became the protector of Italian immigrants and the promoter of their associations. The Italian consul, Jos. Weber, chose him as "chancellor" (1893). For his merits he was appointed honorary vice-consul of Italy in 1914, a title he held until his death (1930). We will be seeing how he will become a much-contested public figure in Esch-sur-Alzette.

³²⁸ Originally founded in Luxembourg city by entrepreneurs C. Clivio, A. Camera, Achille Giorgetti, Michel Knaff, Giuseppe Possamai et Marx Lazard. In Esch a similar initiative takes place in July 1892, on the initiative of the to be honorary consul Jean-Pierre Claude, with the creation of the "Società Italiana di Secours Mutuel", social security system of sorts with the aim of providing moral and financial support to its members. Its activity continued right up to the Second World War, and the number of and the number of members was always considerable (Gallo 1992, 49).

The range of occupations held by these minority groups in the commercial sector was diverse. It manifested in the food sector and hospitality, as well as hairdressing and tailoring. Albeit a minority, Italians were also busy as entrepreneurs in the construction sector.

This preliminary analysis, based on the limited information available on their settlement, shows that ethnicity was not the only form of identity in the early 20th century. Class and religion are almost always as important as, for example, marriage patterns along religious confessions, regions of origin and class. This is confirmed by a large part of our immigrant entrepreneurs. It can be reasonably assumed that none of them arrived wealthy, and thus they are undoubtedly self-made men. It would be more interesting to examine the marriage patterns and professional occupations of the second generation of these small artisans and businessmen, a topic that is beyond the scope of this study. The narrative of anti-Italian sentiment was pervasive in the Minett, where Italians had settled, and it often manifested as a social taboo against marrying Italians. However, exceptions did exist. A few examples can be provided to illustrate how, in the case of self-made shopkeepers and artisans, their settlement dates were already exogamous and they married Luxembourgers or into other nationalities. Indeed, both tendencies are evident in the data, with instances of inter-class marriage and marriages into other merchant families, both Luxembourgish and non-Italian. As examples, we may cite the Sabatini family, who married one Gilniat; Moise Olivo, who married a German; or Jacques Marabese in Esch, who married a Luxembourger. Perhaps the most striking is Achille Giorgetti in Luxembourg city who married the heiress of the Steinberger family, a German family active in the building sector of the capital city, a confirmation that business interests and marriages were inextricably linked. Moving down one generation into the 1910's-1920's the mixed marriages increase in our small sample comprising Italian entrepreneur families. However here too, we notice this was more a class-based feeling than an ethnic based one. Some Italian entrepreneurs, and even merchant families who were or became successful did marry Luxembourgers. There is unquestionably a trend enduring of interethnic marriage among Italians, also among the most affluent master artisan, shopowners (Gallo 1992) but the exceptions are there to prove (especially as we investigate second generations and onwards) that access to Luxembourgish society was not completely shut to them.³²⁹ The rise of the industry, allowed in this case for Luxembourgish women stemming from the working classes like daughters of miners or domestic staff to marry Italian men of a higher economic status, as even the modest amount of property shopkeepers may have owned signified an improvement in social status. Up until the 1930's marrying a foreigner meant, for women losing their Luxembourgish

³²⁹ As seen in PART 1

nationality to the one of their husbands. In many cases it can be argued this to be a trade of “ethnicity” for social ascension, or a marriage that secured Luxembourgish women with a better future. World War I also brought feelings of insecurity related to nationalities and the need to bring back the “original” Luxembourgish who had emigrated abroad.

Another question is as to how they were presumably quickly integrated into Luxembourgish society, question to which the mixed marriages could help answer in the first place as well as the reasons behind their requests for Luxembourgish nationality (Scuto 2012). But what about the social space they physically inhabited? Whether such minorities movement took place outside this original, unquestionably, poorer neighbourhoods into more external, central, or suburban areas of settlement would be another question to ask for the subsequent decades³³⁰. The newer upper-class streets of Emile Mayrisch Street³³¹, in upper class area Dellheicht, being just an example of a street to have remained for the majority Luxembourgish, thus rather confirming Leiner’s hypothesis of a fleet of better-off Luxembourgish towards the outskirts and newer parts of the city post 1914.

In Esch-sur-Alzette space occupation up until the 1920’s said little about one’s positioning in the social class and it would make little sense to emphasize this otherwise typical aspect of persistence of ethnicity if not to state that, albeit mixed socially, Esch still tended to confine within very specific neighbourhood communities such as the Italian.

The history of the Italians in Luxembourg provides an insight the full range of prejudices to which foreigners so easily fall victim to. At the beginning of this century, Italians were sometimes seen as a nuisance because they were different in language and customs: they dressed and ate differently, had a different way of spending their leisure time and spend their money. The litany of clichés is long: the hot-blooded, irascible Italian who’s easy to knife, the Italian who lacks discipline at work and a slacker (Gilbert Trausch 1992).

The Brill was known as “le quartier Italien” which has undoubtedly contributed to the essentialization of such neighbourhoods.³³² Confessional and national demarcation attempts apparently played a certain role, although only with regard to the Italians - possibly from their own understanding of guest workers - a certain “ghettoization tendency can be discerned” (Leiner 1994, 217). Whether this ghettoization came solely from Italians “own understanding” can be questioned and there is room to believe that the role of the press and even some intellectuals over time contributed to the “otherization” of Italians:

³³⁰ The new “upper middle class” neighbourhood of Dellheicht will host in its luxurious mansions, some Jewish and Italian entrepreneurs. Whether these were numerically significant, or exceptions remains yet to be researched.

³³¹ Based on research done from the 1935 census microfilms, on 32 households of the Emile Mayrisch street. Credit goes to the students of the undergraduate course in European Cultures, “Micro-histoire d’Esch” under the supervision of Prof. Denis Scuto at the University of Luxembourg, in 2020.

³³² Blandine Landau makes the same point for the Jewish in Esch’s commercial street centre, referring to some three decades later. See (Landau 2024).

As they all stuck together like burdocks and kept their habits from home, people in their neighbourhoods in Brill-, Buren-, Barburger- and Höhlstraße, on Diesweg and Prinzenring thought they were in Italy (Flies 1979, 475)³³³.

In one instance, during the municipal council meeting, where a housing solution was urgent for the female religious teaching staff, some members argued in favour of a short-term contract in the Brill, fearing the Sisters' reaction the neighbourhood.³³⁴

The criticism and contempt directed towards the Italian community, as evidenced by the words of some of the city's authors themselves, is worthy of attention. Of particular interest is J.P. Manternach's (a teacher) criticism on the lack of a thorough urban planning in Esch-sur-Alzette, which he attributes to the demographic explosion of the city in such a short time. It is important to note that Manternach's critique is not entirely prejudice free, as he goes on to describe some of the workers' neighbourhoods and their hygienic conditions. Of particular interest are the Brill, Grenz and Hoehl neighbourhoods, which lie to the south of the city on the border with France.

On the right-hand side of the main street the Brill street branches off. It is a street inhabited by factory workers and distinguishes itself for its dirtiness and for its fragrance. The inscriptions of the shops make one presume the presence of the Italian people. Unwashed children slide in the sidewalks and in the streets, [whereas] through the windows peep females with uncombed black hair (Manternach 1907, 21–22).

Circumstances and prejudice did not change much over the two decades that follow if one is to believe once again the opinions and colorful descriptions of another Esch's guide upon the entry at the Brill and Hoehl vicinities:

the surroundings are changing [upon arrival in Grenz/Hoehl]: Advertisements and Italian names on shop fronts, and delicatessens, houses and people dressed in gaudy colours, noise, bustle, rubbish, all the liveliness and picturesque uncleanliness of the southern race, which is so much a part of the city. Here [cafés of the Grenz] company is not always recommendable. Let us move on (Société d'Initiative et d'Embellissement 1926, 19).³³⁵

³³³ **In the original:** Da sie alle wie Kletten zusammenhielten und ihre Gewohnheiten aus der Heimat beibehielten, glaubte man sich in ihren Vierteln in der Brill-, Buren-, Barburger- und Höhlstraße, auf dem Diesweg und am Prinzenring wie in Italien.

³³⁴ In 1907, the housing solution, proposed for the teaching staff Sisters of the congregation of Nancy (FR), in the Brill, a predominantly working-class neighborhood, worried some of the local council members: "Mr. Kersch [conservative local councillor] is of the opinion that the contract should be made at short notice, as the Sisters would not stay in there for long because of the neighbourhood". Local council meeting, 17 June 1907, p.27.

³³⁴ Very popular in the late 19th and early 20th century, the *Sociétés d'Embellissement* were Associations of private initiative who had as goals the embellishment of cities.

³³⁵ **In the original :** Du coup, l'entourage change: Inscriptions de réclames et de noms italiens aux façades, fruits et mets du sud dans les vitrines des épiciers et des traiteurs, maisons et gens habillés de couleurs criardes, du bruit, de l'animation, des ordures, toute la vivacité et la malpropreté pittoresque de la race méridionale (...) Ici la société n'est pas toujours très recommandable. Passons. Passons.

We are thus witnessing the emergence of a society in which migrants can climb the social ladder as entrepreneurs and merchants. Nor should we underestimate the case in which some of these successful entrepreneurs managed to strengthen their social position by marrying other wealthy merchants, be they Luxembourgers or not. The fact remains, however, that in the case of the various non-Luxembourg communities, only a minority climbed the social ladder by owning small to larger businesses, sometimes through mixed marriages. The rest of the migrants remained overwhelmingly employed in the mines and steelworks and, at least for the time being, at the mercy of their living conditions with little help from the above.

5.2 Lifting the city – Sociability and the universe of associations

The government believes that we "farmers" have no taste. What are we supposed to know about aesthetics.³³⁶

The Grand- Duchy felt "shamefully small, humiliated by the big, is the mental state of the damaged self-esteem of pre-war Luxembourg" (Linden 1999), not least Europe's then superpowers. Hence, "the judgement by others – tourists, visitors and foreign journalists – had a much stronger impact than it would have had on uncontested nations" (Millim 2016).

Branded names, such as 'City of Roses' for Luxembourg City, 'Land of a Hundred and Thirty Castles' for the country, 'Land of Red Rocks' for the industrial South and 'Little Switzerland' for the rocky Müllerthal valley [...], indeed erase natural, social and cultural complexities by highlighting selected representational and signifying aspects of a city or region" (Millim 2016, 10).

However, as Millim argues further (ibid) while promoting "a limited patriotic identity", this deliberate limitation omits the less desirable circumstances within the state, such as discords among communities, nationalistic fervour and social segregation, from the national brand and creates an idealised 'dream identity'.

Such were the feelings of inferiority internationally. On the national scale Esch-sur-Alzette, felt the minority complex of being Luxembourg's dusty and industrial setting when compared to the country's luxuriant and attractive capital.

In the 1870s, its population already exceeded than 20% of the population of Luxembourg city. By the time Esch became a city in 1906, its population was more than half that of the capital. By 1914 the number of inhabitants in Esch exceeded that of Luxembourg. In 1930, it reached a peak with almost 30,000 inhabitants. Thanks to the merger of five communes in 1920, the capital was able to regain its place of Grand-Duchy's leading communes³³⁷ (Phillipart 2005). This population growth underlines the importance of the economic growth (along with the taxes it paid!) of Esch among of the country's municipalities and set the scene for a rivalry between the economic capital and the political capital.

³³⁶ In the original: Die Regierung glaubt, wir " Bauern" hätten keinen Geschmack. Was sollen wir wohl von Ästhetik kennen (Intervention of Dr. Joerg at the local council, 28.05.1910).

³³⁷ Esch: 29,469 inhabitants; Luxembourg: 53,791.

Farming may have diminished in Esch-sur-Alzette at the beginning of the 20th century, and in fact it almost disappeared, but the prejudices about an enduring backward peasantry added to the town's self-perception of not “being” enough, persisted. Esch may well have been the industrial motor of the country but was in serious need of a lifting in what concerned its appeal and embellishment, for the sake of visitors and its own population. For the upper classes, the financial possibilities meant a way of expressing their class belonging also in the choice of their home. Until then, class expressed itself in the city’s commercial centre, mostly through its external aesthetics. The “good society” could count on architecture to express its wealth, distinction and belonging to a higher and culturally enlightened circle. The city of Esch counts still on numerous examples of an architecture of affirmation through different styles (Buchler et al. 2020). A plethora of buildings in, and historicism, art nouveau and in the 1920s in art deco gave the city an eclectic sense of style. Personal tastes, ideologies and schools of thought gave place to a, nevertheless harmonious city centre, at times rivalling with the capital’s buildings (Phillipart 2005; Buchler et al. 2020). Inspired by Hausmannian ideas and French urbanism and art in general, Paul Flesch³³⁸, the city’s architect (1901-1910) had a vision for the city that included wider streets, increased open air common areas, namely playgrounds as well as embellished green spaces. He also envisaged and launched the city’s Galgenberg park in 1912, followed later in the 1920s, by its rose garden and a promenade, epitome of the turn of century middle and upper-class leisure activities.

The turn of the century marks a process of evolution from the peasant reality of a relatively isolated town to that of an urban reality. Until the turn of the century, Esch-sur-Alzette’s main social and economic relationships had remained restricted to a local scale that included neighbouring villages. By the early 20th century, on the contrary, an urban space had emerged. One in which Esch could claim a central regional role. It did however not succeed, unlike other cities across the border like Nancy, for example (Voilliard 1978) to attract an equally significant, intellectual, artistic and cultural life, as much denounced by Frantz Clément (F. Clément 1915). At most, Esch-sur-Alzette’s was a locally reduced élite far removed from the higher intellectual circles of the likes of Aline Mayrisch’s³³⁹. The fight for a recognition that

³³⁸ Paul Flesch (1870-1955), architect. Esch owes much of its public infrastructure and impressive private villas to his projects.

³³⁹ Aline de Saint-Hubert (1874-1947), wife of Emil Mayrisch, industrialist, future director of ARBED. After the First World War, she became involved in Franco-German reconciliation through culture representing a supranational enlightened bourgeoisie and the perfect buffer to play the moderators between France and Germany in the post WW1. She also founded the Luxembourg Red Cross and campaigned for numerous feminist societal issues, such as the construction of a maternity in Lux city and advocating for the young girls education. The Mayrisch couple’s château in Colpach, was to become, namely a place for intercultural encounters, privileged far and foremost their foreign connections. A literature and art passionate, with her socialisation much influenced by German-speaking countries, Aline Mayrisch maintained contacts with the *Nouvelle revue*

could go beyond its economic weight, on the national and cross-border scene seems to have been and continues to be one of Esch-sur-Alzette's permanent quests.

In fact, the capital [Luxembourg City] was in competition with the burgeoning steel towns of the coalfield. A skillful tax policy and good connections to the international rail network attracted industries to the outskirts. As for the octroi tax, it enabled the town centre to be reserved for services and housing. The new commercial legislation, and in particular the law on limited companies, made it possible to attract large property owners who made the capital their home. This policy explains the massive presence of villas, mansions and town halls for the professions in the new districts adjoining the old heart of the city (Phillipart 2005; 2009).

Moreover, it is not to be excluded that precisely such appeal made it so that many of those who invested or worked in Esch did not however establish their residence there³⁴⁰.

Since 1910 the greater meddling of the Government in the local building regulations³⁴¹, had upset the local council. In fact, the Government believed the municipality was not competent on the matter of legislating in this instance³⁴². Private initiative had therefore up to that point had been left to the discretion of developers alone. Numerous examples of art deco, art nouveau, historicist, classicism, and modernist architecture point at an eclectic style dominating the city, in what Luxembourger art historian Phillipart labelled of "bourgeois conformity in the form, individualism in the decor" (Phillipart 2005).

The government's aim was to achieve greater harmony in the way roads, pavements, paths and housing are built, and to put an end to the discretionary nature of future construction.³⁴³

There was yet another aspect contributing to Esch's poor publicity: a bad press that spread throughout the country, much owed to the feather of the *Escher Anzeiger*:

française and one of its founders André Gide, as well as with the *Décades de Pontigny*, intellectual gatherings of personalities from several European countries (Mercier and Meder 2000).

³⁴⁰ This was one of the concerns of the local council when ARBED decided to locate its headquarters in the city of Luxembourg in the 1920s, fearing that such a move would lead to an exodus of the better-off classes to the capital. The fact that the sons of the managers of the steelworks, for example, were largely absent from the enrolment lists of the industrial and commercial school would suggest that they too preferred to attend secondary school in the capital.

³⁴¹ The fact that different regulations had been in place until then, letting construction regulations to the municipalities' discretion may well explain why in Esch there was such a proliferation of different architectural constructions, granting to the city a truly eclectic touch style wise.

³⁴² Local council meeting, Art 3. discussion on Construction Regulations, 28.05.1910.

³⁴³ Since 1871, Luxembourg City had insisted on regular" buildings that blend into the whole, and prescribed a minimum number of storeys, Esch-sur-Alzette, remains much more flexible on these points of its own building regulations of 1911 and 1923 (Phillipart 2005), therefore further reinforcing the argument of a more discretionary stance on the modalities and tastes of its constructions.

Dr. Joerg: According to a certain Escher paper³⁴⁴, everything is done to discredit the town of Esch with the rest of the country (...). If you get around on the Moselle or anywhere else in the country, you hear how people think about Esch. It simply scandalous how the opinion is spread everywhere that things here are simply terrible. Esch is described as the Eldorado of depravity, as if more immoral conditions prevailed here [more] than in the in the boys' home in Grevenmacher or in the sacristy of Medernach (...) and claims that in the park you meet nothing but prostitutes in the evenings³⁴⁵ (Intervention on the local council meetings 26.02.1910, p.2).

It is evident from the above that Esch suffered from a complex of not being as attractive a site as the capital, Luxembourg or other regions.

One of the first published travel guides of Esch-sur-Alzette, published by the *Touring Club Luxembourgeois*, in 1907 illustrates in detail various sites of the city. The author's style highlights certain aspects, typical of an industrial city lifestyle, sounding almost "far Westish". Money flowed along with the dust from the steelworks.

Pigs give/make bigger hams, the barns have a bigger door [...] men's bags are so full of money that they can stand still on the table. [Esch] is not a fashionable city. The mining flourishes. The industry flourishes³⁴⁶ (Manternach 1907, 5).

The noise and smell arising from each corner of the city, and the many blast furnaces³⁴⁷ permanently fuming with pollution were omnipresent.

Tourists generally run away from the areas where minerals are exploited. That is why our region of steel has been, for a longtime, ignored by everyone, exception made for the factory workers coming from everywhere and who endure the harsh work conditions to make a living, and the great men of the industry business who make this land profitable. Yet, the nature of this region is still beautiful despite the human [presence]. Many of these hills, excavated by workers until presenting the image of chaos, have already been partially covered by a layer of nourishing land and new vegetation that, with its green carpet, will soon hide all of its wounds. In fact, these profound cuts, these open wounds by violent men greedy for some gain [...] rather add up to the picturesque side of the landscape and confer it sometimes a tragic note (Société d'Initiative et d'Embellissement 1926, 27).

Prior to the moves towards independent working-class associations, there were initiatives to provide an arena where workers and the middle classes could meet or enjoy some form of cultural welfare. These associations already existed in other European countries, such as Germany, France or the UK, and were

³⁴⁴ Allusion to the newspaper *Escher Anzeiger*.

³⁴⁵ As per his usual provocative, anti-clerical fueled interventions. **In the original:** Dr. Joerg: (...) in einem gewissen Escher Blatt betrieben und gemäß welchem von gewisser Seite alles darangesetzt wird, um die Stadt Esch bei dem übrigen Lande in Verruf zu bringen. Wenn man auf der Mosel oder sonst wo im Lande herumkommt, so hört man dort, wie die Leute über Esch denken. Es ist einfach skandalös, wie man da überall die Meinung verbreitet, hier in Esch sehe es einfach schrecklich aus. (...) Man schildert Esch als das Eldorado der Verkommenheit, als ob hier unmoralischere Zustände herrschten als im Jünglingsheim zu Grevenmacher oder in der Sakristei von Medernach (...) uno behauptet, im Park treffe man Des Abends nichts als Prostituierte.

³⁴⁶ **In the original:** Die Schweine geben grossere Schinken, die Scheune haben ein grossers Tor (...) die Männer haben derart gefüllte Geldsacke, dass sie beim Stellen auf den Tisch senkrecht stehen bleiben. [Esch] ist keine Modestadt. Der Bergbau blüht, die Industrie blüht.

³⁴⁷ By 1914 they were a total of 18 (Buchler et al. 2020).

sometimes projected as a form of preventing the emergence of an independent workers' movement (Eisenberg 1993). As we shall see, this was also the underlying agenda of other associations promoted by the bourgeois middle classes, some more openly than others.

Some, among the wealthier class, not only enjoyed moderate progress and industrialisation, but also worked to promote access to culture and the well-being of the lower classes. Little attention had been paid to how relationships developed within these associations, making it taken for granted that these associations transcended classes and that they were not a place for conflict. A careful look into some of our sources reveal how some Associations served as a platform to maintain a status quo of the bourgeoisie. For some Associations the political aspects took the predominance, for others the social issues did. The school system, the workplace, public life and, finally, organised leisure were the main areas in which bourgeois culture could express its hegemonic power and appeal. It is evident that class distinctions persisted, not only in terms of access to the Associations, as has been postulated by some historians³⁴⁸, but also in the absence of social constraints on membership. In fact, such restrictions could at times be tacit, but prohibitive by means of the financial contribution that was requested or simply through the demarcation of class consciousness itself.

Meanwhile, the world of the workers struggled with poorly paid work, while most of their social demands went unrecognised. For the latter, active participation in cultural life was out of the question. All they wanted was to find their daily bread in their mouths. But culture, as many professed, was also supposed to be part of that bread and butter. The influence of the elite on the development of the city as a whole cannot be overlooked. At the turn of the century, the appearance of the city changed, and efforts were made to modernise and embellish the city, giving it playgrounds, a green lung, trees, promenades, windowsills with flowers.

Nevertheless, the social atmosphere of an industrial city was created more by the workers than by the tiny proportion of a bourgeois middle class or by the world of intellectuals, who were relatively few in number in the towns of the industrial south of Luxembourg. It is therefore useful to look for cases in which culture and other types of material and educational support, in whatever form, was made available to the lower classes.

It should be remembered here that with issue of adult education, we entered the era of 'educationism', as some historians have called this belief in education as a means of achieving social justice and equality (Zeldin, 1973). Education was for many, also the solution to the social question aimed at the citizen, with

³⁴⁸ See for instance T. Nipperdey, "Verein als soziale Struktur im späten 18, und 19 Jahrhundert" (Nipperdey 1972).

its origins to be found in France³⁴⁹ and certainly inspired Luxembourgers to create similar arenas of social mixing. Vocational training was not a priority issue, from the standpoint of part of the ruling class, as we shall be seeing.

The social question can be analysed from different angles: economic, with new forms of misery stemming from industrialisation and political, as universal suffrage was yet to become a reality. Adult education progressed significantly throughout the early 20th century: evening classes, a variety of lectures aimed at less educated audiences, public readings, the working-class press, people's libraries, etc. They were run by different figures from the industrial world or the bourgeois middle classes and encouraged by the local authorities. This type of organised association, of getting together with others, in a collective action, is the way to learn through others, alongside them. The term circle (*Cercle*) is used both by Catholics and in lay circles to designate all kinds of loosely organised, informal groups: associations, youth groups in patronage, etc. Catholic groups naturally benefited from the full support of the clerical political camp.

³⁴⁹ See for example F. Laot (F.Laot 2005), *Apprendre dans les collectifs solidaires. Le cas de l'éducation sociale des adultes en France à la fin du 19e siècle*.

The road running alongside the railway is lined with long rows of workers' houses built in series, grey and similar to the days of work and toil of their inhabitants (Société d'Initiative et d'Embellissement 1926, 18).

The Société d'Initiative et Embellissement (SdIE), founded in 1901, was to be one of the main driving forces behind the change in the aesthetics and well-being of Esch. Clubs and associations, typical creations of the 19th century, have since occupied a prominent place in historical analysis. Such associations also spread rapidly throughout Luxembourg. In the industrial south, as elsewhere, they demanded subsidies to satisfy their many aesthetic and pragmatic needs, from street signs to public benches and, finally, a park. The mining towns of the south, such as Rumelange, were suffocated by the heaps of stones that surrounded them, their inhabitants deprived of air and light, their children with no other distraction than running around in the streets. In the annual exchange of letters to the Minister of Trade and Industry requesting a subsidy, the word "desolation" appeared. Their demands and objectives were much more modest than those of Esch. According to the local SdIE in Rumelange:

The aim of our Association is not so much to develop tourism as to beautify the locality and its surroundings. Relegated to a rather remote corner of the country, devoid of the charms that can attract foreigners, our main aim is to make the stay here a little more pleasant for our fellow citizens by planting trees and shrubs whose fresh greenery will somewhat mask the shattered hills and rubble that lie around us.³⁵⁰

There were also concerns about any potentially negative visual impact, that the city's landscape may have had on its visitors, as the below excerpt well demonstrates. In December 1912, in a response letter addressed to the government (DG Travaux Publics) along with a request for further funding, Paul Flesch, the municipality's architect and key man at the Esch's SdIE stated on behalf of the latter:

Last year, the AGM voted to carry out a number of works, including replacing the lines with walls topped with wire mesh in the most prominent parts of the streets, embellishing the facades of workers' houses, (...) these houses stand out [...] to travellers arriving by train from different directions.³⁵¹

It is undeniable that some of these associations took to levels of personal and financial commitment that only the passing of time allowed to fully appreciate. To stay within the feats of Esch's SdIE only, numerous public infrastructure and embellishment became a reality entirely to be credited to the almost isolated actions of the SdIE.

³⁵⁰ ANLUX- CI-049 : Letter from the SdIE Rumelange to DG (Minister) Commerce et Industrie, 12 May 1922.

³⁵¹ ANLUX-TRP- 04388. **In the original:** L'année passée des nombreux travaux ont été votés par l'AG tels que : remplacement des traits pour des murs surmontés de grillage aux parties des rues les plus en évidence, embellissement des façades postérieures de maisons ouvrières, maisons qui sautent [...] à l'œil des voyageurs arrivant par le train de différentes directions. Letter from Paul Flesch on behalf of Esch's SdIE to DG Travaux Publics, 05.07.1912.

The founders of the SdIE, in 1901, in Esch-sur-Alzette stemmed undoubtedly from the upper-layers of society: André Koch³⁵², an engineer and former local councillor (between 1900-1902), Dr. Pierre Metzler (doctor and medical inspector), Paul Flesch (then city architect), Jules Meder³⁵³ (Mine Director), Nicolas Bettendorf, a rentier and former watchmaker, Pierre Peporté³⁵⁴, Kaiser-Maguin, a merchant in leather products. By 1922, the SdIE could count on 126 members, primarily scouted from the management ranks of the two industrial companies (by then ARBED and Terres Rouges), as well as entrepreneurs, merchants, employees, doctors and teachers. Incidentally almost all the important foreigner entrepreneurs were represented: Luigi Crolla, Alfred Lefèvre, J.B. Murero, Marco Moia, whereas for example Jewish merchants do not appear to be on the list.

Financially, the Société d'Embellissement relied on donations from its members and an annual subsidy from the government³⁵⁵, albeit largely symbolic.

The correspondence between the local SdIE and the General Directorate of Public Infrastructure in the capital, Luxembourg City, at the beginning of the 20th century is revealing. Evidence from the archives of these exchanges reveals a constant concern on the part of the former for the need for more public and green spaces in the city. These aesthetic concerns arose at a time when leisure activities and foreign travel were on the rise internationally, and in a context in which Esch-sur-Alzette was struggling to become a centre of tourist interest.

It was, moreover, the belief of the SdIE that the picturesque attract of Esch-sur-Alzette had not been exploited enough, a task the SdIE took to great lengths to change.

³⁵² André Koch (1849- 1932). Born in Schengen, he attended his early education in France (Sierck) to pursue later with engineering studies in Liège. He was the honorary president of the SdIE in Esch. A mining engineer, first he worked as a mine director in Esch and later became (1880) the director of the Collart mining site in Steinfort. A statue in his honour (work by sculptor Claus Cito) was erected in Esch's municipal park in 1932.

³⁵³ Jules Meder (1859- 1937), Mine director.

³⁵⁴ We were not able to confirm whether this was Pierre Peporté Vandyck (1838-1906), one of the top landowners mentioned in Part 2.

³⁵⁵ Esch not being considered a touristic attraction it gathered around 300 francs /year, whilst localities like Echternach and Diekirch perceived 2000, because proven to be more attractive to eventual tourists such as the Ardennes, The Moselle, etc). This was a reason for the local council to claim an unfair treatment which did not reflect proportionally the taxes paid by the Esch district, see for instance, local council meeting of 12.04.1913.

5.2.1 Greening the city and creating spaces for leisure

Our Association made every effort to draw the attention of the general public to the sites and landscapes that characterise the area around the town. It was within our association that all the major extension and improvement projects were born, making Esch-sur-Alzette a city that could rival any capital with its modern health and hygiene facilities and the layout of its streets and public squares. For the moment, let's just mention: the Alzette diversion, the development of the new Brill district, the creation of the new admirable public park [Galgenberg], the Industrial and Commercial School, the installation of mains drainage, the magical Galgenberg promenades, the planting of tree lanes, the landscaping of public gardens and, through the flower balcony competition, the cult of flowers (Opening note by Paul Flesch in (Kaiser 1952, 5).

It is interesting to note how Paul Flesch appears here to conflate his role as municipality's employee and public persona, as indeed all the above-mentioned works had an origin in his own projects, but they cannot be all attributed to the sole initiative of the SdIE. We saw how the Association was partly funded by members' donations, partly by subsidies coming from the government. The goal of creating a public park meant a significant financial investment. To create a park, goal of the SdIE, the two hectares that the city of Esch had set aside on the Clair Chêne forest terrain, in 1908³⁵⁶ following the negotiations with the Gelsenkirchen, proved insufficient and with a reason. The proximity of the industrial installations and the inadequate size of the planned park made this impossible. Not only the space left was limited, but as the SdIE had foreseen it would have soon become surrounded by more fumes from the blast furnaces, an environment far from ideal for those in look of fresh air stroll.

Connections were thus key in the quest for a suitable and big enough plot of land. The construction of a public parc was all down to the merit of André Koch, who had come up with the "daring" idea of building it on the red, red, rugged slopes of the Galgenberg.

Andre Koch secured sales agreements with private owners and industrial companies for 14 hectares worth of land to the site plan, which he had made with the owners. The municipal council voted unanimously in favour of this offer. And so, in 1911, work began on laying out the town park. The land was levelled, seeded and planted so that the park could be officially opened on 1 September 1912. It is enough to think of the time it took for the city hospital³⁵⁷ to become a reality - a quarter of a century - partly because of the difficulties of securing the right land and expropriating the owners, to realise that what Andre Koch achieved was nothing short of a miracle. The Galgenberg park, is just an example of where SdIE's

³⁵⁶ See more about this sale in PART IV.

³⁵⁷ See Part IV for a history of the Hospital.

secretary Andre Koch took to his personal task to procure the land³⁵⁸. André Koch, in the words of his colleague Paul Flesch was a man of “good taste” who did “extrahuman efforts” (*L’Indépendance Luxembourgeoise* 1932) by undertaking the task of providing Esch with a public park.

The Park was eventually fitted with a kiosk, the Pavillon Chinois³⁵⁹ and the Greek Temple³⁶⁰, two opposite but fashionable architecture trends of the turn of the century, were both achieved with little assistance from the municipality. With its kiosk in the shape of a Chinese pagoda, built in reinforced concrete, as projected by Flesch and inaugurated on 1 September 1912, the park quickly became the most the city's most popular attraction. The Chinese pavilion was eventually destroyed by fire and never rebuilt (Scuto, 2005).

There is also no doubt about the resentment that the SdIE took to the municipal council. In that same instance of the construction of the Pavillion, the municipality almost withdrew the support of the few thousand francs left claiming it had already given enough by giving out their share of the land. On that occasion Nicolas Bettendorf, member of the management of the SdIE and simultaneously, a member of the local council reacted by abandoning the local council meeting.³⁶¹

In a clear allusion to the tense relationships with the different local councils, Paul Flesch would affirm some 40 years later:

It's worth reminding today's generation, who take the comforts of a modern city for granted, that it was only by expending an immense amount of work and energy that all these projects could be put into effect, after often encountering fierce opposition, the very opposition we had expected to receive sympathetic support (Kaiser 1952, 5).

The resentment of the local SdIE with the local council had started soon after the inauguration of the park, in 1912, by mayor J.P. Michels. The municipal council initially failed to cover the supplementary costs of the Pavillon Chinois. In response to what the SdIE felt as an attack, the committee asked the local council to publish their complaint letter in the meeting minutes:

³⁵⁸ Thanks to his contacts in the industrial world, André Koch, succeeded, to reach a compromise with the various owners, for an area of more than ten hectares in a single block at very reasonable prices. His “industrial” connections in the region do not go unnoticed. He managed to procure land in rather short timeline from locals and industrial directors. 41 acres from the family Ziegler de Ziegleck (widow and children of engineer who had been in possession of a considerable surface of Esch). See sales act ANLux - INT 617 – Parc Public; as well as an exchange of land with the industrialists of the Collart family, who owned mines in Esch. See local council meeting of 10.07.1910.

³⁵⁹ The revival of fascination with the Far East artefacts and culture being another trait of the early 20th century bourgeoisie.

³⁶⁰ Classicist architecture was in vogue at the beginning of the century, particularly within the circles of the bourgeoisie and even of a decadent nobility. They were an emulation of English gardens. As an example, a similar temple to the one in Esch can be found in the Sicilian castle of Donnafugata, belonging to the family Arezzo. Corrado Arezzo (X Baron of Donnafugata (1824-1895) had a circular temple built in the luxurious parc surrounding his castle. The small temple consists of eight columns supporting the structure, whereas the one projected by Paul Flesch in Esch, has 10 columns.

³⁶¹ See local council meeting minutes, 1.02.1913.

The receipt, amounting to 5,750 francs, was sent to the municipality on 21 January 1913, which refused to approve it with more or less inappropriate comments. The association, whose sole aim is the embellishment of the town of Esch and its surroundings, has been working since 1901 with a disinterestedness recognised by all, except the majority of the town council. Everyone recognises that the embellishment society is the creator of the public park; everyone also knows that this society is the only one that has never asked for a subsidy from the commune, and that on the contrary, it is the only society that has offered a gift of 3000 francs, plus the costs of the project, to the commune. One wonders, not without reason, the motives behind these actions. Don't come up with reasons of economy. A park that has so far cost 200,000 francs will bear another 750 francs. All that will remain is the personal hatred towards this or that member of the committee that may have guided some councillors in their vote. This slap that some councillors felt they had to give the Association is not likely to encourage the Association's efforts³⁶².

After such exchanges, it is not surprising that the SdIE had lost the impetus for their initiatives, as relations with local authorities had not always been easy. In 1920 local councilor Jules Hesisten regretted:

Councillor Heisten: I would like to take this opportunity to urge our Association [SdIE] to take care of the access paths. There is a wide field of work for our Embellishment association, but much hasn't been done lately. It may be that there is a low in their cash registers (Intervention at the local council, 22.09 1920, p.12)³⁶³.

The SdIE continued its work, without counting much on municipal support and presumably because of lingering political animosities.

Some of its contributions include, for example, an early awareness for the need of green spaces. Besides the Galgenberg Park, the creation of various belvederes, paths with benches, multiple events, parks. Planting alleys of lime and chestnut trees in the city centre (in the public squares), and the transformation of small squares into flower-filled squares was part of the SdIE achievements (Scuto 2006). They are also revealing of a bourgeois middle class alerted to an environmental consciousness in their attempts to repel the damaging sides of industry, namely the pollution, the noise and in Esch the nasty effects of the slag heaps.

Esch-sur-Alzette can pride itself, furthermore, and much to the credit of Paul Flesch, of having created the first rose garden in the "rose country"³⁶⁴. Covering an area of 35 ares, more than six thousand rosebushes of all types have been planted. In 1934, Flesch created his *Roseraie*, 6,000 rosebushes of 450 varieties.

Many of the gardens, rosebushes and trees have today disappeared. The Belvedere has lost its grandeur.

³⁶² Letter from André Koch to the local council, Local council minutes meetings 20.02.1913, p.37-38.

³⁶³**In the original:** Hr Heisten: Ich benutze die Gelegenheit, um unserm Verschönerungsverein ans Herz zu legen für schöne Zugangswege zu sorgen. Da liegt für unsern Verschönerungsverein ein weites und schönes Arbeitsfeld. Aber er hat sich in letzter Zeit nicht -viel gerührt. wahrscheinlich ist Ebbe in der Kasse

³⁶⁴ The Grand Duchy as the most important rose exporter in the world? Indeed from 1890 to 1930, no less than six million roses a year left the country for prominent customers such as the Imperial Brazilian Court. Jean Soupert and Pierre Notting were the pioneers of Luxembourg's rose cultivation and industry from 1855 onwards (Werno 2015).

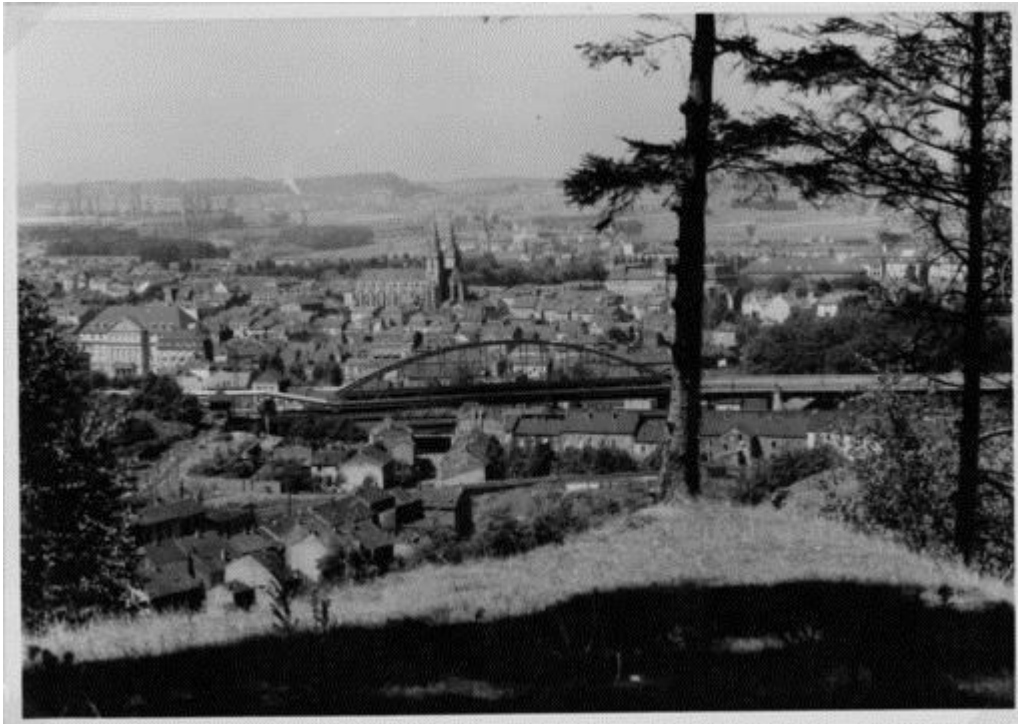


Figure 25: Esch, view from one of the Belvederes. Archives municipales d'Esch-sur-Alzette, sine dato.

The role of the municipality, that of the main steelworks, that of the SdiE and that of two men, Flesch and Koch converged in the instance of the municipal park, notwithstanding the tense relationship with the municipality.³⁶⁵ The internal turmoil within the local council will have caused incapacity in dealing with on time delivery of major urban infrastructure. It proves that out of an almost exclusive private initiative major improvement was possible without any involvement of formal power forces as very little assistance and financial supported were here on offer from the government and even less so from the municipal council.

5.2.2 Education and music – where different social classes meet?

The role of associations merits to be investigated as they reveal a lot about the mentalities of the time. In Esch, the leisure world of the bourgeois middle classes revolved around different interests expressed through membership in associations. They range from literary associations, to cultural, philosophic, sports, music, charity and “protection” minded associations preoccupied with the safeguard of the local

³⁶⁵Much of this can be attributed to the political trials and personal feuds in which Paul Flesch will find himself embroiled. See also Scuto (Scuto 2006) and further in PART IV on the local power relationships and intrigues.

architecture, landscape and nature. Amidst the desolating landscape of sounds and smells, the upper and middle classes impregnate themselves with a sense of sacrifice but without doubt with a sense of self-importance too attributed to them via their role in these associations. Frantz Clement depicted them in his usual scathing style:

For men, apart from the pub there is a surrogate for some of the things they have to do without. It is club life. It is the tragedy of the small town (...) club life is not an evil in itself (...). Small-town people have little sense of purpose and goals. For him, club life (...) is what is joyful and desirable. And he only derives real pleasure from being part of the clubs he belongs to. The most desirable role is to be a member of the board, but since not everyone can be on the board, he chooses a different role. He is the workhorse and makes his comrades feel it again and again. (...) If he doesn't lack the skills to do so, he still has to agitate against other clubs, to be the guardian of the club's honour. Or also: he brings the discord and drives it towards dissolution. Then his role can become socially valuable (F. Clement 1915, 72).³⁶⁶

It is indeed a caricature and yet some associations appeared to be only the vehicle to a desired respectability rather than a true passion or interest of its members.³⁶⁷

Some of them were a response to the crisis in the cities: societies that set up hospitals and dispensaries, charitable or educational societies for the working class, associations that opened museums or evening classes. Others catered more specifically for the cultural needs of the bourgeoisie itself, such as literary and philosophical societies, choirs, libraries, reading circles and salons. A third category corresponded to economic interests such as the merchants' associations. All these associations represented naturally the interests and mentalities of each group and in Esch it was no different. They were also, established in view of countering the weight of opposite associations, see for example the establishment of the *Association pour l'Education Populaire* (AEP), partly to appease the widespread of the Associations of Catholic blueprint. Associations served too as an arena where different ideas and camps fought for a presence and dissemination of its ideas in the city.

³⁶⁶ **In the original:** Für die Männer gibts außer dem Wirtshaus noch ein Surrogat für manches, was sie entbehren müssen. Es ist das Vereinsleben. Es ist die Tragik der Kleinstadt, daß sie zu allem, was irgendwie erhehend ist, die Karikatur abgeben muß. Und und für sich ist das Vereinsleben ja kein Uebel, denn es wurden aus diesem Wege schon Zwecke angestrebt, die anders nicht erreicht werden konnten; es wurde sogar vieles realisiert, an das man nicht zu denken wagte. Der Kleinstädter hat für Ziele und Zwecke wenig Sinn. Das Vereinsleben an und für sich, die Vereinsmeierei als Ausartung desselben ist für ihn das Freudige und Begehrenswerte. Und rechtes Vergnügen hat er nur dann, wenn er in den Vereinen, denen er angehört, eine Rolle spielen kann. Die wünschenswerteste Rolle ist die, Vorstandsmitglied zu sein, nber da nicht jeder im Vorstand sein kann, sucht er sich eine andere Rolle aus. Er ist das Arbeitstier und läßt es die Kameraden immer wieder fühlen; (...) Wenn ihm nicht dazu die Fähigkeiten fehlen, so bleibt ihm noch die schöne Ausgabe, gegen andere Vereine zu hetzen, Hüter der Vereins Ehre zu sein. Oder auch: er bringt den Zwist hinein und treibt es auf die Auflösung hin. Dann kann seine Rolle sozial wertvoll werden.

³⁶⁷ Quiqueret illustrates remarkably the "social conversion" of police officer Frick, before he became the main suspect and accused of the assassination of the Kayser-Paulus in 1910. He was indeed the president of the Association of Protection of Rabbits, a position that put him above all suspicions.

The local bourgeoisie was not indifferent either to the *threats* posed by the working class; its involvement in local Associations demonstrates the different ways in which the upper middle classes organized themselves presumably in favour of the former's well-being and interests.

Membership in voluntary associations – based on an emerging common culture and centred on family and work – ideas of progress and a strict moral code, education and sometimes religion held these middle-class groups together (Kocka, 2004, 29).

The employers and the State itself promoted a defense of the entitlement to property by the lower classes. To counteract the housing shortage, the government of Minister of State (PM) Paul Eyschen drafted a bill in 1895 for the creation of affordable rental and home ownership. Working-class families were deemed eligible to afford their own homes:

By this means, they seek to strengthen the family spirit, to preserve the authority of the father, to reinforce respect for the mother, to propagate a taste for order, to inspire a love of thrift, to imbue a sense of property, to repel subversive ideas and to maintain social peace (explanatory memorandum by PM Paul Eyschen, to the 1895 bill (Laboulle 2022)).³⁶⁸

The bourgeois ideal of respectability was therefore launched with the backing of the then Liberal government³⁶⁹. Other initiatives, motivated by the same reforming grounds like *La Ligue du Coin de Terre*³⁷⁰, saw the light around that same period. The latter was extensively analysed by the different social sciences of the neighboring nations, which *grosso modo* contended that the encouragement of the working class to access small plots of land, was not deprived of a certain paternalist tone to it.

Nevertheless, the bourgeois respectability, distinction and *raison d'être* seemed threatened precisely by the same measures they appeared to promote, like access to housing and education.

A generalized belief among the upper middle classes was that if the working classes emulated their own way of life they could keep out of “trouble” and open the path to an entrance door of the lower middle-classes to them³⁷¹. The threat posed by the lower classes was indeed often poised in the terms of the dangers of co-habitation. Themes like childcare, personal hygiene, illiteracy, and disease become problems of the

³⁶⁸ **In the original** : « Par ce moyen, ils cherchent à solidariser l'esprit de famille, à préserver l'autorité du père, à renforcer le respect envers la mère, à propager le goût de l'ordre, à inspirer l'amour de l'économie, à imprégner le sentiment de la propriété, à repousser les idées subversives et à maintenir la paix sociale ».

³⁶⁹ The law, which passed in 1906, intended to allow companies, municipalities and private individuals to take out a real estate loan with the *Sparkasse* and the assistance of the SNHBM (Société Nationale habitations à bon marché).

³⁷⁰ In 1896, Abbé Jules Lemire, inspired by "terrianism", founded the Ligue Française du Coin de Terre et du Foyer. The aim was clear: to provide the head of the family with a plot of land on which to grow vegetables for household consumption. His ideals soon spread to much of Western Europe.

³⁷¹ In Belgium, an oral survey taken between 1902 and 1904 among the lower middle classes confirmed such fears. Asked about the fact that some workers had just recently become home owners, a merchant reacted: “On constate chez tous une transformation notable: ils deviennent économes, sobres et se préparent à entrer dans la classe de la petite bourgeoisie”(Kurgan-van Hentenryk 1983).

society at the large and were no longer treated as only an individual issue only as was also the case in contemporary Esch.

A kind of paternalism, either from employers, local politicians or the local bourgeoisie, often instrumentalised certain sections of the population. Undoubtedly, a moralizing type of discourse stemmed from the Church and its stance vis-à-vis the increasing *concubinage*, lack of church attendance, extramarital births and alcohol intake.

The fact that (...) alcoholism in most cases raged in the working class (...). The causes are easy to guess; first and foremost it is the escape from a grey everyday world that offers nothing more than hard work for twelve hours a day and no prospect of a better lot; in the case of foreigners it can also be the escape from a hostile environment, coupled with homesickness (...) (Fayot 1979, 1:29).

The latter were all at the core of local, national and religious institutions' concerns. Indeed, one of the consequences of the process of urbanization on migrants from abroad was a significant decrease in church attendance among the working classes (Noiriel 1986) .

Therefore, supporting the working classes through the access to private property even if very small amounts of land was one of the ways through which the upper classes believed to improve workers' lives. So was the access to education, the possibility of growing fruit and vegetables, and the occasional poultry in their own patch of land, which the *Ligue du Coin de Terre* strongly advocated for. Much has been argued in historiography defending the paternalistic tone and goals behind such associations, as serving the ultimate goal of keeping workers, entertained and "tidy" in decorous activities³⁷². The originality of Associations like the *Ligue du Coin de Terre* lied precisely in the wish to create a third way between bourgeoisie and working class towards a pacific coexistence, as much against the industrial bourgeoisie as it was against collectivism (Mougenot 1991) .

What has remained understated, at least in Luxembourgish historiography is how these served the purposes of a status quo of charity as the solution for social problems, at the discretion of the masters of such Associations. Such attitudes may have indeed refrained, for years, the establishment of the social reform laws.

In the same vein it not surprising that many of the members of the local elites were involved in all sorts of Associations: the Fire Brigade, the farmers Associations, the *Amis de la Fleur*, le *Coin de Terre*, the *Cercle Horticole* and other beneficence, without mentioning the most prestigious of all, the musical Associations.

³⁷² See for a detailed description of this association in Esch the forthcoming work of Daniel Richter (Richter 2024).

Of the many musical ensembles present in Esch, the *Harmonie municipale* was the most distinguished. It had indeed been founded by the Esch's elites in 1871. They included the then mayor Pierre Claude, the magistrate, Klein, the factory manager H. Lacroix, the merchant Sebastien Buchholtz, the notary Victor Wolff, the notary clerk Michel Rousseau, the customs controller Pierre Scheer among other personalities of the town (Reitz 1996). The first president to leave his mark was Léon Metz³⁷³, who was elected to the in 1872 and remained at the head of the band for the band for 34 years, from 1885 to 1920. Even when he lost the “helm” at the municipal council³⁷⁴ his influence was major in this and other Associations.

Composer, music teacher and instrument shop owner Felix Krein was also to have a preponderant role in the destiny of the musical association. The *Harmonie* was initially, in the 1870s, aimed at (also for financial reasons) entertaining the circles of the Esch elites with private concerts (Büchler 1996) but it opened up to become an eclectic and apolitical Association, ready to play music for all and to attending all type of celebrations, for example on the, 1 May 1910, the band took part in the demonstration for universal suffrage in Luxembourg.

What strikes in the long life of this Association is the way it survived the different tides of political representatives in the municipal council. It was with great admiration that Mayor Victor Wilhelm, at the general meeting in 1931, noted that the musicians of the *Harmonie* were present at all secular and religious festivities, jubilees, inaugurations, funerals, sporting competitions, concerts (Büchler 1996, 56). This praise for a presumably all-round Association did not prevent, however, the latter from receiving (self) criticism about potentially becoming too dependent on the municipal administration. In 1910, indeed then music director³⁷⁵ had been given the status of municipal employee. The *Harmonie* was admittedly instrumentalized by all parties. The political and social tensions of the first half of the 20th century soon emerged. As further demonstrated by Büchler (ibid), at the beginning of the 1920s the “red” municipal administration did not hesitate to make life Léon Metz, still president³⁷⁶ difficult: no participation in public events without the express agreement of the of the council of aldermen.

In turn, the right-wing majority in the municipal council contested the choices of musical repertoire. In 1922, Jules Heisten, councillor of the right-wing minority, contested the participation of the *Harmonie*, at an event aimed at celebrating Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, and of playing the Internationale. For

³⁷³ He was also the founder of UGDA, Union Grand-Duc Adolphe, a network of music schools around the country still active in Luxembourg and to date providing free tuition for all students wanting to enroll in music courses.

³⁷⁴ Metz loses the elections to Armand Spoo in 1909.

³⁷⁵ Chosen among 83 applicants, Charles Gunther (1872 – 1941) was a German, and estimated personality in the city.

³⁷⁶ His son Robert Metz would succeed him in short term vice-presidency.

Eugène Mailliet³⁷⁷, a merchant, and new president of the *Harmonie* (as of 1922), the band had a duty not get involved in politics. Sometimes with excuses, sometimes with plain refusal on the grounds of their political neutrality, the *Harmonie* stopped playing at events organized by trade unions. In the 1930s a trip to fascist Italy was also vehemently criticized by the worker circles (Büchler 1996, 68).

The *Harmonie* was, admittedly, both a product and victim of the tense years of the interwar period. Regrettably, the literature on the *Harmonie* does not provide, for the period at stake, information on who, besides the musicians playing at the orchestra, the beneficiaries of the courses and musicians were³⁷⁸. Did they predominantly stem from the working or the middle classes? At all times the Association tried to cover the costs for the instruments, but it struggled to have uniforms replaced, hats, for example had to be acquired by the students themselves. Whereas the practice of an instrument was covered for by the municipality, in 1926 the solfège courses had to be covered by the students. Doubts can therefore be cast as to whether the working classes were able to cover any of these costs.

³⁷⁷ Eugène Mailliet (1880-1971). Born into a farming family in Schlindermanderscheid in North-eastern Luxembourg, Mailliet became a successful wine and spirit entrepreneur in Esch. He was also at the head of the *Harmonie Municipale* and president of the national music and singing association "Union Grand-Duc Adolphe" until 1966.

³⁷⁸ A list with the musicians for 1895 allows to identify some members of the bourgeois middle-classes (Bettendorf et al. 1996, 36).

5.2.3 Cultural fights

The local council struggled with the question of which associations to subsidize. By 1910³⁷⁹, 39 Associations in Esch requested financial support from the total 4000 annual francs the municipality had available for this purpose.

The turn of the century saw the birth of many cultural associations, singing and music societies gymnastics and theatre associations, literary and popular education. As elsewhere in politics and press, two Associations contended the public in Esch, the secular and the Catholic Associations.

On 11 November 1909, the Esch section of the liberal-socialist socialist popular education association was founded. It emerged in the context of offering an alternative, political and cultural response to its Catholic counterparts, the Cercle Catholique³⁸⁰ and the Catholic People's Association³⁸¹ founded in 1903.

L'Association pour l'Education Populaire (AEP)³⁸², had set itself the goal of promoting critical reason through conferences, theatre and literary soirées, to awaken critical reason and realise its emancipation in the sense of cultural progress. It subsequently developed a lively activity and campaigned for the creation of the girls' lyceum and the music school, in Esch, among other initiatives. Teacher Hubert Clément³⁸³ became the former's active propagandist in 1912. A progressive camp had turned their attention to the school system, which they wanted to see remodeled in their favour. At the root of all cultural development lied questions of education. With the collaboration of some men like J.B. Enschede³⁸⁴, C. M. Spoo, the private initiative of certain associations of cultural nature sought to continue and approximate the cultural life of the town of Esch. Among these associations, the influence of the *Association pour l'Education Populaire* (AEP) cannot be ignored.

³⁷⁹ See local council meeting, 16.07.1910, p.2.

³⁸⁰ To confront and reconquer a society increasingly under the sway of liberalism and the socialist movement, the Catholic associations grouped together at a central headquarters in Luxembourg city, the *Maison du peuple*. Around the country the Catholic middle classes organized to have local sections offering conferences, libraries, etc.

³⁸¹ Next to the Katholischer Volksverein there was also the youth association Cercle Amical des jeunes gens catholiques.

³⁸² In German, *Volksbildungsverein*.

³⁸³ Hubert Clément was editor to be of the *Escher Tageblatt* in 1928 and of the magazine *A-Z* as of 1934. He will also become Esch sur Alzette's mayor in 1935 and socialist deputy from 1934-1940 (Bodry and Fayot 2016).

³⁸⁴ Jean Baptiste Enschede (1873-1922). After his studies in Philosophy and science at the universities of Munich, Strasbourg and Prague, Enschede taught at the grammar school in Luxembourg and then became a professor at the industrial and commercial school in Esch s. Alz. where he worked from 1902-1911 and where he taught German, English, Latin and Greek. In 1911 he became director of the girls' lyceum in Esch sur. Alz. He played a major role in the founding of this institute. He held the post of director until 1916, when he returned to Luxembourg as a professor at the grammar school.

Luxembourg's cultural life was inspired, if not impregnated, by political debates. A certain intellectual inertia had given way to an overflowing activity that had an impact on all aspects of public life. In fact, this meeting of the bourgeois middle classes with the working class would result incomprehensible if not for the cultural, social and political evolution of the time. At the turn of the century, school education was still essentially the preserve of the bourgeoisie, and exclusively its male members. The emergence of the Association pour l'Education Populaire (AEP) marked the coming together of liberal intellectuals and the working classes (Maas 1988). It was this association which, until the middle of the period between the two wars, oversaw and animated a large part of the town's cultural life.

The AEP wished to represent the free education of the people, deprived of party-political, religious or ideological ties, but rather the cultivation of the spirit through the exercise of intellectual and the imparting of educational material recognised as valuable in the fields of literature, history, art, science and philosophy, science and philosophy:

Opposite our endeavours is the common education, which pursues the cultivation of the mind on the basis of political or religious dogma (AEP 1934, 34).³⁸⁵

Indeed, the success of the AEP in a given town could depend on the hostility of the local clergy (Maas 1988). In the same vein, competition with the Catholic Associations could be fierce. Furthermore, when such associations asked for the financial support of the municipality, tensions resulted between members who thought politically oriented associations should be given no subsidies.

Part of the educated bourgeoisie will be at the basis of the foundations of the AEP. In Esch, teachers played a vital role in the AEP, but so did engineers and other representatives of the steelworks in the Industrial South. A type of paternalism is never excluded from such initiatives. In fact, just like for the Associations such as *La Ligue du Coin de Terre*, workers and artisans may have been the target public, however, but were far from being represented in the steering committees of such associations. In Esch Maas (ibid), identified only two elements from the working class and an artisan in this position, something which the historian goes on arguing that this is not to say that popular involvement was negligible (Maas 1988, 6).

The book on the 25th anniversary of the AEP (AEP 1934) in Esch recounts how the local AEP stemmed from the existent *Cercle Littéraire*. The latter had been founded had a few years earlier among the teaching

³⁸⁵ Der Volksbildungsverein vertritt die freie Volksbildung, die keinerlei parteipolitische, religiöse oder weltanschauliche Bindung kennt, sondern Geistespflege durch Uebung der geistigen Kräfte und Vermittlung der als hochwertig und lebenswichtig anerkannten Bildungsgüter aus Literatur, Geschichte, Kunst, Wissenschaft und Philosophie als höchstes Ziel sich steckt. Nicht um das Bekennen geht es uns, sondern um das Erkennen. Unseren Bestrebungen gegenüber steht die gebundene Volksbildung, die die Geistespflege auf dem Boden politischer oder religiöser Dogmen betreibt.

staff of the recently arrived educated ranks from outside the town of Esch. This association had a library of scientific and literary works and literary works that were available to the members and their families and from which the AEP eventually built on its own. The *Cercle Littéraire* too was at inception a place for gathering and for lectures to be held for this inner circle, mostly teachers. Thus far the sphere of influence of this literary circle remained limited to those educated middle class and remained somewhat exclusive. It is thanks to the intellectual relations between the teaching staff of the Industrial School and the progressive the progressive part of the population of Esch, that ties were established between the two and that the idea of growing an educational project open for all started to ferment and rapidly became concrete the AEP was founded (AEP 1934).

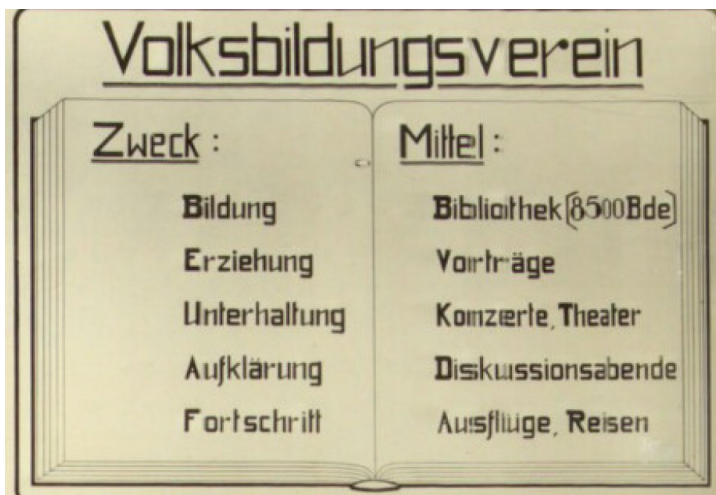


Figure 26: Esch-sur-Alzette's AEP's Goals and means to achieve them (AEP 1934, 3).

In terms of those of benefited from its services, the Esch section of the AEP will become the one with the most numerous and active membership in the country. The offer was wide: summer camps, courses for adults, a rich library (by 1934 the AEP claimed 7000 books) in their possession, conferences, theater, opera, and a range of other literary and musical activities.

The two groupings, secular and Catholic, competed, for example, by way of how many conferences they could organize over a year. Their fundamental differences being on the one hand, the spread of a secular generalised knowledge on the AEP side, and a catholic stance in the defense and maintenance of tradition on societal issues, from the camp of the *Cercle Catholique* and the *Katholischer Verein*. On the latter camp, conference speakers included the lawyers, priests and exponents of the clerical world. Religious associations also aimed at a generalized education of the Catholic population masses, some of their topics

were still tainted by the religious element. In the programme of conferences³⁸⁶ for the last trimester of 1913/ beginning of 1914, in Esch, we see advertised the following conferences: “*Relationship between church and state under the French Revolution until the Concordat and Relationship between church and state under the French Empire and in the 19th century*, by the lawyer Alfons Nenens, as well as a proposed talk on the topic of *Relations between church and state in our country*. Other conferences included the participation of P. Cariers, editor of the catholic publication Diekirch *Forstschrift*, and a talk by Jean Origer³⁸⁷, Director of the St Paulus Society in Luxembourg on “*The new electoral law*”. Another eminent speaker was lawyer Pierre Dupong³⁸⁸ from Luxembourg, with a talk on Constitutional reform. Other topic proposed by the Catholic Association included *Poetry and the machine age* by Dr. Jak Meyers, professor in Luxembourg; and *Religion and crime*, with Alfred Meyers, dentist, as a speaker. Eugène Reichling³⁸⁹, from Esch, proposed a talk on the *Great Converted*. Dr Paul Faber, a lawyer, from Luxembourg, offered a talk accompanied with photographs, of the Cathedrals in France and Germany. Folk song evenings were also foreseen.

The latter were all diligently advertised by the *Luxemburger Wort*, whilst emphasizing the “peculiar” needs of the section of Esch of the *Cercle Amical*.

The Christian-inspired organisations created the ideal environment for a movement to grow and become rooted in politics too, with the creation in 1914 of the Parti de la Droite. The Right-wing Party was shaped by the activities of such Catholic associations. Examples are the creation of the "Katholischer Volksverein" (1903), the "Katholische Volkshochschule"(1904), the "Katholische Arbeitervereine" (1906), the "Katholischer Lehrer- und Lehrerinnenverein" (1909) and the "Katholischer Akademikerverein" (1910). While the 'Volksverein' and the 'Volkshochschule' helped to train party activists, the militants, the 'Akademikerverein' provided the party elite for the nascent right-wing party (in 1914) (Biltgen 1989).

What these associations have in common is the number of women engaged in its activities albeit with drastically opposite world views on the role women should have in society.

³⁸⁶ Chronik aus dem Erzbassin. Vorträge. *Obermosel Zeitung*, 18.11.1913, p.2.

³⁸⁷ Jean Origer (1877 – 1942) was a Roman Catholic priest, journalist, politician. Born in Esch he would become Director of the Imprimerie St. Paul, Member of Parliament President of the *Parti de la Droite*. He deceased in the concentration camp at Dachau after arrestation by the Nazis.

³⁸⁸ Founding member of the Parti de la Droite in 1914 and future Prime Minister (1937-1953). Between 1940 and 1944, he led the government in exile in Montreal, Canada.

³⁸⁹ Eugen Reichling (189?-1939) . Local councillor for the Parti de la Droite, between 1919-1928, Alderman from 1929-1939.

The AEP could count on the present of women such as Mongenast Servais³⁹⁰ as senior members. In Esch, AEP's role is also linked to a true grassroots movement for the establishment of a Girls secondary education.

Many of the prejudices may seem anachronistic if observed with today's eyes. However, they stood in the way of the creation of further and advanced education for girls and denied that young girls were given the same opportunity as those granted by the State to males. We will be seeing how even in Esch, not everyone agreed the Girls 'secondary school was pressing or even necessary.'³⁹¹ It took time to do away with prejudices, as well as "a huge amount of energy and tireless educational work" (AEP 1934, 14) , which the AEP organized and advertised in the press.

Among such talks were Prof. Enschedé's who gave public lectures on "*Modern Women's Education*" and "*The necessity of founding a girls' school in Esch*", The Association claimed it to be clear from the archives that it abided to the strictest neutrality, both politically and religiously. Nevertheless, from the pulpit of St. Joseph's Church on 29 March 1913, the members of the AEP were excluded from the Catholic community, a harsh judgement that was cancelled after a few weeks under the pressure of public opinion (AEP 1934, 15).

On its turn, the Cercle Amical turned to inviting female exponents of Catholic organisations.³⁹²

The role of women inside the home was, in their view, to be fiercely defended from subversive ideals of the left wing socialist oriented policies, as exposed by the Baroness de Montenach, the conference speaker of an evening organized by the Cercle Amical in Esch, and warmly introduced by the *Luxemburger Wort* as "a confirmation and recognition of the Cercle's social programme by the elite of our society":

³⁹⁰ Marguerite Mongenast-Servais (1882-1925), born in a family of left-liberal steel industrialists in Luxembourg city. She was engaged in several progressive associations, among them the anti-monarchist *Action républicaine*. She will also become secretary of the Socialist Party.

³⁹¹ See in Part IV section about the foundation of the Girls secondary school.

³⁹² Suzanne baronness de Montenach (1867 – 1957) was the founder of the "Swiss Catholic Women's Association" (SKF). She also founded the "International Catholic Girls' Protection Association" ("Suzanne de Montenach," n.d.).

The modern development, in many places so intensely-rapidly metropolitan, necessarily loosened, internally and externally consolidated family ties. The competition for bread and advancement has pushed a vast number of young girls into the labour force and sparked a nervous, épidémie-like wanderlust. Infinite moral ruins, moral collapse, mental decline, the pitiable lack of energy of thousands of young, helpless, unenlightened beings characterise the woman's path of suffering towards economic life. It is one of the noblest and most important tasks of the modern woman to work actively against all these social evils, which the progressive transition of women from domestic to commercial life has brought about all along the line, through social and charitable enlightenment and educational work. This is one of the noblest and most important tasks of modern women (Speech of the Baroness of Montenach organized by the Cercle Amical, (*Luxemburger Wort* 1913) ³⁹³

These actions are once again revealing of the tensions in a nation divided between practicing Catholics and defenders of tradition on the one side, and the advocates of secularism on the other. This was yet another example of how society was deeply divided along lines that went beyond those of class only. Views on gender roles were set to be at the basis of the mutations on society's structure for the rest of the 20th century.

5.2.3.1 The Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso

Associations proliferated also among foreign communities. The Belgians, the French, the Polish were also active around their Associations and cafes, although the material found in the local archives relates to a later period (1930s onwards).³⁹⁴

The discovery, in some cases, of their statutes, saved from the dispersion of the archives, to which the lack of a proper seat of these societies has certainly contributed, makes it possible to trace some of its guiding principles.

Italian areas soon sprang up in the industrial cities: the Brill and Grenz neighborhoods in Esch, and the two *Italia* neighbourhoods in Dudelange and Differdange, respectively. Different occupations were created within the community, either as alternative to the harsher jobs in the steel plants and in the mines,

³⁹³ **In the original:** Die neuzeitliche Entwicklung, jenes vielerorts so intensiv-rapide Großstädtischeren notwendigerweise bei irrationellen, innerlich und äußerlich gefestigten Familienbanden lockern. Der Konkurrenzkampf um Brot und Fortkommen hat eine Unmasse von jungen Mädchen in das erwerbstätige Leben gedrängt und eine nervöse, épidémie-artige Wanderlust entfacht. Unendliche, moralische Ruinen, sittlicher Zusammenbruch, seelischer Niedergang bedauernswerte Energielosigkeit von Tausenden von jungen, hilflosen, unaufgeklärten Wesen bezeichnen den Leidensweg der Frau zum Wirtschaftsleben Eine gründliche Vorbereitungen zu dem natürlichen, idealen beruf Der künftigen Mutter haben materielle Sorgen und Bedürfnisse vorzeitig unmöglich gemacht. All diesen sozialen Übeln, wie sie Der zur fortschreitenden Bewegung ausgewachsene Übergang der Frau vom Häuslichen zum erwerblichen Leben auf Der ganzen Linie gezeitigt, tatkräftig entgegenzuarbeiten durch sozial-Caritative Aufklärungs- und Erziehungsarbeit, das ist eine der edelsten und wichtigsten Zeitaufgaben der modernen Frau.

³⁹⁴ In her work *Antoinette Reuter* (Reuter 2007a) also mentions the existence of a *Secours Mutuels des Lorrains et des Alsaciens d'Esch-sur-Azlette*. Probably founded after World War I, the latter did not recover from its dissolution by the German occupiers in 1940.

as a side occupation adding to the financial sustainability of often numerous families. Lastly, cafes and Associations served to keep the bonds with one's culture. For lonely immigrant men, as was the case of many who came with no family, they served as the only place of encounter with something familiar. Among others we see emerge grocers, restaurants and handicraft companies, and of course cultural and sports associations, e.g. some music bands, of which namely, the "Verdi" and "La Garibaldina", but also numerous football teams, theatre groups and the Italian Mutual Aid Societies. The church also took care of Italian immigrants: first the Caritas in Freiburg im Breisgau, from 1901 the Opera Bonomelli.³⁹⁵ Like many of the other Associations present in the city they too asked the municipality for subsidies. This was met with vehement anti-Italian feelings from some members of the local council:

Dr. Joerg: We must first give something to the Luxembourgers. (...) I am not in favour of granting subsidies to foreigners. They chase our workers out of your country (...) **Councillor Cravatte:** They pay their taxes when they are here. **Dr. Joerg:** I would prefer it if were our compatriots who were here. **Councillor Weisen.** The members of the "Sängerlust" are decent people. (Consent.) **Mayor Spoo:** Indeed, we will give them something. **Dr. Joerg:** (..). I'm delivering nothing to the Italians. **Councillor Cravatte** There are also Luxembourgers in this association. (...) **Mayor Spoo.** The president, Mr. Cresto, among others, is a Luxembourger. **Dr. Joerg.** I would like to know who is for a subsidy for the Italians. (...) **Dr. Joerg.** These people send their money to Italy and come to us for subsidies (...). **Mayor Spoo:** Such a rhetoric only serves to provoke hatred of nationalities (Discussion on subsidies to grant to Associations, pp.8-9, local council meeting, 2.04.1910).³⁹⁶

Notwithstanding some official support, through the Consulate, some of the ethnic associations created to assist Italians followed the same patterns as the Luxembourgish ones. As can also be seen for other associations of this type, the philanthropic and paternalistic attitude of certain Luxembourgish personalities played a not insignificant role in the impulse and foundation of the first Italian mutual aid association in Esch. A decisive role was namely played by the then Consul of Italy Joseph Weber and his coadjutor Jean-Pierre Claude. Both Luxembourgers, Weber and Claude, the latter in his capacity as chancellor of the Italian Legation (and in that of municipal secretary³⁹⁷) appear to be among the first promoters of the solidarity of Esch. The paternalistic tone is immediately visible from the 1893 statutes

³⁹⁵ Geremia Bonomelli, Bishop of Cremona. In 1900, an homonymous Association assistance to Italian emigrants, was founded, the "Opera di assistenza agli emigrati italiani" or Opera Bonomelli. In 1901 they sent Monsignor Luigi Zavattaro as a missionary to Luxembourg.

³⁹⁶ **In the original:** Wir müssen zuerst den Luxemburgern etwas geben. (...). Ich bin nicht dafür, Fremden Subsidien zu gewähren. Sie jagen unsere Arbeiter aus dem Lande. (...) **Hr. Cravatte:** Sie bezahlen doch Steuern wenn sie hier sind. **Hr. Dr. Joerg** Es wäre mir lieber, wenn unsere Landsleute hier wären. (...) Ich liefere nichts an die Italiener. (...) **Hr. Cravatte** Es gibt auch Luxemburger in diesem Verein. **Hr. Bürgermeister:** Der Präsident Hr. Cresto unter andern ist Luxemburger. **Hr. Dr. Joerg.** Diese Leute schicken ihr Geld nach Italien und kommen bei uns Subsidien fragen. **Hr. Bürgermeister:** So ein Raisonement ist nur dazu' angetan, den Nationalitätenhaß hervorzurufen.

³⁹⁷ Where he will appear as a rather controversy personality, see PART IV.

of the Società Italiana Mutuo Soccorso of Esch. Fearing abuses and aware of the tumultuous nature of some of its conational the statues warned:

No relief shall be due for illnesses caused by debauchery or intemperance, nor for injuries received in a brawl, where it is proven that the Member was the aggressor, or for injuries received in a riot in which he voluntarily took part, or still in a cabaret.³⁹⁸

The new ways of organising industrial work now highlighted, at the turn of the century, all the precariousness to which workers and their families were exposed in the absence of any cover in the event of fatal or disabling accidents, illness, old age. The extremely hard conditions of work, its great instability due to the very high percentage of foreign workers who were poorly qualified and employed on fixed-term contracts, did not favour the spread of mutual aid societies among the workers in large factories and mines, as was the case in small companies, or among artisans and clerks, whose less precarious and alienating work situation made it easier to project themselves into an associative perspective (Caldognetto 2007). Indeed, the precarity of the work of some of these seasonal workers made itself feel especially in the winter months and at times of deep economic crisis.

The creation of Associations like the Italian *Mutuo Soccorso*³⁹⁹ denotes two things, one that the foreigner working classes were left alone to their sickness and invalidity⁴⁰⁰ ordeal, admittedly before the introduction of accident insurance as of 1901, secondly that the creation of such Association is the reflection of the existence of those on top of the social ladder who acknowledge the existence of those at the bottom, through the provision of philanthropy, restricted to one's ethnicity:

Article 3 - Full members are all Italians living in the Grand Duchy who, having undertaken to comply with these Articles of Association, share in the benefits of the association.

Article 4 – Honorary members are those who, by their benefactions, advice or subscriptions, contribute to the prosperity of the society without participating in the assistance it grants (Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso 1893, 8-9).

They were founded, by those who were in a privileged entrepreneurial position in a period when Italians kept being left out of social legislation, as did Luxembourgers until the first wave of social legislation starting in 1901. “Successful” representatives of the community were the founding members of *Associazione Mutuo Soccorso*. In Esch, among its honorary members we find Ignazio

³⁹⁸ Art. 32 of the Statutes. *Statuti Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso*, Esch-sur-Alzette, 1893. Archives Municipales de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette, n.47- Mutuo Soccorso.

³⁹⁹ Article nr 1 of its statutes stated in 1893 that its purpose was 1) to pay its injured or sick members a temporary incentive during their inability to work ; 2) to contribute to the cost of their funerals (Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso 1893).

⁴⁰⁰ Art. 10 of the Statutes mentioned that lumbago, muscular strains and hernias, if they produced total incapacity to work, were also eligible for subsidy. *Statuti Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso*, Esch-sur-Alzette, 1893. Archives Municipales de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette, n.47- Mutuo Soccorso.

Alcadre⁴⁰¹(president), Jean Cresto,⁴⁰² the innkeeper, Luigi Moriconi ⁴⁰³ (innkeeper and theatre owner) and Venuto Bregoli (Gallo 1992). Other merchants and entrepreneurs will be joining the Association, like Victor Crescentini who will take over the pasta factory of the Gatti brothers in Esch in 1922 (Caldognetto 2007), Marco Moia, the building contractor, Alfredo Poggi, all representative of well-established commercial activities. A later list from 1935 confirms the presence of other active members stemming from the flourishing Italian business scene in Esch: Mose Olivo, Lise Giro, Luigi Crolla, Pasquale Sabatini and Pietro D’Ambros as well.⁴⁰⁴ Caldognetto (Caldognetto 2007) points out the common denominators of these prominent small and middle entrepreneurs, that is, a rapid, sometimes meteoric careers, perhaps favoured, by the new and closer relations with the natives induced by the mixed marriages, not uncommon in these cases.

5.2.4 Francophile Associations

At the beginning of the century, amid a growing climate of Germanophobia, associations were also set up to promote the French language. This had been also one of the goals of the AEP. In 1905, the first committee of the Alliance Française (AF) is created in Luxembourg city. Among its founding members

⁴⁰¹ An orphan from Turin, he appears to have been among those migrants who took the road of “the Germanies” mentioned above, he arrived in Esch from Gelsenkirchen. He was to stay at the helm of the Association until 1930. We saw how he had been one of the first Italians to join Esch. Some sources present him as a master builder (Caldognetto 2007), whereas the genealogy site Luxroots.org mentions his initial job occupation as miner, up until he successfully “climbed the ladder “ that allowed him to become an independent innkeeper/restaurateur.

⁴⁰² Jean Cresto (1862-?). Jean Cresto will become the owner of the renowned Hotel des Voyageurs located not far from the railway station, one of the most prestigious and popular places for both Italians and Luxembourgers (Caldognetto 2007).

⁴⁰³ Members of Associations typically met in the cafes or in the premises made available by the municipalities. According to the police reports that typically accompanied the request for subsidies at the local council, the assemblies of the Association took place in the café owned by Moriconi (Letter from Police Commissioner, 3.04.1918. Archives de la Ville d’Esch-sur Alzette. Associazione Mutuo Soccorso A-47.

⁴⁰⁴ *Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso* Esch-su-Alzette. Membres actifs. 14.12.35 (?). Archives Municipales de la Ville d’Esch-sur Alzette. Associazione Mutuo Soccorso A-47.

we identify Marcel Noppeney⁴⁰⁵, Joseph Hansen⁴⁰⁶ Auguste Ulveling⁴⁰⁷, Tony Wenger ⁴⁰⁸, Edouard Simonis⁴⁰⁹, all eminent members of the capital's bourgeoisie and inner circle of power. Robert Brasseur will become its president in 1925 ⁴¹⁰. The biographies of some of these founding members help understand the reasons for their fear of pangermanism. In the fervour of the 1919 referendums, many Francophiles were as openly in favour of an economic union, even an annexation, with France as they were against the advances of Belgium. Again being bourgeois middle class certainly defies rigid definitions, also because so diverse in terms of the very ideals each individual defended. Nothing illustrates this better than the sense of a national identity that unfolded along the industrialisation period and that saw a sense of closure only in the 1920s. Allegiances were very often of a pure economic survival nature; such was the case of farmers:

Il est intéressant d'examiner dans ce contexte [choix d'une nouvelle union économique] la position des responsables ruraux. Entre la Belgique libre-échangiste et la France protectionniste le choix était d'autant plus facile que nos taux de rendement assez médiocres, bien inférieurs à ceux de la Belgique étaient quand même supérieurs à ceux de la France (...) Les organisations paysannes prennent donc énergiquement position pour l'union économique avec la France (Gilbert Trausch 1970).

⁴⁰⁵ Marcel Noppeney (1877-1966) was born in born into a Franco-Luxembourgish upper middle-class family. In 1883, his father was appointed notary in Differdange and took advantage of the boom in the steel industry to prosper. Marcel Noppeney lived with his grandfather in Luxembourg, where he attended the Athénée. He completed his secondary education in Echternach and Diekirch, where he passed his baccalauréat in 1897. He studied law at the Cours supérieurs in Luxembourg, Nancy, Geneva and the Sorbonne. He worked only briefly as a lawyer. From 1912 to 1922, he was director of the political department of the daily L'Indépendance luxembourgeoise. In 1914, he founded the Comité de secours luxembourgeois aux Français et aux Belges victimes de la guerre. Suspected of spying for France, he was sentenced to death three times in Germany. After the First World War, he advocated political rapprochement and economic union between Luxembourg and France. His opposition to all forms of Pangermanism led to his arrest by the Nazis in May 1940. After his release from the concentration camp of Dachau, he returned to Luxembourg in May 1945. The autobiographical *Traits et Portraits* recounts Marcel Noppeney's childhood in Differdange and his adolescence in Luxembourg. In it, he describes a Luxembourg culture marked by French influence in the early twentieth century but threatened by Pangermanism. Upon returning to Luxembourg, Marcel Noppeney devoted himself fully to the "defence and honouring of the French language"(F. Wilhelm, n.d.-b).

⁴⁰⁶ Born into a farming family, Joseph Hansen finished high-school at the Athénée de Luxembourg in 1893. His excellent academic performance earned him admission to the École normale supérieure in Paris on the recommendation of the Luxembourg government. From 1899 to 1917, he taught French and Latin at the Gymnase in Diekirch. In 1905, he founded the Diekirch section of the Alliance française. A liberal in spirit, he took part in events organised by the Association pour l'éducation populaire (AEP), (F. Wilhelm, n.d.-a).

⁴⁰⁷ Auguste Ulveling (1859-1917), President of the Court of Auditors (Chambre des Comptes). Married to the sister of Marcel Noppeney, Laure Madelaine.

⁴⁰⁸ Tony Wenger (1846 -1924), born in Hayange (FR), Hospital administrator in Luxembourg city and alderman.

⁴⁰⁹ Edouard Simonis, (1845-?) Lawyer the Superior Court of Justice and the Council of State of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg also alderman in Luxembourg city.

⁴¹⁰ Robert Brasseur (1870 –1934) politician, lawyer, and journalist. Brasseur was educated at the Athénée de Luxembourg, before studying law at University of Strasbourg and in Paris. His father, Dominique, was a deputy (1866 – 99) and mayor of Luxembourg City (1891 – 94). His uncle, Pierre, was a mining industrialist, owner of the Brasseur Schmelz in Esch -sur-Alzette.

Others considered the Belgian industrial counterparts attempt at a (re)approximation to Luxembourg, as a dangerous sign of annexation goals of the country (Calmes 1972).

Class and national identity did not necessarily go hand in hand. The fervent appreciation for France and Republican values, by some of the upper classes encountered the indifference of a neighbour, admittedly too big to be interested, as often goes in the tale of small countries.

For the founding members of the AF, the needs were clear. They arose from the realisation that although Luxembourgers understood, spoke and read French and German, their command of both languages was generally imperfect. And since German was more widespread among the rural population because it was the language from which their dialect⁴¹¹ derived, the creation of the AF met a real need in the main rural and industrial centres.

Some of its activities were common to the world of associations, such as the organisation of conferences and literary festivals, while others included subsidies for teachers wishing to improve their skills and the dissemination of French songs "in the popular milieu" (Brasseur 1930, 4). By 1905, the association already had 100 members in the city of Luxembourg, including a large number of teachers, administrators, deputies, lawyers, councillors, industrialists, shopkeepers, doctors and students (Noppeney 1930, 45).

In a book gathering contributions around the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the AF, Joseph Hansen goes to great lengths to prove the existence of a gallic soul in the Luxembourgish "race", through a history of the intellectual relationships between the two countries. The author, in his search for a justification of a French blueprint since medieval times and through the more recent history of Luxembourg, provokingly calls the *Klëppelkrich*⁴¹² a "childish scuffle" (Hansen 1930, 13).

In the same exposé, Joseph Hansen lamented the fact that there were so few French-language newspapers and went on to explain some of the historical reasons for this disadvantaged position, not without making some interesting comments *en passant* about his views on universal suffrage, which by 1930 had become the *acquis* of a decade:

⁴¹¹ Dialect is here used in the contemporary assessment, of the elites, of the Luxembourgish language being reduced to a "patois".

⁴¹² Peasant revolt in 1798 against the French occupiers of the Southern Netherlands, a region which now includes Belgium, Luxembourg, and parts of Germany.

Unfortunately, the progress of the democratic movement, so desirable in fact, and the lowering of the electoral threshold, a lowering which regrettably and gradually led to universal suffrage, brought into political life sections of the population which only had the rudiments of the French language learnt at school and which could only be reached by using the German language. Since 1839, when Luxembourg was obliged to cede the Walloon cantons to Belgium, the Grand-Duchy has consisted only of districts where the population speaks a Germanic idiom, at least in everyday life⁴¹³ (Hansen 1930, 18).

Indeed, language became another camp in which cultural battles were fought. The "oppressive" German language appeared as the enemy to be defeated, although this feeling became more pronounced after the First World War:

The significant growth of the German language in the press over the last few years, its almost exclusive use in our churches, where it is used for preaching, catechism and prayer, its intrusion into the debates of our parliament, where certain elected representatives of universal suffrage⁴¹⁴, little versed in the finer points of the language of Voltaire, are making increasing use of the right granted to them by the Constitution to use German, have in no way undermined the positions of the French (...) (Hansen 1930, 18).⁴¹⁵

If there was no doubt that Francophile Associations served the purpose of mainstreaming the French language and making it more accessible to the masses, the means to achieve it diverged between those proposed by the AF and those by the Alliance Franco-Luxembourgeoise (AFL), which was to be founded in 1913, in Esch-sur-Alzette. In the case of the capital's AF their first meetings, in 1905, remained confined to a highly educated circle of elites:

Ah, we wouldn't conspire in silence! The colour of burnt topaz, the fragrant Ceylon tea steamed in the cups. We smoked too, but with a less oriental flavour... Simonis's "*gros-gris*", Wenger's "*half-londrès*", my *corporal* cigarettes, that composite flavour of the strongest tobaccos from the Régie, all of this remains inseparable, in my memory, from the discussions on the pre-eminence of the French language and the means of diffusing it (Noppeney 1930, 43).⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ **In the original** : Malheureusement le progrès, si souhaitable par ailleurs, du mouvement démocratique, l'abaissement du cens électoral, abaissement qui insensiblement a abouti au suffrage universel, ont appelé à la vie politique des couches de la population qui ne possèdent de la langue française que les rudiments appris à l'école et que on ne pouvait atteindre qu'en se servant de la langue allemande. Depuis 1839, en effet, époque à laquelle le Luxembourg fut obligé à céder à la Belgique les cantons wallons, le grand-duché se compose que des arrondissements ou la population parle, du moins dans les relations ordinaires de la vie, un idiome germanique (...).

⁴¹⁴ C.M. Spoo and Michel Welter had opened a precedent in Chamber before the universal suffrage, by advocating the interchangeable use of French and German in the Chamber, arguing the latter was the language of the masses (See Part IV).

⁴¹⁵ **In the original** : Le progrès notable de la langue allemande dans la presse au cours des dernières années, son emploi presque exclusif dans nos églises, où elle sert à la prédication, au catéchisme et à la prière, son intrusion dans les débats de notre parlement, ou certains élus du suffrage universel, peu rompus aux finesses de la langue de Voltaire, usent de plus en plus du droit que leur accorde la Constitution de se servir de l'allemand, n'ont en rien ébranlé les positions du français(...).

⁴¹⁶ **In the original**: Ah! Nous ne conspirions pas en silence! Couleur de topaze brûlée, le thé de Ceylan, parfumé à souhait, fumait dans les tasses. Nous nous fumions aussi, mais dans un gout moins oriental...Le "*gros-gris*" di Simonis, les demis-londrès de Wenger, mes cigarettes caporal, ce parfum composite des plus forts tabacs de la Régie, cela reste inséparable, dans mon souvenir, des discussions sur la précellence du langage français et les moyens de le généraliser

According to Noppeney the teaching of the language had to start from below but his former comrades had other ideas:

In my view (...) language teaching should be a bottom-up process. I argued fiercely that we had to go to the people via the teacher; that it was the teacher who had to be won over (...) and the pupil and the pupil girl, and the parents of those smallest hopes...(...) Taking a slow, methodical drag on his cigar, Wenger, on the other hand, advocated for the extension of the elite: "by concentric circles, he said" (Noppeney 1930, 43).⁴¹⁷

Far from the cigar-smoking, Ceylan tea-drinking elite of the capital, there were in the "remote" provinces, according to Noppeney, "intellectual centres in Diekirch, Echternach and even Esch-sur-Alzette" (Noppeney 1930, 44) worth exploring. In the regional sections, the committees were primarily concerned with creating and maintaining libraries. Moreover, an agreement was reached with the AF in Nancy that enabled members of the teaching staff to enroll free of charge in holiday courses set up in the Lorraine capital. The exponents of the Alliance Française, feared indeed the fierce competition that by then the Reich was proposing to Luxembourgish students: scholarships, free subscriptions to the German newspapers available in all hotels both in the cities and countryside, prizes for writing contests to Luxembourgish students, free attendance of conferences (Hansen 1930, 27), in sum, a wide offer of access to culture in German. In his memoirs on the foundation of the AF, Marcel Noppeney recounted of how his wish was to start from "below", however the AF programme seemed to propose little to reach the masses of the population.

The contemporary press is rich in advertising the balls organized with the *Société Française des Dames*, theater plays, the "best conferenciers" from Brussels and Paris- historians, writers, professors- all activities to which there can be doubt the lower classes would attend in great numbers.

In the Esch-sur-Alzette section of the AF, presided by Alfred Houdremont⁴¹⁸, its membership starts with 43 people and did not grow much in the first years. We see appear in the list of these first members, some familiar names: Charles Laval, the notary and honorary president, Alfred Houdremont, director of the industrial school, Kayser-Maguin, merchant, Théodore Kapp, also teacher at the industrial school and member of local school commission, Nicolas Bettendorf and Gregoire Barblé⁴¹⁹, the latter two, we had seen as active members of the *Société d'Embellissement*.

⁴¹⁷ Pour moi (...) l'enseignement de la langue doit se faire par le bas ! Je prétendais avec feu qu'il fallait aller au peuple en passant par l'instituteur ; que c'était celui qu'il importait de gagner (...) et l'écolier et l'écolière, et les parents de ceux minuscules espoirs...(...) Tirant avec méthode et lenteur sur son cigare, Wenger, en revanche, préconisait l'extension de l'élite: "par cercles concentriques disait il"

⁴¹⁸ Alfred Hudremont, (1860-1925), whose command of French language was impeccable (Schaaf 1930) had been born in Paris to Luxembourgish parents.

⁴¹⁹ Born in Vielsalm (Belgium) he must have claimed naturalization (Lux) by the time he joined the local council (1912-1917) although I have found no trace of it in the sources.

Its activities consisted mostly in meetings, conferences, theatre plays, musical evenings, an annual ball, summer excursions, the 14th of July banquet. In 1914 its members were 120 and the library could count on 500 books. By 1930 membership had raised to 400 (Schaaf 1930). Other members in Esch section of the AF included Jean Jeitz, also a teacher, J.N. Ahnen, teacher, Françoise Stoffel teacher and librarian of the association, as well as some representatives of the steel industry as honorary members: Jacques Olinger, Joseph Franck both mining directors in Esch.

The events organized by the AF speak for themselves: history and literary conferences by eminent lawyers and professors, speakers from Paris, in evenings organized sometimes at the *Athenée*, at times in the *Lycée des Jeunes Filles*, in Luxembourg City. As the Athenée's banqueting hall was too small, the public was sometimes asked to stand back from attending, to allow access only to members and guests. Other events like the Annual Charity Ball of the Association des Dames Française and the *Société Française de Bienfaisance*, jointly organized with AF, were the highlight of the French speaking communities.

In Esch, the AF followed the similar programmes organising theatre evenings, music and conferences. As envisaged by the founding members of the AF, a great deal of exchange went on between teachers and members of the AF who often visited their Nancy counterparts. An article of the *Tageblatt* in 1921 mentioned that it was the 14th (!) time that “our Luxembourg friends visit us this season” (*Escher Tageblatt* 1921). The elitist vision of the Luxembourg founders of the AF was brought to the forefront at Alfred Houdremont's funeral. What would have been the intellectual life of the city without such enlightened individuals as the director of the Industrial and Commercial School?

When Alfred Houdremont was appointed Director of the Industrial and Commercial School in Esch-sur-Alzette twenty years ago, he was immediately aware of the importance of the position he had been given. As soon as he arrived in the mining South, he stated his determination not to confine himself to the preoccupations, however absorbing, of administrator and teacher, but to fulfil a genuine social mission in the town where he was to work. [...] The mining metropolis was then at a decisive stage in its prodigious development. But there was one worry on everyone's mind at the time, and Houdremont shared it. Were the tumultuous pulses of industrial life, the panting of blast furnaces, the throbbing of machines that drown out the divine music of the soul with their powerful rumour, not going to stifle the very seeds of intellectual and aesthetic life? Wouldn't the heavy wisps of smoke that close off the horizon on all sides prevent the imagination from making luminous escapes into the regions of Beauty and Harmony? [...] Guided by the same concerns, he founded the allotment gardens in Esch, a work of family and social harmony [...] But the work he felt was best suited to moulding souls to all the noble disciplines was that of the Alliance Française [...]. (Speech pronounced by Joseph Hansen, at the occasion of the funeral of Alfred Houdremont director of the Industrial School of Esch-sur-Alzette, *L'Indépendance Luxembourgeoise*, 9 May 1925, p.3)⁴²⁰

⁴²⁰ **In the original** : Lorsqu'il y a vingt ans Alfred Houdremont fut nommé Directeur de l'Ecole industrielle et commerciale d'Esch-sur-Alzette, il se pénétra aussitôt de l'importance du poste qui lui fut confié. Dès son arrivée dans le bassin minier il affirma sa résolution de ne pas se confiner dans les préoccupations, si absorbantes fussent-elles, d'administrateur et de pédagogue, mais de remplir, dans la ville où il devait exercer son activité, une véritable mission sociale. [...] La métropole du bassin minier était alors à l'étape décisive de son prodigieux développement. Mais une inquiétude était alors dans tous les esprits et Houdremont la partageait. Est-ce que les pulsations tumultueuses de la vie industrielle, le halètement des hauts-

But what next to this closed circle offer of the AF in Esch-sur-Alzette?

The Alliance Franco-Luxembourgeoise (AFL), founded in Esch-sur-Alzette, in 1913 worked to fill that void. Both the AF and the Alliance Franco-Luxembourgeoise were active, naturally, on the 14th of July celebrations as well as in (financial) assistance to war veterans⁴²¹. They were equally overt in their political positions, the AFL being admittedly more vocal. The links of at least a branch of the AF to the clerical world however, upset part of the public opinion, the press and led to the eventual dissociations of some of its members.⁴²² Indeed, the creation of the AFL in 1913 can be seen considering the different political stances professed by its founders. The AFL was founded by Pierre Thorn⁴²³, photographer, and operated in ways that were, different to the AF, albeit with the same objectives of promoting the French language. Among the honorary members⁴²⁴, of the AFL, two representatives from the steel plants Nicolas Wagner (Mining director, ARBED), Guillaume Theves, engineer at the ARBED, Nicolas Schock, director at Terres Rouges, Jean Reiser, mining director at Terres Rouges and lastly, Victor Wilhelm, then mayor (1931) and deputy at the Parliament. Should we interpret any of these honorary memberships as sign of alternative political sympathies to those professed by the AF? It would be jumping into conclusions; as seen some of the ambiguous relationships of the AF with the “right wing” had forced many of their members into a dissociation from the latter, in its spirit the AF remained, however, imbued of the ideals of French republicanism.

It is interesting to observe the shifting meanings of the neighbouring nations, within both Associations, according to the interests they represented and the inexorable passing of time. Just ten years earlier to the appearance of AF’s 25th anniversary celebration book (1930), the animosity towards Belgium (or rather

fourneaux, la trépidation des machines qui couvrent de leur rumeur puissante les divines musiques de l’âme, n’allaient pas étouffer en son germe la vie intellectuelle et esthétique ? Les lourdes traînées de fumée qui ferment l’horizon de toutes parts, n’allaient-elles pas interdire à l’imagination les lumineuses échappées vers les régions de la Beauté et de l’Harmonie ? [...] Guidé par les mêmes préoccupations, il fonda à Esch l’œuvre **des jardins ouvriers**, cette œuvre d’harmonie familiale et sociale [...] Mais l’œuvre qui lui paraissait la plus propre à façonner les âmes à toutes les nobles disciplines, c’était celle de l’**Alliance Française** [...].

⁴²¹ The Alliance Franco-Luxembourgeoise took pride in having contributed significantly, namely, to the reconstruction of the municipal town hall in Longwy after the War. The sympathy of the Eschois was enlarged to the French deserters and could be traced back to their Francophilia following the war of 1870-71 and partly, perhaps, by their reaction to the omnipresence of the Germans in the iron and steel companies, which operated largely thanks to German capital, managers and immigrant workers, at least in the early days (F. Wilhelm 1999, 100).

⁴²² The invitation of René Benjamin (1885-1948), French writer and journalist to a conference in February 1923, shocked the left-wing press. René Benjamin will indeed become one of the ideologists of the Vichy régime and a sustainer of Maréchal Pétain.

⁴²³ Pierre Thorn (1866-1947). Born in Erpeldange (Remich), photographer. He was also actively involved in other Esch’s sports Associations.

⁴²⁴ Besides the many honorary members in France.

Belgian interests) was real. The founding members of the AF had indeed in common with its rival Association Franco-Luxembourgeoise, two common enemies: the “pervasive flood of Germanisation” of the linguistic social space and Belgian annexionism, of which the AFL was also a vocal critic. According to its statutes, only Luxembourgers and French nationals could take part at the language courses on offer by the AFL. This may have been because the latter’s statutes specifically indicated in its articles nr 3 and 4, respectively that its main goals were: 3) To establish between the French and the people of Luxembourg bonds of sympathy, solidarity 4) to make Luxembourg better known and appreciated France and vice-versa (Alliance Franco-Luxembourgeoise 1931, 4).

Given that the Association was founded in 1913 it is unlikely that an intentional exclusion of Belgians had been already on the cards, but it still comes across as surprising that French speaking Belgians could not take part on the activities/courses of the Association.

The activities and goals of the Association are well described in a press article around its 6th anniversary:

The need for the creation of courses and conferences arose from the lamentable state of knowledge of French among our working-class and middle classes. It is indisputable and undeniable that our young men and women, on leaving primary school, do not and cannot, have the knowledge they need to face and overcome the various difficulties they encounter in their careers. It is also clear that not everyone has the means to follow the courses of a higher or upper primary school, -an industrial or commercial school or a secondary school. The French courses organised by the Alliance Franco-Luxembourgeoise help these underprivileged people, all those whose state of wealth or occupation prevents them from studying at higher schools. Today, even more than before the war it is of incalculable interest to the for young Luxembourgers to speak French correctly, they -must manage the conversation to avoid these gross errors of grammar and pronunciation. It is advantageous for them to know how to read and write French -and above all to understand exactly what they have read exactly what they have read and written. The courses started in 1913 were attended by 35 to 40 -students, and by 1914 this figure had already risen to 50 -when we were abruptly halted in our work by the outbreak -of war in August 1914. (L’Indépendance Luxembourgeoise, 27 August 1919, p.1)⁴²⁵.

The number of attendees in the courses soon grew bigger, but the expectations of hitting 500, proved to be optimistic in 1921, as lamented by Pierre Thorn in the AGM held at the café Cresto⁴²⁶.

⁴²⁵ **In the original** : La nécessité de la création des cours et conférences découlait de l’état lamentable des connaissances de français constatées parmi nos classes ouvrières et moyennes. Il est incontestable et incontesté en effet que nos jeunes gens et nos jeunes filles, en sortant de l’école primaire, n’ont pas et ne peuvent, d’ailleurs pas -avoir tes connaissances requises pour affronter allègrement et surmonter victorieusement les difficultés variées qu’ils rencontrent dans leurs carrières si diverses. Il est évident aussi que tous n’ont pas les moyens de suivre les cours d’une école primaire supérieure, d’une école industrielle et commerciale ou d’un lycée. Les cours de français organisés par l’Alliance Franco-Luxembourgeoise -viennent en aide à ces -deshérités, à tous ceux que leur état -de fortune ou leurs occupations empêchent -de faire des études supérieures dans les écoles. Aujourd’hui, -plus encore qu’avant la guerre il est -d’un intérêt incalculable pour le jeune Luxembourgeois et la jeune Luxembourgeoise de parler -correctement le français, ils -doivent arriver dans la conversation à éviter ces fautes grossières de grammaire et de prononciation ; il n’-est pas moins avantageux pour eux de savoir lire et écrire correctement le français et surtout de comprendre exactement ce qu’ils ont lu et écrit. Les cours commencés -en 1913 étaient fréquentés par 35 à 40 élèves et en 1914 -ce -chiffre s’élevait déjà à 50 quand nous fûmes brusquement arrêtés dans nos travaux par la déclaration -de la guerre en août 1914.

⁴²⁶ (L’indépendance Luxembourgeoise 1921)

If the main goal was to provide especially, the population of Esch with access to French language courses, the press tells us that the Association took it at heart, to widespread the need of the use of French beyond Esch. The main aim of the association was to propagate the French language in the country through the establishment of French language courses, namely by persuading local councils throughout the countries to sponsor courses to the masses at the expense of the municipality. The courses proved to be successful in the mining south localities and soon a number of rural communities would also respond the appeal by organizing free courses. The AFL went, in fact, campaigning around the country with a talk under the title “*The French language, its importance as a world language and its great importance for the Luxembourgers*”. It can be said they trailed the country for 20 years in their promotion of the French language⁴²⁷, with the aim to set up free French courses throughout the country. They too targeted teachers, perhaps more modestly than the AF, not offering them stays or summer courses but rather directly through press advertisements, pleading them to get involved on a volunteer basis:

Autumn is just around the corner and post school courses are about to start again. In our country, situated on the borders of France and Belgium, knowledge of "the French language was necessary before the war, it has now become indispensable for us Luxembourgers. However, there are few who have the time and resources and means (to attend special schools to learn French). We therefore ask the "teaching staff" of our country to take charge of the matter and to organise adult courses for the French language. We are ready to give information on the method of our courses to any interested and to send them our Statutes. It is the duty of the government and local authorities to encourage a private initiative of this by allocating subsidies or "to take direct charge of the directly responsible for organizing French courses (...) (*L'indépendance Luxembourgeoise* 1920)⁴²⁸.

The newspaper *L'indépendance Luxembourgeoise*, which served as a press arm for both Francophile associations AF and AFL had visioned well the tensions that may have arisen between the two competing associations, upon the founding of the AFL, in 1913, whilst conceding that change was needed in the *modus operandi* of the AF:

⁴²⁷ In the years to come the AFL will roadshow the country. In 1923, they were in Bissen (Mersch), in 1924 in Bascharage, Belvaux, Mamer, Aspelt and Remich, and continued to trail remoter locations in the Rambrouch and Rédange cantons in North and Western Luxembourg in the decade to come. They targeted small farming villages like Bauschleiden (Boulaide), Hoscheid, Folscheid (Folschette) and Arsdorf, meeting in the town festivities' halls, cafés or the in the parishes straight after the evening mass. Other localities were mentioned in the press throughout the years 1920-1932: among them in the South/Gutland: Kœrich, in the Moselle, Wormeldange and Burmerange, in the centre Bourglinster and in the North and East: Clervaux, Ell and Bettborn. There seems to have been a certain geographic logic to each cycle of conferences.

⁴²⁸ **In the original** : L'automne approche où des cours post-scolaires vont être repris. Dans notre pays, situé aux confins de la France et de la Belgique, la connaissance de «la langue française était nécessaire avant la guerre, elle est maintenant devenue indispensable pour nous autres Luxembourgeois. Toutefois, il en est peu qui disposerait du temps et des moyens nécessaires (pour fréquenter des écoles spéciales, pour apprendre le français. Aussi prions-nous le corps enseignant, de notre pays de se charger de l'affaire et d'organiser des cours d'adultes pour la langue française. Nous Sommes prêts à donner des renseignements sur la méthode de nos cours à tout intéressé et de lui faire parvenir éventuellement nos Statuts. C'est le devoir du gouvernement et des autorités communales d'encourager une initiative privée de ce genre par l'allocation de subsides ou «de se charger directement de l'organisation de cours de français.

This Alliance Franco-Luxembourgeoise, recruiting from more or less the same circles as the existing Alliance Française, will therefore also be called upon to live on good terms of friendship and camaraderie with the latter. Perhaps these two associations should even combine their efforts in order to achieve more surely and more completely a goal which is more or less the same. I even believe that this will be a good opportunity to infuse new life into more than one section of our Alliance Française, to extend its sphere of action and to make its efforts more effective and more homogeneous (Becker 1913).⁴²⁹

It had, in that same article, furthermore, identified the particular issues faced by those living just across the border with Germany (and this was before World War 1), a suggestion that seems to have been taken in consideration by the AFL which toured the Moselle region in its campaigns, namely Flaxweiler, Manternach and Remerschen in the late 1920s.

Notwithstanding the wishes for a collaboration between the two, the ways they chose to operate and vehicle the dissemination of the French language resulted very different. If they both acknowledged the scarce knowledge of French language reigning in the lower and middle classes, their means of actions diverged.

In the annual letter with a request for subsidies to the municipality AFL's president Pierre Thorn is adamant about the reasons as to why the association would expect financial support from the municipality:

From 1 October 1919, our association gave French language lessons to 150 pupils on all days of the week, except Sundays. (...) We set the annual contribution of the pupils very low in accordance with the teaching hours in order to recruit as many visitors as possible (Letter from Pierre Thorn, president AFL, to council of Aldermen in Esch-sur-Alzette, 4.03.1920. Dossier AFL, nr. 67. Archives Municipales de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette).

On the AF side both Noppeney and Joseph Hansen had mentioned the urgency of French for our "peasants, shop owners and workers" (Hansen 1930, 27), notwithstanding it is harder to trace, through the sources available at least, in which measure AF's actions directly impacted those or improve the language skills of those who most needed it.

The Second World War only served to exacerbate anti-German feeling. In fact, during the occupation, the Germans also "dug up" all aspects of Luxembourgish history and culture that could serve and justify the Germanisation of their origins.⁴³⁰

However, what is still evident in today's debates is the difficulty of emancipating Luxembourgish⁴³¹ from German, which is still used in the press and as the main language of literacy, despite its virtual

⁴²⁹ **In the original :** Cette Alliance franco-luxembourgeoise se recrutant à peu près dans les mêmes milieux que l'Alliance Française déjà existante, sera donc aussi appelée à vivre dans de bons termes d'amitié et de camaraderie avec cette dernière. Peut-être même ces deux associations devront-elles combiner leurs efforts afin d'atteindre plus sûrement et plus complètement un but qui est sensiblement le même. Je crois même que ce sera une bonne occasion pour infuser un sang nouveau à plus d'une section de notre Alliance Française, pour en étendre une sphère d'action et pour on rendre les efforts rendre les efforts plus efficaces et plus homogènes.

⁴³⁰ See namely the work of Bernard Thomas (Thomas 2011) on the "Westforschung" and Luxembourgish national identity.

⁴³¹ In the words of sociologist Fernand Fehlen "fully take on Luxembourgish as a language"(F. Braun 2016).

disappearance from everyday life and the diminishing use of German in public administration. The analysis of the position of the three official languages, the priority given to each of them and, regrettably, their instrumentalisation⁴³² according to what suits the existing power structures, should refer more often to historiography to make the debate more transparent.

This insight into the world of certain associations reveals a great deal about the interests, political affiliations and world views of their members, although it does not in all cases provide answers to the question of the interaction between the bourgeois middle classes and the lower strata of society. The desire to distinguish oneself through membership of associations, a typical trait of the upper classes (and “wannabes”) in the 19th and early 20th centuries, also seems to be a characteristic of Esch. In the management and honorary membership of such associations, we see the socio-professional categories of the educated and economically well-off middle classes, as well as their entrepreneurs and some exponents of the steel industry. Was there a sense of otherness towards the lower classes and, conversely, a sense of similarity in the views shared by the bourgeoisie? There is no doubt that there was a renewed attention and connection with the "real world" of the working class, with the creation of such associations. This period, together with the overwhelming urbanisation of the city of Esch, also marks the end of charity as it used to be, which did not mean the end of a persistent paternalistic attitude, even if vested with the best intentions.

In some of the associations, the working-class element was more dominant than in others, and in some it is difficult to ascertain to what extent the latter were involved in, or even benefited from, the activities promoted by these associations.

In others, such as the SdIE, although composed exclusively of wealthy members, it cannot be denied that it was exclusively concerned with providing a better, more dignified environment for everyone in the city. This does not preclude the fact that membership was exclusive and often fueled by drinking and cigar-smoking soirees in the houses and cafes where its members met. Nevertheless, in the case of the SdiE, there was a genuine interest in improving the city's infrastructure and making such improvements and embellishments available to all. The same was true for the involvement of the middle classes in issues such as the greening of the city, the fight for the quality of its air and, finally, an access to better education, from which arguably only the same middle classes would go on benefiting? We see similar patterns unfolding in the life of associations, whose allegiances are primarily those of class and ideology. In the

⁴³² I discuss this at length in my analysis of contemporary debates of media and migration in Luxembourg (Cascao 2023).

case of the Italian *Mutuo Soccorso*, ethnicity is the common denominator, but cultural struggles never leave the background.

Class and political solidarity played a more important role than simply sharing the same ethnic background, although more research would be needed to establish whether, for example, merchants, shopkeepers and entrepreneurs mingled with miners and workers in the same cultural associations. Social barriers did exist, even if they could be crossed in the form of philanthropy, where, in this case, wealthy Italians would show solidarity by sponsoring those in need.

Even if in some of these associations there is not always a trace of the attempt to "domesticate" the workers, as some have suggested, and thus to reduce their "dangerousness", by somehow disciplining them within bourgeois society according to the models of the "regulated life" and the values of "savings" and morality advocated by the latter, it cannot be denied that some of these associations' initiatives, whether political or not, have contributed to the dynamisation of solidarity associations. Moreover, they casted a gradual spread of a greater awareness for the need for a "lifelong solidarity" in the field of what could be greater security and assistance, and why not "beauty" and leisure (from the SdIE) for the lower classes. In the case of the mutual aid societies, they clearly paved the way for a more institutionalised type of social security and *acquis* that would characterise the Grand Duchy in the 20th century.

The analysis of the associations clearly shows that some struggles concealed others. The role of women and their emancipation in society clearly owed more to radical left-wing ideologies than to Catholic associations. The perception of foreigners also appears to be a double-faced one, unwanted and despised even by some left-wing exponents, but welcomed as entrepreneurs. We are never far from contemporary perceptions of migration and an understanding of its dynamics that often, and perhaps deliberately, hides what is primarily a class-based prejudice under the cloak of ethnicity.

In the case of the French language association mentioned above, they serve as an illustration of how they could serve different interests. In the case of the AF, it served the interest of creating, and reproducing the same class structures, in the case of AFL, it served at inception an overtly political stance in favour of a union with France. Both associations took advantage of the end of the *Zollverein* and with it the hope of a more widespread use of the French language and all republican causes. With the passage of time and the *fait accompli* of an economic union with Belgium, the AFL causes did not disappear completely. As the sources also testify, the AFL, produced an incessant activity of diffusion of the importance of French not only in Esch but in the most remote corners of the country and took to actually teach French to those who needed it and to vehiculate the message on the necessity of French to those who could eventually benefit from it, being hands on and without the prejudice of the all-powerful elites. By allowing their conferences

and lectures to be held in Luxembourgish, they made possible in the remotest villages of the Moselle, Oesling and the Haute-Sure what they hoped would become French courses available to all social strata. Time would ironically show that, fast forward one century, the French language would indeed end up penetrating society, everyday life and, above all, the labour market via the lower classes (Brucker 2017), without having yet reached the stage of equality as a language of literacy that it would deserve in a self-proclaimed bilingual country.

The above incursion into the life of Associations shows concerns with relations between classes as well as relations within the bourgeoisie/middle-class itself. Few locations, in the Grand-Duchy, were as characteristic of the new capitalist industrial relations as Esch. The internal complexity of the classes in formation remains the common thread running through the different associations and their practices. Turning our attention to national and local politics, opens or rather revisits an important field in which struggles contributed as much to shaping classes as classes themselves shaped struggles.

To understand the role of the local municipal power in Esch-sur-Alzette, it is necessary first to revisit the political context at a wider scale. In the next chapter we will be discussing the actions of the municipal council, their concerns, revindications, resistances and fights. This conception allows us to interpret history through the perspective of the city, rather than only through the wider perspective of the nation.

5.3 Political-historical chronological landmarks in Esch- sur-Alzette

- 1900 Following the count of the population in the 1900 census, Esch is entitled to 2 new deputies, thus increasing to 6 its representatives in the Chamber: plus 2 extra in 1906 and again 2 in 1911. By 1918 15 deputies represent the Esch district at the Chamber of Deputies.
- 1901: C.M Spoo and Michel Welter, social democrat deputies for Esch, introduce a law proposition⁴³³ in view of decreasing the poll tax to 10 francs (from 15 francs), a “psychological threshold” (Maas 1983)
- October 1901 – The Industrial school is inaugurated after a five-year debate in the Parliament.
- 1902 In the legislative elections of 10.06.1902 of the six elected deputies, the 1st is Leon Metz, liberal, followed by the Baron de Tornaco independent, and 3rd Eugene Steichen⁴³⁴ a clerical.
- 1903 July- first congress of the new social-democrat party
- November 1903 – foundation of the newspaper Der Arme Teufel, of socialist blueprint and dissident from Michel’s Welter’s social-democratic newspaper *Escher Journal*, later also known as the "Neues Journal",
- December 1903 – foundation in Esch of the Catholic “Volksverein”
- 1904 – grouping of the liberals under the umbrella Ligue Libérale
- 1908 - Liberals and social democrats conclude a political alliance “Bloc des Gauches” to endure until 1914
- 1908 – Léon Metz is in balloting for the first time in the legislative elections
- November 1909- the Escher section of the liberal-socialist Association, later AEP (Association pour l’Éducation Populaire) is founded as a counterpart to the Catholic People's Association founded in 1903.
- February 1910 - A motion in favour of reduction to under 10 frcs poll-tax for the municipal elections is approved in the Esch council.
- 1910 Inauguration of the Girl’s High-school

⁴³³ Fayot (Fayot 1979) highlights that this was not only the merit of democrats as it had been a proposal stemming from Emile Servais from 1895.

⁴³⁴ Eugene Steichen (1868 -1936), lawyer and clerical deputy for the canton of Esch 1896-1908; 1911-1914; 1919-?

- 1913 reunification of the social democrats with the SAP (Sozial demokratischer Arbeiterpartei) of Jean Schaack-Wirth.

- 1919: In a double referendum held in September Luxembourgers were asked to vote on their preferred form of governance and whether there should be an economic union with either France or Belgium. The majority voted to retain Grand Duchess Charlotte as head of state, and for an economic union with France. Upon France's disinterest, an economic union with Belgium was established in 1922.

- 1919 universal suffrage is introduced in Luxembourg

- 1930 Inauguration of the City's Hospital

6 PART IV – Class and the city – The dynamics of local power

The main divide running through public opinion at the time was a social divide between, on the one hand, the new strata of the middle class born of industrialisation and the emerging urban society and, on the other, the Catholic Church, which would accept neither secularisation nor the growing autonomy of civil society (Scuto 2012, 46).⁴³⁵

The institutionalised weight of preindustrial society of which agriculture was central part, became the main obstacle to some aspects of modernization. This was not only true of Luxembourg, but it also reflected, in fact, a wider European trend:

Politically modernization implied, for those who wanted to undertake it, a frontal collision with the main supporters of traditionalism, the agrarian society (Hobsbawm 1984, 182).

Liberalism and its practical arm, capitalism, as Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 1984) argues further, could not afford to undermine the agrarian bases of political stability. In Luxembourg, an overwhelmingly rural country, despite industrialisation in the South, some of its liberal exponents understood this well. Liberalism indeed would have not accepted accusations of being hostile to agriculture. Jacques Maas (Maas 1983) convincingly argues that some liberal candidates feared to overtly profess their (anti-clerical) ideology for fear of losing their catholic electorate. This was the truer for some press publications that, apart from the *Arme Teufel*, defended themselves against accusations of being socialists, by putting a brake to their antic-clericalism (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978).

Léon Metz himself – a prominent figure in Esch both in his capacity of director of Metz and Cie, and as mayor between 1906-1909 – pampered the farmer movement by becoming its president (Mersch 1963). Liberalism, indeed, never tried to dissociate itself from it and claimed for itself some of the successes in the front of agricultural progress. There was in the use of the Thomas slag as fertilizer a useful instrumentalisation of the benefits that technological innovation could bring to agriculture. The liberal narrative interpreted agricultural as inevitably having to go down the same road of progress as the rest of the country thus culminating in agricultural modernisation. Many among the members of the liberal party commended the liberal engagement with the country's landowner stock in the decades to come:

The general improvement in the agricultural situation around the nineties of the last century was noticeable, thanks to the far-sighted liberal economic policy of the time. When the domestic iron industry took the lead in our economic

⁴³⁵ **In the original** : Le principal clivage qui traverse alors l'opinion publique épouse une frontière sociale qui départage, d'une part, les couches nouvelles de la classe moyenne issues de l'industrialisation et de la société urbaine naissante et, d'autre part, l'Eglise catholique qui ne veut accepter ni la laïcisation ni l'autonomie croissante de la société civile.

development in those years, the other sectors of the economy, especially agriculture, were significantly revitalised. This was a natural course of development, and any judgements to the contrary must be described as erroneous and misguided. It really cannot be denied that the blossoming of agriculture, trade and commerce at that time was the direct result of the onset of the boom in heavy industry: iron production not only provided the labourer with a welcome working opportunity and a decent wage, whilst agriculture was already benefiting from the Thomas slag at the end of the 1880s, which significantly increased our land yields in a remarkably short time and thus revived agriculture and livestock farming (Olinger and Zanen 1940, 205).

It is also to note that liberals had more difficult in finding partners in the rural regions. To conflate both the interests of a widely rural country with those of the emergent industrial cities, towns and society became the priority at the level of the central government. The clerical attacks on the steel industry, whose interests were represented by the Liberals at political level, were aimed directly at Esch-sur-Alzette, a stronghold of the Social Democrats. It is thus not unexpectedly that some of the Government's members will express unfavourable views to the requests of the canton. Where do the ruling Esch bourgeois middle-classes position themselves in this multifaceted political context and which interests do they serve?

Academic research on the political history of Luxembourg's two main cities and towns is scarce. Exceptions are Norbert Franz's (Franz 2001) history of the capital's administrators and Christine Mayr's (Mayr 2004) work on a micro-historical comparison between the role and administrative style of rural mayors in France, Luxembourg and Germany. Both of these historical analyses end in 1890. Incidentally, just two years later, in 1892, the poll tax was reduced from 30 to 15 francs, opening up a new space and capacity for the political participation of an emerging middle class. Some of the peculiarities of Luxembourg local government in the 19th century are highlighted in Mayr's work:

In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the specific conditions of a small state are of great importance for the exercise of the function and the administrative style of councillors. The distances between the villages and the capital are so short that local administrators can easily arrange personal meetings with members of the government. Ministers also find time to attend to the affairs of certain communes. As a result, mayors very often approach them directly with their requests. In this small state, personal relationships, even kinship, often develop between local administrators and members of the government. All these conditions influence communication between mayors and state administrators: it is more immediate than in other countries, and mayors often know how to bypass the hierarchical channel prescribed by law. In some cases, Luxembourg mayors obtain a seat in the national parliament after their municipal mandate. These mayors succeed in representing the interests of their municipality in the national representative body, and they then exercise their municipality's 'foreign policy' (Mayr 2004, 2).

Some of the specificities mentioned by Mayr will remain in place throughout the period under analysis (1907-1922). Conversely, aspects, like the presumable easier access some mayors had to the government, ceases to be the case. It appears rather, in the two decades that follow that coincide with the period here under observation, that it becomes increasingly difficult to communicate directly with the government, at least in Esch. Up until the advent of the industrialization the Esch's canton representation at the level of the Parliament had included the rulers of the "old order": The Tornaco family through Charles de

Tornaco⁴³⁶, baron and landowner in Sanem, Dr Théodore de Wacquant another landowner from Foetz, and Alexandre De Gerlache, Auguste Collart, both landowners and industrialists, from Differdange and Bettembourg, respectively. From Esch specifically, some notaries can be recognized among the first to have represented the city: Henri Motté, the notary (in office between 1841-1848), Nicolas Schmit⁴³⁷ (in office between 1854-1857) Alexis Brasseur⁴³⁸ (in office 1866-890), Victor Wollff, also a notary (1872-1875).

In 1875, Léon Metz⁴³⁹, makes his first entrance at the Parliament, representing the liberal camp. Léon Metz was ubiquitous. In 1873, just a couple of years on his arrival as director of the Metz et Cie in Esch, immediately marked his beginning as counsellor (1873-1877) and alderman (1877-1906) in the local council. From 1906 to 1909 he became mayor, following the death of Dominique Hoferlin.

If we take a brief look back at the power and glory of Alderman Metz, we can see that Mr. Metz always wanted to be "Lord of the village", as the old Escher people used to say. Leo Metz was obviously not satisfied with being director of the *Metzer Schmelz* in Esch; he was also to hold all the other positions of honour⁴⁴⁰.

An unbiased analysis of Metz's role presents a challenge, the sources shifting between laudation of his merits (Mersch 1963) and business feats (Barthel 2022), so typical of a historiography focused on business successes. In other words, there is a great risk of overestimating its importance through an effect of sources, which emanate almost exclusively from the protagonists working to antagonize Metz. The same is to say, the unapologetic writing of his archenemies in *Der Arme Teufel*.

A plethora of other leadership positions earned him the wrath of his left-wing enemies, who believed that it was impossible to oversee so many associations and political roles at the same time. At the time, he was a member of Parliament representing the Esch canton, president of the Chamber of Commerce, president of the Adolf [music] association, president of the School commission, president of the church council, commissioner of the W.L. Railways (*Société royale grand-ducale des chemins de fer Guillaume-Luxembourg*, also known as *Compagnie Guillaume-Luxembourg*), president of the Esch music association, general director of the steelworks and mines of the Metz & Cie., and president of the Agricultural Association.

⁴³⁶ And his father before him, who was Member of the Chamber between 1842 and 1860, 1872-1875 and president of the government between 1860-1867 (Als et al. 1994).

⁴³⁷ Nicolas Schmit (1809-1888), a priest and seminar professor in Luxembourg (see luxroots.org) and brother of landowner Jacques Schmit-Clees to whom he left his landed assets.

⁴³⁸ From Esch but a lawyer in Luxembourg (in office between 1866-1890).

⁴³⁹ 1842-1928

⁴⁴⁰ Der Bürgermeister Herr Leo Metz, *Der Arme Teufel*, 11.11.1906, p.1.

Still according to *Der Arme Teufel*, by the time Metz became mayor, he faced little opposition in the local council. Jean Schaack identifies as Metz's few opposers, himself, Jean Van Dyck, a farrier, J.P. Hoferlin, a manager⁴⁴¹, and the "bourgeois" [sic] J.P. Weisen, a manufacturer⁴⁴² without, however specifying their political camps.⁴⁴³

Esch had by the beginning of the 20th century, gained for itself a new population, a new slice of voters, and a very pioneer representation in the Parliament, in the persons of C.M. Spoo and Dr. Michel Welter, first social democrats to be elected to the *Chambre des Députés* (Parliament).

Both men belonged to the élite of Esch-sur-Alzette. Their ascension to the political scene and each of their personal history's peculiarities deserve to be highlighted. Firstly, their origins, both outside Esch-sur-Alzette. Caspar Mathias Spoo was the son of a modest porcelain worker from Echternach, a good student and self-made man. He was known in Esch not only because he headed an important manufacture⁴⁴⁴ and wholesale of construction material but also because he was very active in Associations, in the branches of music and Luxembourgish literature. Unlike his peer Michel Welter, his social democratic ideals are not built upon a strong anti-clericalism. On the contrary, the Christian convictions he made no secret of⁴⁴⁵ can partly explain his political commitment: charity meant standing up for the poor and the underprivileged. His must have not been a comfortable position, as this was a period where anti-clericalism defined the left, in the first place, be it in the moderate, be it in its most radical circles. Spoo's enemies of the *Der Arme Teufel* did not spare him. Neither did the Church, which is believed to have denied him a Catholic funeral:

We mention the civil funeral in particular because Spoo had fulfilled his duties as a Catholic right up to the end, and only outwardly separated himself from the Church when he was forced to do so by the machinations of its servants (Luxemburger Zeitung, 17.03.1914 as cited by Flies (Flies 1979, 547).⁴⁴⁶

One cannot avoid being appalled at seeing, on the contrary, that just one year after, in 1915, the fierce anti-clerical Dr. Joerg (see further) had not only a catholic funeral service "muni des secours de notre mère la Sainte église" ("with the help of our mother, the Holy Church") but also an obituary issued in his

⁴⁴¹ Jean Pierre Hoferlin (1859-1911). The genealogic sources, present him as either manager or accountant, his obituary mentions he was the secretary of the *Conduite d'eau intercommunale* (see luxroots.org).

⁴⁴² Jean- Pierre Weisen (1860-1911), a merchant-manufacturer.

⁴⁴³ Einst und jetzt, *Der Arme Teufel*, 04.09.1910, p.1.

⁴⁴⁴ Spoo et Cie, manufacturing of agricultural machinery, boilermakers, and iron constructions.

⁴⁴⁵ See Excursus in part I.

⁴⁴⁶ **In the original:** „Wir erwähnen das Zivilbegräbnis besonders, weil Spoo bis in die letzte Zeit seine Pflichten als Katholik erfüllt hatte und sich nur äußerlich von der Kirche erst getrennt hat, als er in seinem loyalen und graden Sinn durch die Umtriebe ihrer Diener dazu gezwungen wurde“.

archenemy the *Luxemburger Wort*! He was said to have had a reawakening of his Catholicism during his illness.

There also seems to be little doubt that C.M. Spoo's success in the 1896 general election was the result of a little help from his clerical right-wing connections.⁴⁴⁷ As to his entry into politics in the first place, via the Esch's local council (1892-1900) this was, likely, partially to be attributed to a private account settling with the Metz family.⁴⁴⁸

Welter too was a son of modest origins, born to a family of 11 siblings in a farm in the Oesling.⁴⁴⁹ It was both trivial and ironic that a priest should have spotted him as exceptionally good student, in his early years. He exercised as a doctor in Esch from 1897 to 1907, where he oversaw the indigent.

Whether the brand new social democratic party can be considered as a spokesperson of extreme left is debatable, in fact its transformation, moderation and vicinity to the liberals with the creation of the *Bloc des Gauches*, marks the end of any aspired association with orthodox socialism.⁴⁵⁰ It cannot however be denied that the changes proposed and introduced by Welter and Spoo, and later Xavier Brasseur⁴⁵¹ were nothing short of radical. These three men made their entryway in the power scene and unquestionably put Esch-sur-Alzette on a map.

Their politics appealed strongly to both the interests of the proletariat and independent small craftsmen. The former consisted of no proper electorate, as the universal suffrage had to wait until 1919, whereas the latter were admittedly an electorate the social democrats had to contend with the liberals, up until both parties formed an alliance. This was an alliance with the common goal of fighting a clerical political class. Esch's canton⁴⁵² maintained important leverage in terms of its clerical representatives, which still found

⁴⁴⁷ The elder Spoo was undoubtedly the most prominent personality in the canton, who also had sympathies and a little "help" in Catholic circles. Welter himself alluded to Spoo having been helped by the clerical at the balloting of the elections in 1896 (Mersch 1966b, 208) Jacques Maas (Maas 1983) also evokes the possibility that Spoo entered the Parliament in 1896 thanks to the assistance provided by Brincour (of the Right wing).

⁴⁴⁸ See Fayot (Fayot 1979, 1:40) for a detailed background to this "The economic competition, his failure, in connection with the Metz family shed light, at least in part, on his motivation to enter politics and in this way to get to grips with the all-dominant Metz family".

⁴⁴⁹ The Oesling (Eislek in Luxembourgish) is a region covering the north of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, part of the natural region known as the Ardennes. The Eislek covers 32% of the territory, which it shares with Gutland. The region is characterised by a hilly landscape and large forests.

⁴⁵⁰ The alliance with the Liberals may have been as Maas (Maas 1983) argues indeed the ultimate attempt to distance themselves from a pure socialist ideology.

⁴⁵¹ *Crème de la crème* of the Luxembourgish liberal bourgeois families, Xavier Brasseur (1865-1912) was the son of the director of the *Brasseur Schmelz*, Pierre Brasseur and Helene Würth, heiress of the Würth family. His move from the liberal camp to a more left-wing, social democratic party in 1902 could be interpreted as an atonement for an inherited complicity with the capitalist system.

⁴⁵² The district was overseen by a commissioner, the government's supervisory agent, who managed the districts. Each municipality was governed by a college of mayors and aldermen and a local council, which has remained almost unchanged to this day. Esch belonged to Luxembourg's district. The existence of districts was only abolished recently, in 2015.

support in its most rural parts. The rest of the country and the Esch population who kept voting for the conservatives had not forgotten what still rallied them to the rest of the country, namely a peasant past, Catholicism and a small town provincial daily life.

One can speak at the turn of the century of indeed a central government, dominated by a ruling class composed of an urban business bourgeoisie on one side and a landowner rural bourgeoisie on the other.⁴⁵³

The period 1870 - 1914 represents the summit of this “poll tax” bourgeoisie:

At the political level, it is precisely the bourgeoisie that exercises all political rights, while the worker, the modest peasant and the petty civil servant are completely excluded. In 1894, by setting a percentage of taxable income required to be a voter, the poll-tax electoral system still excluded 93.8% of the population from political life (Maas 1983, 2).

The census electoral system meant each voter had to pay a certain amount of tax to take part in the elections, just as a candidate had to have personal assets in order to buy votes. Thus, in 1900, the 48 deputies included: 14 lawyers, 6 notaries, 12 landowners, 6 engineers/industrialists, 6 traders, 1 farmer, 1 doctor, 1 president of the BIL and 1 former minister of state:

This meant that all the economic interests of the propertied classes were represented; one seat required one hundred votes, which of course could not have been obtained if one had challenged the voters' economic and social strategy (Fayot 1979, 1:24).

On the part of the ruling “*oligarchy*” (Fayot 1979, 1:18) of the old liberals and the Catholics, there were efforts to counter some social grievances in the lower classes of the people, whether out of Christian charity for the poor and needy, or out of concern to maintain or regain their influence where it threatened to wane, namely in a working class that had been transformed by economic development. Charity originating in private initiative was, therefore in the eyes of the more traditional branches of policy makers, at the very end of the 19th century, still the only solution for the poor. In the same way, strongly rooted in Catholic belief, the latter were also convinced of the ever-present structural existence of poverty.

MP Krier⁴⁵⁴: Charity is always a very respectable thing. The poor person usually accepts alms gratefully when he sees that the rich person deprives himself of something in order to do him a favour, that the rich person imposes sacrifices on himself in order to lighten his burden. In public charity the poor get used to receiving their penny, not as charity but as a right... (...) In public charity recognition is very difficult, because the poor look upon what is done as being due to them (...). "There will always be poor people among us. After 2000 years, nothing has contradicted the Lord's words" (Intervention of Deputy Krier at the Chamber of Deputies, 18 March 1897).⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ We still observe some remnants of nobility, with three Barons being part of the Government throughout this period, De Tornaco (father and son) for Sanem, De Gerlache for Differdange and De Blochhausen representing the agrarian Northeast.

⁴⁵⁴ Jean-Bernard Krier (1835-1900), priest and deputy for canton Rédange (1887-1899).

⁴⁵⁵ **In the original** : La charité est toujours quelque chose de très respectable. Le pauvre accepte ordinairement avec reconnaissance l'aumône lorsqu'il voit que le riche se prive d'un bien pour lui rendre service, que le riche s'impose des sacrifices pour lui alléger son fardeau. Dans la charité publique le pauvre s'habitue à recevoir son denier, non pas comme une charité mais comme un droit ... (...) Dans la charité publique la reconnaissance est très difficile, parce que le pauvre regarde ce qui est fait comme y étant dû (...). « Il y aura toujours des pauvres parmi nous » Après 2000 ans rien n'est venu démentir la parole du Sauveur ». C. R. 1897-1898, 18th March 1897, p.1370.

As for a stance on the actual increase of the working conditions and salaries of the working class, as in other matters, the upper middle classes and bourgeoisies' position remained often ambiguous. Such was the case when it came to matters of supporting workers' strikes, which some of the lower middle classes in Esch did⁴⁵⁶, but which did not gather consensus among the upper-middle classes, namely, engineers in Esch (B. Majerus 2005). In the same vein, actual salary increase demands were dismissed by both the executive power and the major industry employers, like the Mayrisch⁴⁵⁷ (Banque de Luxembourg 1999). Furthermore, the 8-hour/day law decree was, until its enforcement in 1918, perceived with skepticism from some of the major industrial employers in the country (Scuto 1990b). Another factor contributed to this gated inner circle of power, manifested in the operational choice in which regarded the use of languages:

In addition, the use of the French language and the educational monopoly of the propertied classes helped to consolidate economic and political rule. The governments of 1843 made another fundamental choice: they decided to make French the second compulsory language in primary schools after German. This was a political choice. The aim was to ensure the independence of young Luxembourg from Prussia and German influence in general. At the same time, this choice reflected the concerns of an elite turned towards France and its liberal ideas. The divide between German, the language of the working classes, and French, language of the bourgeoisie, remained a tangible reality throughout the 19th and even the 20th century (Scuto 2012, 27).

We will return to the question of languages and how their use at different times in Luxembourg's history suggests the instrumentalisation of one or other language as an obstacle to access to power. However, there are other aspects that come together in a *de facto* closed inner circle of power:

(...) If one adds to this the fact that the Catholic Church on the one hand and the Freemasons' Lodge on the other stood unreservedly behind the establishment, then one recognises in Luxembourg around 1900 the type of closed, feudally governed society (Fayot 1979, 1:24).

The use of different terminology to label political parties and camps, in Luxembourg at the turn of the 20th century, can be misleading. This is in part due to the very nature of the embryonic state at which some political parties were at. What is more revealing of this period is that this difficulty in the identification of

⁴⁵⁶ Musicians at the local association *Harmonie Municipale* often struck in solidarity with workers (Bettendorf et al. 1996). Although in a buffer position between employer and workers, engineers sidelined with the former (B. Majerus 2005).

⁴⁵⁷ Emil Mayrisch, (1862-1928) steel industrialist and President of the Board of Directors of ARBED. Emil Mayrisch's father was a doctor, his mother belonged to the Luxembourg industrialist family Metz. Emil studied metallurgy at the *Royal Technical University of Aachen* from 1882 to 1886 but did not complete his studies because he did not sit the diploma examination. Instead, he took up a position in the company of his great-uncle Norbert Metz. His first job was to take part in the planning and commissioning of the Dudelange steelworks, of which he became director in 1897. He rose to the management of the company and merged his company *Acieries Metz* into *Acieries Réunies Burbach Eich Dudelange* (ARBED) in 1911.

individual's allegiance is a constant in most of the political formations of that period. Parties, and their individual members and, even the press underwent major political transitions, shifting and alliances.⁴⁵⁸

In fact, the most extreme left-wing members with a seat at the Parliament defined themselves as social democrats. Whereas some authors state its mission as an ambiguous one ("party straddling the proletariat and the bourgeoisie" (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978, 5), others insist that Michel Welter, in particular, never wanted to be considered a revolutionary:

There was nothing socialist about the programme (...); on the contrary, it appealed broadly to all strata of the canton of Esch. Welter was certainly a proponent of the socialist ideal, but he wasted little time in preaching upheavals in the economic framework; revolutionary ideology had little hold on him.⁴⁵⁹(Seignobos 1908, 708) as cited in (Mersch 1966b).

It is true that the Social Democrats represented a radical break with the existing two-party system (clerical versus liberal) and offered an alternative, but they were far from appealing to a revolution. In fact, the interchangeable use of the terms social democrat and socialist by members of the party, the press and public opinion, leads to confusion. Their actions, and those of dissidents within the Social Democratic Party who have turned to purer forms of socialism and activism, provide ample evidence of this.⁴⁶⁰

Let us come back to Esch's parallel political foundations throughout the same period. When we use "socialist" for denominating Jean-Schaack-Wirth⁴⁶¹, in the pages to come, we stand by his own identification in numerous passages during his interventions at the local council meetings as "socialist"⁴⁶². Jean Schaack-Wirth will be a determinant figure in Esch's political history, longstanding member of its local council, and emblematic personality at the origins of organised socialism in Luxembourg⁴⁶³. A master-tailor and owner of a small family-owned business, he was also one of the founders, with Jacques

⁴⁵⁸ See for example the work of Maas (Maas 1983) on liberalism and Wehenkel-Frisch (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978), where the figures of Jean Schaack and Jacques Thilmany are central to the understanding of the numerous face turnings of the former.

⁴⁵⁹ **In the original** : Le programme (...) n'avait rien de socialiste, il faisait au contraire appel largement à toutes les couches du canton d'Esch. Welter se réclamait, certes, de l'idéal socialiste mais il ne perdait guère son temps à prêcher les bouleversement des cadres économiques ; l'idéologie révolutionnaire avait peu de prise sur lui.

⁴⁶⁰ See Wehenkel- Frisch (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978) on the origins and fate of Luxembourgish socialism through the lens of the newspaper *Der Arme Teufel*. Dr. Michel Welter was adamant about his dissociation with the trade unions, rather preferring to "hide" behind the "fit for all" solution of the universal suffrage.

⁴⁶¹ For an in-depth explanation of his far from straightforward political path and turns see (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978) as well as (Bodry and Fayot 2016) for a complete biography.

⁴⁶² Socialist's press and political arm *Der Arme Teufel* was founded as secession to Michel Welter's newspaper Escher Journal. Indeed, in 1903 Michel Welter takes his distances from "any revolutionary ideology" (Maas 1983, 60) and slowly abandons references to Marx in his parliamentary discourses. For many, Welter, was seen as a traitor of the revolutionary ideals. He ended up moving back to Luxembourg city which only added to his "conformism".

⁴⁶³ See annex to be integrated with periods in office of the different local council members and their respective functions.

Thilmann, of the newspaper *Der Arme Teufel*. His political allegiances will often shift back and forth from social democracy to socialism and eventually to a siding with the right-wing party in 1920.

Labelling Dr. Joerg's⁴⁶⁴ position is far more ambiguous. He was the doctor of the working classes, candidate with the social-democrats, identified himself as a socialist, and an unapologetic anti-clerical. However, as will be demonstrated, his positions were not always unconditionally in approval of the working classes and its actions.

The political belongings of the mayors and other members of the local council in Esch –sur- Alzette for this period are not always straightforward to identify either, until the formation of proper political parties obliged it so. We will attempt a labelling from 1906 onwards.

6.1 The political affiliations of the mayors of Esch-sur-Alzette post 1906

In order to try to place each of the mayors in a wider context, an attempt has been made to identify their political orientations, a task that is not always straightforward given, firstly, the absence of proper political parties and, secondly, the shifting of some individuals between different factions during the period under consideration⁴⁶⁵.

Léon Metz (1906-1909), director of the Metz et Cie, later ARBED was undoubtedly a liberal and deputy at the Parliament, albeit a Catholic. Armand Spoo⁴⁶⁶(1909-1912) was C.M. Spoo's son and embraced the ideals of German social democracy. He is said to have been elected largely thanks to the influence of his own father. The Spoo family was, nevertheless, as seen, also a practicing Catholic family. J.P. Michels (1912-1917) belonged to the Liberal camp⁴⁶⁷with an anti-clerical stance. His unpopularity grew at the heart of the local council, undoubtedly left shaken by the events of the 1ST World War. His time in office cost him accusations, by the minority of favouring his "friends".

J.P. Pierrard⁴⁶⁸ (mayor between 1919-1920) and Nicolas Biwer⁴⁶⁹ (mayor between 1917-1919) were on the conservative side and eventually joined the right wing *Freie Ordnungspartei*⁴⁷⁰ a mixed list composed

⁴⁶⁴ Dr. Jules Joerg (1871-1915), doctor and member of the local municipal council (1910-1912).

⁴⁶⁵ See Annexes 1 and 2 for complete information of time in office of each member of the local council and respective function for the period comprised between 1841-1922.

⁴⁶⁶ Armand Spoo (1886-1935), industrialist and technical director of Spoo et Cie. Mayor between 25.09.1909 - 28 December 1911.

⁴⁶⁷ J.P. Michels, mayor (1914-1917) and deputy (1914-1917).

⁴⁶⁸ J.P. Pierrard (1878-?), tailor and shopowner.

⁴⁶⁹ Nicolas Biwer (1871-1944).

⁴⁷⁰ This was the name chosen for the Right wing, conservative list for local elections. See Flies (1979) and Wehenkel-Frisch (1978).

mostly of landowners and businessmen. Victor Wilhelm⁴⁷¹, a railway officer, will be the first working class elected on list of the socialist party through universal suffrage in Esch.

If Esch inherits somehow of a preindustrial past where an agrarian middle-class ruled, until 1906, it is far from being an area surviving exclusively on agriculture as it may have been the case for other regions in the North, East and West of the country. To prove it the different main and side trades in which the members of the municipal council are involved with until the advent of industrialisation in the 1870s.

On the front of the mentalities, we shall be seeing how the discussions around the school laws and secularisation pervaded more than one aspect of the city's everyday life. This evolution and emancipation from old ways of seeing the interference of Church in the personal affairs of the population will be brutally interrupted by the events of the First World War and will shake Luxembourgish society. In fact, the end of the First World War will mark the end of an era and an awakening in terms of national identity. Even though Luxembourg did not take directly a part in the War, this period will encapsulate all the ruptures the country will have to face: "political, dynastic, economic, social, financial and international" (Gérard Trausch 2009, 9). The end of the war will pave the way for what Trausch (ibid) also calls the space for the difficult integration of the working-class world into that of a national community. Coming back to the central aspect of social stratification which is after all the dimension this work is here preoccupied with, this period displays indeed the difficulties of a proper categorization of the many dimensions and subdimensions of the middle classes. Esch represents again very well the case in point. Fruit of the tertiarization of the country, its middle classes appear in all its forms, smaller and bigger merchants, smaller and bigger master artisans, employees, private and public, liberal professions, entrepreneurs...our municipal council of the beginning of the century is thus very briefly introduced.

Another dimension needs to be taken into consideration, regardless of the immense steps in terms of modernization, progress and even mentalities. The Grand-Duchy remains a small country and Esch remains a small city. Personal rivalries are never far from being at the forefront of the discussions in the local council meetings. In his eulogy of the metropolis, Frantz Clément⁴⁷² adamantly attacks the small

⁴⁷¹ Victor Wilhelm (1886-1967). He played a leading role in Esch sur Alzette municipal politics. He was elected to the municipal council in 1919 and remained there until 1944.

⁴⁷² Frantz Clément (1882-1942) was an important figure in Luxembourg's cultural world. As a writer, editor and journalist, he was committed to a pan-European consciousness and to democratic rights. He believed that Luxembourg's location, at the crossroads of the Romance and Germanic cultures, would help to foster mutual understanding and cultural exchanges between the two countries. He became editor-in-chief of the daily *Escher Tageblatt* in 1913. During the First World War he was interned for five weeks in a prison in Coblenze. He was also a freelance journalist in France between 1924 and 1928. After the invasion of Luxembourg, he was arrested by the Gestapo and interned in the Hinzert and Dachau concentration camps. New research shed new light on the circumstances of his death. He was gassed and incinerated on 6 May 1942, the day of his arrival at Nazi euthanasia centre at Hartheim Castle near Linz (autorenlexicom.lu).

town⁴⁷³ "psyche": in his cultural/psychological analysis the author evoked the circumstances of the small-town mentality. We will be witnessing how his observations apply on several occasions during our exploit of the local council.

But it is in his depictions and contempt for the lower middle classes of the small town and the competition between the different substrata that compose it, that his writings unveil the features that will often come to the surface at the heart of the local municipal council:

The small town is the home of the middle class, and all the characteristics and 'bad habits' of the middle class can be studied in it. (...) The small craftsman and businessman is the most dangerous and insurmountable protagonist of parochial politics of the worst kind (...)⁴⁷⁴

But it is his depiction of the civil servant the one class he sees with the more contempt, that is anger is steered at:

I believe that it is worth making a summary contribution to the psychology of the middle and senior "small-town civil servant". There are three things that seem to elevate the civil servant above the merchant and the better craftsman and that are enough for him to feel and show his superiority. Firstly, the civil servant is to a certain extent an intellectual; secondly, he has no need to play the servant to anyone and everyone for his few pennies' living; and thirdly, he feels himself to be a representative of the sacrosanct State. (...) For the intellectuality of the middle official is limited only to what he has learnt at school, this drilling machine, and what he has necessarily forgotten is replaced by a shabby knowledge of the newspapers and a certain knowledge of things remotely connected with his office. Even if he had real intellectual qualities, they would have to come to nothing, for he never gets round to administering, he is only a mechanised assistant. But nothing gives him "more cause for arrogance" than his education. He knows a number of things better than other people, who are behind him in everything, precisely because he is "paid to know these things better". These things are usually so surrounded with formulae that a sensible man does not take the trouble to penetrate them. The civil servant interprets this as inferiority and because he has a small superiority, he presumes to have more judgement in all things than the "ordinary" man. This solemn arrogance is full of ridicule. Over time, the civil servant's apparent material independence has given him a complacency that is no less unpleasant than the "overestimation" of his intellectual powers brought about by his "education". He sits in his swivel chair, and as he hardly ever encounters any difficulties in his work, his month flows by in comfortable boredom, and on the last day of the month he collects his salary in good or bad weather. His advancement takes place in the same mechanical way and he knows no real struggle for existence. It is understandable that he looks with contempt at the merchant who anxiously waits behind the counter for the ten-penny customers. (...) The material situation of the tradesman is more precarious than that of the civil servant, it is subject to constant fluctuations, but (...) he has the chance to acquire a fortune if he does not have one. The civil servant's self-satisfaction is therefore usually mixed with wormwood and his "intellectual" superiority does not prevent him from feeling gratified if the smell of a merchant's kitchen happens to penetrate his nose (F. Clement 1915, 24–25).

Esch-sur-Alzette appears thus at the crossroads of different populations' interests. It was demonstrated how, by the end of the 19th century it is undoubtedly no longer an agricultural setting. It is dominated by three main employers: the steelworks Brasseur, Metz et Cie and Gelsenkirchen which greatly contributed to the emergence of an overwhelming working-class population as well as to better and less better off

⁴⁷³ Clement does not explicitly refer to Esch-sur-Alzette, the criticism is however revealing of a certain type of mentality and the publication does coincide with his establishment in the industrial city.

⁴⁷⁴ **In the original:** „Die Kleinstadt ist die Heimat des Mittelstandes, und alle Eigenschaften und 'Unarten des Mittelstandes kann man in ihr studieren (F. Clement 1915, 19)“; „ Der kleine Handwerker und Geschäftsmann ist der gefährlichste und unüberwindlichste Protagonist der Kirchturmpolitik schlimmster Art „, (F. Clement 1915, 22).

middle classes. Within the petty bourgeoisie there was intense competition as Clement's (F. Clement 1915) scathing writings suggest.

Politically, too, Esch-sur-Alzette's say in the legislative elections became a key factor for all the political parties, which fought for its voters with different strategies, as the work of Maas and Wehenkel-Frisch (Maas 1983; Wehenkel-Frisch 1978) were able to capture.

6.1.1 The press – a mirror of the cleavages in the country

The press in Luxembourg was as varied as it was frequently short-lived⁴⁷⁵. We will here focus on some of the most widespread newspapers during our period, especially in view of the implications the press had both on the national public opinion as well as in Esch-sur-Alzette. The local council was naturally not immune to the opinions of the newspapers. The meetings minutes are rich in references and irritations about what was published in the different newspapers, and in the *Luxemburger Wort* in particular. According to Wehenkel-Frisch (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978), the *Luxemburger Wort* was established in the capital, but absent from the entire canton of Esch, and with little presence in the rest of the country, although its echoes reach far in terms of its anticlerical enemies. It was, as mentioned, the plume representing the “old order”: landowners, the countryside and pious Catholicism. The subscriber count may not appear impressive, having peaked at 2500 in 1880. However, thanks to the clerical contribution of its editors, it gained prominence among the public opinion throughout the country, maintaining this status well into the 20th century:

Its creation marked the true birth of political Catholicism in Luxembourg and was its press organ in the second half of the 19th century. As a result, it made a significant contribution to the foundation of the right-wing party in the early twentieth century, before it became the statutory "friendly press" of the Christian Social Party. It became by far the most influential newspaper with the largest circulation in Luxembourg, until it was criticised for having a monopoly of opinion (Hilgert 2004, 67).

On the other end, liberal publications included the *Luxemburger Zeitung* (1868-1941) and *L'indépendance Luxembourgeoise*, (1871-1934) in the capital. As for the former, Maas (Maas 1983) believes that it has taken a more explicit political stance in its defence of liberalism.

The *Obermosel Zeitung* (1881-1941, 1945-1948), was founded in Grevenmacher by the printer Joseph Esslen (1850-1937). Starting out as a regional publication, it grew in importance over the years, proudly

⁴⁷⁵ See the work of Romain Hilgert on the history of the press in Luxembourg (Hilgert 2004).

proclaiming itself "the most widespread newspaper of the Grand-Duchy" in 1909. Its editor also did efforts to publish a special edition for the south of Luxembourg between 1891-1914.⁴⁷⁶

Just like the country itself, the press was split according to different loyalties and subgroups of the population. Very clear differences emerge from the statistics of the beginning of the 20th century. The country was still at the stage of a narrow regional press. Each town had its own newspaper dominating the region without any risk of competition. According to Wehenkel-Frisch (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978) - who also explores the role of publicity and advertising in the newspaper- an ad in the *Luxemburger Wort* must have, according to the author, been frowned upon in the Industrial South. An advertisement in *Der Arme Teufel*, as Wehenkel-Frisch contends further, would not have attracted the sympathy of the inhabitants of the Oesling either.

In which concerns Esch-sur-Alzette, according to Flies (Flies 1979), "Escher Zeitung" is the first newspaper to ever be published by Joseph Origer from 1887 to 1896. Brief successors to it, will be the "Escher Post" (short-lived from 17 September 1889 to 30 October 1890); the "Escher Courier", this time printed at G. Willems (1895-1896) "catholic and tolerant" (Hilgert 2004, 152–53) albeit not clerical, the "Escher kleine Presse" by J.-Nik. Moes, (also short lived 1897-1898); the "Escher Volksblatt", which a was weekly newspaper that first appeared in 1898 and until 1901. The latter declared in 1898 that more than two years earlier, a new political era had begun in the canton of Esch. It added that during the legislative elections in June 1896, it had become clear that the canton of Esch was no longer prepared to remain under political tutelage (Hilgert 2004). In fact, the canton had conquered Luxembourg's economic supremacy decades earlier whilst falling far behind other regions in the political arena. The first social-democrats elected at the time, the doctor Michel Welter, and the businessman Caspar Mathias Spoo, therefore founded the Escher Volksblatt. The "Escher Journal"(1902-1913), later also known as the "Neues Journal", which was published also under the wing of Dr. Michel Welter, resumed the its predecessors' work, and stayed in print until 1913; The "EJ" lost some of its Esch character after the departure of Schaack (who dissociated from Welter and was to be dismissed from the social-democratic party) over ideological differences, Welter being regarded by Schaack and Thilmany as too "bourgeois". Eventually the EJ became more evenly distributed across the country. In a way, it reflects Welter's own dissociation and departure from Esch-sur-Alzette and return to the capital⁴⁷⁷, to become more central.

⁴⁷⁶ <https://eluxemburgensia.lu/periodicals/obermosel>.

⁴⁷⁷ Michel Welter had left Esch for the capital. By renaming itself Neues Journal, the Escher Journal had removed all references to its Esch roots from its name (Quiqueret 2022, 104).

Jean Schaack and Jacques Thilmany will be at the origin of *Der Arme Teufel*, which appeared from 1903-1929 and was described as the first real Esch organ of the social-democratic (later SAP, Sozialistischer Arbeiterpartei) party. The *Der Arme Teufel*, whose fights and editorial priorities changed considerably over time will stop being published in 1929.

We know from the sources of the local council, however, that Eschois were exposed to other leftist cross border newspapers as well, whose readers were censored by the priests even at school:

Councillor Hoffmann⁴⁷⁸:(...) In addition, they whip up the children by telling them that if they found a newspaper if they find a newspaper at home like the Arme Teufel, the Escher Journal, the Volksbote⁴⁷⁹ oder the Sauerzeitung, they should throw them into the fire. (...) **Councillor Hoffmann**: The children should then tell their mother that they shouldn't cook their father any food. (Interruption) That's what it means to bring discord into the families. (Intervention at the local council meeting, 28.01.1911, p.4).⁴⁸⁰

Another publication was the "Escher Anzeiger", published by the St. Paulus printing house in Luxembourg of Catholic blueprint launched in Esch in the summer of 1910, and opponent to the Armand Spoo era of the local council.

In mid-1913 with the establishment of the radical liberal "Escher Tageblatt" came the consolidation of both the liberal and social democratic stance, thus reflecting the views of the Bloc des Gauches⁴⁸¹, political formation which would come to an end by beginning of 1916 by a coalition of liberals and social democrats.

The Escher Tageblatt, a new daily newspaper for a new city and a modern world, became the press outlet for the urban, salaried middle classes – which the radical liberal movement pursued. This movement, the one of the Bloc des gauches (1908-1915), in which liberals and socialists fought together against clericalism and succeeded, in particular, in imposing a vote on the 1912 Education Act. The major demand of these left-wing forces was universal suffrage (Scuto, Steichen, and Lesch 2013, 9–14).

Their position, just as with the political parties may be interpreted considering the audiences they wanted to reach and represent, and eventually still conquer, not least by means of publicity⁴⁸².

⁴⁷⁸ Nicolas Hoffmann-Schaedgen (1858-1918), initially a teacher he established himself as the owner of a timber business and a sawmill in Esch. Member of the Esch town and aldermen's council (1909-1911). Member of the committee for the establishment of a girls' lyceum in Esch. President of the Esch choral society 'Uëlzecht' (1904-1918).

⁴⁷⁹ We ignore if this came on the footsteps of a homonymous newspaper published briefly in 1892. A short-lived weekly published by Charles André Engel (1849-1900), it saw itself as an organ of popular education and law, as well as the organ of the Luxembourg General Workers' Association (<https://eluxemburgensia.lu/periodicals/luxvolksbote>).

⁴⁸⁰ **In the original**: Weiter bemerke ich, daß die Pastöre nicht in die Schule kommen dürften um ihren Unterricht zu erteilen, denn was sie dort tun, ist erstens ein Hohn auf alle Pedagogik. Dazu wiegeln sie die Kinder auf indem sie denselben sagen wenn sie zu Hause eine Zeitung fänden wie der Arme Teufel, das Escher Journal, der Volksbote oder die Sauerzeitung so sollen sie dieselben ins Feuer schmeißen.

⁴⁸¹ See on this matter the analysis of Denis Scuto on the role of the newspaper in the revolution of 1918-1919 (Scuto 2013).

⁴⁸² Wehenkel-Frisch (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978) successfully manages to paint a picture of the social space in Esch through the small adds of the *Der Arme Teufel*. However, publicizing in each newspaper may have had less to do with political sympathies than with a real need to reach a target public for publicity purposes.

Authors like Wehenkel-Frisch (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978) may have well defended the *Der Arme Teufel* from being simply an anticlerical pamphlet but a short immersion in the period post 1907 is enough to see the relentlessness of the newspaper against the clergy. In fact, liberals will criticise social democrats and socialists alike for riding the wave of the bastion and singularity of liberalism: the "anti-clerical struggle". The author (ibid) claims this dual target capitalism/clergy to be the originality of the *Der Arme Teufel*. But the formation of the dissident newspaper reveals of far more reaching cleavages, for example, that of intellectuals against workers:

In the Arme Teufel, contributions only come from comrades who work with nails, planes and hammers during the day, they can't write like gentlemen who have been sliding around on school desks for two decades (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978, 15).⁴⁸³

We are before a tangible tension between intellectuals also known as "socialistes de salon", and those who endured hardship in their daily lives. This tension will manifest often, locally, into a contempt of those who were not educated enough, in the eyes of a given élite, to profess their opinions. An example from the local council:

Councillor Schaack: I beg you not to twist my words deliberately. (...) **Mr. Hoferlin:** But I won't put up with anything from a tailor (Intervention at the local council meetings, 8.1.1910, p.6)⁴⁸⁴

Schaack riposted to these attacks often via his newspaper, whereby he exposed the members of the local council and their ideas:

So, Prof. Kapp wants to subject the councillors to an entrance exam! One can certainly empathise with such a highly educated man, how difficult it must be for him to sit among ordinary craftsmen on the municipal council. Mr. Kapp should therefore be able to get himself a municipal council of his own kind, where only professors are admitted. Since Mr. Kapp is extremely talented, as he has already proven on various occasions, and it is beneath his dignity to have to sit together with non-professorial municipal councillors, we must advise Mr. Kapp to choose another effective council. The Escher municipal council with its ordinary plebeians is too small and ordinary for him. Mr. Kapp had "already" passed an exam in the "civil service" consumer association. If he feels like it, he can "tell us" himself how the grade turned out (*Der Arme Teufel*, 24.06.1917).⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸³ In the original: im armen Teufel da schreiben nur lauter Genossen, welche tagsüber mit der Nagel, mit Hobel und Hammer hantieren, die können nicht schreiben wie Herren, die zwei Jahrzehnte auf den Schulbänken herumgerutscht sind.

⁴⁸⁴ **In the original:** Hr. Schaack: Das habe ich nicht so gemeint, ich bitte Sie, meine Worte nicht absichtlich zu verdrehen (...) Hr. Hoferlin: Ich lasse mir aber auch nichts von einem Schneider sagen.

⁴⁸⁵ Herr Prof. Kapp will also die Gemeinderäte einem Aufnahmeexamen unterwerfen! Man kann es allerdings einem so hoch gebildeten Mann lebhaft nachfühlen, wie schwer es für ihn fein muß unter ganz gewöhnlichen Handwerkern im Gemeinderate fitzen zu muffen. Herr Kapp müßte sich demnach einen Gemeinderat nach seiner Art zulegen können, wo nur Professoren zugelassen werden. Weil nun Herr Kapp äußerst begabt ist, was er ja verschiedentlich schon bewiesen hat und es unter seiner Würde steht mit nichtexaminierten Gemeinderäten zusammensitzen zu müssen, so müssen wir Hrn. Kapp raten, sich einen anderen Wirkungskreis auszusuchen. Der Escher Gemeinderat mit seinen gewöhnlichen Plebejern ist zu klein und ordinär für ihn. Herr Kapp hatte bereits ein Examen im Beamtenkonsumverein abgelegt. Wie die Note ausgefallen ist mag er selbst erzählen, wenn er Lust dazu hat.

Indeed, Theodore Kapp, did not lose an occasion to treat Schaack with contempt:

Mayor Pierrard: If it goes on like this [noise], I shall cancel the meeting. **Councillor Kapp:** Do that, I won't put up with any insults from a tailor. **Councillor Schaack.** Academic. **Councillor Kapp.** Inconscient. (Scaramouche between Kapp, a teacher and Schaack, tailor, during the local council meeting of 18 November 1918, p.219)⁴⁸⁶

Schaack must have got used to these forms of contempt. In her monography on the *Der Arme Teufel* newspaper, author Wehenkel-Frisch (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978) mentions the despise expressed by the Communist newspaper “Der Kampf”, which commented and demolished the politics style of the once left-wing tailor and newspaper editor. The excerpt bears no date however *Der Kampf* was issued first in 1920, and this was precisely the pivotal moment in which Schaack changed sides into the right-wing oriented list of the *Freie Ordnungspartei* in Esch:

The political appearance of a Schaack, this grimacing mixture of petty bourgeois sentimentality, old-fashioned anti-clericalism, blustering, choleric comedy and progressive softening of the brain offers no longer anything that would make you want to linger for even a moment. ... The groaning, hissing, clamouring, flailing, eye-rolling and Struwelpeter by J. Schaack (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978, 177).⁴⁸⁷

These tensions which were internal to the political parties, but also manifested between the “worthy” middle classes of the capital and the less worthy “middle classes” of Esch will emerge often during the two decades we will be here analysing.

6.1.1.1 Languages and power

The linguistic circumstances in Luxembourg were indicative of other underlying issues. These were frequently of a political nature. Difficulties in mastering the official languages were a particular concern in a mixed population city like Esch. As of 1912, Nicolas Hoffmann-Schaedgen, councillor and president of the local school commission warned of the need for after-school support classes in Esch. These were to be maintained both for German and French language:

⁴⁸⁶ **In the original:** Hr. Bürgermeister. Wenn es so weiter geht, dann hebe ich die Sitzung auf Hr. Kapp. Tun Sie das, ich laß mir keine Beleidigungen von einen: Schneider gefallen. Hr. Schaack. Akademiker. Hr. Kapp. Inconscient.

⁴⁸⁷ **In the original:** Die politische Erscheinung eines Schaack, diese fratzenhafte Mischung von kleinbürgerlicher Sentimentalität, altmodischem Antiklerikalismus, polterndem, cholерischem Komödiantentum und progressiver Gehirnerweichung bietet jetzt wirklich nicht mehr das allermindeste, wobei man Lust haben könnte auch nur einen Augenblick zu verweilen. ... Der ächzende, zischende, zeternde, fuchtelnde, augenverdrehende und hohlköpfige Struwelpeter von J. Schaack.

Councillor Hoffmann: The Italian children can't speak German. **Dr Joerg.** They may even be 20 years old when they come here, they can still neither read nor write. **Councillor Hoffmann.** The German children do not know French, whereas otherwise they are up to date (Intervention at the local council meeting of 29 December 1911, p.14).⁴⁸⁸

For non-German speaking foreign communities' literacy in German posed a clear issue. Reversely, so did French for Luxembourgers who did not get a chance of pursuing secondary education.⁴⁸⁹

In which regards languages and their use, circumstances evolved ever since, paradoxically on an opposite direction. The use of Luxembourgish as an administration /official language, something well underway in present day's society was unthinkable 150 years ago. Its outreach and acceptance as a language forging the identity of Luxembourgers had started indeed with the advocacy of people like C.M. Spoo, with his unconditional advocacy in favour of the use of the "then" patois, at the Parliament⁴⁹⁰. An anecdote had it that during a meeting in a Hotel in Luxembourg city, the deputy had overheard someone (who had not recognized him) complaining that Spoo had the nerve to propose that it was ok to speak "bad German" in the Chamber of Deputies.⁴⁹¹

Luxembourgish language saw momentum grow post second world war, for reasons that are outside the scope of this research to discuss. French and German kept their parallel roles, with French being then connoted with higher levels of education. The use of French and the meaning attributed to each of the languages were also never far from the political affiliations associated with them, in the post WW1 the increasing diffidence towards the German language led to some resistance, and to politics of proximity with the French language much through the support of Francophile Associations. This was even more so the case post Second World War without, however, having ever succeeded in supplanting the need for the

⁴⁸⁸ Die italienischen Kinder können kein Deutsch. Dr. Joerg. Die können 20 Jahre alt sein, wenn sie hierhin kommen, dann können sie noch weder lesen noch schreiben. Hr. Hoffmann. Die deutschen Kinder können kein französisch, während dieselben sonst auf dem Laufenden sind.

⁴⁸⁹ The similarities with the language context of the education system in Luxembourg, as it still exists today, are striking. The parallels with today's challenges in the current Luxembourgish education system are visible in the obligation of having the main literacy programme in German, something that has been widely documented as an obstacle to the success of children of immigrant background who do not speak Luxembourgish nor German at home (Horner and Weber 2008).

⁴⁹⁰ This Assembly [reference to 1848], convened with the aim of giving the country a new constitution and imbued with patriotic sentiment, made no obstacle to the use of the language of the country and the democratic laws of the time were created partly under the influence of this same language. Foreign languages were only used for reactionary purposes. If God gives us life and strength, we hope that the next legislative elections will be based on our political programme and on the question of the Luxembourgish language (Intervention of deputy C.M. Spoo at the Parliament, 15 June 1897, p.1910).

⁴⁹¹ [Our good Clervaux fellow citizen] had followed everything with interest, he also wanted to contribute his little word, and so he mentioned the fresh news of Spoo's intervention in parliament. "Apparently someone in the Chamber thought it was ok for them speak bad German there. (...) It must have for sure been a socialist".

In the original: „Unser guter Clerfer war allem mit Interesse gefolgt, er wollte auch sein Wörtlein beitragen, und so erwähnte er die brühwarne Nachricht vom dem Spoo'schen Auftreten in Parlament.“Et hat jô och „ên“on d'Chamber gemengt, se missten dô schlecht Deitsch schwetzen dûorfen [sic] (...) An et soll jô och nawell ê van deden Zozialiste gewiêst sen“ fuhr er erweiternd fort (D'Hemechtssproch 1937).

use of *hochdeutsch* as literacy language⁴⁹² until today. Luxembourgish, however, remained the language of the private world and underwent a rehabilitation that succeeded in neither extinguishing it nor relegating it to the domestic sphere only. Which is not to say that the mastering of sometimes, French and sometimes German did not clear set a boundary between those considered literate and the non-literate. This had also an inevitable impact in the education path chosen for one's children and where, in the beginning of the 20th century, French had a quintessential role in differentiating one in terms of class consciousness and belonging.

Access to higher education and incidentally, even, a seat in the Parliament entailed the mastering of the French language. Access to legislation and official communication with the higher instances at the level of the Government and the District Commissioner also implied some knowledge of French. By restricting the discussions and written proposals to French, the higher ruling instances of the country created a first barrier to access power. Deputies C.M Spoo and Michel Welter realized this and stood in favour of the use German and even of the vernacular in the Chamber. At the level of the local council, more than one councilor, sometimes even a mayor were uncomfortable with the omnipresence of French in not only deliberations but exchanges with the Government:

Councillor Schaack: Firstly, I would like to thank the local school commission for making this report in German. If the same were done in our Chamber, then some people could express their opinion, instead of having to stay silent (out of fear) for not being on the same level as the lawyers in French (Intervention of councillor Schaack, at local council meeting on 13.08.1910, p.5).⁴⁹³

Schaack had not been the first to intervene in favour of a facilitation of procedures through having some of the official documentation written in German rather than French. Back in 1903 councillor Weisen had submitted a proposal for a change of language used for deliberations:

⁴⁹² See Fehlen (Fehlen 2013) and (Sieburg 2013) for an understanding of the socio-linguistic history of French and German in Luxembourg respectively.

⁴⁹³ **In the original:** In erster Linie danke ich der Lokalschulkommission dafür, daß sie diesen Bericht auf deutsch gemacht hat. Wenn man in unserer Kammer dasselbe täte, könnten manche ihre Meinung sagen, anstatt daß sie schweigen müssen, weil sie im französischen den Advokaten nicht gewachsen sind.

whereas on the repeated proposal of local councillor Mr. Weisen, the choice of the German language for the deliberations of the local council, which for a century have been drafted in French, has been placed on the agenda for this meeting, (...) having regard to article 29 of the Constitution, and article 26 of the municipal law of 24 January 1843, it proceeded to vote on the said proposal, which was rejected by 8 votes to 3 (Extract of the deliberations of the local council 28.03.1903. ANLux - INT 613 Dossier).

During the local council meetings there were furthermore hints at who may have been more or less fluent in the French language, especially when it meant bargaining during internal conflicts:

Mayor Michels: Should I still thank you for the impertinence contained in the letter? **Councillor Bock:** There are no cheeky remarks in it. **Mayor Michels:** I also understand French (Exchange during the local council meeting of 25.11.1916, p.5).⁴⁹⁴

The liberal political elite that emerged in the nineteenth century never ceased to look towards France and the ideals of 1789. The military occupation of the country by Germany during the First World War reinforced the Francophilia and Germanophobia of the majority of the ruling bourgeoisie (Scuto 2012, 5). These dynamics will be at play during the analysis of the local political power scene. Interestingly they reveal already some of the reasons as to why the Esch local bourgeois middle classes may have felt inferior to the ruling classes of the capital. For some they were not as educated, others were not that much of a *bourgeoisie*, but rather a well off smaller town merchant living off his unsteady clientele, in a city with less “charms”.

⁴⁹⁴ **In the original:** Hr. Bürgermeister: Soll ich mich noch für die Frechheiten, die in dem Schreiben stehen, bedanken müssen? Hr. Bock: Es sind keine Frechheiten drin. Hr. Bürgermeister: Ich verstehe auch französisch.

One century of Esch deputies in the Parliament (Chambre des Députés) - 1840s to 1940s

Name	Profession	Time in office	Political camp
Henri Motté	notary	1841-1848	-
Nicholas Schmit ⁴⁹⁵	Seminar Professor	1854-1857	-
Victor Wolff	notary	1872-1875	-
Léon Metz	Director Metz et Cie	1875-1918	Liberal
C.M. Spoo	industrialist	1896-1914	Social-democrat
Michel Weleter ⁴⁹⁶	doctor	1897-1916	Social-democrat
Xavier Brasseur ⁴⁹⁷	lawyer	1901-1912	Social-democrat
Leon Metzler	lawyer	1902-1918	Social-democrat
Edmond Muller	engineer	1908-1918	Liberal
J.P.Michels	Merchant	1914-1917	Liberal
Pierre Kappweiler	Trade unionist/insurance agent	1917-1924	Independent with support of the Rechtspartei for his first candidature (RP)
Bernard Herschbach	Trade unionist and president of the Berg- und Hüttenarbeiterverband d'Esch	1917-1925	Popular Party
Theodore Noesen	Master-mechanic/entrepreneur	1917-1919/1924-1925	OVP (Parti Poulair Independant)
Francois Theisen	Teacher	Feb. 1918 – Oct 1918	? ⁴⁹⁸
René Blum	Lawyer	1918-1937	Socialist Party
Joseph Kieffer	electrician	1918-1919	Socialist Party
Jacques Thilmany	Trade unionist	1918-1919/1924-1925	Socialist Party
Jean Schaack	Tailor	1918-1919	Socialist Party ⁴⁹⁹
Victor Wilhelm	Railwair officer (Station Master)	1925-1945	Socialist Party
Hubert Clément	Teacher/editor Tagebaltt	1928-1948	Socialist Party
Paul Flesch	architect	1926-1928	Radical Socialist
Léon Weirich	miner	1928-1940	Socialist Party

⁴⁹⁵ Brother of Escher landowner and municipal tax collector Jacques Schmit- Clees, to whom he left his fortune/landownership.

⁴⁹⁶ Moved to Luxembourg City in 1900.

⁴⁹⁷ Born in Esch but living in Luxembourg city cost him the accusation of part of Esch's public opinion.

⁴⁹⁸ Possibly because so short-lived, the name of Francois Theisen receives no mention in the official history of the Chamber of Deputies (Als et al. 1994).

⁴⁹⁹ He will eventually side with the right wing in the local municipal council in order not to lose elections. See Fayot and Wehenkel-Frisch for a detailed incursion of this turbulent political path.

6.2 The local council of Esch-sur-Alzette

Assessing the ruling class through its decision-making process.

The years under scrutiny here (1907-1922) see Esch consolidate its place as an industrial regional centre. This period sees some important elements emerge in the relationship between the city and the central government. At that time, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, like many other European countries, was faced with a debate between the centralisation of powers at national level and the autonomy of local entities. The period was marked by administrative reforms aimed at rationalising and modernising public administration. Such reforms were introduced to improve administrative efficiency and to adapt local structures to the growing needs of a modernising society. These reforms have often sought to balance powers between central and local authorities but have sometimes led to tensions.

Local authorities, being closer to the day-to-day concerns of citizens, could clash with national directives perceived as remote or inappropriate. Conflicts arised, namely, over tax issues, resource management or the application of national legislation. The main symbol of the turn of the century shift in societal attitudes having been without doubt, in Esch, the endorsement of liberal views towards secularism.

The beginning of the 20th century saw a push towards greater citizen participation and democratic reforms. The rise of social movements and new political forces influenced power structures and led to an evolution in democratic practices at local level. Finally, the First World War had a major impact on Luxembourg too, influencing local government through occupations, restrictions and major economic and social changes. It will be indeed after the end of the War that major societal changes will take place.

By identifying a priori these themes, we can better understand the dynamics and transformations of local power in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg at the beginning of the 20th century. The conflicts between local and national authorities, as well as the evolution of local democracy, are all facets that need to be analysed in order to grasp the challenges of this period. How did the ruling class represent a city that could still not overwhelmingly vote for representation, until 1919? Did it pursue its own interests and those of who could vote for them? Did it side with the industrial companies as main employers of the city? Were there signs of class struggle, or on the contrary solidarity between classes in the politics pursued by the local council? Which logics predominated locally, those of political allegiances or rather those of other sources of identity? If it is true that what setting oneself apart from other classes was what gave unity to this diverse middle-class, as well as an identity it also holds true that such unity was overridden often by

other conflicting identities. What shapes did modernity take in their vision for the city? Through the main themes that occupied the agenda of the local council we will attempt a mapping of the concerns at the heart of the local council.

6.3 The composition of the local municipal council 1843-1922

We saw previously how the evolution of the city's population regarding its elites manifested also in terms of the composition of its municipal council. Let us then consider first the municipal body, quintessential symbol of the administrative power. Its membership, examined over a period spanning 80 years, reveals foremost a long social status stability, even though different professional categories succeed one another. Until the advent of the industrialisation, it will be the same "milieus" who will preside the town: farmers, landowners, master artisans and merchants.

Traditional agrarian families kept having a seat at the local council. Until 1876, year of the partition from Schifflange, the adjacent town's most prominent families were represented: for example, the historically present landowners like the Arendsdorfs, the Biver⁵⁰⁰ or the Bestgen. They owned a significant part of land surface in Schifflange. In the years that run up to the settlement of the first steel plants, we find some of the top Esch landowners in the local council. For example, Dominique Stoffel, mayor (1841-1843) who will die in 1847. Another profession highly represented in the local council, is that of farriers⁵⁰¹. Among them, Pierre Peporté, Jacques Schimt (mayor twice from 1830 to 1836 and from 1843 to 1861), Jean Pierre Hamilius and Jean Vandyck. Before industrialisation, notaries and a notary clerk had a steady seat as either councillors or secretary. Henri Motté, Vitor Wolff, D.L Brasseur and Michel Rousseau all took turns in office. Instead, Charles Laval notary in residence from 1875 to 1920 will choose not to do so. At least directly he is never involved in the local nor national political scene, unlike his father and brother⁵⁰². What an overview of the composition of the local council spanning almost one century reveals, foremost, is the commercial rather than industrial traits of its ruling personalities, post 1909. An overview of the professions of those in position of power locally, in Esch, show the predominance of the merchants, artisans, entrepreneurs and manufacturers. This numerical and social dominance of big and small

⁵⁰⁰ Unrelated to the construction entrepreneur Nicolas Biver (sometimes also spelled Biver), mayor to be (1871-1944) who was originally from Vianden in the North of Luxembourg.

⁵⁰¹ They were blacksmiths who also successfully converted into the ironmongery business.

⁵⁰² His father was Jean Antoine Laval (1809-1888), Member of the Luxembourg Superior Court of Justice. His brother was Antoine Marie Auguste Laval-Metz (1843 –1915), liberal Deputy, politician and industrialist. He sat in the Chamber of Deputies, of which he served as President from 1905 until 1915.

businesses and artisans manifests into them taking control and occupying key positions. This composition brings about a renewed questioning on whether this was a petty or grand bourgeoisie. One needs again to recur to the simplified, though useful conceptualization of the middle classes used by Kocka (2004), as it is what best applies here⁵⁰³. We are thus talking about a management of the local power primarily dominated by bourgeois milieux represented by representatives of both the *Wirtschafts* and *Bildungsburgertum* and, possibly a more modest one represented by the petty bourgeoisie of smaller businesses, innkeepers, master artisans and shop owners. An interpretation would place the lower middle classes as a highly precarious group necessarily needs to take into account that the privilege of eligibility still set the latter aside from the working class:

The restrictive voting rights that existed until the First World War, in large parts of Europe (...) acted as a constant reminder to the propertied and educated parts of the middle class that they belonged together and that they were not part of the “people” and distinct to the working class (Kocka, Jürgen 1993, 10).

This distinction is at no time to be undervalued if one wishes to understand individual stances within the local council. This bourgeois middle class is to dominate the top managerial positions at the level of the local council, as of the beginning of the century. These members ranged from low middle class shop owners and shopkeepers to proper entrepreneurs, manufacturers and merchants. Denominations of men’s professional status changed often in time. Hobsbawn highlights the importance of the linguistically turn in English, in which Master (in German Meister) “became a synonym for employer” (Hobsbawm 1993, 128), thus granting them the status of job creators. This is true of some members of the local council in Esch-sur-Alzette.

We resorted therefore to broadly distinguish the members of the local council in four different categories, those stemming from a farming background (FARMERS), those from an “educated“ (EDU) background, those from an economic (ECO) background and those working class (WOR). There remain still some members of the local council whose identities were not possible to ascertain.

⁵⁰³ A revisiting of Van Leuween and Maas (2005) classification for the HISCO- coding scheme would also apply well in this context, since they make a useful understanding of class separation based on power relations as well as they consider farmers as a separate entity.

1841-1922 number of members according to professional category

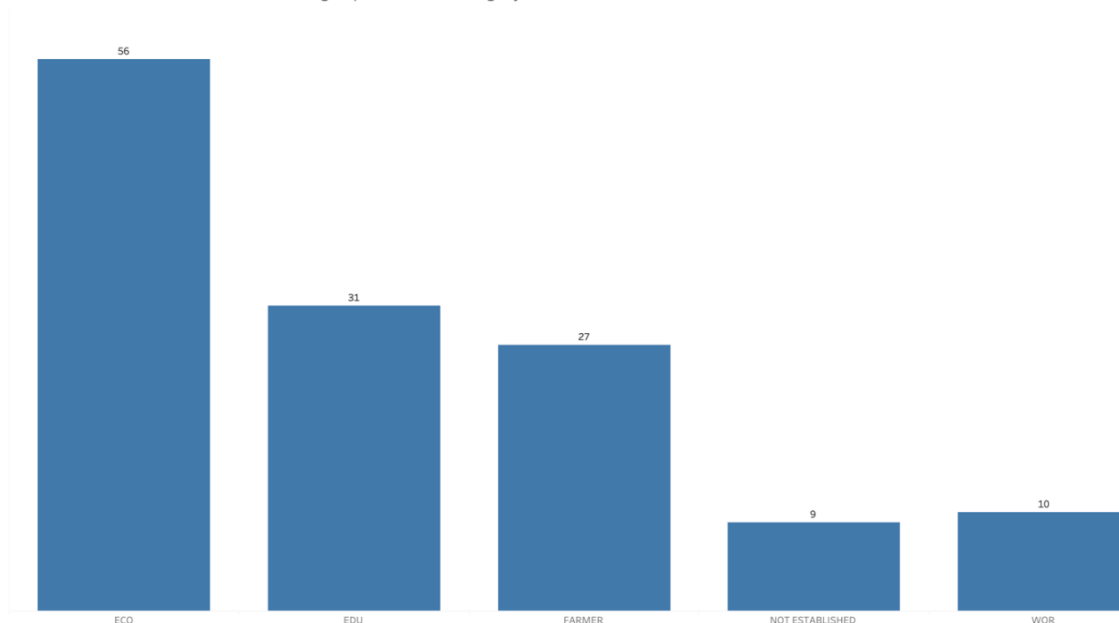


Figure 27: 1841-1922 number of members of the local council according to professional background

Name	profession	Born in	In office period	Political affiliation
Dominique Stoffel	Farmer	Esch-sur-Alzette	1841-1843	Non applicable
Jacques Schmit	farrier	Esch-sur-Alzette	1843-1861	Non applicable
Pierre Claude	Farmer/dyer	Esch-sur-Alzette	1861-1878	Non applicable
Dominique-Joseph Hoferlin	Farmer/landowner	Esch-sur-Alzette	1879-1906	Non applicable
Léon Metz	Director steel plant	Berbourg	1906-1909	Liberal
Armand Spoo	manufacturer	Echternach	1909-1911	Social-democrat
J.P. Michels	Merchant/master artisan	Schifflange	1912-1917	Liberal
Nicolas Biwer	Construction entrepreneur	Vianden	1917-1919	Freie Volkspartei (in Esch Freie Ordnungspartei)
Pierre Pierrard	Master artisan (Tailor)	Esch-sur-Alzette	1.08.1919- 18.9. 1920	Freie Volkspartei (in Esch Freie Ordnungspartei)
Victor Wilhelm	Railway employee	Bergem	1921-1934	Socialist

Figure 28: List of mayors and their respective professions – Esch-sur-Alzette 1842-1919.

Not having further information about their revenues, we can only hint about their possible fortunes. However, the nominal rolls on capital gains can give a concrete idea of their presumable wealth based on the taxes paid.

Another aspect to the political life of the country, that we have not left unnoticed, is the absence of formal political parties in Luxembourg until the universal suffrage. Society abides and parts itself into a clerical⁵⁰⁴ camp, a liberal one, representing the interests of the bigger industry, and as of the late 19th century to a niche of social democrats and socialists, having their origins in Esch and in the circles of small craftsmanship in Luxembourg city.⁵⁰⁵ It should not be forgotten that the absence of real political parties under the censitary suffrage system meant that the political "colour" of all the elected members of the communal council could not be known from the outset. It is only in 1924 that the law is amended to reflect contemporary electoral forms⁵⁰⁶.

In short, in Esch-sur-Alzette, we have before 1900 an almost exclusively traditional component, reflecting an upper middle stratum with its three components: the agrarian and landowner class, the industrialists, and merchants⁵⁰⁷, occasionally some craftsmen. Additionally, some members of the liberal professions are already present since the mid-19th century. It wasn't until 1910 that entrepreneurs made their entry into the local council. Except for Jean Schaack-Wirth⁵⁰⁸, it is only with the introduction of universal suffrage that socially more modest elements make their entry into the local council.

⁵⁰⁴ I share Jacques Maas 'view on the adequateness of the use of the term "clerical rather than "catholic". As the historian convincingly argues clerical was a political denomination common at the time, with a more precise and restrictive content, whereas the term Catholic was deprived of any political content; we see for example several liberal politicians claiming to be Catholic. This was the case, for example, of Leon Metz and even the social democrat C.M. Spoo, to remain in the context of Esch. Even more insightful is the use of "clericaux-agrariens" (Maas, 1983) which denotes an ensemble of characteristics of the Luxembourgish right wing of that period.

⁵⁰⁵ See Fayot (Fayot 1979) for the earliest traces of socialism in Luxembourg.

⁵⁰⁶The laws of 16 August 1919, 9 July 1923, 31 July 1924 and 23 May 1932 established: a) universal suffrage and the abolition of the poll tax; b) the right of women to vote; c) proportional representation; d) the electoral age of 21 and eligibility at 25; e) the complete renewal of municipal councils every six years (law of 1932) f) compulsory voting g) an increase in the number of councillors to 17 in municipalities with 20,001 to 30,000 inhabitants and to 25 in municipalities with more than 30,000 inhabitants (law of 1924).

⁵⁰⁷ The nuances are complex to assess, what made of one a trader, a merchant, a shopkeeper, an artisan, or retailer? In Luxembourg the obligation of patent tax existed only for some professions. In such case only the nominal rolls on tax paid on capital gains can help shed light on the social and wealth distinctions displayed between professions.

⁵⁰⁸ Wehenkel-Frisch will have settled for considering him indeed a petty-bourgeois rather than a working-class member.

By the 1890s, the population had adapted to the new industrial setting circumstances and turned into the new many trades. Even though the village centre with its stables only gradually adapted to the urbanistic and residential reorganisation, the municipal council had clear ideas about how it wanted the city to be laid out in a near future. Many obstacles appeared however to the concretisation of the plans idealised by the local council and outsourced to German firms and architects.⁵⁰⁹

Another key element marks the definite parting from Esch's former rural nature: the fact that the last farmer/landowner to be present as councillor dates of the period 1910-1912⁵¹⁰. Moreover, pressing matters related to farmers' needs started to be treated as marginal in the local council, until they eventually disappeared from the agenda all together. The entry into the First World War will overturn this situation and demonstrate the dramatic needs in food and the total dependance of Esch's city on the solidarity of other villages in the canton (Mondercange, Bettembourg) and beyond (Holzem, Hivange, Kahler in the Cappellen district) and as far as the Oesling for food supplies.

Nevertheless, before 1914, the dichotomy rural/farmer versus an urban working class was not the dominant narrative nor a concern at the heart of the local council, even though the contrary was true at a wider political level (Maas 1983).

Some families in Esch still owned sheep and goats, and not only proper farmers as for some of the lower strata the breeding of such animals offered the possibility of an accessory activity and thus income⁵¹¹.

When in 1907, farmers associations requested an annual subsidy, the matter was met with some exasperation from members who had rather the working classes and their ordeal at heart, Jean Schaack, pointed out that previous requests for subsidies, had originated from the Miners' association (*Bergmann-Unterstützungsverein*) but had been rejected. Thus, accordingly, no

⁵⁰⁹ In 1910 the company Allgemeine Städtereinigungsgesellschaft Wiesbaden had been chosen to be responsible for the whole sewage and canalization system as well as for a plan of urban development. In 1924, internationally acclaimed Joseph Stübgen also developed an ambitious green plan for the city. At the time of this commission, Stübgen was about to turn 80, but his reputation was still very high. He had worked extensively in the region: he had been chief architect for the cities of Aachen and Cologne, but also Belgium and even overseas, namely in Brazil in the city of Porto Alegre. None of the two plans were ever put into practice.

⁵¹⁰ Jean-Francois Deitz Arendt.

⁵¹¹ According to Schaack, "the goat is the labourer's cow" (Intervention at the local council meeting on 28.02.1911, p. 5).

precedent should be set. Whereas local council members of the traditional Esch were keener on keeping the support for the Association, as they believed Esch still had many farmers.⁵¹²

Until 1906, in a small town such as Esch, the reasons for the predominance of councillors of agricultural and commercial origin had more to do with an established form of power, determined by their ancestral landed property and commercial presence in the town, than with any perceived real income. This was the logic, at least until the beginning of industrialisation. Occasionally we find some white-collar workers, public and private sector employees, clerks, accountants, whose higher education somehow entitled them to secure a position, often as secretaries or bookkeepers. Where the white-collar, lower-middle class eventually found a place was less due to their financial position than to the respectability associated with their professions. Workers and clerks, as well as primary and secondary school teachers, often fulfilled the role of secretary because they were fluent in both French and German, an ability that was not to be taken for granted. The lack of knowledge of French was sometimes insinuated, as mentioned above, against members of the local council and even mayors. In addition, the knowledge of some accounting concepts or background was of course a desirable skill in a job at the heart of local council administration.

After the years of Pierre Claude's (farmer and dyer) presidency, another personality will rule in Esch for a quarter of a century:

He is replaced by the farmer and innkeeper Dominik-Joseph Hoferlin, together with "his friend", the Steel plant Director Leo Metz, steered the destiny of the municipality of Esch until its elevation to city (1906) (Flies 1979, 386).⁵¹³

The extent of the influence and duration of the mandates of two of Esch's mayors pre and post industrialisation, Pierre Claude and Dominique Hoferlin, denotes another aspect that merits attention. None of the two appear in the land registers as being major landowners. It is undeniable however that once again family connections prove all their influence. Pierre Claude married, for the second time, Anna Origer⁵¹⁴, the granddaughter, of former mayor and landowner Dominique Stoffel, undoubtedly heiress to at least part of his landed assets.

⁵¹² Discussion at the local council, see local council meeting 4.06.1907.

⁵¹³ **In the original:** Es tritt an seine Stelle [Pierre Claude] der Ackerer und Wirt Dominik-Joseph Hoferlin, der zusammen mit «seinem Freund», dem Hüttendirektor Leo Metz, die Geschicke der Gemeinde Esch bis zu deren Stadterhebung (1906) einträchtig leiten wird.

⁵¹⁴ Her mother, Franziska Stoffel was the sole heiress to Dominique Stoffel's vast surfaces.

Furthermore, both Pierre Claude and Dominique Hoferlin attended to other professional activities, accessory to their landownership which granted some wealth (enough to be elected according to tax poll vote) as well as vested them a degree of respectability. The once farmers tended and turned to have some sort of side commercial sphere: dyers, wagoners, farriers, shop owners. Those other professional spheres that dominated already the old town, among them, butchers and innkeepers, simply enlarged their clientele. Innkeepers, like Dominique Hoferlin had indeed played a major role in prospecting land to the industrial companies (Kremer-Schmit 1996).

The shift into the new century, and with it a very diverse population flocking to the city brings an end to an Esch bred and born leadership. 1906 and the entry into power of Léon Metz is the first to break the pattern. All subsequent mayors had been born outside Esch: Armand Spoo in Echternach (moved to Esch as a 20-year-old), J.P. Michels⁵¹⁵ in Schiffflange, Nicolas Biwer in Vianden.

This also coincides with a decade long period, lasting between 1910-1920, during which the dominant social group, of the commercial bourgeoisie, would have to confront numerous problems and fight to defend both its own interests and those of the city. From these actions and struggles, we shall retain the points illustrating the reality of their domination and the desire for a modern management of the city. A city still in need, in the front of hygiene and sanitation of the most basic infrastructure.

Another aspect deserves here to be highlighted, the persistent of forms of nepotism in transmitting seats of power. And it is no wonder that some of the same family names keep coming up. In fact, sons, nephews, and sons in law succeed in positions of councillors. This was undeniably also consequence of the censitary vote and purchase power to elect and be elected. Therefore, some of the first generation of landowners introduced in part II, as well as their descendants of, are here represented, for example the farriers Hamilius and Van Dyck, the notaries Brasseur and notary clerk Rousseau. However undemocratic the electoral process was, a groundbreaking motion in the

⁵¹⁵ The genealogic sources prove once again their valuable support in reconstructing socio-professional paths. J.-P. Michels was born on 28 December 1877 in Schiffflange. He stemmed for a family from the Gutland (Nospelt), his father had come to Schiffflange as a day labourer, then became a miner and eventually an entrepreneur. Only a gradual approach to birth registers of an individual's different children allow for a reconstruction of what may have been men's professional paths. As a result of a dissolution of the previous local council, new elections took place in 1912. J.P. Michels became mayor and initiated a 5-year mandate. He was married to Anna-Helena Hamilius. He was a butcher in Hiehl (Hoehl) until he was elected mayor was. He then switched to the wine, spirits and cigar trade in cigar trade in Other Straße, Rue d' Audun, attesting to the presence of a middle/upper class clientele in the city.

local council pleading the extension of Esch's electorate as early as February 1910⁵¹⁶, almost a decade before the introduction of universal suffrage in 1919, exposes some of Esch's singularities:

Mr. Schaack: The same motion was on the agenda two years ago, but it was not adopted. Hopefully it will be different today. It is a question of to grant the right to vote to those citizens who are of age and have their civil rights to vote, even if they do not even if they do not pay 10 francs in taxes. We have cases where a good, honest craftsman or labourer who works out early in the morning until late at night is not entitled to vote, while his son, who holds a small position, has this right. Is this not outrageous and humiliating in the highest degree? A local railway official was one day asked by a candidate to vote for him but replied that he would renounce his right to vote as long as his father did not have it. This man was right, and we should have many such people. Therefore a whole category of respectable citizens is excluded. If they could help us to work out regulations here, then they would not be so one-sided. I therefore propose that every citizen who has the same duties, should have the same rights. **Mayor Spoo:** It is a question here of course, of the universal suffrage for the municipal elections. Not for the Chamber, because, as you know, the constitution has to be amended first. (Local council meeting, 26.2.1910 (pp. 2-3) on Art. 2 Proposal of several councillors, concerning the introduction of universal suffrage right).⁵¹⁷

The above motion had no leverage over the constitution but serves the purpose of demonstrating that in Esch-sur-Alzette, too, the political will of social democrats (and not least, the opposition which, voted in favour) was there.

The beginning of the century brings a new wave of councillors stemming from the “new” middle class, Biwer, the construction entrepreneur also enters the political scene as mayor (he will eventually leave because of illness). Alfred Lefèvre, never did so, possibly because he never asked for Luxembourgish nationality but his connections to power stretched in ways that did not necessarily involve political office.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ Local council meetings 26 February 1910. Art. 2. Motion of several Aldermen, concerning the introduction of universal suffrage. The motion of Schaack and his comrades was voted for by all members present and welcomed with a “Bravo !” by Schaack. We ignore though the impact of such measure in the following elections. Armand Spoo asked for his dismissal already at the end of 1911.

⁵¹⁷ **In the original:** Der nämliche Antrag war bereits vor 2 Jahren auf der Tagesordnung, aber er wurde nicht angenommen. Hoffentlich geht es heute anders. Es handelt sich darum, denjenigen Bürgern, welche großjährig sind und ihre bürgerlichen Rechte besitzen, das Wahlrecht zu verleihen, auch wenn sie keine 10 Franken Steuern zahlen. Wir haben Fälle, wo ein braver, ehrlicher Handwerker oder Arbeiter, welcher von morgens früh bis abends spät arbeitet, nicht stimmberechtigt ist, während sein Sohn, der eine kleine Stellung innehat, dieses Recht besitzt. Ist dies nicht empörend und im höchsten Grade demütigend. Ein hiesiger Bahnbeamter wurde eines Tages von einem Kandidaten um seine Stimme gebeten, antwortete jedoch, er würde auf sein Wahlrecht verzichten, solange sein Vater dasselbe nicht besäße. Dieser Mann hatte Recht und solcher Leute müßten wir viele haben. Weshalb schließt man eine ganze Kategorie von ehrsamern Bürgern hier aus. Könnten uns dieselben nicht helfen, hier Reglemente ausarbeiten, dann wären sie nicht so einseitig. Ich schlage deshalb vor, daß jeder Bürger, der dieselben Pflichten hat, auch dieselben Rechte haben soll.

⁵¹⁸ Alfred Lefèvre (1866-1958), building contractor in Esch. He was among other prominent positions, not only the wealthiest entrepreneur in Esch but also the one whom Léon Metz trusted for most of the major works outsourced by the Metz et Cie, later ARBED (of which for example was commissioned with the construction of the large retaining wall of the Brasseur plant site between Esch and Audun-le-Tiche, in 1910 with the covering of the Alzette in the Esch

There is thus a longer period of commercial dominance, starting with Dominique Hoferlin's period in office, that permeates between the pure farmer town and the proper working-class/low middle-class administration that takes off only in 1919. The latter reflects without doubt, not only the increasing politization of the working classes but the effects of the introduction of the universal suffrage. It is indeed in 1919, that the local council will be headed by Victor Wilhelm, a Railway employee and have as councillors for the first time: a miner (Peter Bukovac) and Jacques Thilmany⁵¹⁹ a prominent figure of the socialist newspaper *Der Arme Teufel*.

Despite the undisputable presence of the industrial sites as main employers, industrial "lords" remained surprisingly absent from the local council, even though, as seen previously, the 35-year rule of Léon Metz is undisputable, even by way of how he kept exercising his soft power in many associations. Seldom did other representatives of the industry have a stake in the local decision. Their discretion at the local council is the most unexpected aspect. We traced their presence, over 80 years, and highlight the names of the men who, were also members of the town council, albeit for rather short period mandates.

period_entry	period_exit	surname	name	function	profession
1873	1907	Metz	Leon	mixed functions	steel plant director
1886	1890	de Roebe	Theodore	counsellor	manager steel plant/engineer
1888	1892	Laboulle	Jean	counsellor	director des mines
1900	1902	Koch	Andre	counsellor	engineer
1910	1912	Reiff-Hamilius	Pierre	counsellor	employee(steel plant)
1912	1917	Barblé	Gregoire	alderman	manager steel plant/engineer
1913	1918	Donnersbach	Nicolas	counsellor	employee(steel plant)

Figure 29: Members of the local council to have held managerial or employee positions at one of the industrial plants between 1841-1922.

We shall be seeing how on different occasions they too were accused of working to benefit their respective companies' interests at the detriment of the overall population.

The remarkable and long-term exception was that of Léon Metz, who between being alderman, councillor and Mayor (the latter between 1906-1909⁵²⁰) acted as a permanent member of the

Brill neighbourhood, in 1912 with the extension work of the ARBED-Esch Plant. He was the biggest employer of the city and the head of the Escher Canton Health Insurance Fund.

⁵¹⁹ Jacques Thilmany's original profession was cutler, when of his marriage to an Eschoise, he listed his profession as conference organizer, as indeed he organized the socialist circles' conferences in the Minett region.

⁵²⁰ Leon Metz's decline started in 1908 when he goes, for the first time, to the second round of vote in national elections. He also loses, in parallel, the Esch municipal elections to Armand Spoo.

decision-making process for around 30 years. Although he was not an Esch native, he established his residency there and there he died in 1928. Such dual managerial positioning was often subject to criticism and earned him accusations by its political rivals. In 1907, Jean Schaack-Wirth, socialist, accused him of conflict of interests over the water network distribution:

I can only repeat, either you resign as mayor or resign as director of the Hütte [Steel Plant]⁵²¹ (Intervention at the local council meeting minutes, 9.12.1907, p.98).

Jean-Schaack's *Der Arme Teufel* represented the press arm of the minority in office during the Metz era and spared him no accusations:

One would have thought that the town of Esch itself had always been characterised by freedom, progress and forward thinking in all areas. And if I now claim that until recently, no town in the country was as backward in its public life as Esch, it is almost unbelievable, but true. Esch had a good, old, thoroughly honest mayor, Mr. Hoferlin, who trusted the amiable people and presided over the local council. But the big questions were decided by the then alderman, Mr. Metz, and administrative matters were almost entirely in the hands of the Italian vice-consul [J.P. Claude]. And he was a paean through and through. He was regarded everywhere as extremely shrewd and cunning. Among the blind, the one-eyed man is king. When Mr. Hoferlin died, Mr. Weisen, leader of the bourgeois opposition, and Mr. Metz were considered to succeed him as mayor. And the latter took "the heavy burden" upon himself and also carried this burden with other burdens, solely so that the opposition would not damage his reputation. At that time, Mr. Metz was: deputy of the canton of Esch, president of the Chamber of Commerce, president of the Union Adolf⁵²² Association, president of the School Commission, president of the Church Council, commissioner of the W. L. Railways, president of the Esch Music Association, chief director of the large steel plants and the mines of the Metz & Cie. company, president of the Agricultural Association, and, last but not least, mayor of Esch. No wonder, then, that these all too many reins slipped imperceptibly but completely from his hands and passed into the hands of the overly efficient secretary (...) Despite prayer and devotion, despite the rolling trouble, the old clerical power was defeated, its rule was shattered, and only two badly shattered "pillars" stood out from the vast ruins of the fallen palace: Mr. Metz and Mr. Claude⁵²³ (*Der Arme Teufel* 1910).

This was, the *Arme Teufel*, the source of Metz's arch-opponents, for which the tones should not surprise. At the time when the Hoferlin was the mayor, Leon Metz's opponents accused him of governing through an intermediary.

If in Esch (a privileged few) had been voting "leftwards" since the late 1890s for the legislative elections, it remained outrageously clerical locally, according to *Der Arme Teufel*. Under this aspect, less was to blame on Metz himself, if you are to believe the *Arme Teufel*, than to some

⁵²¹ **In the original:** „Ich kann nur wiederholen, entweder Sie als Bürgermeister demissionieren oder Ihr Amt als Direktor von der Hütte niederlegen“

⁵²² UGDA – Union Grand-Duc Adolph

⁵²³ First allusion to Jean Pierre Claude and his wrongdoings. Son of former mayor Pierre Claude, J.P. was incredibly well connected to the world of diplomacy and other circles of power in Luxembourg. He held high level jobs in France and Greece as well as also being an honorary consul to the Italian and Spanish community.

councillors, J.P. Claude, the secretary, “school teachers, the Sisters, capelans and the Italian “missionaries” (*Der Arme Teufel* 1910)⁵²⁴.

However, the thirty-five-year Metz era did slowly come to an end. Dissatisfaction with the authoritarian management of municipal affairs, the postponement of important infrastructural projects such as public water supply and sewerage, urban planning and the hospital issue led to Léon Metz suffering a resounding defeat in the municipal elections of October 1908 (Maas 2022). Without a majority on the Esch town council, Metz clung on to his mayoral seat until the Minister of the Interior felt compelled to dissolve the Esch municipal council and call new elections for August 1909. Under the leadership of the industrialist Armand Spoo, the left-liberal opposition list won these elections by a landslide.

What stands out during these eighty years is thus a clear domination of the commercial bourgeoisie (after Léon Metz, and before Victor Wilhelm) which, whether liberal, whether social democrat, whether inclined to the right, managed to rule the industrial city. This status quo endured until the introduction of universal suffrage in 1919. This group of “petit notables” will at times clash with its socialist members but more on purely ideological, cultural worldview matters and engrained rivalries than anything else.

This commercial turn was evident in economic terms, as well as in the political and administrative control of the town. In the case of the educated bourgeoisie, their influence was no less in the region, where their social prestige steered opinions. This was reflected in the presence of people such as the state veterinaries, Bivort⁵²⁵, Hoffmann and the doctors Joerg, Pierre and Nicolas Metzler⁵²⁶ and Schaeftgen⁵²⁷. The liberal professions enjoyed great esteem as well, as they were informed by scientific knowledge. In short, doctors, veterinaries, engineers, accountants, head

⁵²⁴ Einst und Jetzt. *Der Arme Teufel*, 4.09.1910, p.1.

⁵²⁵ Hippolyte Bivort (1819-1901). In 1845 he entered the veterinary school in Vienna, continuing his studies in 1846 at Carlsruhe and in 1847-48 at Curreghem-lez-Bruxelles. He graduated as a veterinary surgeon in 1848 and took up residence in Esch-s.-Alz. as a practising veterinary surgeon. In 1851 he was nominated Government Veterinary for Esch-sur-Alzette.

⁵²⁶ Dr. Pierre Metzler (1857- 1940). An ophthalmologist, Dr Pierre Metzler had also set up a small eye clinic in the religious house of the Sisters of Mercy (1894), from which the private clinic Ste. Marie of the congregation of the Elisabethian sisters, spun off in 1927.

⁵²⁷ Dr Nicolas Schaeftgen (1879- 1950), studied medicine in Zurich and Berlin. Settled as a doctor in Esch in 1905, where he practised for 45 years. A leading figure and long-standing member of the Escher Hospital Society, Schaeftgen published numerous articles in the liberal Escher Tageblatt on the subjects of free choice of doctor and health insurance, particularly in the years before the outbreak of the First World War. Member of the Escher town council (1912-1915), secretary of the Collège Médical (1935 - 1948), then its president (1949-1950). Biography compiled with the help of Jacques Maas’ publication on the history of the hospital (Maas 2022b).

teachers, in brief, people with a higher educational background whose know-how was invaluable for the endorsement of a local council with a deep knowledge of the latest in science. Two professions represented this well: the teacher and medical profession. They advised on all matters but had specific insight into all thematic regarding sanitation, public health, disease spreading and in the case of teachers on how the education system should work in a city afflicted by the novelty of a numerous and diverse population. The fast pace of growth in Esch demanded a search of professionals having the best capacities:

Councillor Cravatte⁵²⁸: You know that we were elected to achieve something. If we want to progress we must be careful to get a capable man, who possesses great knowledge and who must also have this conviction; it is of great importance. Esch is expanding at a colossal rate, perhaps too much and it is absolutely necessary that at the head of our construction office, we get a man who has a wide range of competence in the construction of roads, canalisation, architecture, etc. It should be an engineer-architect. **Mayor Spoo**: We don't have any engineer-architects. There are only two in the country. And then no engineer-architect works for 5000 Fr. per year. **Councillor Cravatte**: We must have a good architect who knows something of the streets, the sewerage, etc. Mr. Mayor. That much general knowledge an architect always has (intervention of councillor Cravatte local council meeting 9.03.1910, p.8).⁵²⁹

What other members, who did not stem from the above mentioned *Bildungsbürgertum* disliked was that the former took advantage of their professional expertise to make a dual income from their roles as local councillors and their private initiatives. This led to complaints to the Government which ended up with the latter expressing itself against the practice of a dual occupation). Members of the local council, despite concerned about finding the best available, such as architects and engineers insisted the local council must refrain, the Government ruled, that such professional may

⁵²⁸ Henri Cravatte (1871-1948), local councillor and merchant in the beer trade. He happened to be Dr. Schaeftgen's brother-in-law, because married to his sister Louise Schaeftgen.

⁵²⁹ **In the original**: Herr Cravatte: Sie wissen, daß wir gewählt wurden um etwas zu leisten. Wenn wir mit dem Fortschritt gehen wollen müssen wir darauf halten, einen tüchtigen Mann zu bekommen, der große Kenntnisse besitzt und der auch bei seinen Kollegen in Achtung steht dadurch, daß er etwas leisten kann. Auch die Handwerker müssen diese Überzeugung haben, es ist dies von großer Bedeutung. Esch dehnt sich kolossal rasch aus, für uns vielleicht zu rasch und es ist unumgänglich notwendig, daß an der Spitze unseres Baubüros ein Mann steht, der eine weitgehende Kompetenz besitzt in Bezug auf Anlage von Straßen, Kanalisation, in der Architektur usw. Es müßte ein Ingenieur-Architekt sein. (...)Hr. Bürgermeister. Wir haben keine Ingenieur-Architekten. Es sind im ganzen zwei im Lande. Und dann arbeitet kein Ingenieur-Architekt für 5000 Fr. jährlich. (...) Hr. Cravatte. Wir müssen einen guten Architekten haben, der etwas kennt von den Straßen, der Kanalisation usw. Hr. Bürgermeister. So viel allgemeine Kenntnisse hat ein Architekt immer.

do any private work, but exclusively all municipal work that is in his field. On different occasions they did not shy away from denouncing directly to the government what they saw as an abuse⁵³⁰. In addition to the influence that individual functions or businesses could grant them, many members of this administrative élite, often the ones exercising liberal professions also enjoyed the prestige and power that came with exercising collective responsibilities in municipal, regional, or even central government bodies. They will be the same who will eventually be accused of not getting enough interest and involvement with the local council.

6.3.1 The end of the agricultural town

We saw in the precedent chapter, how agriculture as an occupation had virtually disappeared from Esch in the 1890s, in fact, very few citizens identified as farmers in the censuses. From the 205 members of the *Luxemburger Bauerverein* in 1890 (Allgemeine Landwirtschaftliche Genossenschaft 1890, 3), only 5 were from the south of Luxembourg (and among them a veterinary, and few of the historical landowners from Foetz, Mondercange and Differdange). There was not even one single member from Esch-sur-Alzette. The once rural town of Esch-sur-Alzette changes scales and will soon reach a number of inhabitants close to those of a small city. What changes in the map of the city is also visible in the population curb. The figures in 1892 (7457 inhabitants) more than triple those of 50 years before (2011 inhabitants in 1842)⁵³¹. The 1870's also marks the incursion into a professional diversification, among the working population in the city. A plethora of new professions emerges in the city: promoters, mine managers, clerks, architects and engineers arrive with the implementation of the first factories (Kremer-Schmit 1986). It is in the late 1890's, precisely in 1899 that the city of Esch' population reaches the figure of 10.000 inhabitants. By 1922, this number will have doubled to reach 21.208 people.

This novel state of play with its power structures are at the core of the present chapter. Urbanization increased rapidly in Esch as introduced in the previous chapters. If the typical industrial town in

⁵³⁰In 1887 coucillors P. Peporté and J. B. Kersch addressed a complaint on the dual compensation of councillors Bivort and Schmiedeler. The Government pronounces itself in favour of their complain stating that according to the law , te two members could at most touch an indemnity but not a full salary from the local council, given they held other occupations. AN-LUX Dossiers Communaux – INT 605. *Plainte de Ce Que Les Srs Bivort et Schmiedeler Sont Chargés de La Direction de l'abattoir En Leur Qualité de Membres Du Conseil Communa l-1887.*

⁵³¹ Archives Municipales d'Esch-sur-Alzette, composition du conseil communal 1842-1922.

the turn of the century was still a medium-sized city elsewhere in western Europe⁵³², Luxembourg reminds us again of the need for a reappraisal of any pre-established notions of what an industrial town should be. Even at its peak, in 1922⁵³³, Esch's population reached approximately 21.000 inhabitants. Considering the dimensions of the country, and that apart from the capital and the neighboring Minett towns, Luxembourg remained overwhelmingly rural, Esch stood out as epitome of the industrial town. In terms of its internal functioning, there were major developments of municipal services and staff movements. The town's small scale in 1842 reflected also in the modest composition of its municipal council members and their functions, which included the president, the secretaries, the elected members as well as a pair of extra functions, namely a forest ranger and an usher. A roadmender and a mechanic were added, in 1843 and in 1886, respectively, to the list of employees⁵³⁴ (Archives Municipales d'Esch-sur-Alzette, *sine dato*). The number of foresters gradually increased in order to keep a close watch on the iron-rich land. The range of services provided by the municipality remained virtually unchanged for around four decades, and it was not until the 1890s, with the consolidation of industrial development, that the services offered by the local administration became more diversified. A local office for charity and services to the poor was created (1892), as was a separate police force that was integrated into that of the municipal agents. Hygiene and sanitation became paramount⁵³⁵ in a city struggling to retain its new citizens and ensure it could keep up with the goods a modern city needed to function. The activities of the local council remain vague and imprecise, so much so that it is impossible to establish with any certainty the climate that reigns in the period between 1840s-1900.

The development of municipal services and staff reflects the growth of the city and its costs. Periods of economic depression created new obligations for the council in certain areas. Thus, by the time the town was promoted to a city, the municipal services had developed to include a

⁵³² A medium sized industrial city in France, Roubaix, was already 65,000 by 1871 (Hobsbawm 1984, 210)!

⁵³³ Taking in consideration only the period this research is concerned with.

⁵³⁴ The sources inform us that by 1908 the number of municipal employees in street maintenance, abattoir and water network had risen to 25, by 1911 they were 44 (Association d'assurance contre les accidents 1908; 1911).

⁵³⁵ The case for the creation of a city Hospital is raised (see PART IV) amidst a period of ongoing epidemics and diseases, like cholera, chickenpox, typhus. This was a period where infectious diseases were at the centre of public health preoccupations, namely cholera, which hit Luxembourg badly in only a few years and the southern region in particular. The year of 1867 was particularly deadly in Esch and Schifflange often taking away several members of the same family together. Unsurprisingly the death toll among the working class was predominant (Theisen 1936).

secretariat, a revenue office, a police force (then municipal), an electricity office and a slaughterhouse. In 1906, these departments employed around forty people. Other departments were added over the years: the Building Department in 1910, the Engineering Department in 1912, the Planning Department in 1913, the Accounts Department in 1913, a Medical Service in 1912, a Municipal Music School in 1926 and the Municipal Library in 1929. By 1920, the council employed a total of 172 people (Borschette 1956).

6.3.2 A foreword on the sources

In the absence of other sources, such as personal accounts, the local council serves as a pool and pulse of the life(s) of the city during the first two decades of the 20th century. It reflects what was going on in Luxembourgish society as a whole, where economic and social conjectures meet.

This chapter is mainly based on a systematic reading of the minutes of the meetings of the municipal council of Esch-sur-Alzette, comprising 10 volumes for the period 1907-1922.

These sources illustrate the discussions and actions taken in the abridged versions of the minutes of the municipal council meetings (*Kurzbefasste Sitzungsberichte*). These sources have recently been made available by the municipal archives and subsequently digitised. Readable sources are only available for the period between 1907 and 1922, and this is not without its challenges⁵³⁶.

In order not to get lost in this sea of documents, the historian must know what he is looking for and the dates of certain events, of discussions that sometimes lasted for years, even in the Chamber of Deputies. In Esch, they were interrupted every time a new mayor took office. In order to have this knowledge, it is necessary to have compiled a systematic catalogue of all political and social issues. Since much remains to be done in this field, and since our study is only a modest beginning, we will only lay the foundations for this work and invite those who wish to fill in the gaps for before and after this period in the city's political history. Since not all the issues relating to the urban development of Esch can be dealt with in a single work, we would like to refer to other works that have been completed or will be completed shortly after our own.

⁵³⁶ The local council meetings for the period before were in very damaged state and handwritten. As for the period 1907-1922, the German Fraktur/Gothic print script does not always allow for a precise OCR search within the documents which resulted in a time-consuming analysis.

For example, we have chosen to leave out the discussion of major infrastructures such as the tramway and the railway, the energy sector of water, gas and electricity⁵³⁷, and many other urban features, which although undeniably being a sign of modernity, were outside the scope of this dissertation. We hope, furthermore that many of the gaps in the relationship between classes can be covered by combining the "forces" of this and Daniel Richter's (Richter 2024) dissertation on the same historical period, making use of the perspective of the working classes. In this sense, we see this work as part of a greater collaboration between what has been done and what is yet to be done. Furthermore, the choices for which we are solely responsible have sought to reflect aspects of modernity that have less to do with "artefacts" than with culture and mentalities. In this sense, we see this as both a social history and a cultural history of the city.

For the period between the end of the 1880s and 1907, and in an effort to fill the gap in the sources relating to the minutes of the meetings, information was added by searching for relevant information in the *Dossiers Communaux*, which contain the files relating to the municipality in the National Archives, comprising the bundles from 1886 to 1922 (ANLux - INT 606 to INT 0631). They allow us to delve into the issues surrounding the development of a small town like Esch into an industrial town and into the lives of its inhabitants. They also include administrative research into conflicts within the town's administration. In addition, the tandem analysis of the debates held within the town council and the correspondence with the government seeking authorisations allows us to study the main themes of the period. Finally, and no less importantly, it provides an insight into the exchanges between the various ministries and departments of the government, and thus their views on some of Esch's key infrastructure needs.

Another source, which has been added occasionally, is made up of the discussions at the level of the Chamber of Deputies in various instances in the years between 1896 and 1901.

Political life is, of course, the result of social life. We must not take the statements made in the municipal council "literally", as if they were absolute truths. They must be interpreted and judged in terms of their subjective and comparative value and, above all, in the light of the historical context which, nationally and internationally, overshadows the local.

The availability of unfiltered local council meetings provides readers with the opportunity to gain insight into the content and manner of discussion of the matters addressed. The inflammatory

⁵³⁷ Historian Philippe Blasen is currently working on a history of 125-year-old Esch Gas works, a company today called *Sudenergie*.

interventions of Dr. Joerg (councillor between 1910 and 1912), for example, which cost him at least one libel suit, prove that the local council was far from being a politically correct forum:

(...) I have just read in the *Luxemburger Wort* that Flesch [Paul] is suing me for 100,000 francs in damages, and the 4 policemen for 20,000 each, a total of 180,000 francs. I would have to have Koppes⁵³⁸ [bishop] bag to put all the money in it (Intervention of Dr. Joerg at the local council meeting, 28.05.1910, p.9).⁵³⁹

We also wanted to complement the "dry" and quantitative nature of the previous chapters with the "voices" we were able to capture, to take the pulse of the town through its main events and its administration, during a period of intense urban development and, last but not least, the war years, with the political turmoil that accompanied and followed them, of which the introduction of universal suffrage in 1919 was one of the most significant results. The very next year, in 1920, Esch-sur-Alzette saw the first municipal council elected by universal suffrage, presided over by a left-wing railway official.

Finally, we have made use of the wealth of secondary literature and the press to help us frame the events in question.

6.4 Two decades of middle-class management through the lenses of the local council (1900-1922)

After 1900, the demographic boom and expansion of the city continued. The town council's priorities were to organise and control urban development and demographic growth. The bourgeois middle-class fear of moral degeneration, decline, and alcohol was palpable in both local and central powers' wish to sanitize against the dangers brought by unhealthy urban environments. This translated into the deployment of financial means into sanitation⁵⁴⁰, of which the concern for new places where to bury the dead and even demands for a crematorium are just an example. The latter

⁵³⁸ **In the original:** (...) ich habe soeben im Luxemburger Wort gelesen, daß Flesch mich auf 100 000 Franken Schadenersatz verklagt, außerdem die 4 Polizisten auf je 20 000 macht zusammen 180 000 Frk. Ich müßte dem Koppes seinen Beutel haben, um all das Geld darin zu tun.

⁵³⁹ Jean-Joseph Koppes (1883-1918) promoted Catholic associations, which were mainly supported by lay people and inspired by German Catholicism (founding of the Catholic adult education centre, the Volksverein, the Akademiker-Verein, the Rechtspartei), so that Catholicism was able to become the leading cultural and ultimately also political force in Luxembourg society after the Great War. He was at the centre of the fierce and persistent battles, particularly over the controversial school law (1912) and press matters, in which Koppes took an intransigent stance. Bishop Koppes has gone down in history above all as an antagonist to liberalism, socialism and Freemasonry.

⁵⁴⁰ In 1910 discussions were still taking place for a complete sewage coverage of the city.

faced resistance but was kept on the agenda of the municipal council's left wing on and off for more than two decades.⁵⁴¹ According to Fayot (Fayot 1979, 1:25), water, gas and electricity were introduced in Esch in 1885, but the electricity network was only installed in 1900, and in the same year only 320 households were connected to the gas mains.

In terms of staff employed the city was ill equipped for a city of its size, in 1903 with a population reaching already the 10.000 figure, the local administration counts only 16 people among its permanent staff (Buchler et al. 2020). For the city planners the poor were a problem, whose ordeal the municipality took as a chief concern. Attesting to it, the key role played by the Poor Administration office relief (*Das Armenbureau*) in the municipal council meetings throughout the years and the political struggles at the level of Parliament that finally led to the implementation of the first social security laws⁵⁴². Being poor often conflated with being an immigrant, and the immigrant, often, with being an "Italian", source of all concerns: robberies, street fights, alcoholism, in sum, a public danger. Land for public property development was scarce on the market and much of what was done to house the poor was done with the help of the industrial companies and later the State. Because of its small size, and concentration around the city centre and the three industrial plants, there was in Esch, unlike other industrial cities of the time⁵⁴³, the absence of suburbs. Rich poor or in the middle, Esch's populational groups all lived incredibly close to one another until the early 1920/30s when the upmarket neighbourhoods of Dellhöh and Wobrecken first started developing.

⁵⁴¹ In 1936 a councillor even suggested that a crematorium would even be a "tourist attraction".

⁵⁴² a first era of social legislation saw the introduction of health, accident and old age insurance from 1901 to 1911.

⁵⁴³ Vide for example Leiner's (1994) comparison with Thionville in Lorraine and Burbach in Saarland.



Figure 30 : Map Esch-sur-Alzette, 1926 (Société d'Initiative et d'Embellissement 1926).

Some neighbourhoods were under permanent and extreme high migratory pressure. Some streets were almost exclusively occupied by unskilled (seasonal) workers. However, streets with a high proportion of middle-class residents were sometimes among the most frequented residential districts. Moreover, in Esch even in the most "bourgeois" streets, there were always extensive contingents of the generally quite mobile workforce. Examples of these are the Rue du Faubourg and even the very prestigious Rue de Luxembourg. At the turn of the century, the main road from Esch to Luxembourg ran parallel to the Alzette on the north-eastern edge of the town. to Luxembourg. The upper and middle classes of the town lived along this road. Leiner (Leiner 1994, 240) adds that more than 20 per cent of its residents were self-employed (merchants, master craftsmen, freelancers) or middle-ranking civil servants and employees. He notes also that just as many of its residents enjoyed board and lodging as servants in one of the upper middle-class homes. Its southernmost extreme was still inhabited by working classes (just under 15 per cent of Rue du Luxembourg) becoming more upper class as it went North, with the engineers' villas and other upmarket housing.

Leiner notes how the Brill neighbourhood with the workers' agglomerations Brillstrasse (Rue du Brill) and Burenstrasse (Rue des Boers), which was located between Rue de l'Alzette and the Rue d'Audin (Otherstrasse) somewhat closer to the city centre, only developed in later years (after 1905 and 1918) into a second important working-class neighbourhood.

The Otherstrasse (Rue d'Audin) appears as a strictly middle-class street, nevertheless very close to the working-class areas, for which in Esch we can certainly speak of a culture of mingling, that starts to fade only in the interwar period, with the construction of the new upper (literally because topographically above) and because more distant from the nuisance of the factories, and downtown Esch.

The municipal council dealt foremost, in this period (1907-1922), with the social expenditure, whether it was sanitation, street lighting, public utilities in an overall hygienist strategy. In a country that was, despite its swift industrialisation, still overwhelming rural, the attempts, and actual feats of the local council represent firsthand, the progress of a modern city in the making.

6.5 The central themes: infrastructure, sanitation, and the indigent

6.5.1 An insalubrious town, an “embarrassing” city.

At the end of the 19th century, the health situation in the localities of the industrial South was still very precarious: in Esch, the problems linked to unhealthy streets, a shortage of drinking water and the presence of dung⁵⁴⁴ on the pavements continued. At the same time, trade and markets were regulated under stricter hygiene conditions. This included open-air markets and the sale of bread and meat. Sidewalks were built and damp areas were dealt with. Such work was often carried out by the industrial companies. In a publication of 1871, Theodore de Roebé, engineer at the Brasseur plant and member of the local municipal council denounced the pitiful state of the streets in Esch-sur-Alzette:

Esch sur Alzette is a town; it has been recognised as such since 1311. But if a stranger comes today, to the town of Esch, which is very well known in France, Belgium and Germany for its ironstone deposits and the iron industry that is now being established, he certainly does not realise that he is in a town; on the contrary, he thinks he is in a large but very dirty village. (...) This is the first impression the traveller gets of the town of Esch and the following ones are hardly more sublime. Dirty streets everywhere, dung heaps in front of every house, in damp or even hot weather a pungent stench in all the streets and alleyways (De Roebé 1871, 7–8).⁵⁴⁵

This brief illustration of the state of the town at the start of industrialisation sets the scene for the decades to come. Esch, by then a regional industrial centre, remained a very dirty, run-down place. It is not surprising, then, that the main concerns of the local council were the construction of new roads, the sanitation (sewerage) of the existing ones and the lighting of the streets for all sorts of safety reasons. Interestingly, De Roebé also notes the lack of willingness on the part of some merchants to actually live in Esch, even though the attraction of setting up shop in the town is imperative, given the attractive conditions created by the new railway connections. In fact, the

⁵⁴⁴ Historian Patrick Joyce highlights the important of landmarks like running water arriving in the cities and not least the possibility of defecating in private, in what he calls the “history of shit” (Joyce 2003, 12). At different occasions, the Esch local councillors complain about the shame this public defecation and lack of pissoirs bring to the city.

⁵⁴⁵ **In the original:** Esch an der Alzette ist eine Stadt; es wurde als solche bereits anerkannt seit dem Jahre 1311. Kommt aber heute ein Fremder nach unserem Ort, nach der Stadt Esch, welche durch ihre Eisensteinlager und die entstehende begriffene Eisenindustrie allerorts, in Frankreich, Belgien und Deutschland sehr bekannt ist, merk er gewiss nicht dass er in einer Stadt befindet; vielmehr denkt er sich in einem zwar grossen aber sehr schmutzigen Dorfe. (...) Das ist der erste Eindruck, den der Reisende von der Stadt Esch empfängt und die folgenden sind kaum erhabener. Schmutzige [sic] Straßen überall, Misthaufen vor jedem Hause, bei feuchtem oder gar heißem Wetter ein verpesteter Gestank in alle Straßen und Gässchen.

reluctance of many shopkeepers to settle in Esch can be attributed both to the lack of sanitary infrastructure and to the lack of a place to buy or rent tout court.

The health situation in emerging industrial communities in the mining south remained highly precarious for a long time to come. In Esch-sur-Alzette, for example, an anonymous contributor to the *Indépendance Luxembourgeoise* in 1884 called for measures to be taken to stop epidemics:

Every year there are public complaints about the health situation in our locality. (...) I regret to say that today the evil still exists and the gutters are never cleaned or washed. Passing in front of the town hall, you can breathe in an unbearable smell (*L'indépendance Luxembourgeoise* 1884⁵⁴⁶).

It was not until the 1890s that a change of direction began. It was during this period that the Luxembourg government began to think carefully about how to improve the supply of drinking water to the population. In the period 1893-1908 alone, there were no fewer than 80 water pipeline projects, including four in the canton of Esch-sur-Alzette (Kovacs 2022). It is therefore irremediable to see a link between the poor drinking water and lack of sewage situation, and the spreading of highly contagious and potentially deadly diseases, like cholera and typhus among others.

The state of the streets in Esch and the lack of the minimal sanitation and hygiene services endured for over four decades. Discussions on a general sewage plan were still taking place in 1910 and a suitable contractor from Wiesbaden, Germany was advised from the Government. Long after De Roebé had written his plea, the most inhabited neighbourhoods of Esch were still in a pitiful state. Nothing illustrates the rundown aspects of hygiene or rather the lack it, than the slaughterhouse. When he addresses his dismissal letter after a 25-year service, to the local council, Veterinary Hoffmann⁵⁴⁷ described the state of the slaughter in its first years:

I have been in Esch for almost a quarter of a century, (...) I feel to recall my work in this institution. I will briefly describe the state of the abattoir when I joined. At that time, the abattoir was the depository for the rubbish from the whole community. As soon as you entered, countless insects grinned at the visitor, swarms of mosquitoes besieged these containers. The rats had set up their cosy home here: Under fascines, wooden hemp, bricks and house stones, etc. [they] could find the best hiding places. When removing a pile of wood, for example, 92 rats were killed in one hour. After years of complaints and appeals, after I had tried all possible and impossible; these things finally disappeared from the slaughterhouse. (...) The rats walked over the calf down in broad daylight. (...) a rat's face peeping out of every hole. In the adjacent manure and rubbish pit was swarming with millions of maggots, nasties and produced billions of rubbish, which flooded the slaughterhouse. Thanks to the energetic intervention of the then local councillors, Mr. Eng. Koch, Mr. Eng. Fischer and Dr Metzler, I managed to finally to get rid of the pig slaughterhouse (...). A new sewerage system was also set up as the old one was completely dilapidated and clogged. The stables were too small. After a long, lingering hesitation, these were also extended and modernised. Today they are the most beautiful and

⁵⁴⁶ Intérieur-Nouvelles Locales, *L'Indépendance luxembourgeoise*, 6.07.1884.

⁵⁴⁷ Félix Hoffmann (? - 1923). Director of Esch's slaughterhouse and State Veterinary.

practical in the whole country. In a nutshell: the second oldest slaughterhouse in the whole country is, as it is today, a very useful institute in which objects function, that are still missing from even in the most modern slaughterhouses today. (...) These are all facts that no one can and should deny (Letter from 14.10.1918, see local council meeting, 9.11.1918, p.235).

The local council will often discuss of the odour emanating from the animals being slaughtered as well as the noise of them waiting at night for their “turn” in the morning, as very unpleasant. The improvement of the slaughterhouse became thus one of the local council’s top priorities.

The need for public urinals was another recurring theme and plea. According to the local council’s discussions on what could be improved in Esch, considering the upcoming spring and good weather conditions (period of the year where road and other public works could carry on uninterrupted), Neudorf inhabitants complained about there no being urinals in the area. One councillor lamented:

If you then come along the railway station road, you won't find a urinal anywhere, except for the one belonging to the railway, where you can't go in without ruining your shoes, it's a situation Esch ought to be ashamed of.⁵⁴⁸

Urinals were a need but at the same time no one wanted them near, even after having voted for their construction the local council faced the resistance of nearby local residents:

Mayor Metz: It was agreed that it should be erected, but none of the owners wants it near them. The stones, everything was ready, but the people complained, nobody wanted it (local council meeting, 6.11.1908, p. 198).⁵⁴⁹.

During a meeting of the recently invested local council, presided by Armand Spoo, councillor Jean Schaack complained that the money invested in the “Grenz” seemed to have disappeared. This working-class neighbourhood shared the fate of Neudorf:

If you were to accompany a stranger there, he would say that Esch would have done better to remain a village.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁸ **In the original:** “Komme man dann der Bahnhofstrasse entlang, so entdecke man nirgends ein Pissoir mit Ausnahmende der desjenigen, welches der Bahn gehör, wo man nicht hineingehen komme, ohne sein Schuhwerk zu ruinieren, es sei das ein Zustand, dessen Esch sich schämen müsse“ (local council meeting 14.12.1907, p.1906).

⁵⁴⁹ **In the original:** Hr. Metz: Es war ja abgestimmt, daß er errichtet werden soll, aber keiner der Eigentümer will ihn in seiner Nähe haben. Die Steine, alles war fix und fertig da, aber die Leute haben reklamiert, niemand wollte ihn.

⁵⁵⁰ **In the original:** Wenn man einen Fremden dorthin führen würde, so wurde derselbe sagen, Esch hatte besser gethan [sic] Dorf zu bleiben.

In many areas Esch still resembled a village indeed, with only the blast furnaces at far giving away its industrial turn. Given the magnitude of the issues raised, the road to modernity on all these fronts will be a long one.⁵⁵¹

6.5.2 *Das Armenbureau – dealing with daily misery.*

Being home to the fastest growing working-class population in the country meant having to deal with misery, illness and extreme housing conditions, the lack of flats available for rent was glaring. Unsurprisingly, councillor Schaack took the poor administration bureau and the defense of the working classes at heart:

Mr. Schaack. When one speaks of poverty, a secret meeting should be held; (...) However, we are not in favour of publicity and will remain within the limits that discretion imposes on us in this case. The new Administration for the Poor has thus held, since 19 June 1910, when it took office, eighteen meetings more than the previous one since 1885! Considering that the budget amounts to 54000 francs, you will realise that there is work. (...)–During our house visits we have found many poor homes. It is sad to say this about a working-class town. In Neudorf, for example, we found that a father of a family with 7 children living in an attic. There are three beds there, it is hardly possible to get in. So, everything is still to be done and I am in favour of setting up committees and especially meet women who have grown up in poverty and who have learnt hardship; it is by no means enough to meet over a cup of coffee to do these things. That's all I want to say. It is also not enough that we declare we have arrived with our own means. We also have to give. We don't want to send away anyone who has no bread to eat, because it is better that 10 people should receive something than that one should go away hungry. It should also be noted that on the one hand the school breakfast has been excluded from the community budget and on the other the rates have been reduced. Furthermore, I would like to point out that it is up to the the Poor Administration to set up its own office, up in the new school building; because it is always embarrassing when people ask for support and then have to be there when this or that word is spoken. We have also had cases where entire families have come to us who were destitute. From all over the country they send people to Esch, that's no longer solidarity. The poor administrations would have to function better in our country. It is the duty of the people to feed their fellow human beings⁵⁵².

⁵⁵¹ See Stéfanie Kovacs (Kovacs 2022) whose work delineates the shy and lengthy engagement towards sanitation from the Industrial South in the face of rampant industrialisation.

⁵⁵² Local council meeting 11.01.1911, p.7. In the original: Wenn man von der Armut spricht, so sollte eine Geheimsitzung stattfinden; viele Punkte müßten eigentlich, berührt werden, was man aber so nicht kann. Wir sind jedoch für die Öffentlichkeit und werden in den Grenzen bleiben, die die Diskretion uns in diesem Falle anferlegt. Die neue Armenverwaltung hat also seit 19. Juni 1910, ihrem Amtsantritt, 18 Sitzungen abgehalten, also mehr als die frühere seit 1885 (...)Wir haben bei unseren Hausbesuchen viele arme Wohnungen gefunden. Es ist traurig wenn man dies sagen muß von einer Arbeiterstadt. Im Neudorf haben wir z. B. gefunden, daß ein Familienvater mit 7 Kindern eine Mansarde bewohnt. Drei Betten stehen dort, es ist kaum möglich hereinzukommen. Es ist also noch alles zu machen und ich bin dafür neben der Armenverwaltung noch Ausschüsse zu gründen und besonders aus Frauen, welche in der Armut ausgewachsen sind und die deren Härte kennen gelernt haben; es genügt noch lange nicht, daß inan sich bei einer Tasse Kaffee begegnet, um diese Sachen zu erledigen. Mehr will ich nicht sagen. Es genügt and) nicht daß wir erklären wir seien mit unseren eigenen Mitteln ausgekommen wir müssen auch geben. Wir wollen niemanden der kein Brot zu essen hat fortschicken, denn es ist besser 10 erhalten etwas, als daß einer hungrig fortgehen sollte. Weiter

Councillors and mayor had even more glaring stories served to illustrate furthermore what had been the findings of the first statistics on housing conditions in Luxembourg that had taken place in 1907. The municipality's own regulations were hardly ever respected⁵⁵³:

Mayor Spoo: As I said, we can't not be overly ambitious for the moment. We are currently in a transitional⁵⁵⁴ period. However, there is an abundance [of landlords] that mock all hygiene; for example, in one house 180 people live here instead of a maximum of 50. **Mr. Wester [councillor]**⁵⁵⁵: I have heard of a case which has occurred on the Grenz [neighbourhood], and which seems almost unbelievable. Someone in there was terminally ill. When the nurse came to attend the sick person the next morning, the patient was dead and placed in a coffin under the bed, while in the bed itself another was already asleep in the bed.⁵⁵⁶

Another issue faced by the working-class children was hunger, even though admitting so came with the resistance of some members of the municipal council. "There are hardly such poor people in Esch"⁵⁵⁷, stated the entrepreneur Joseph Wester during a council meeting requesting to vote a credit for free lunches for some children. Some socialist members of the local council proposed to expand benefits for the poor, while other members expressed concern about the potential for abuse

ist zu bemerken, daß einerseits das Schulfrühstück in das Gemeindebudget ausgenommen worden ist und wir andererseits die Taxen ermäßigt haben. Ferner möchte ich darauf hinweisen, daß es angezeigt wäre später der Armenverwaltung, ein eigenes Büro droben in dem neuen Schulhaus einzurichten; denn es ist immer peinlich, wenn die Leute um eine Unterstützung einkommen und dann dabei sein müssen, wenn dieses oder jenes Wort fällt. Und dann erzählt man auch nicht herum dieses oder jenes Mitglied würde gerne Unterstützung geben; wir geben alle gerne. Ich bitte den Schöffenrat sich mit dem Armenbüro wegen der Ausschüsse in Verbindung zu setzen. Wir haben weiter Fälle gehabt, wo ganze Familien zu uns gekommen sind, die mittellos waren. Wir konnten sie nicht über die Grenze setzen sondern mußten ihnen zu leben geben und wenn sie dann ein Billet für nach Hause gelangten taten wir es, aber nicht uns ihrer loszumachen. Aus dem ganzen Lande schickt man die Leute nach Esch, das ist nicht mehr solidarisch. Die Armenverwaltungen müßten dazu besser in unserem Lande funktionieren. Es ist die Pflicht der Menschen ihren Mitmenschen zu essen zu geben.

⁵⁵³ Art. 101. Of the Municipality Regulations established that „ All buildings with assembly rooms must have a sufficient number of proper lavatories, the cleanliness and maintenance of which must be ensured at all times. If a house contains various flats, the owner must provide a lavatory for each family or at least one lavatory for every 12 persons. In buildings with workrooms, offices, storerooms, public houses, etc. one lavatory and two urinals for every 15 persons and two urinals for every 15 persons, for meeting rooms (factories (factories, hotels, concert halls and theatres), one lavatory and one lavatory and two urinals per places must be installed for every 75 persons." Regarding Art. 94 - "Anyone wishing to let furnished apartments must register this in writing with the police commissioner" (local council meeting. 28.02.1912).

⁵⁵⁴ Reference to the fact the city was in a period of seasonal migration.

⁵⁵⁵ Joseph Wester (1882-1920). Construction entrepreneur.

⁵⁵⁶Local council meeting, 28.02.1911, p.4. **In the original:** Hr. Bürgermeister. Wie gesagt, könnt wir nicht für den Augenblick allzustreng eintreten. Wir befinden uns eben in einer Übergangsperiode. Es bestehen allerdings Fülle, welche aller Hygiene spotten; so sollen in einem Hause hier 180 Leute wohnen, anstatt höchstens; 50. Hr. Wester. Ich habe von einem Fall gehört, der sich auf der Grenze ereignet hat und der sozusagen unglaublich scheint. Jemand in diesem Hause war todkrank. Als die Krankenschwester am andern Morgen zu dem Kranken krümmen wollte, war derselbe tot und in einen Sarg unter das Bett gestellt, während im Bett selbst schon ein anderer schlief.

⁵⁵⁷ **In the original:** " So arme Leute gibt es wohl kaum in Esch".

of the municipality's generosity. Such divergent perspectives emerged from a similar line of reasoning that impeded the advancement of social legislation, as a traditional belief in the efficacy of simple Catholic charity was held to be sufficient to address the needs of the population. At the suggestion of the local school commission, headed by Hoffmann-Schaedgen, the provision of free lunches for those in need was proposed. Once again, Dr. Joerg advocated for the rights of the disadvantaged, while also expressing concern about the potential misuse of funds and abuses:

Dr. Joerg. The matter has some merit, but I don't see why the institution should be restricted to the children of the lower classes. There really are children in Esch who suffer from hunger (...) but on the other hand abuses will not fail to occur, just as with breakfast. (...) There are indeed children here in Esch whose mothers are widows and are also suffering from emaciation, and who get nothing to eat at lunchtime. In such cases, one may do so, because these children are indeed malnourished. Do not believe that giving them lunch will suffice in these cases. No! These children are then poorly accommodated in sleeping accommodation that makes a mockery of to all hygiene. (...) In Esch, as much as lies within our power, there should be no child who goes hungry, but [that] we do not go too far. ⁵⁵⁸

In which concerned matters of poverty being discussed the dignity and privacy of those in need was also at stake, some members advised that discussions on the itemization of the funds distributed by the poor Administration should be held in secret meeting and not be the subject of public minuting:

Councillor Schaack: There are parents who send their children who should not even know that the bread they eat comes from subsidies. Children, who should be unaware of the existence of a poor relief organisation are sent here. This is how far we have come. (...). However, the families now receive a fixed support every month and not every Monday as before. You know that it is difficult to deny a poor child a voucher, when it is explained that there is no bread at home. (...). I hope that next year we will hold a secret meeting for these matters; what is suitable for publication can then be made public. ⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁸ Local council meeting, 20.12.1911, p.11. **In the original:** „Die Sache hat manches für sich, aber ich sehe nicht ein, weshalb die Einrichtung auf die Kinder der unteren Klassen beschränkt, bleiben soll. Es gibt wirklich Kinder hier in Esch, die Hunger leiden (...), aber auf der anderen Seite werden die Mißbräuche nicht ausbleiben, gerade wie beim Frühstück. (...) Es gibt tatsächlich Kinder hier in Esch, deren Mütter Witwe und dazu an der Auszehrung erkrankt ist, und die mittags nichts zu essen bekommen. In solchen Fällen mag man es tun, denn diese Kinder sind in der Tat unterernährt. Glauben Sie nun aber nicht, daß die Verabreichung von Mittagessen in diesen Fällen genügt. Nein! (...) Diese Kinder sind dann noch schlecht logiert in einer Schlafstätte, die aller Hygiene Hohn spricht. In Esch soll es, so viel in unserer Kraft liegt, kein Kind geben, das Hunger leidet, aber wir dürfen auch nicht zu weit gehen. Es wird jedenfalls schwerhalten, alle Mißbräuche auszuschalten“.

⁵⁵⁹ Local council meeting, 27.08.1910, p.6. **In the original:** Es gibt Eltern, welche sogar ihre Kinder hinschicken, welch letztere doch nicht einmal wissen sollten, daß das Brot, was sie essen, von Unterstützungen herrührt. Kinder, deren das Bestehen einer Armen Verwaltung unbekannt sein sollte, schickt man hierher. Soweit waren wir gekommen. Wir haben den ganzen Winter hindurchgearbeitet, mit dieser Angelegenheit gründlich zu studieren; wenn wir Geheimsitzung hätten, könnte ich Ihnen Namen nennen, die ich hier verschweigen muß. Während der 3 ersten Monate 1909 wurden an permanenten Unterstützungen bezahlt 2336 Fr. In derselben Periode 1910 wurde bezahlt 2447 Fr. Also sozusagen kein Unterschied. Jedoch erhalten die Familien jetzt jeden Monat eine fixe Unterstützung und nicht

The Poor Administration relief consisted also in assisting with all kinds of basic needs in terms of materials: coal for heating, pharmacy invoices, shoes, clothing, basic food staples, transportation, help to pay funerals, payment of rent and even money lending. Because of a precedent misadministration of funds by the former head J.P. Claude, less Italians benefited from the relief, in 1910. This was again justified by the local administration as having been the result of the end to the financial abuses.

Councillor Schaack: Not as many Italians were transported free of charge, Mr. Claude is no longer here, otherwise this figure would be much higher. (...) **Councillor Schaack.** The following were paid for pharmacies 1489.92 and 907.17 Fr. respectively. It has become cheaper. **Mayor Spoo:** There are no more Italians more among them.⁵⁶⁰

But could the needs of Italians be less than their peer poor Luxembourgers, just because J.P. Claude had been dismissed? Local administrations had a certain degree of discretion as to how they used the funds available to them, although there are indications that foreigners may have been receiving less.⁵⁶¹ What this drop in financial and material assistance admittedly hints at is the beginning of a shift into a society that was increasingly becoming to identify as a nation against “others”, something that Scuto (Scuto 2012) contended as a signifier of the foreigners becoming a “distinct social group”. The working class was barely organised at this stage, let alone unionised, but research will show that there were tendencies to stigmatise foreigners even at the lower levels of the class structure in the years (decades) to come, a trend which the ordeal of the First World War only served to exacerbate⁵⁶². The double standards of the social democrat administration were overtly publicized as prioritizing the needs of Luxembourgers first, no matter how poor other groups of the Esch working class may have been. We will be seeing how, in fact, the discrimination cut across other sectors of the municipal administration’s budget and decision making-process.

wie früher jeden Montag einen Von. Sie wissen, daß es schwer füllt, einem armen Kind einen Bon zu verweigern, wenn es erklären kommt, zu Hause habe man kein Brot. (...) Ich hoffe, dass wir nächstes Jahr eine Geheimsitzung für diese Angelegenheiten halten; was geeignet ist zur Veröffentlichung kann dann veröffentlicht werden.

⁵⁶⁰ Local council meeting, 27.8.1910, p.7. **In the original:** Es würden nicht mehr soviel Italiener gratis befördert, Hr. Claude ist nicht mehr hier, sonst unter diese Ziffer viel höher (...) Hr. Schnaack. Für Apotheken wurden bezahlt 1489,92 bzw. 907,17 Fr. Dieselben sind billiger geworden. Hr. Bürgermeister. Es sind keine Italiener mehr darunter.

⁵⁶¹ See the work of Daniel Richter (Richter 2024) on how the Poor Relief was administrated.

⁵⁶² See namely Scuto (Scuto 2012) on the history of Luxembourgish nationality on the construction of a “Luxemburgertum” and the work of Fabain Trinkhaus (Trinkhaus 2016) on Italian labour migrants in Dudelange and the beginnings of the Luxembourg trade union movement.

But even among socialists, sparks arose, in a period where the demands universal suffrage started to gather momentum and workers were being organized in trade unions⁵⁶³. But above all he believed there was no significant will among the Luxembourgish working classes to organize themselves in favour of the universal suffrage, something that irritated his fellow councillor Schaack:

Councillor Schaack: It's not begging. We are in a class state. **Dr Joerg.** As socialists our workers should organise themselves in order to do justice for themselves; this is just a joke. (...) By the way, I have never found workers who are so little keen on organisation as our Luxembourg workers. It is their fault if they don't have the right to vote. After all, they have two fists with which they should stand before the Chamber; then one could see whether this pretense of regency would be put forward for a long time. The fact that they do not yet have the right to vote is their fault. In the other countries [they] also bought it with the gun on the shoulder. Here the workers won't budge. **Councillor Schaack.** If they do, they are thrown out and banned!" Go abroad!" That's how it looks right now. **Dr Joerg.:** Absolutely not. Just look just look at the Siemens-Schuckert plants; everything is organized there and there it doesn't happen. **Councillor Schaack:** I have often explained that that all our workers should be organised, whether they belong to the Christian Socialists or the free trade unions. (...) Whose fault is it if the mothers are no longer ashamed to send their children to the *Armenbureau!* On whom! On capitalism! That's why we as a progressive community must intervene to help. (...) Then help us, Mr. Joerg. Doctor, you are big and strong. Hold a conference about it. **Dr Joerg.** There are still too many conferences being held. If I were a gentleman, not even one would be allowed to take place one for a whole year. The first person to hold one would be fined 50 francs. **Mr. Schaack.** How can you, a socialist, say something like that!⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶³ See for a detailed history of the movements of trade unions Denis Scuto's work, namely (Scuto 2013; 1990b).

⁵⁶⁴ Local council meeting, 29.11.1911, p.11. **In the original:** Dr Joerg: Als Sozialisten sollten unsere: Arbeiter sich dann organisieren, um sich Gerechtigkeit zu verschaffen; das hier ist nur gebettelt. Hr. Schaack. Es ist nicht gebettelt. Wir sind in einem Klassenstaat. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Ich habe übrigens noch nie Arbeiter gefunden, die so wenig auf eine Organisation erpicht sind, wie unsere luxemburgischer (...) Es ist ihre Schuld, wenn sie noch kein Stimmrecht haben. Sie haben ja zwei Fäuste, mit denen sie sich vor der Kammer aufstellen sollten; dann könnte man ja sehen, ob dieser Vorwand der Regentschaft noch lange vorgebracht werden würde. (...) Daß dieselben noch kein Stimmrecht haben, ist nur ihre Schuld. (...) In den anderen Ländern hat man sich es auch mit dem Gewehr an der Schultererkauft. Hier rühren die Arbeiter sich nicht. Hr. Schaack. Wenn sie sich mucksen, werden sie herausgeschmissen und bann! Ins Ausland gehen! Da sieht es gerade so aus. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Absolut nicht. Sehen Sie sich doch mal nur die Siemens-Schuckert-Werke an; da ist alles organisiert und so was kommt dort nicht vor. Hr. Schaack. Ich habe schon oft erklärt, daß alle unsere Arbeiter organisiert sein müßten, einerlei sogar, ob bei den Christlich-Sozialen oder den freien Gewerkschaften. Dann bräuchten sie nicht ins Armenbureau zu gehen. (...) An wem liegt die Schuld, wenn die Mütter sich nicht mehr schämen, ihre Kinder ins Armettbureau zu schicken! An wem! Am Kapitalismus! Deshalb müssen wir als fortschrittliche Gemeinde helfend eingreifen. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Zuerst sich selbst respektiert. Ich kenne einen Christlich-Sozialen, der sich nicht genierte, im Armenbureau vorzusprechen. Ich habe ihm denn auch gelegentlich den Standpunkt klar gemacht. Hr. Schaack. Dann helfen Sie uns dabei, Hr. Doktor, Sie sind ja groß und stark. Halten Sie mal eine Konferenz darüber. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Es werden noch zu viel Konferenzen abgehalten. Wenn ich Herr wäre, dürfte ein ganzes Jahr hindurch nicht eine einzige stattfinden. (...) Der erste, der eine abhalten würde, bekäme 50 Franken Buße. (Heiterkeit, Unterbrechung.) Hr. Schaack. Wie, Sie als Sozialist sagen so was!

During the tenure of Armand Spoo, there was a clear inclination towards social democracy, which led to a perception that the state and municipality had a responsibility to provide assistance to the poor. This assistance was not merely based on Christian charity, but also on a broader social solidarity.

6.5.3 Local rivalries, self-interests and defense of the working classes

If local power members, regardless of their backgrounds, were to agree on the essential, a significant amount of their time in office would be spent in discussions on internal and personal quarrels. Incompatibilities of character, conflicts of interest, and divergences in substance were also observed. In some instances, these disputes reached the level of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. During the period under consideration, two significant internal disputes emerged and subsequently dominated the proceedings of the local council. The disputes concluded with a process initiated against the city architect Paul Flesch, as well as another initiated against J.P. Claude, an accountant and former secretary of the municipality, who was also the head of the Poor Administration. J.P. Claude, son of the former mayor Pierre, an accountant, was accused of malfeasance, specifically in the manner in which he allocated funds as Head of the Poor Administration. He was also dismissed in 1909, despite the government's reservations about the circumstances surrounding his dismissal. As with the case of Paul Flesch, the government was opposed to a dismissal that would have resulted in J.P. Claude, a respected individual, being deprived of a state pension.⁵⁶⁵ The affair appears not to have taken much of a toll on Claude. In fact, by 1923 he was referred to as “honorary secretary of the municipality of Esch-sur-Alzette” (Municipalité d’Esch-sur-Alzette 1923). Moreover he ran a small publishing business and kept an active role in the diplomatic relationships with Italy and Spain, both of which in the quality of Chancellor of the Italian Consulate, and Honorary Vice-Consul of Spain (Blasen 2021b). Quarrels, mistrust and accusations of favoritism and defense of self-interests marked each single administration from 1906 to 1922. Mistakes, lost invoices and delays in making available material for construction of the new Industrial school⁵⁶⁶, resulted in a long process, of which Paul Flesch (municipal architect 1901-1910) was eventually acquitted, coming back briefly to seat as

⁵⁶⁵ See affair Claude. ANLux Dossier Communaux INT – 617.

⁵⁶⁶ For the details of the incident see the background to the construction of the Industrial and Commercial School in the Guide Historique et Architectural de la Ville d’Esch-sur-Alzette (Buchler et al. 2020, 128–34).

municipal councillor power in 1912. The years 1909-1912 were defined by lengthy meetings spent discussing eventual “punishment” measures to the city’s architect. Paul Flesch had dared to speak out against the financial pretensions of a few entrepreneurs, and to reject their financial pretensions during the construction of the *Ecole Industrielle et Commerciale* in Esch that Flesch supervised as municipal architect. In their capacities of entrepreneurs, three other members (Spoo⁵⁶⁷, Wester and Nicolas Hoffmann-Schaedgen) were involved because providers themselves of material, goods, and labour to the Industrial School. Flesch also criticised the company Spoo et Cie, of which Armand Spoo was the technical director, for being too slow in carrying out the work. Nicolas Hoffmann-Schaedgen, who was responsible for the carpentry work, was criticised for having exaggerated the length (and as consequence the cost) of the wooden parts. The contractor, Joseph Wester, was accused of using inferior quality cement, a charge that led to the end of the partnership between Wester and cement manufacturer Bregoli. The contractors deny the allegations. However, the affair had political consequences for the city and professional consequences for Paul Flesch. The process on the presumed abuses of power by Flesch went through⁵⁶⁸ various rounds of letters to and from the Government. Flesch apparently gathered the support of one councillor only, J.P. Hoferlin, a commercial agent and presumably personal friend, who stated to his defense throughout the process, undertaken by the local council, to dismiss him:

Mr. Hoferlin [councillor]: “Is it to be regarded as lawful, otherwise as proper that 3 councillors involved in the construction of the industrial school as main contractors and on whose invoice cancellations, up to several thousand francs were made by the town architect Flesch, can take part in this vote, as obviously sworn enemies of Flesch? (...). Flesch has been employed here for 10 years, whether provisionally or otherwise. He has a family to feed and I don’t want to take his bread [away]. I agree with Mr. Schaack that the architect should

⁵⁶⁷ Armand Spoo’s company Spoo et Cie had been a provider during the construction of the new Industrial School that was terminated by 1909. To avoid conflicts of interest and presumably because he learnt the lessons from this process Spoo committed however not to supply anything to the municipality in his capacity of businessowner: “Regarding ironmongers, I have to admit I have to admit that we only have two large shops in this in this sector. I can also name them. They are Buchholtz and Gillain. If you need a speciality item, you have to go there. Our business [Spoo et Cie] is not an option here. I don’t want to supply anything for the municipality “. See his intervention during the local council meeting of 7 July 1910). **In the original:** „In Bezug auf Eisenhandlungen muß ich zugeben, daß wir nur zwei große Geschäfte in dieser Branche haben. Ich kann dieselben auch namhaft machen. Es sind Buchholtz und Gillain. Wenn man einen Spezialartikel braucht, muß man dorthin gehen. Unser Geschäft kommt ja hier nicht in Betracht. Ich will nichts für die Gemeinde liefern “.

⁵⁶⁸ The opinion of the Government remained ambiguous as it issued letters defending the role played by the other councillors/contractors as it did in defending Flesch whose dismissal they deemed radical: “Hr. Bürgermeister verliert das betr. Schreiben des Hrn. Generaldirektors des Innern vom 20. August, laut welchem letzterem, der in der Sitzung vom 7. Juli gefaßte Beschluß betreffend die Entlassung des Hrn. Flesch unannehmbar scheint. Hr. Generaldirektor ist der Ansicht, daß keine derart entscheidenden Gründe vorliegen, mit die radikale Entlassung eines Beamten mit 9-jähriger Dienstzeit zu rechtfertigen, dem man alles in allem keinen groben Dienstfehler vorwerfen könne.

work exclusively for the municipality, but not show him the door.⁵⁶⁹ A personal enmity should not be exploited in this way (Intervention in the local municipal meeting on 16.06.1910, p.11-12).

In a brochure released in 1911 (Flesch 1911), called *Mein Fall* (My downfall), Flesch protested against his dismissal as city architect, and expressed dismay about the way in which in one instance on the occasion of a municipal council meeting, in April 1910 he had felt embarrassed as, both as a professional and as a family man.⁵⁷⁰ His credibility was stained. Personal animosities did a lot to hinder the normal functioning of the local council as many hours of discussion were lost over sometimes even the pettiest sums of money. Doctor Joerg, despite being in theory in the same political camp as Flesch fully and steadily endorsed his dismissal throughout the process referring to him depreciatively as „den Här Bonjour“.⁵⁷¹

Other members of the local council were scrutinized for their abuses of power and misguidances. More legal pursuits and intrigues followed throughout the years. These had often more to do with personal disliking than with political allegiance.

Mayor Michels: (...) We take turns with the various entrepreneurs. (...) At the meeting before last, Mr. Biwer made a remark (...): “All connections are being sought here.” What did you mean by that? Explain to me what you meant what you meant by “looking for connections” (...). What do you want to say what you want to accuse the Board of Aldermen? **Councillor Biwer:** It’s not about the college of aldermen, but about you personally. (Local council meeting, 12.04.1913, p.74.).

Yet another case involved cases of fights between police officers and all sorts of ill management within the police forces.⁵⁷² For those with other pressing issues for the daily agenda it was no wonder that these vicissitudes exasperated their wishes to move further and beyond such “pathetic

⁵⁶⁹ **In the original:** Flesch ist hier angestellt seit 10 Jahren ob provisorisch oder anders. Er hat eine Familie zu ernähren und ich möchte ihm sein Brot nicht nehmen. Ich bin mit Hrn. Schaack einverstanden, daß der Architekt ausschließlich für die Gemeinde arbeiten soll, aber nicht ihn vor die Tür zu setzen. (...) Man sollte eine persönliche Feindschaft nicht aus dieser Art und Weise hier ausschlichten.

⁵⁷⁰ Local council meeting minutes 26.04.1910.

⁵⁷¹ Local council meeting, 20.10.1910, p.11.” Mr. Bonjour”, here in a clear reference to Paul Flesch’s francophile ideology, his adherence to the Free Thinkers’ Movement, republicanism and not least his overtly position in favour of Luxembourg’s annexation to France, during the turbulent period of 1918-1919. In his own words: „If Napoleon hadn’t lost the battle of Waterloo, we’d still be French today and there’d have been no need for a plebiscite“ (Flesch 1919). He evoked at different occasions in the press the right of Luxemburgers “of Gallic race, to the return to the “motherland“ [France]. His ideals of a francophile Luxembourg inscribe themselves in an attempt from some circles and some press to enable a geostrategic vicinity to France. If it is true that some branches of society were in favour of the economic union and that between Belgium and France the majority voted for an economic union with France (soon rejected by France itself), only an élite spoke French, mastery of French was certainly not the norm among the masses.

⁵⁷² Quiqueret’s (Quiqueret 2022) book retraces the story of the police officer later incriminated with one of the most surprising murders in the history of Esch.

civil service stories”⁵⁷³. In 1913, under the new presidency of J.P. Michels, Councillor Donnersbach regretted the amount of money lost in litigation⁵⁷⁴, but Michels' presidency would also see its share of personal animosities come to dominate and obscure the functioning of the local council.

Entrepreneurs took regular seats at the local management. Nicolas Biwer, Joseph Wester, Armand Spoo, Jean-Baptiste Kersch, four entrepreneurs of the construction and machinery sector all shared an interest in being outsourced for the creation of local works. If it was customary to give local entrepreneurs turns for the works outsourced, exchanges of accusations on favouritism to one or the other entrepreneur soon emerged. If in 1913, insinuations are blatant, they soon grew to become serious accusations in the years that followed:

Mayor Michels: In the past 10 years—you earned 186, 397 francs from the municipal administration. **Councillor Biwer.** I have worked the least of all, for the city. **Mayor Michels.** In 1898, you carried out francs for directing work for 1090 francs (. . .) **Mayor Michels:** In the year 1899 for 1690 francs⁵⁷⁵

For the first time, but not last during his term, J.P. Michels will be submitted to a vote of non-confidence, among other allegations that of using his office to be benefitting his own liquor and cigar business. This far he still was shown some support from other councilors. Nickels, another member took to his defense:

Councillor Nickels: As to the other question, of the “search for connections”, you will find vague excuses. In my opinion, Mr. Michels is not doing his business, the politics he pursues here will hardly benefit his business.⁵⁷⁶

Exchanges of accusations were often pursued up to the higher instances, in the Government. In one instance the minority⁵⁷⁷ members of the local council, Biwer, Noesen and Pierrard protested and shared with the Government their allegations against the Mayor J.P. Michels in 1916. In their dossier it was insinuated some entrepreneurs were being favored on road works, and that they

⁵⁷³ Local council meeting minutes, 28.04.1910, p.5

⁵⁷⁴ Local council meeting minutes, 04.01.1913.

⁵⁷⁵ Local council meeting, 22.03.1913, p. 2. **In the original:** H. Bürgermeister: Innerhalb 10 Jahren haben Sie von der Stadtverwaltung 186 397 Franken bezogen. Herr Biwer. Ich habe am wenigsten von allen für die Stadt gearbeitet. H. Bürgermeister. 1898 führten Sie für 1090 Franken Regiearbeiten aus (...) H. Bürgermeister. Im Jahre 1899 für 1690 Franken.

⁵⁷⁶ Local council meetings, 20.04.1913, p.94.

⁵⁷⁷ Nicolas Biwer, entrepreneur; Theodore Noesen, entrepreneur and J.P. Pierrard, tailor, all leaning to the conservative camp.

(minority) were being unfairly targeted by communal taxes. Eventually, the government took sides with the majority downplaying the whole affair to personal animosities:

This provision would particularly affect contractors and owners who are members of the council, such as Messrs Biwer and Noesen, as well as their relatives and political friends, such as Messrs Lefèvre and Kayser. (...) My visit to the site and the explanations provided to me [by the majority] have convinced me that I share [the majority's] view. (Letter from the Commissaire de District to the Director General of internal Affairs and Public Instruction on the issue of the Biwer complaint on works conducted in the Adolf-Emil Strasse, 8. 12. 1916)⁵⁷⁸.

Concerns with the viability, even survival of local businesses did not concern only the rivalries between individual merchants and entrepreneurs but also the city center entrepreneurs faced with the competition of the industrial companies, which they believed should be concerned exclusively manufacture of steel instead of creating what they saw as disloyal competition through the creation of *Okonomate*⁵⁷⁹. The presence of some employees of the steel plants in the municipal council caused discomfort for what they might know and what information they may share back at work. Coucillor Weisgerber, a butcher, voiced his concerns:

Councillor Weisgerber: It will suffice if I tell you that all invoices for deliveries for the cooperative must be addressed to the factory. So it is not the cooperative that pays, but Gelsenkirchen. We cannot stand by and watch the merchants and owners being oppressed. I'm not against the Schmelz [steel plant], but it has to leave something for the other people as well. The Ökonomat in Dudelange has abolished articles for sale according to what the merchants there have told us. **Mr. Donnersbach.** I have heard nothing about it. On the contrary, I have heard that new articles have been purchased. **Mr. Weisgerber.** What I am saying has been explained by Dudelange businessmen here in the Commercial Association. **Mr. Donnersbach.** I told the gentlemen this morning in the Ökonomat that the factory had been accused of this and that. They replied that they should come and inspect the books. **Mr. Schaack.** If you were free, you would not be speaking in these terms. **Councillor Donnersbach.** Not at all! I am speaking without regard to any interests in order to refute the erroneous view that has been spread. I have done that and only that.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁸ ANLux-INT 613.

⁵⁷⁹ Retail shop set up by an employer for the use of its employees. The unease evolved from 1904-1905, among the Esch traders. Various accounts suggested that the number of bankruptcies is increasing rapidly. It also seems that the value of real estate has begun to fall in various parts of the canton and that certain communes are reluctant to invest in public utility projects because they doubt the future of the locality. employers' shop associations were being blamed for the ruin of small businesses. See Jacques Maas (Maas 1983) on the political implications for the liberal representatives of this crisis. The First World War was the last drop on the already dire situation of small businesses and whole traders. Fayot (Fayot 1979) also argues that the workers dependency on their employers was exacerbated by the fact that even though the law of 1895 forbade payment in goods (truck system), but the plants "shops" dominated the market because the customers were willing to pay the price.

⁵⁸⁰ Local council meeting, 27.6.1914, p.84. **In the original:** Weisgerber: Es wird doch genügen, wenn ich Ihnen sage, daß sämtliche Rechnungen für Lieferungen für den Konsum an das Werk adressiert sein müssen. Es ist also nicht der Konsum, her bezahlt, sondern Gelsenkirchen. Wir können doch nicht ruhig zusehen, daß die Kaufleute und die Eigentümer unterdrückt werden. Ich bin nicht gegen die Schmelz, aber sie muss doch schließlich auch etwas für die anderen Leute übrig haben. Im Ökonomat in Düdelingen hat man Verkaufs Artikel abgeschafft gemäß dem was die dortigen Kaufleute uns mitgeteilt haben. **Herr Donnersbach:** Ich habe nichts davon gehört. Ich habe im Gegenteil davon gehört, daß man neue Artikel angeschafft hat. **Herr Weisgerber:** Was ich sage, das haben Düdelinger

However, it would have been the dramatic First World War years and the rush for food supply that characterized the daily life of the city's administration, that exposed the faults of many local councillors, all parties confounded, in their unlawful advantage taking of their position in access for food.

6.5.4 Food provisions and occupation - The hardship of 1914-1918

The outbreak of the First World War marked a break with the usual routine concerns of the local council. The challenges of the First World War were added to the ordeal of the daily needs of a largely working-class population. International events, which had never been at the centre of its concerns, or only to a very limited extent, brought to a halt the polemics that had often centred on education question and its demands for increasing secularisation. The community had to deal with the problems arising from the necessities of food and the German presence:

The autonomy of the theoretically neutral country is absent when it comes to supplies. Germany imposed its conditions. Even to obtain supplies from neutral countries, the Luxembourg government had to go through the German authorities (Scuto 2013, 30).

The antagonism between the south and the north of the country, always latent, was brutally reawakened by the problems of supply and famine. A real outbreak of anti-farmer hatred spread through the population of the mining south and was felt in local council meetings. The anti-clericalism of some councillors was exacerbated by the favourable attitude of the conservative right to what they considered to be a well-fed peasantry. Doctor Michel Welter, the social-democrat elected for the Esch district had just been nominated Minister in charge of Agriculture. The fact that he did not seem to be in a position of facilitating access to food to his fellow district men, had been a hard pill to swallow for the socialists (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978).

The state of war made it impossible to import food to make up for the shortfall in domestic production. The government introduced rationing and set maximum prices to curb inflation. The

Geschäftsleute hier im kaufmännischen Verein erklärt. **Herr Donnersbach:** Ich habe heute Morgen im Ökonomat den Herrn mitgeteilt, das und das habe man den Werk vorgeworfen. Sie antworteten mir, man solle Einsicht von den Büchern nehmen kommen. Herr Schaack. Nicht wahr, wenn Sie frei wären würden Sie jetzt eine andere Sprache führen. **Herr Donnersbach:** Nicht doch! Ich spreche ohne Berücksichtigung irgendwelcher Interessen um die irriige Einsicht, die man verbreitet hat zu widerlegen. Das habe ich und nur das habe ich getan.

result was a flourishing black market and high tension between town and country. During the war years the local council prioritized the issue of vital food supply rationing. Finding food staples for the Esch population was at the time their number one priority, namely, butter, meat, milk, cereals and fat for cooking. Councillor Wester recalled the humiliation of having to procure beans and potatoes during the negotiations with farmers:

Councillor Wester: So, we also went to Oesling to buy potatoes. We got down on our knees in front of the farmers, so to speak, and had to put up with a lot of humiliation, but in the end, we managed to get potatoes on the condition that we would dig them up ourselves. In the evening we had 8 wagons together, all of which came to Esch. We sacrificed our money and our health for this (Intervention of Joseph Wester responsible for the food provision, 12 May 1917).⁵⁸¹

Once again, there were accusations about the government's handling of the situation, choosing to help other regions first. Complaints about farmers trying to make extra profits and showing no solidarity with the Minett were high on the agenda:

Councillor Brausch: I would like to take this opportunity to say that we are regarded throughout the country as people who are quite different. We are indeed treated as pariahs. When it comes to food distribution, we only get our turn after everyone else has been fed. The poorest villages are served before us. When we came to ask about the lard, there was already a whole pile of consignment notes for deliveries to other villages. **Mayor Michels:** It was the same with petrol. (...) **Councillor Weisgerber:** And the maximum prices will only be set when the "gentlemen farmers" have sold their bulls at 50 cents a pound.⁵⁸²

Bran, oats, and semolina were insufficiently supplied to Esch, a fact blamed to the Association of Local Agricultural Associations, whose distribution failed Esch, which in turn had to rely on neighbouring towns of Schifflange and Mondercange for solidarity:

Mayor Michels: on behalf of the small civil servants, craftsmen, tradesmen and labourers, the municipal council must protest against the way in which the government has been treating consumers in recent times. Now they are also saying that we will have to make do with 100 grams of meat per day from 1 September. For a man who has to work from morning till night that is not enough. (...) With the farmers who have plenty of milk and eggs, they may be able to do so, but they also have the extra 90 grams of bread a day. We cannot

⁵⁸¹ Local council meeting, 12.05.1917, p.38. **In the original:** So waren wir auch ins Oesling um Kartoffeln zu kaufen. Wir haben uns sozusagen auf die Knie vor den Bauern gesetzt, wir mußten mancherlei Demütigungen über uns ergehen lassen; schließlich aber gelang es uns, Kartoffeln zu bekommen, unter der Bedingung, daß wir sie selbst ausheben würden. Abends hatten wir 8 Wagons zusammen, die alle nach Esch kamen. Wir haben dafür unser Geld und unsere Gesundheit geopfert.

⁵⁸² Local council dated 3.05.1916, pp.11-12. **In the original:** **Hr. Brausch:** Bei dieser Gelegenheit will ich feststellen, daß wir im ganzen Lande als Leute betrachtet werden, die ganz anders sind. Man behandelt uns tatsächlich als Parias. Bei der Nahrungsmittelverteilung kommen wir erst an die Reihe, wenn alle andern versorgt sind. Die armseligsten Dörfer werden vor uns bedient. Als wir wegen des Schmalzes vorstellig wurden, lag bereits ein ganzer Haufen von Frachtbriefen zu den Lieferungen an andere Ortschaften da. **Hr. Bürgermeister.** Beim Benzin war es gerade so. **Hr. Weisgerber.** Und die Höchstpreise werden erst gemacht, wenn die „Herrenbauern" ihre Stiere zu 50 Sous das Pfund verkauft haben werden.

possibly be satisfied with this situation. In the first few days, therefore the Council of Aldermen will call a public meeting for this purpose. I recently went to the government with 10 workers and civil servants; At that time, we were told that the meat ration would be increased to 125 grams, and that we would also get 50 grams more bread. None of that is happening. The only one who gets 90 grams more bread is the farmer, he is the producer and as such should get more, I am happy to admit that. But on the other hand, we have a duty to work against this enterprise (...) **Councillor Weisgerber:** The farmer has everything he needs. We have no bacon, no lard, no fat, nothing.⁵⁸³

The crisis lived during the war years was not enough to keep the municipal council united, much on the contrary. Renewed feuds between individual councillors and the mayor emerged with accusations strong enough to make the local council shake. In the last quarter of 1916, irregularities in the way the vital food supplies were managed and distributed by the local councillors in charge led to disagreements with Mayor Michels and disrupted the functioning of the local council. A motion for the dismissal of the members of the Food Commission of Wester, Bock and Brausch⁵⁸⁴ was the result of ongoing disagreements. Since there was an absence of six municipal councillors during more than three consecutive meetings of the municipal council without legitimate, a proposal was submitted to dissolve it⁵⁸⁵. Since part of the local council stopped attending the meetings in 1916, thus causing the hindering its functioning because the necessary number of members was not gathered for quorum. Projects such as the Hospital had also to be delayed. The pressure of war was not enough to keep at bay the usual arguments and demands for dissolution of the local council. A motion of confidence to mayor Michels was again also needed in late 1916. The struggle for food also ended up costing the life of the young mayor himself. J.P. Michels succumbed to a lung infection, in the aftermath of a trip to Berlin, where he had been negotiating food supplies, in late 1917. Nicolas Biwer and J.P. Pierrard will take their political revenge (they

⁵⁸³ Local council meeting, 19.08.1916, p.2. **In the original: Hr. Bürgermeister:** Wir haben noch eine andere Angelegenheit. Im Namen der kleinen Beamten, Handwerker, Geschäftsleute und Arbeiter muß der Gemeinderat Protest erheben gegen die Art und Weise, wie die Regierung die Konsumenten in der letzten Zeit behandelt. Jetzt heißt es auch noch, wir müßten uns ab 1. September mit 100 Gramm Fleisch pro Tag begnügen. Für einen Mann, der von morgens bis abends arbeiten muß, ist das nicht genug. (...) Bei den Bauern, die sich reichlich an Milch und Eiern ergreifen können, mag das ja hingehen, auch haben dieselben 90 Gramm Brot pro Tag mehr. Wir können uns unmöglich mit dieser Sachlage zufrieden geben. In den ersten Tagen wird deshalb der Schöffenrat oder der demokratische Vereine öffentliche Versammlung dieserhalb einberufen. Ich war bereits kürzlich mit 10 Arbeitern und Beamten in der Regierung vorstellig geworden; damals sagte man uns, die Fleischration werde auf 125 Gramm festgesetzt, auch bekämen wir 50 Gramm Brot mehr. All das geschieht nicht. Der einzige, der 90 Gramm Brot mehr bekommt ist der Bauer, er ist der Produzent und als solcher soll er auch mehr bekommen, das gebe ich gerne zu. Wir haben aber andererseits die Pflicht der Unternehmung mit allen Kräften entgegen zu arbeiten und wir werden auch in diesem Sinne Sorge tragen. Hr. Weisgerber. Der Bauer hat alles was er braucht. Wir haben keinen Speck, kein Schmalz, kein Fett, nichts.

⁵⁸⁴ Nicolas Brausch (1869-1918), entrepreneur who worked in the field of transport of minerals.

⁵⁸⁵ Local council meeting minutes of 7.12.1916.

had been Michels fiercest rivals)⁵⁸⁶, by subsequently becoming mayors of the city and giving way to a right-wing administration for a few years, at the end of 1917 and 1919 respectively. Both lost no time in attacking the previous majority. The accusations leveled against several members of the municipal council, who had been responsible for food supplies during the war, were harsh. They included the diversion of vouchers, food and favouritism towards ARBED:

Councillor Wester: We have left you wheat and rye, which no other municipality in the country has. Be glad that you have that. (...) **Councillor Pierrard:** Just one word. (...) everyone knows that you have been more concerned more concerned with the Industrial plants than with the community. (...) **Councillor Wester:** For our part, we had borrowed beans from the Arbed and if they got them from us, it was because we owed them. (Exchange during local council meeting, 9 May 1917, p.38).⁵⁸⁷

The new administration in charge after Michels, took care of bringing to light the findings on each of the members involved. Suspicions had started during the time Michels was in office. The latter had indeed ordered an investigation and the dismissal of the members in charge of the food provision⁵⁸⁸, namely Joseph Wester (construction entrepreneur and opponent to Nicolas Biwer), Bock, Donnersbach, Weisgerber and Brausch. The findings of the audit performed by the local committee in 1917 appeared to be downplayed by the Government, which asked for things to be solved internally without its intervention.

If the war period served to aggravate clashes, it also paradoxically highlights where the council was to stay united. Amidst the many conflicts that arose during the fifteen years here examined two fronts stand out in a demonstration of unity among municipal council members: one being the shared frustrations in the relationship with the central Government.

The other was the emergence of a growing sense of national identity. Before 1914, the percentage of foreign employees was considerable and foreign personnel continued to mark their presence until well beyond the First World War (Sauer, 2019). The need for technical expertise brought with the implementation of the first German managed iron and steel sector players started as early as 1870. Nevertheless, the start of the First World War sees the first signs of germanophobia

⁵⁸⁶ Intervention of councillor Biwer at local council meeting in 20.04.1913, p.4: “The mayor was also once an entrepreneur in the municipality. (...) You had already told people in around the pubs that you would comb my hair here; Remember not to get too close to me again—or you'll have to deal with me.“ **In the original:** Der Herr Bürgermeister war auch einmal Unternehmer der Gemeinde (...) Herr Biwer. Sie hatten bereits in den Wirtshäusern herumerzählt, Sie würden mich hier kämmen.

⁵⁸⁷ **In the original: Hr. Wester:** Wir haben Ihnen Weizen und Roggen hinterlassen, was keine andere Gemeinde des Landes hat. Seien Sie froh, daß Sie den haben. (...). **Hr. Pierrard:** Nur ein Wort. (...) Ein jeder weiß, daß Sie sich in der letzten Zeit: mehr um die Schmelzen gekümmert haben als um die Gemeinde (...).

⁵⁸⁸ See local council meeting minutes 25.11.1916.

emerge with it. The unease towards the German presence at the factories, in the Minett region, at managerial level becomes palpable. The suspicion towards Germans extended to other parts of the South, where Germany owned factories and industrial plants were located, with Differdange being another case in point:

(...) But this [Max] Meier⁵⁸⁹, who knows how to be jovial and give a chance to the bold, represents an ideology that many Luxembourgers do not like: that of a "Germany in full capitalist expansion, masking its imperialist mystique as a people of lords, often unconsciously, under the guise of crass utilitarianism and impulsive, generous bonhomie (Léon Geisen as cited by Wilhelm (F. Wilhelm 1999, 104).

There was little in the council meetings to suggest that the German military presence in the Grand Duchy was not tolerated or that it was even questioned. This is true, at least for the first couple of years. The reasons for it can partly be explained by Luxembourg's membership to the *Zollverein* and dependency on the German economic sector, partly by the ambiguous stance of the Government itself and the Monarch (Scuto 2014)⁵⁹⁰. One further interpretation is that of course of a country which simply abided by the rules of its supposed neutrality status. Nevertheless, there were occasions when members of the local council vocalized their frustration at how French citizens were being treated. One on an equally rare occasion councillor Schaack proffered the words "invasion", defended the country's neutrality and gathered unanimous support from the other members of the local council.

⁵⁸⁹ Max Meier, Engineer and director of Société des Hauts Fourneaux de Differdange from 1904 until 1919. Popular but deemed authoritarian, Meier paved the way for the economic future of the company and Differdange itself (Wilhelm, 1999).

⁵⁹⁰ The ambiguous stance of Luxembourg in the conflict has been long been part of an open historical debate. The occupation was limited to the military, and Luxembourg's political institutions remained untouched for the duration of the war. the government of Minister of State Paul Eyschen appealed for calm to the Luxembourg population and continued to observe strict neutrality towards all the belligerents. This stance earned Luxembourg accusations of collaboration from the Allies after the end of hostilities.

Councillor Schaack: We are living in difficult times where we are threatened with death and life. A fortnight ago, we attended a meeting in which we took on the duty of mediating with the government at the steelworks. Today we are faced with a great task that is only just becoming as difficult as it was in those August days of 1914 when the Germans invaded the country. (...) On the other hand, I also protest against the fact that a foreign power has interfered in internal affairs here on neutral territory.⁵⁹¹

Undoubtedly, it will be the direct interference of the German military, when of the workers' strike events in 1917,⁵⁹² dictating the local council on how it should act that first propelled its subsequent vehement response. The contempt shown by the German military on the insufficiency and unpreparedness of local police to deal with such strike, instigated a firmer reply from the local council. A reply letter from the local council to the German military Landsturm Infantry. Battalion in Siegburg in June 1917, is explicit⁵⁹³:

⁵⁹¹ Extraordinary local council meeting, 2 June 1917, (pp.59-60). **In the original: Hr. Schaack:** Wir leben in schweren Zeiten, wo wir mit Tod und Leben bedroht sind. Vor 14 Tagen wohnten wir einer Versammlung bei, in welcher wir die Pflicht übernommen haben, mit der Regierung bei den Hüttenwerken zu vermitteln. Heute stehen wir vor einer großen Aufgabe, die gerade zu schwer erst, wie in jenen August tagen 1914, als die Deutschen ins Land einrückten. (...) Andererseits protestiere ich aber auch dagegen, daß hier auf neutralem Gebiet eine Fremde Macht sich in innere Angelegenheiten eingemischt hat.)

⁵⁹² The shortages, rising prices and loss of purchasing power led to social unrest. Discontent led workers to organise themselves into trade unions. In September 1916, the first two iron and steel unions were formed in the coalfield, in Esch-sur-Alzette, and in the capital. A strike that broke out in the steel industry in 1917 was severely repressed by the German army. German Military intervened on the occasion of the organization of a strike by workers of the Gelsenkirchen demanding a raise in their wage.

⁵⁹³ Bei Beantwortung Ihres Briefes vom 3. Juni 1917 Oberstleutnant und Kommandeur, (...) benutzen wir die Gelegenheit Ihnen zu gleicher Zeit auf Ihr Schreiben vom 1. Juni 1917, (...) zu antworten. Was die beiden Schreiben in Allgemeinen anbelangt, sei bemerkt, daß die Gemeinde-Verwaltung der Stadt Esch an der Alzette nur die luxemburgischen Gesetze, deren Außerkraftsetzung bis dahin nicht erfolgt ist, anerkennt und Verfügungen, die von einer anderen Seite als von Seiten der luxemburgischen Regierung erfolgen, als nicht bestehend ansieht, besonders, wenn solche Verfügungen in direktem Widerspruche mit unserer Gesetzgebung, bzw. Verfassung stehen, sodaß deren Befolgung für uns, für die Gendarmerie und die Polizeiorgane eine Verletzung der durch die Verfassung gewährleisteten Rechte von Seiten öffentlicher Beamten darstellen würde und mit schweren Strafen belegt ist. Was die Briefe im Einzelnen anbelangt, so sei erwähnt, daß der Gesamthalt des ersten Briefes, sowie die einzelnen Vorschriften direkt im Widerspruch zu Art. 24 und 25 unserer Verfassung, nämlich zu Art. 24, welcher die Freiheit, seine Meinung vor allen Dingen durch das Wort kundzugeben, garantiert und Art. 25, welcher das Versammlungsrecht garantiert, verstoßen. Der Hinweis also, daß die Gendarmerie und die Polizeiorgane mitverantwortlich gemacht werden, kommt der Aufforderung gleich, diese Beamten, welche speziell berufen sind den Gesetzen ihres Landes Achtung zu verschaffen, sollen den Gesetzen ihres Landes zuwiderhandeln. Der erste Brief wurde, wie Sie vielleicht selbst gesehen haben, veröffentlicht, um die Bevölkerung vor Unannehmlichkeiten Ihrerseits zu schützen, nicht weil die Gemeindeverwaltung mit dem Inhalt des Briefes einverstanden gewesen wäre. Er wurde veröffentlicht, ohne die Bevölkerung auf das Ungesetzliche des Inhaltes aufmerksam zu machen, um die bis dahin sich vollständig ruhig verhaltende Bevölkerung nicht durch Ihr Vorgehen zu reizen. Art. 25 der Verfassung, welcher lautet wie folgt: Art. 25. Les Luxembourgeois ont le droit de s'assembler paisiblement et sans armes, en se conformant aux lois qui règlent l'exercice de ce droit, sans pouvoir le soumettre une autorisation préalable. Zu Deutsch: Die Luxemburger haben das Recht, sich friedlich und ohne Waffen zu versammeln, indem sie sich den Gesetzen fügen, welche die Ausübung dieses Rechtes regeln, ohne daß hierzu eine vorherige Ermächtigung erfordert wäre. Wie Sie sehen, würde die Weitergabe Ihrer Verfügung, wie Sie es nennen, eine direkte Verletzung unserer Verfassung, bzw. ein

In reply to your letter of 3 June 1917, Lieutenant Colonel and Commander (...) we take the opportunity at the same time to reply to your letter of 1 June 1917 (...) As regards the two letters in general it should be noted that the municipal administration of the town of Esch an der Alzette only applies the Luxembourg laws, and that decrees from any party other than the Luxembourg, especially if such decrees are in direct contradiction with our Constitution, so that for us, for the gendarmerie and the police authorities a violation of the rights guaranteed by the constitution on the part of public officials is subject to severe penalties.(...) As far as the letters in detail are concerned, it should be noted that the overall content of the first letter, as well as the individual provisions, are in direct contradiction with articles 24 and 25 of our constitution, namely Art. 24, which guarantees the freedom to express one's opinion, and Art. 25, which guarantees the right of which guarantees the right of assembly. The reference to the fact that the gendarmerie and the police are held jointly responsible police is tantamount to calling on these officials to uphold the laws of their country (...) As you may have seen for yourself, the first letter was published ⁵⁹⁴, to protect the population from any inconvenience on your part, not because the municipal administration agreed with the content of the letter. It was published without making the population aware of the unlawful nature of the content, so as not to disturb the population, which had been completely calm until then. Article 25 of the Constitution, which reads as follows: Art. 25: « Les Luxembourgeois ont le droit de s'assembler paisiblement et sans armes, en se conformant aux lois qui règlent l'exercice de ce droit, en se conformant aux lois qui règlent l'exercice de ce droit, sans pouvoir le soumettre une autorisation préalable ».The Luxembourgers have the right to peacefully and without arms by complying with the laws which regulate the exercise of this right without prior authorisation. As you can see, the transfer of your decree, as you call it, would be a direct violation of our constitution, or an abuse of authority on our part for which the College [of Aldermen], mindful of the oath of office it has taken, will never give in. Finally, we would like to ask you that future letters in the same spirit be directed to the government in Luxembourg, as we, as already mentioned above, only receive only accept instructions from this authority. For the College of Aldermen, sign. Biwer. (Letter to the German military battalion in Siegburg, extraordinary local council meeting 3.06.1917, p.81-82).

In the aftermath of the War, the escalation in anti-German feelings was deemed as exacerbated and conspirational by some managerial staff who claimed to have been complotted against. In his poignant memoir Hubert Hoff ⁵⁹⁵(Hoff, sine dato, ANLux, AES-59a), then director of the ARBED Esch-Schiffflange plant⁵⁹⁶, expressed his disappointment at the way he was treated during and after the First World War. Precursor of undeniable technical expertise and innovation facilitator, at the new ARBED headquarters at the Esch-Schiffflange plant, Hoff regretted the way in which he was dismissed:

In the first days of November 1918, the war was over. Germany had surrendered. Mr. Mayrisch visited me in Esch, explained to me that the end of the war would have far-reaching political consequences in Luxembourg and recommended that I leave the country in a very friendly manner. (...) I left behind everything I had created in 7 years, including all my personal possessions (Hoff sine dato, 117).

Amtsmissbrauch unsererseits darstellen, wozu das Kollegium eingedenk des geleisteten Dienstes, sich nie hergeben wird. Zum Schlüsse würden wir Sie bitten, Ihre im selben Sinne gehaltenen zukünftigen Briefe der Regierung in Luxemburg zuzusenden, indem wir, wie bereits vorstehend erwähnt, nur Instruktionen von dieser uns Vorgesetzten Stelle entgegen nehmen. Für das Schöffenkollégium, gez. Biwer.

⁵⁹⁴ The local council had agreed to having the first letter with German military instructions published in the press.

⁵⁹⁵ Hubert's Hoff unpublished memoir, *Errinerungen aus meinem Leben. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der ARBED Luxemburg*, is part of the legacy of the ARBED, whose archives have been since trusted to the National Archives in Luxembourg. ANLux AES- 59a

⁵⁹⁶ From 1911 to 1918.

Emile Mayrisch's attitude is known to have been one mediator, between Germany and France, throughout the interwar period. Together with his wife, Aline Mayrisch de Saint-Hubert, and through their French and German connections they engaged in numerous initiatives⁵⁹⁷, which contributed to guide the public opinion towards a reconciliation and re-approach of the two countries. Their legacy contributed to a role of intermediary State that Luxembourg has claimed ever since. The reason behind the drop in Germany's qualified personnel in Luxembourg's industry during the Great War was not only the call to arms. The immediate aftermath of the First World War led to a purge campaign with the goal of establishing an increased quota of Luxembourgish staff at the steer of the biggest companies, especially those of (former) German capital. Amidst a climate of intense anti German feeling, largely propelled and fueled by the media (Sauer, 2019), Aloyse Meyer and Mayrisch appealed to the government in a move against the "counterproductive wish of wanting to excessively protect the national working force" (Sauer, 2019). In April 1919, the two managers address a petition to the Chamber of MP's. Despite recognising the dominant position of higher rank German personnel within the Luxembourgish industry, they manifest themselves against the proposed legislation. Such draft law foresaw, namely, that in all commercial and industrial enterprise, a proportion of 95% employees and technical staff and 90% of the workers, respectively, should be Luxembourgishers.

Moreover, it should not be overlooked that over the last ten years, the German element has acquired a predominant position among the personnel of certain large industries established on Luxembourg territory (*L'Indépendance Luxembourgeoise*, 04.04.1919, pp.1-2).

Mayrisch and Meyer expressed themselves against the ban foreign staff in Luxembourg's soil, by highlighting:

the dangers of any legislative measure that would prevent foreign elements from gaining access to the industries established on our soil. (...) Secondly, there are many branches of the iron industry, of recent origin on our soil, in which the Luxembourg worker, for lack of an appropriate professional education, did not have the necessary aptitudes. Skilled labour is still in short supply. And the era of specialisation is not over. It would even be desirable for small and medium-sized industry to devote itself more to the processing, shaping and finishing of iron products (*L'Indépendance Luxembourgeoise*, 04.04.1919, *ibid.*).

The scene was set for an upcoming couple of years (1918-1919), in which the debates on Luxembourgish identity and geostrategic alignment dominated the public opinion. This also paved

⁵⁹⁷ Alyne Mayrisch's correspondence with French writer Jean Schlumberger is an incursion into their liberal bourgeois intellectual circles (Mercier & Meder, 2000).

the way for Esch's positioning within the wider national discussion. A position that had all it took to displease the establishment, for it was, as polls would show mostly republican.⁵⁹⁸ The dream of a Republic ended up, ironically being denied, through the abstention of the members of the "Die Freie Volkspartei", who saved the dynasty through their stance⁵⁹⁹. The short-lived republican revolution of 1919 fails in the aftermath of the intervention of French troops. The results are history, even if the vote in favour of the monarchy and Marie-Adelaide's sister Charlotte were overwhelming, Esch had given its say against it.

⁵⁹⁸ Result in the referendum of 28 September 1919: In Esch voted 55% for a republic and 42% for Charlotte, who had become first in line to the throne after the abdication of her sister Grand-Duchess Marie Adelaide.

⁵⁹⁹ Five Eschois, among whom Théodore Noesen, Pierre Kappweiler and Bernard Herschbach, who on the same day in the morning had gathered in favour of the Republic, in Esch, shattered once and forever (?) the aspirations to a Republic on the Chamber that same afternoon (12 and 13 November 1918). See Scuto for a detailed account in (Scuto 2013). In fact, the members of the Freie Volkspartei, pressured by the clerical Prüm, abstained during the vote in the Chamber. As inhabitants of the red south they were according to Flies (Flies, 1979) later blasphemed, denigrated, spat upon, slandered, suspected and threatened on a daily basis.

6.5.5 The struggle for recognition - Clashes with the central government

Dr Joerg: I believe that the government should also contribute something and not leave everything exclusively for the philistines of Luxembourg. Yesterday I visited the Eicher Berg where the government has its premises. Nothing is done for us; the canton of Esch has to pay for all this work. I reproach the deputies who have represented the canton of Esch for 20 years and have done nothing in this respect. (...) There is so much talk of municipal autonomy and when we want to do something, we get into trouble. (...) In the end, everything is for Luxembourg [capital] (Intervention at the local council meeting 28 May 1910, p.5).⁶⁰⁰

The war only exacerbated the bitter relationship with the central government that had existed since the previous decade. Requests for subsidies, for infrastructure, education, festivities were not always met by the Central Government. This was matter for the indignation of the local council. Consequently, whoever had been the previous administration and the representative deputies for Esch in the central government were frequently to blame.

Among Esch's needs were new schools, a hospital, a general sewage plan, the layout of parks and recreational areas, and a swimming pool. There were also plans to kick-off the launch of a new building which could host the municipality, a new Town Hall⁶⁰¹. The visits to other infrastructure around the country instigated the same wishes for Esch. A visit of the *Armenbureau's* management to the Rhamhospiz⁶⁰² in 1910 in Ettelbruck, left a good impression as to how women and children were accommodated there. For councillor Schaack it was time Esch should start building a hospice and a children's home as well. However, the construction of a hospital remained the highest on the political agenda of the municipality.

6.5.6 The difficulties in finding developable land

Land to develop the desired infrastructure was scarce, and there was regret at not buying when the time was right and prices were lower. There was a shortage of available land and housing to house the teaching staff, the religious orders (who provided for some teaching staff) and the most sensitive issue, that of adequate housing for the working classes.

⁶⁰⁰**In the original:** Ich glaube, die Regierung müßte ebenfalls etwas beitragen und nicht alles ausschließlich für die Spießbürger von Luxemburg machen. Ich bin gestern noch im Eicher Berg passiert, da unterhält die Regierung die Anlagen. Für uns wird nichts getan; der Kanton Esch muß all diese Arbeiten bezahlen. Das mache ich den Deputierten zum Vorwurf, die den Kanton Esch seit 20 Jahren vertreten und nichts in diesem Sinne getan haben.

⁶⁰¹ Inaugurated in 1936.

⁶⁰² Hospice and orphanage, with namely sectors for care of the poor, and mental illness. The headquarters were in Luxembourg city but there was also a branch in Ettelbruck.

The local council needed land to carry out its many building projects and to improve infrastructure, parks and recreational areas. It was also well aware of the speculative strategies of some property owners in the city centre. On a number of occasions, the council had to overcome obstacles such as the extension of the Brill School in 1909, the search for an ideal site for the hospital foundations and attempts to acquire land for the new Town Hall. Rising prices in the city centre were met with regret that land had not been acquired earlier, for example when additional land was needed to extend the Brill School:

Mr. Weisen [councillor]: When Mayor Hoferlin [Dominique Joseph] bought the site there for a low price, to build a church there, how was he insulted at the time. A municipality should always buy when the price is low. **Schaack [councillor]:** Mr. Spoo 10.65 Are. That would be 24,000 Fr. per acre. At today's prices a public square would cost almost half a million [francs]. **Mr. Schaack:** Mr. Laval⁶⁰³ is quite right when he sells everything. At the time he had the whole thing for a cheap price. **Mr. Spoo [mayor]** For 25,000 Fr.⁶⁰⁴

The government urged the municipality to buy as much land as possible something which was welcomed with the criticism:

Mr. Weisen: The government authorised all this [previous careless sales like the Clair Chene] and now it comes along and demands that we buy more land. **Mr. Mayor.** Mr. State Minister Eyschen[PM] told me that we should buy land wherever the opportunity presents itself, we would never buy too much. **Dr Joerg.** He thinks we could just pay for it. **Mr. Wester.** At that time, we could have bought terrain for 150 Fr. an acre. **Mr. Schaack.** Living conditions have changed completely over time, everything has gone up.⁶⁰⁵

One key area of the city was particularly coveted: the Brill, which included the central commercial artery of the city as well as one school. The rush to buy plots of land there had been great, as we have seen in the previous chapters devoted to land ownership. In this first decade of the 20th century the urge to secure land, from the municipal council had valid reasons, either they rushed or otherwise neighbours would no longer agree or worst they would ask for a permit to build something themselves. In the case of the Brill, where the cover of the Alzette was pressing, the

⁶⁰³ Schaack probably referred to the considerable amount of land in Esch sold by Auguste Laval between 1908 -1910.

⁶⁰⁴ Local council meeting, 30.12.1909, p.5.

⁶⁰⁵ Local council meeting 30.12.1909, p.6. **In the original:** Hr. Weisen. Die Regierung hat doch damals das alles genehmigt und nun kommt sie und verlangt, wir sollen noch Terrain kaufen. Hr. Bürgermeister. Herr Staatsminister Eyschen hat mir gesagt, wir sollten Terrain ankaufen, wo sich nur immer die Gelegenheit dafür bietet, wir würden nie zu viel kaufen. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Der denkt, wir könnten drauflos bezahlen. Hr. Wester. In der Zeit hätten wir Terrain für 150 Fr. den Ar kaufen können. Hr. Schaack. Die Lebensverhältnisse haben sich total geändert mit der Zeit, alles ist in die Höhe gegangen.

municipality benefited from an exchange of land with Auguste Laval⁶⁰⁶, the lawyer in Luxembourg, in order to conclude the foreseen works of coverage of the Alzette river and the completion of the street's pipelines:

Mr. Laval also complies with the municipality's request the part of the Poststrasse from the Weisgerber property to the Kintzelé's property a width of 16 metres, including pavements and for this purpose he declares himself to provide the 4-meter-wide strip of terrain required for this widening. This strip is on the right-hand side of the aforementioned road in the direction of the Poststrasse after the Kintzelé terrain. Mr. Laval also cedes to the municipality the building site on the Kintzelé terrain with an area of 4 acres 20 against exchange as well as a strip of land of 30 metres (2 metres wide and 15 metres deep) from the terrain adjoining the Kieffer building site. On the other hand, the municipality cedes to Mr. Laval a terrain of 7 acres from the former Kintzele site which it had previously acquired.⁶⁰⁷

Solutions were often found through acquaintances, good relationships and exchanges (sometimes with other benefits attached) and by using the business opportunities arising within the local council itself. Upon the reprimand of the Minister of Internal Affairs, in which reference was made to the inadequate size of the courtyard of the new school building in Brill, it was proposed that it be enlarged by extending to the neighboring property, in order to comply with the prescribed dimensions. The latter's house belonged to Pierre Reiff-Hamilius, one of the councillors and an employee of the steelworks. He himself had inherited it through marriage to the daughter of the blacksmith and landowner Jean Pierre Hamilius. Whatever was left of the old landowners thus continued to yield a profit for their descendants:

Mayor Spoo: We have reached a compromise with Mr. Reiff, according to which the house and the site with an area of 17.40 acres for the price of 40,000 francs. The site is as far as ours in Poststrasse, we are taking about 3/4 of it for the schoolyard. The rest, including the house for flats for our teaching staff. (...). The price conditions are therefore very favourable. The flat that we can also use, will serve to amortise the capital. I therefore propose to make the purchase.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁶ Laval authorised the Municipality to channel the waters of the Alzette through the Poststrasse he had built "im Brill" and to carry out the sewerage work required by this diversion. The work to be carried out at the junction of the Alzette bed, were to be carried out in accordance with the plans approved by the government and on the section running through the Laval property. The roads built on the Laval property are to be built using the soil, slag and other material originating from the demolition of the existing pipeline on the Poststrasse.

⁶⁰⁷ See *Art. 8 Exchange of the municipality with Mr. Laval, lawyer from Luxembourg regarding their respective terrains in the "Brill"*, local council meeting minutes of 20.10.1910, p.9.

⁶⁰⁸ Local council meeting, 29.12.1910, p.6. **In the original: Hr. Bürgermeister.** Wir haben ein Kompromis mit Hrn. Reiff abgeschlossen, gemäß welchem er uns das Haus nebst Platz mit einem Flächeninhalt von 17.40 Ares zum Preise von 40 000 Franken abtritt. Das Terrain geht soweit wie das unsrige in der Poststraße, wir nehmen etwa 3/4 davon für den Hof. Den Rest mit dem Hausverwenden wir zu Wohnungen für unser Lehrpersonal. Die Preisbedingungen sind also sehr günstig. Die Wohnung, welche wir verwenden können, wird das Kapital amortisieren. Ich schlage deshalb vor den Kauf vorzunehmen.

Property development presented a significant challenge for the municipality, with numerous instances where landowners opposed the sale and set prices deemed too high. Expropriation was, as advised by the government, the last resort, but it was frequently employed.

With regard to the town hall new headquarters project, the land at the heart of the city was at stake. Some landowners were unable to agree to the sale. The project aimed to acquire the entire neighbourhood in central Esch to construct a new town hall and a district court. In order for the district court to be built in Esch, a decision had to be made regarding the opposition landowners. This decision would determine whether the case would be declared of public interest and the owners would be expropriated. Amicable resolutions were not always met, which caused some councillors to express their displeasure:

Dr Joerg: You can't throw a gift of 10,000 francs into everyone's lap by widening the road at the taxpayers' expense. **Mayor Spoo:** The city cannot get involved in such speculation. ⁶⁰⁹

The failure to reach an agreement on a given plot of land resulted in delays or, in the most extreme cases, the cancellation of entire projects. The search for an optimal site for a new hospital provides an illustrative example. The location of the proposed hospital underwent frequent alterations. In addition to the commission established for the project having to agree on the location, the same location had to meet a number of requirements. These included considerations such as price, the logistics required to set the foundations, hygiene, accessibility in terms of transport, and proximity to factories.

In addition to the municipality, industrial companies were also in need of land from private ownership. These companies were still in search of plots to build further roads and land for their infrastructure and housing of employees. In 1911⁶¹⁰, an attempt by the *Düdelinger Hüttengesellschaft* to buy various plots in Lallange (Section B), did not see all councillors agree regarding the price offered by the company, deemed to be lower than its real market value. However, one aspect seemed to steer the opinions towards meeting positively the company's requests: the fact it was a company that would employ almost exclusively Luxembourg civil servants.

⁶⁰⁹ Local council meeting, 15.07.1911, p.9. **In the original: Dr.Joerg:** Sie können doch nicht einem jeden ein Geschenk von 10000 Fr in den Schoß werfen, indem Sie die Straße auf Kosten der Steuer Zähler erbreitern. **Hr Bürgermeister:** Die Stadt kann sich nicht in solche Spekulationen einlassen.

⁶¹⁰ See local council meetings 20. 11. 1911, p. 2-3.

Recreational places were another pressing item. The city was young in population and children did not have recreational grounds. Furthermore, the city wanted its appeal to go beyond of the idea of a just industrial and commercial centre but there was a wish that outsiders would have other reasons to visit. At the time the *Rothe Erde* had convinced Esch's municipal council (1908) to sell the land for the building of the Adolf Emil Plant, the Clair Chêne, Esch's green heart was for most the destructed, with only a surface remaining on which a park had been (falsely) promised:

It has also been pointed out at the time on a so-called City Park has been indicated. I, declare that I personally have the desire to create a Buen Retiro for our workers and I believe, that the corner between the Wangeert and the Vorderer peaks is suitable for this, which would certainly be left free during the construction of the plant. this place would be used to create a recreation area for our people, and it is absolutely essential that when something is done, it is done in the right way, and that these places are also made available to the other citizens, and to anyone who behaves properly. Therefore, this idea will probably be realized more easily, if you sell the land to us (Intervention of Director Seidel⁶¹¹ at local council meeting, 6.11.1908, p.193-195).

It was not until 1912, and with the assistance of the Société d'Émbellissement, who procured the land, that the envisaged city park, was finally inaugurated in the Galgenberg hill. The land left behind to the municipality in the Clair Chêne ended up being too small for the project and revealed the false promises that industrial tycoons had lured the municipality with.

⁶¹¹ Rudolf Seidel, director of the mine and steelworks of Aachener Hütte Verein in Esch- sur-Alzette. He successfully lobbied for the construction of the new Adolf Emil plant in Esch.

The wealth of the canton of Esch has spread across the countryside, and the smallest hamlets in the Ardennes have benefited from it (Intervention of Deputy Baron de Tornaco in the Chamber of Deputies, 21 May, 1901⁶¹²

6.6 Other fights for Esch – Secularism, secondary education, and a hospital

By the beginning of the 20th century Esch was the milking cow of the country as De Tornaco and others after him⁶¹³ argued, but still received no recognition for it. Another point that the Esch deputies drew the government's attention to, was the absence of Eschois at the head of key institutions such as the Chambre de Commerce:

As you know, the organisation of the Chambre de Commerce dates back to 1841. It has twenty-one members, including a president, appointed by the Chamber of Commerce itself (...) Well, for years now, not one of these twenty-one members has lived in the canton of Esch. You must admit that this is a singular anomaly (...) and it seems to me that the canton of Esch can claim to be interested, because of its industry and commerce (Intervention of Dr Michel Welter at the Chamber of Deputies, 16 February 1897).⁶¹⁴

In addition to advocating for the representation of the city and the canton at the national level, other strategies were pursued to address the shortcomings in the educational landscape. One of the reasons that prevented Esch representatives from gaining access to certain political and professional circles was the aforementioned lack of educational opportunities.

We will examine next the actions of the town council in relation to three major political issues of the period 1900-1922: the school law and the issue of secularism, educational provision, and the construction of the hospital in Esch.

The specific instances of conflict between the municipality and the central government serve to illustrate the point that Esch-sur-Alzette was engaged in a struggle for the right to make its own decisions. Many of these incidents occurred throughout the turn of the century and well into the 1920s and 1930s. Members of the local council were instrumental in ensuring that Esch received

⁶¹² C.R., 1901-1902 p.1563.

⁶¹³ „Papa Spoo selig hat einst gesagt, Esch sei die Milchkuh des Landes aber man achtet uns nicht“ (Intervention of councillor Paulus at the local council meeting, 5.03.1920, p.4).

⁶¹⁴ C. R., 1896-1897, p.1035. **In the original** : « Vous savez que l'organisation de la Chambre de Commerce date de 1841. Elle compte vingt-et-un membres, dont un président, nommé par la Chambre de Commerce elle-même (...) Eh bien parmi ces vingt-et-un membres, depuis des années il n'y a pas un membre qu'habite le canton d'Esch. Vous devez avouer que c'est une anomalie singulière (...) et il me semble que le canton d'Esch peut avoir la prétention d'y être intéressé, à raison de son industrie et de son commerce ».

greater visibility within the country. The lengthy, years-long decision-making processes for establishing a proper hospital and an industrial and commercial school were a central concern of the local council for many decades. It was crucial for the city to persuade the government to recognise its industrial and commercial potential by investing in its youth.

6.6.1 The school law and religious education in the upper primary school.

The issue of the central government's perceived belittling of the local council was not the sole factor at play. The period between 1909 and 1912 was characterised by a single dominant issue: the organisation of religious education in schools. The political struggles of the period were ideologically driven and focused on the issue of education.

The social upheaval that began during Armand Spoo's presidency (1909-1912) is a defining moment in the city's political history. His presidency represents a pivotal moment in the city's political history. Upon assuming the role of mayor, Armand Spoo was perceived by many to have ushered in a new era of progressive governance.

From a social perspective, it was anticipated that improvements to the working conditions of the proletariat would be achieved through socialism. Consequently, in accordance with the German model, worker protection was also established in Luxembourg: health insurance in 1901, accident insurance in 1902 and old-age and disability insurance in 1911. This was a result of the tenacity of Dr. Welter and C.M Spoo at the Chamber of Deputies.

Armand Spoo, an industrialist by profession and perceived as too moderate by many, was thus caught in a period of heightened tensions between two opposing blocs. The central conflict of Armand Spoo's brief tenure in office was undoubtedly the struggle for a secular education system, driven by the social transformations occurring in Esch-sur-Alzette.

It is evident that efforts were made to acknowledge the needs of different confessional groups prior to the left-wing turn of Spoo's presidency. Indeed, Luxembourg was known as a haven for Jewish populations originating from Alsace and subsequently Eastern Europe. Additionally, Esch was home to several hundred Protestants who had joined the ranks of the working class within the various German-owned and Luxembourgish-owned companies.

The protestant community received the subsidy of both the industrial plants and the municipality to build their own church. The Jewish community (largely composed by merchants and cattle

breeders) was also satisfied in its requests addressing the distinct needs of the community, although requests for a separated rooms in the slaughterhouse or a separated cemetery were not met at the time. Notwithstanding, a work excursion to the Netherlands was for example funded by the municipality, for Jewish butchers to learn the latest in terms of abattoir hygiene. The costs of renewal of the surrounding area to the Synagogue were also born partially by the municipality in light of the equality rights for all cults.

The special status of religious communities otherwise seldom posed an issue. At most, a request by the Jewish community to transfer ownership of the Jewish cemetery to the community was deemed excessive. In perfect line with their secular convictions “on Earth”, the local council believed though that granting special rights for the Jewish cemetery was to be ruled out:

Mayor Michels: I hardly believe that the municipal council will be persuaded to waive its right of ownership.
Councillor Schaack: This whole arrangement is utterly ridiculous. Just as well as we all live together here in Esch, we should also have only one churchyard where everyone is buried next to each other. **Mayor Michels:** That would be the right thing to do.⁶¹⁵

In fifteen years of different administrations only once did the administration showed the concern about the presence of unknown Galician Jews accused of shambling soap and fat items during the 1st W War.

Mayor Michels: We asked the police commissioner for a report on the matter. Mr. Schaack alludes to the Galician Jews, who not only here in Esch, but everywhere and in the smallest general shops, buy up everything that the government has procured with great effort from abroad and transport it across the border. (...) They are the hyenas of the economic battlefield.⁶¹⁶

This reproach and harsh wording used against the latter, was almost immediately toned down by another remark from the mayor defending the Esch Jewish community:

Mayor Michels: These are individuals who were never seen here before the war. There are also other Jews here who have nothing to do with them and who absolutely condemn their activities.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁵ Intervention during local council meeting, 20.01.1916, p.1. **In the original: [Hr. Bürgermeister]:** (...) Inzwischen ist dies bereits geschehen. Ich glaube kaum, daß der Gemeinderat dazu zu bewegen sein wird, auf sein Eigentumsrecht zu verzichten. **Hr. Schaack:** Diese ganze Einrichtung ist überhaupt lächerlich. Gerade so gut, wie wir hier in Esch alle beieinander wohnen, sollten wir auch nur einen einzigen Kirchhof haben, wo alle nebeneinander begraben sind. **Hr. Bürgermeister:** Das wäre das richtigste.

⁶¹⁶ Local council meeting, 8 April 1916 p.2. **In the original: Hr. Bürgermeister:** Wir haben einen Bericht vom Polizeikommissär in dieser Angelegenheit eingefragt. Hr. Schaack spielt auf die galizischen Juden an, die nicht nur hier in Esch, sondern allerorts und in den kleinsten Kramläden alles, was die Regierung sich mit viel Mühe aus dem Ausland verschafft hat, aufkaufen und über die Grenze befördern. (...) Es sind die Hyänen des ökonomischen Schlachtfeldes.

⁶¹⁷ Local council meeting, 8 April 1916 p.3. **In the original:** Es handelt sich um Subjekte, die vor dem Kriege nie hier gesehen wurden. Es sind auch noch andere Juden hier ansässig, die nichts mit jenen zu tun haben und die das Treiben derselben absolut verdammen.

Another factor that shaped the relationships at the local council level was the influence of worldviews and ideologies, rather than political considerations. Religious practice presented a number of challenges, including the remuneration and housing benefits enjoyed by priests, as well as the teaching of Catholicism in local schools. The majority of clashes arose from the starkly contrasting perspectives. On the one hand, there were those advocating the complete eradication of religious instruction, while on the other, there were those who resisted this view. In between these two extremes, there were those who sought a compromise. In 1911, with the first social democrat mayor in office, such disputes became particularly evident. Some in the local council were part of a broader social movement advocating for significant reforms to educational legislation. In the inaugural meeting of the local council in 1911, presided over by Armand Spoo, a motion proposed by councillors Hoffmann-Schaedgen, Dr. Joerg, and Jean Schaack-Wirth was presented. The local council, which was then composed of individuals with a left-wing leaning, was becoming increasingly agitated by the amount of time dedicated to religious instruction in upper primary schools and the salaries paid to priests. It cannot be excluded that the existence of different confessions was sometimes employed as a means of furthering what they perceived as a necessary change in the relationship between the state and the church. The objective was the separation of the two, which had already been included in the broader national legislative proposals for some time.

The new, highly controversial school law brought about a significant change in the provision of religious education in October 1912, both in Esch and throughout the country. The debate on the appropriate place of religious instruction within the school curriculum had been a prominent issue in the years preceding the national reform, and finally came to a head in the last quarter of 1912.⁶¹⁸ Already during the Leon Metz administration (1906-1909), we find three vocal anti-clerical elements: Jean Schaack, P. Van Dyck and Jacques Hamilius⁶¹⁹. Anti-clericalism cut across socio-professional and class backgrounds. For many it was a matter of principle.

⁶¹⁸ These circumstances arise having as precedent the educational struggle between the Church and the liberal forces of the 19th century (in particular the school laws of 1881 and 1898), which in turn triggered the mechanisms and the left-wing political forces that revived the discussions in the couple of years ahead of 1912. See Jacques Maas for a detailed account on the implications of the educational reform within the liberal forces (Maas 1986).

⁶¹⁹ Schaack will eventually present Hamilius in *Der Arme Teufel* as a “Rouge” (Wehenkel-Frisch 1978).

But such changes had started to take shape before, in 1909, when the clergy were forbidden to teach on weekdays after school hours and on Sundays. They were also forbidden to take part in the (upper primary) schools. Schoolboys were no longer allowed to attend church services during school hours - even with their parents' consent. The compensation of the priest for giving religious instruction in the girls' upper primary school was also cancelled (Flies 1979).

Other modalities of interference that the Church exerted during school hours, were tackled by the municipal council. Jean Schaack had shown his concern with the practice of *Silentium*⁶²⁰, that despite already eradicated in some other towns in Luxembourg was still practiced in Esch. The majority of the local council's opposition to the *Silentium* was based on the view that religion permeated almost the whole of the school day.⁶²¹

Although only nuns had been appointed from 1868 to 1909, for 41 years (Flies 1979), the town council opened the way for secular teachers to teach in the schools of Esch. The debates got passionate and quickly went adrift and beyond its mere legal contours. Members of the local council lingered in their monologues, which mixed their dislike for the Church and their aspirations and advocacy for a separation of State/Church:

Dr. Joerg has proved through the texts of the law, that no congregation owes these gentlemen. Our people have more than enough. They go praying for good weather and it always rains. They hold processions of the cross for the crops to flourish, and at night everything freezes. We have had enough of that for once. Our money can be put to much more useful ways. We no longer spend money without knowing why. If you givers and their masses are to bring us heaven, then the clergy might as well wait until we're in heaven before they want to be paid. All workers, all craftsmen, all entrepreneurs must wait here for the result of their work...before they get their money. Our clergy surely, they don't want to be compared to those who must be paid in advance (Intervention of councillor Schaack, 12.05.1910).⁶²²

In January 1911⁶²³, the motion prepared by the Esch council read as follows for approval:

In view of the denominationally very mixed population of our schools, where the holding of religious lessons during school hours gives rise to the greatest inconvenience; whereas, furthermore, religious instruction reduces the secular lessons all too much by 2 hours a week of catechism, 2 hours of Bible and daily hour of catechism, we request that:

⁶²⁰ Hours spent in prayer/silence in presence of the priests before and after school hours.

⁶²¹ See local council meeting 22.12.1909.

⁶²² Local council meeting, 12.05.1910, p.9. **In the original:** Dr. Joerg hat durch die Gesetzestexte bewiesen, daß keine Gemeinde diesen Herrn etwas schuldig ist. Unser Volk hat von der Musik mehr wie genug. Sie gehen beten für gutes Wetter und es regnet immer. Sie halten Kreuzprozessionen zum Gedeihen der Feldfrüchte, und in der Nacht erfriert alles. Wir haben dessen doch einmal genug. Unsere Gelder können viel nützlicher verwendet werden. Wir geben kein Geld mehr aus, ohne zu wissen warum. Wenn ihr Geber und ihre Messen uns den Himmel bringen sollen, dann können die Geistlichen ja auch warten, bis wir im Himmel sind, bevor sie bezahlt sein wollen. Alle Arbeiter, alle Handwerker, alle Unternehmer müssen hier das Resultat ihrer Arbeit abwarten, ehe sie ihr Geld bekommen. Unsere Geistlichkeit will doch sicher nicht mit denen verglichen sein.

⁶²³ Local council meeting, 14.01.1911, p.4. *Art. 5 — Antrag der Herren Stadträte Hoffmann, Dr. Joerg und Schaack für die Neutralität des Primärunterrichtes.*

1. the teacher should no longer be involved in Bible lessons nor with catechism, and
 2. that the religious instruction is to be given by the clergy outside the statutory school hours.
- (signed): Hoffmann, Dr Joerg, Schaack-Wirth.

The local school commission, headed by Hoffmann who was also a local council member had prepared, for the occasion, a report on the same lines:

The local commission of the town of Esch a. d Alz:

Whereas: 1. that our state as such is religionless resp. stands above all religions; 2. that it expressly guarantees freedom of religion and stipulates in the Constitution: that no citizen of Luxembourg may not be compelled to any form of religion; that it all citizens without exception and regardless of their religion, to obey its laws, 4. that it is specifically commanded by law that all children of all inhabitants shall attend primary schools; 5. that Luxembourg primary schools, however, are unjustly linked solely to the Catholic religion; 6. that the textbooks and reading books of this primary schools are crammed with teaching and learning material of Catholic religious content; 7. that the fathers and guardians of schoolchildren who do not profess any religion or the specifically Catholic spirit, prevails in our schools as a direct, permanent partiality of the state. Considering further that in our city according to the results of the census, there are 888 inhabitants, for the most part adult citizens capable of judgement, who have no religion, that we have 880 Protestants and 132 Israelis among us, all of whom are full Luxembourg citizens; that with the rapid population growth of population growth of Esch in the near future probably all religious denominations of the whole world will be personally represented here; Approved with 3 votes (Hoffmann, Manternach, Schmit) against 2 votes (Noesen and Müller) to ask the municipal council to work that every religious doctrine be deleted from the programme of our elementary schools; 2. that no religious teacher be given the school halls for his lessons; not the Protestant or Israelite, nor the Catholic; 3. within the statutory school hours only profane instruction may be given within the statutory school hours; 4. that all textbooks with religiously teaching and learning material disappear as soon as possible.

The President of the Local School Commission
signed. Hoffmann-Schaedgen.

In 1911, the school law dated still back to 1843, from a time when the whole country was Catholic, however, circumstances had changed with the figures of the census proving it⁶²⁴. Nevertheless, despite an 1881 the legislature declaring that the teacher in the school must avoid anything that could offend the children of another denomination, the content of the Bible, the catechism, was according to the view Hoffmann-Schaedgen an obvious offense to the religious views of Protestants and Jews. Furthermore, in his view, the school assignments were all too permeated by a Catholic religious spirit:

I am really surprised that more complaints have not already been received. I have the exercise book of a girl in our primary schools I noticed that all the assignments were, without exception, about Our Lady. I don't know whether the Protestant and Jewish children had to do the same, but it would be interesting to find out. Moreover, at least one third of the reading books have Catholic religious content. Twice a week the Catholic priest gives Catholic religious instruction which should take place as much as possible at the beginning or at the end of school lessons. Now the schools start at half past 8 in the morning. (...) Four Protestant fathers have complained that their children had to stay in religion classes. We have initiated an enquiry and found that this is indeed the case. (...) In the other cities they have long since been over it. In Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, Charleroi the fathers of families have complained and the government immediately decided that religion classes should take place after school. For 30 years this has worked to everyone's satisfaction. The teacher refrains from making any comment on religion. If we want to do the same here, we will be accused of wanting a school without

⁶²⁴ See local council meeting, 11.01.1911, p.4. Intervention of councillor Hoffmann: “the last census showed that 888 Escher citizens do not belong to any religion, 880 citizens are Protestants and 132 Israelites.

religion, the school without God. Why don't you tell us which God should be spoken of in school, because the different denominations fight each other to the death. The constitution states that no one can be forced to practice a religion⁶²⁵.

Practicing catholic members of the local council faced the strong views and a majority against their own stances. Throughout the years they responded, in vain, that Catholic education did no harm to anyone and went on suggesting that a school segregation might be the solution

Find out how many Protestant and Israelite children attend our schools (...) Then we could build a school for every denomination (Intervention of councillor J. B. Kersch, local council meeting 14.01.1911, p.5).

Two months ahead of the official endorsement of the new school law, in October 1912, frictions on whether the crucifix should be hanged on the walls of the Brill school, still gave rise to discussions that took more time than heftier votes on the budget and finances. This time, Nicolas Biwer, the construction entrepreneur, recently elected councillor, intervened saying that in any case he had spoken to many Jews who expressed no concern whatsoever as to whether the crucifix was hanged.”⁶²⁶

What stands out from such passionate speeches, pleas, motions and beliefs is that Esch, was in a key position to demand change, being indeed home to a melting pot of nationalities and confessional backgrounds:

The separation of church and state is in the air and if in our country the basis start in Esch it is precisely because Esch is a working-class town, of workers who always think of their daily bread and have to work for it and do not want to "help" pay people who do nothing for the community, who do nothing for the general public. I hope that we will find a majority to eliminate this injustice. Gentlemen, the whole progressive country is turning its eyes today to Esch and is counting on us to continue on the path of progress and enlightenment we have trodden with energy and perseverance. The decision is in our hands and I hope that a majority will be found in favour of our ideas (Intervention of councillor Schaack, 15.7.1911).⁶²⁷

To the moderation of the mayor and other members, opposed the fierce radicalism of the Dr. Joerg and Jean Schaack, the latter sided relentlessly with the working classes on most debates. The

⁶²⁵ Local council meeting, 14.01.1911, p.5. *Art. 5 — Antrag der Herren Stadträte Hoffmann, Dr. Joerg und Schaack für die Neutralität des Primärunterrichtes.*

⁶²⁶ Local council meetings 14.08.1912, p.95. **In the original:** Ich habe mit verschiedenen israelitischen Herren gesprochen, die mir erklärt haben, daß es ihnen gleich sei, ob ein Kruzifix dort hänge oder nicht.

⁶²⁷ Local council meeting, 15.7.1911, p.5. **In the original:** (...) Die Trennung von Kirche und Staat liegt in der Luft und wenn in unserm Land der Anfang in Esch gemacht wird, so kommt das eben daher, weil Esch eine Arbeiterstadt ist, Arbeiter, welche stets an ihr tägliches Brot denken und dafür arbeiten müssen und dabei nicht noch Leute bezahlen helfen " wollen, welche nichts für die Allgemeinheit tun. Ich hoffe, daß wir eine Majorität finden werden um diese Ungerechtigkeit zu beseitigen (...). Meine Herren, das ganze fortschrittliche Land richtet heute seine Blicke nach Esch und zählt darauf, daß wir auf dem beschrittenen Weg des Fortschrittes und der Aufklärung mit Energie und Ausdauer weiterkämpfen. Die Entscheidung liegt in unseren Händen und ich hoffe, daß sich eine Mehrheit für unsere Ideen finden wird.

motions on the school reform passed as seen, with some abstentions and votes against, although some abstentions were not on the principle but on the form, application and timing such resolutions were envisaged. The majority of this short-lived local council (1910-1912) appeared to be successful in their efforts due to their shared anti-clerical stance, which gained momentum within the broader context of national school reform. The bishop, religious education, and the Luxemburger Wort newspaper, which was perceived as the most significant obstacle to their goals, were frequently the targets of their ire. The few members of the local council who were practicing Catholics and opposed such stances did not do so vehemently. It was indeed not within the municipality of Esch, or at least not within its local council, that resistance to such matters was to be found. Indeed, after analysing their fiery speeches, it can be said that within the local council the impression that remains is that its vocal members were, paradoxically, “preaching to the converted”. Their anger was primarily directed at the establishment, the central power, the centuries of engraved, endured and unquestioned Catholic interference in all its practices, and not least, at the Monarchy itself. The majority of the local council (1909-1912) were aware that failing to comply with the local resolution and the national law would leave them with the option of a petition to the Grand-Duchess, which would likely not succeed. In the decade following the adoption of the 1898 school law, historian Jacques Maas notes that "constant reference was made to the positions taken by this or that politician or political group during the parliamentary debate on this law", according to historian Jacques Maas (Maas 1983). The School Act of 1898 had a transformative impact on the political landscape of the 19th century, paving the way for the radical reforms to the education system that were enshrined in the 1912 law. The 1912 School Act marked the end of the clerical stranglehold on public education. Despite the bishop's vehement opposition, the *Bloc des Gauches* (comprising liberals and social democrats) succeeded in passing a law that has become the cornerstone of the Luxembourg education system. The legislation introduced free education and other changes, including an extension of the compulsory schooling period to seven years. Furthermore, the Act terminated the clergy's supervision of teachers and relieved them of the obligation to teach religion, which was instead left to priests.

6.6.2 A new-education path on offer

While Théodore, Marie and Elise de Roebé, born in the late 1840s and early 1850s, were still taught at home by a school nurse, this changed with the next generation of the de Roebé family⁶²⁸. The fact that they sent their children to the public primary school in Esch-Alzette was perhaps due to the fact that the standard of primary schools had improved considerably by the end of the 19th century. However, Elise de Roebé was somewhat skeptical about this decision; she feared it would have a negative influence on her niece Marie (J. Weber 2013, 66–67).⁶²⁹

Being upper class and attending a local primary in school in Esch may have come across as something surprising to the eyes of the élites of the capital. Added to the plausible explanation Josiane Weber (ibid) gives about the general improvement of the quality of primary schools throughout the 19th century, is certainly the fact that Theodore de Roebe knew Esch well. Not only was he an engineer in the Brasseur plant, he was also a member of the local municipal county between 1886 and 1890.

In 1884, an upper primary school (*Oberprimärschule*) is opened for both boys and girls. These schools only accept children above compulsory school age. However, many children from out of town were also accepted upon an examinations and paid 20 francs a year in school fees to the municipal treasury (Flies 1979, 398). These institutions eventually closed in 1901 (year of opening of the industrial and commercial school) and 1910 (opening of the *Mädchenlyzeum*, Girls' High-school) respectively, as the new schools replaced the need for Upper primary schools. The path to a recognition of the needs of the Esch population and the granting of an advanced education structure was arduous:

(...) This does not prove that the people of Esch are backward, that they are not as intelligent as others; but it simply proves that in Esch, they do not have the opportunity to learn, that what we lack is school. We only have primary schools, and that's where the education of the vast majority of Esch residents ends (Intervention of deputy Michel Welter in the Parliament, 16 February 1897).⁶³⁰

⁶²⁸ Family of the administrative and industrial elites from Luxembourg city.

⁶²⁹ While Théodore, Marie and Elise, born in the late 1840s and early 1850s, Théodore, Marie and Elise de Roebé had been taught at home by a school nurse, this changed with the next generation of the de Roebé family. They sent their children to the public primary school in Esch-Alzette was perhaps due to the fact that the standard of primary schools improved significantly at the end of the 19th century. century. Elise de Roebé was somewhat skeptical about this decision somewhat skeptical about this decision, however; she feared a negative influence on her niece Marie.

⁶³⁰ C. R. 1896-1897, 16 February 1897, p.1055.

The period just before and after the turn of the 20th century was marked by educational reform. At the end of the nineteenth century, politicians realised that the traditional education system was not well suited to the needs of an industrial society. The reform of the industrial school is part of this context. The public authorities are becoming aware that average education is no longer adapted to the needs of the new society emerging from the industrial revolution. A commercial section was added to the old industrial school. From then on, the industrial and commercial school, with its independent management, had to meet the demands of industry, trade and administration.

It will be the task of Esch deputies to plea at the level of the central government for specialized education infrastructure to be envisaged for Esch-sur-Alzette and not only in Luxembourg city and the in the main towns of rural districts such as Diekirch and Echternach⁶³¹. It is amidst these first discussions on the future of the educational offer for Esch-sur-Alzette that the North-South divide of the country makes itself visible. As per usual through the stances of its agrarian, clerical representatives, always wary of anything remotely related to change. For the members of the right wing, the problem was the opposite. They deemed there were far too many schools. Deputy Prüm⁶³², from Clervaux, was the epitome of the enemy of all things southern and industrial:

Intermediate and upper primary education are breeding grounds for the employed and the downgraded. The various branches of government, commerce and industry can no longer absorb the innumerable graduates of these schools, and this is how , in all the countries of Europe this formidable army of down-and-outs that poses the greatest threat to social security, was formed (...) I would ask the Government to consider the question of whether it would not be advisable to change a certain number of our higher primary schools, which are breeding grounds for aspirants, lawyers' clerks and copyists, into vocational and industrial primary schools (...). (Intervention of Deputy Prüm, 16 February 1897).⁶³³

If this can be interpreted as a rebuke to an increasingly bureaucratic state, it is undeniably also evidence of the refusal and skepticism towards regard any kind of higher or secondary education. To provide Esch-sur-Alzette with a wider and more advanced educational offer became central in the political agenda of the city's circle of power as well. Teachers were poorly paid and had

⁶³¹ In 1843 Secondary education was provided by a single establishment, the Athenée de Luxembourg, while two other schools pre-secondary provided the basis for post-primary education, in Diekirch and Echternach.

⁶³² Emile Prüm (1857-1922), industrialist and mayor of Clervaux, foreman of the clerical/agrarian camp.

⁶³³ C. R. 1896-1897, 16 February 1897, p.1044-1045.

according to councillor Schaack good reasons for being dissatisfied. The incentives like free housing were not being enough to keep them happy⁶³⁴:

Councillor Schaack: What are the results of our schools? I don't want the runners up of every teacher to be read out here. I know quite well that this number is sometimes dependent on pure coincidences. The pupils in one class always have more talented than those in another; there are better parents live in one neighbourhood than in another one; in this one there are almost exclusively rich people, the children are better fed, in the other neighbourhood the "poor man's odour" still prevails. This does not mean, however, that the children of the poor are not as intelligent as those of the rich (...) Shouldn't we take a little less consideration for seniority a little more on merit, so that capable teachers do not find themselves set back and discouraged in their discouraged in their zeal. Can we not do the same not do the same with the 5-year salary supplements?⁶³⁵

Moreover, there was a growing realization that more could be done in terms of the choice of education paths available in the city. This would attract both more students and teaching staff. The foundation of a mining and technical school that could form staff for the metallurgical industry was also up for discussion. In 1910, petitions had been received in which workers between 16 and 40 years of age demanded this school.⁶³⁶ The school was first envisaged to take the premises of the by now established Industrial School (since 1901) and had in principle the agreement of the government. The aim of these courses was to enable young people who wished to enter industrial enterprises to take the so-called middle steps, the levels that lie between the individual managers of the factories and the workers. A similar school existed in Thionville, in nearby Lorraine and Esch did not want to stay behind.

⁶³⁴ Xavier Bresseur had initiated the discussions on the improvement of teachers 'circumstances in the Parliament in 1902 teaching staff was scarce, salaries were very low and in Esch they felt particularly harassed by the influence of the priests, in the aftermath of the "clericalization" of the 1898 law amendments. See Maas (Maas 1983, 43–44).

⁶³⁵ Local council meeting, 13.08.1910, p. 5. **In the original:** Welches sind die Resultate unserer Schulen? Ich will nicht, daß hier die Nummern eines jeden Lehrers oder einer jeden Lehrerin vorgelesen werde. Ich weiß ganz gut, daß diese Nummer manchmal abhängig ist von reinen Zufälligkeiten. Die Schüler einer Klasse haben immer mehr Talent als die einer andern; in einem Stadtviertel wohnen bessere Eltern als in einem anderen; in diesem sind fast ausschließlich reiche Leute, die Kinder sind besser genährt, in jenem herrscht noch der „Armeleutegeruch". Das will jedoch nicht heißen, daß die Kinder der Armen nicht so intelligent sind wie die der Reichen. (...) Sollen wir da nicht etwas weniger Rücksicht auf das Dienstalter nehmen und etwas mehr auf das Verdienst, damit tüchtige Lehrer sich nicht zurückgesetzt finden und in ihrem Eifer entmutigt werden. Können wir nicht ein Gleiches tun mit den 5 jährigen Gehaltszulagen? Wir haben den Lehrern nichts zu sagen, aber wenn deren so knapp mit genügend durchmischen, müssen wir auch ein Wort mitzureden haben. Hier können wir das tun.

⁶³⁶ See local council meetings of 9.3.1910.

Organizing and specializing⁶³⁷ the offer of the local vocational schools was another aspiration of the local council, the belief being that such schools thrived in other countries like Germany and Switzerland, and not least already in Luxembourg city. In this way Esch would get a facility that would be exemplary for the whole country. Through an in-depth reform of the education system, the Eyschen government (1888-1915) attempted to respond to changes in society. The then Prime Minister was an advocate of the idea of specialised schools: the *Athénée* de Luxembourg for those planning to go on to university, an industrial school for those destined for a technical profession, an agricultural school for the sons of farmers, and a craft school for the children of craftsmen. A particular focus was placed on vocational training. Local councillors sought to establish vocational schools, which would provide young people with the requisite skills to pursue careers as tradesmen, factory workers, construction workers, labourers, and so forth. These institutions would facilitate the transition from education to employment in the industrial sector. Nevertheless, their aspirations did not end there. The objective was to establish a school in Esch that would enable students to pursue a brighter future. This was a proposition that could only be fulfilled through the establishment of a scientific and technical path.

⁶³⁷ The Esch proposed school for 1911-1912 envisaged six departments: 1) Carpenters; 2) Locksmiths; 3) Electrical engineers; 4) Decorative painters; 5) Business people 6) Unskilled professions, for all those who had not yet chosen a profession.

6.6.3 The establishment of the Industrial and Commercial school in Esch-sur-Alzette

A symbol of resilience and resignation of the local middle-classes

MP Spoo: (...) 1) Can the country afford this [technical] school? 2) Does the canton of Esch have the right to obtain it? (...) As for the first question, the country has an obligation to think about the future of the largest population centre it has, the canton of Esch, which today has 40,000 inhabitants, the canton of Esch which does not have a single state establishment. **MP Welter:** (...) We only have primary schools, and that's where the education of the vast majority of Esch inhabitants ends. (...) You can draw up a statistic and you'll see that all the employees working in Esch, from the head miner to the operations manager, are not Eschois; the Eschois don't occupy these positions because they're not prepared for them. I'd like to bet that among all these employees, there are no Eschois, there are Luxembourgers, foreigners, Luxembourgers from other cantons, but no Eschois (Intervention of Deputy C.M. Spoo on the topic of the establishment of an industrial, commercial and technical school at the Parliament, 16 February 1897).⁶³⁸

The debates at the level of the Parliament leave no doubt as to the pressing nature of the subject among Esch's political representatives.

In a first stage the industrial development of Esch-sur-Alzette benefited, mostly outsiders with a given professional expertise. There was in fact a generalized belief that it was especially the foreigners who took advantage of it, because academically better prepared in subjects Luxembourgers had no expertise in. The government did not want to create a rival school to the gymnasiums in Diekirch and Echternach, which were short of students, so it decided to create a school for craftsmen. This view was not shared by C.M. Spoo, who was a staunch advocate of the creation of a secondary scientific school to provide the administrative and technical staff needed by the fledgling industry. In his opinion, a craftsman's school could not provide its students with the scientific training and general knowledge required for access to management positions, which were almost all occupied by foreigners at the time (Konsbruck 2001). In this occasion, almost all deputies for Esch, of all political affiliations agreed on the necessity of turning aspirations of both an industrial and technical school.

The liberal Léon Metz, who incidentally had been at the origin of the proposal through his role of alderman in the local council declared:

⁶³⁸ C. R. 1896-1897, 16 February 1897, p.1051.

I must also say that the proposal by the honourable Mr. Spoo for the creation of a technical school seems to me to be destined to be of great service, especially to the children of the working classes, to whom the future of industry is, so to speak, closed. It is possible that this school will involve great sacrifices. That does not prevent us from taking a closer look at this idea (Intervention of Leon Metz in chamber of deputies, 16 February 1897).⁶³⁹

And so did the Baron of Tornaco, an independent deputy from Sanem (Esch canton), who rallied with the social democrats' proposal:

(...) It doesn't matter whether it's a technical or scientific school, the word technical means the same thing as scientific⁶⁴⁰; one comes from Greek, the other from Latin. It doesn't matter whether in Esch they make iron or in Luxembourg gloves or anything else; what is certain is that Esch is the centre of a population that can be roughly estimated at 100,000 souls (...) And despite this we have no middle school (Intervention of Baron De Tornaco, 24 May 1901).⁶⁴¹

Before the industrial school was eventually founded in 1901, there had been the intention to divide the school into three sections: an industrial, a commercial department and a scientific/technical section. At the time Esch deputies had demanded and defended the creation of a school, as the city of Luxembourg had had for over a decade (Biltgen 2001). According to Flies, as early as 1894, a group of family fathers had petitioned the local council to build a secondary school in Esch. They had in mind a grammar school (*progymnasium*), which would save their children bearing the significant costs of pursuing studies in Luxembourg, Diekirch or Echternach. The government hesitated, because the existing institutions were not overcrowded and instead proposed the establishment a school for craftsmen. It was to become a long battle, with on one side a government insisting on the onerous cost of a complete school whilst defending for Esch the need of craftsmen school only (Biltgen 2001) and on the other side the united front of the Esch MPs for a more advanced secondary school offer:

The philosophy [of the Government] was implacable. It was necessary to give a basic education (three years of general education) to children who would then go on to work in factories and finally return to technical education to take up menial jobs in industry (Biltgen 2001, 24).

⁶³⁹ C. R. 1896-1897, 16 February 1897, p.1077.

⁶⁴⁰ Technical and scientific education are often used interchangeably in the different for a where the issue was debated. Whichever concept one wishes to employ, the reality of this path was that of an upper education preparing for more ambitious professional outcome than that of the industrial school only. A technical school would thus, just like the one already existent in the *Athenee* in Luxembourg city, allow for a continuation of studies to the university level, if wished.

⁶⁴¹ C. R. 1901-1902, 24.05.1901, p.1605.

The government's objectives were clear from inception as to a financial optimisation of the school in detriment of the creation of a technical section that could provide the working class with some educational and thus social mobility. Behind this project was a clear philosophy, a social approach, which today we would describe as paternalistic, but which at the time was dominant and aimed to maintain social peace by emancipating the workers *ma non troppo*⁶⁴².

C.M. Spoo, on the other hand, campaigned in the chamber, the municipal council and in the press in favour of a scientific and technical secondary school that would prepare the administrative executive staff and the technical needs of the up-and-coming industry. This had been personally at heart for C.M. Spoo's as this had been one of his battles from the outset of his debut in the Parliament.⁶⁴³ The idea was thoroughly supported by the municipal council and the majority of the Esch representatives at the Chamber of Deputies. The matter of the addition of the technical/scientific section was relegated to the central section of the parliament⁶⁴⁴. What emerges from the rapports is that indeed there were also deputies from outside Esch who supported the scientific/technical section, for example Frédéric François⁶⁴⁵, a lawyer from Diekirch. Paradoxically one of the deputies elected for the Esch canton, Eugène Steichen⁶⁴⁶ was adamant in his opposition to the creation of the scientific/technical section (Konsbruck 2001).

It was not until 19 June 1901, that the law finally created a complete industrial school⁶⁴⁷. In the end, after heated parliamentary debates, Esch received a secondary (industrial) school, but not the

⁶⁴² Biltgen (Biltgen 2001) captures without fault the government's paternalist stance with regards to the Esch's working class.

⁶⁴³ (...) for nearly eight years, I've been defending the need for this school through my words and my writing. (Intervention of C.M. Spoo, C.R. 1901-1902, 21 May 1901, p.1549).

⁶⁴⁴ In those days the Chambre [Parliament] did not consist of committees [unlike today], but at the opening of the session, it was divided by lot into three sections. The constitution of special sections for particular projects was however also possible. The task of the sections was to deliberate on all matters submitted to them, each time appointing two rapporteurs. The six rapporteurs then met under the direction of the President of the Chambre in a central section, which in turn deliberated and appointed one of its members to report back to the plenary. For more insight on the functioning of the Luxembourgish Parliament see (Als et al. 1994).

⁶⁴⁵ Deputy from 1899 to 1909.

⁶⁴⁶ Eugène Steichen (1866-1936), born in Bettembourg and elected for the Esch's circumscription, Steichen was however based as a lawyer in Luxembourg city. A right-winger, he left the right-wing party in 1925 for a dissident list, while as a Francophile, he opposed the UEBL [Belgo-Luxembourg Economic Union] convention (Konsbruck 2001).

⁶⁴⁷ The municipality undertook to provide the state with the buildings and school furniture required for this purpose and to pay a sum of and to contribute to the general expenditure by paying a sum of 5,000 francs each year.

technical school they had long advocated for.⁶⁴⁸ The aspirations of Esch's deputies were dashed. We will try to understand the reasons for this failure.

The industrial school entailed five years of discussions but even when the goal was finally, only partially, achieved, the municipal council had to endure the criticism associated with their risk taking. The industrial school had been inaugurated and was functional by 1901. However, nine years later and despite the presumed support of different members and ministries in the central government, the so much needed technical and scientific addition was yet to be approved. The appeals were recurrent throughout the years, and they start as early as 1901, with the regret by the Esch MP's that the scientific/technical path had not been approved:

We are quite happy to leave the details of the organisation to the competent men who are not lacking here; and as these competent men, it seems, have found that an industrial school would be better, we will accept this name (...) We do not care under what title or in what form they will be provided; what we need is a complete establishment, six classes (...). (...) We don't want this to be done in the way that has unfortunately often been done in this country for public service buildings and facilities, i.e. to start without an overall plan and then later add and rebuild according to the needs of the service (Intervention of C.M Spoo at the Chamber of Deputies, 21 May 1901).⁶⁴⁹

And yet it was precisely what Spoo feared that ended up hindering and aborting the aspirations of a technical/scientific section. At the same time Spoo, delivered the fatidic words with which the Government would end up dissociating itself from any promises on the delivery of technical/scientific curriculum. Indeed, during the same session Spoo gave in:

Give us then a complete industrial school; as for the organisation, do as you like, start with two classes; then add the other four if the need arises; we are not even asking for the creation of other classes unless the need is demonstrated.

One can understand Spoo's resignation, the matter was urgent and the whole project was in danger of being jeopardised by too great an ambition. Alas, the Government would have done everything in its capacity to prove that the need for scientific /technical education was not there. The exchanges between services between 1901 and 1909 is unambiguous on the matter. The correspondence⁶⁵⁰ between the different services at the level of the central government proves that there never seems to have been, from the part of some of the services such as the District Commissioner⁶⁵¹, the ministry of Finances and even the State Architect to apply further the wishes of the local council. The other strategy of the Government included delegating the responsibilities of the creation of this school to the local council itself. Referring to talks with deputy Metz (also a councillor in Esch) and with Spoo, Prime minister Eyschen settled the discussion as follows:

⁶⁴⁸ See Biltgen (Biltgen 2001) and Konsbruck (Konsbruck 2001) for a chronology of the debates in the Parliament .

⁶⁴⁹ C.R. 1901-1902, 21 May 1901, p.1549- 50.

⁶⁵⁰ ANLux INT 612.

⁶⁵¹ Esch circumscription (canton) belonged to the district of Luxembourg whose commissioner was Pierre Braun.

(...) So it seemed to me that the technical school was if not abandoned for the moment, or at least that it could be left out of this project, except to see if later on the municipality of Esch, with the help of the Government, would like to create this school (...) For my part, I would be very reluctant to vote for an industrial school combined with a technical school at the same time. I am not against a complete industrial school, but there is a material impossibility (Intervention of PM Paul Eyschen, 21 May 1901).⁶⁵²

These were behind the scenes exchanges that the local council ignored, convinced as they were that the words of the various deputies throughout the years would have been enough to justify relaunching the matter.

In their meeting of 9 April 1910, in fact, the local council cast a summary of interventions by deputies of and members of Government, of different political colours in favour of the creation of a technical school in Esch.⁶⁵³ They relaunch the idea of a school that would host under the same building, three departments: an Industrial school, commercial school and technical school. The latter would mainly cover: mining, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and Civil engineering. Aware that locally institutions like the higher technical schools in Germany or like the *Écoles des Arts et Métiers* in France, could not be established, the local council wished rather to limit itself to providing elementary, middle and technical to meet the level of contemporary needs. The Government thus needed to be “relaunched”, after a decade to make the necessary arrangements to have the matter back on the agenda. Two main issues intertwine and were open for the debate simultaneously. Firstly, whether the scientific and technical annex would be added, as preconized by the local administration and the various initial debates most deputies, representing the canton of Esch. Secondly, at stake was the bare physical need of a new building, which some seemed to object as well.

Moreover, the debates between Government and local council were often marked by financial questions, concerning the cost and the division of tasks between the State and the town of Esch, which had to make the necessary premises available to the State. The city, despite the cost imposed on it, accepted any solution, the creation of a secondary school on its territory taking precedence over all other considerations. At the beginning of 1902, the question of building a new school building for the Industrial school was considered by the local council, which appointed a special

⁶⁵² C.R. 1901-1902, 21 May 1901, p.1552.

⁶⁵³ In this occasion the local council collected eleven instances between 1901 and 1905, where different deputies and Ministers such as Mongenast had pronounced themselves in favour of this addition.

committee to look for a suitable site. This was admittedly, foremost a question of premises⁶⁵⁴ but which reinstated the appeal to have also a technical section added to the school.

The exchanges of the different government services on the matter are revealing. We can, in fact, trace thanks to the sources of the *Dossiers Communaux*⁶⁵⁵ from 1901 to 1909 the background to this case what the real intentions of the Government were (not):

Starting in 1904 the District Commissioner Braun⁶⁵⁶, explains to his superior the DGI⁶⁵⁷ of the causes of delays in the construction of the new premises while highlighting that the school functioned perfectly well in its provisory “premises”⁶⁵⁸:

I have the honour of noting, Mr. Director General, that up to now the Esch establishment has developed normally and progressively and that this development has not been hindered by a lack of space or rooms in the building where the departments are currently housed⁶⁵⁹ (Letter from District Commissioner Braun to DGI Henri Kirpach on the 15 October 1904).

What is also interesting to note was a growing diffidence vis- a vis- the communal architect Paul Flesch. His expertise was to be checked by the architect of Paris, himself. On a letter to André Narjoux, the French capital’s architect written by Braun the plea is made:

The municipality of Esch-sur-Alzette in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is planning to build a new industrial and commercial school. The plans and specifications for these buildings, costing 500,000 francs, were drawn up by the municipal architect, Mr. Flesch. However, the medical inspector and the headmaster of the industrial school have made various comments on the project, and the State Architect has suggested that the Flesch plans be examined by a foreign architect (letter from district commissioner Braun to André Narjoux, municipal architecte in Paris, 23 July 1904. ANLux INT-612).⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁴ The "Industrial and Commercial School", as it will henceforth be tacitly referred to, was initially housed in a building in Alzettestrasse, which later became the Peace Court. When this proved to be too small as early as 1904, city architect Paul Flesch presented a special commission of the municipal council with a plan for a Renaissance building. The broad lines of this plan were accepted and it was realised between 1906 and 1908. The inauguration took place in October 1909.

⁶⁵⁵ File ANLux- INT 612.

⁶⁵⁶ Pierre Braun born in Goebange in 1872, Lawyer and politician, had been just nominated District Commissioner for Luxembourg in 1903.

⁶⁵⁷ Henri Kirpach (1841-1911), lawyer, with studies in Heidelberg and doctorate in Paris. Director- General Internal Affairs 1878-1910).

⁶⁵⁸ The school still had its premises within a building in Alzettestrasse, which later became the Peace Court. When this proved to be too small as early as 1904, the city architect Paul Flesch submitted a plan for a Renaissance building to a special commission of the local council, which was accepted in its large lines and completed from 1906-1908.

⁶⁵⁹ **In the original:** J'ai l'honneur de constater, M. le Directeur General, que jusqu'à ce jour l'établissement d'Esch s'est développé d'une façon normale et progressivement que ce développement n'a pas été entravé par un manque de place ou de salles dans le bâtiment ou les services sont logés en ce moment.

⁶⁶⁰ **In the original:** La commune d'Esch-sur-Alzette dans le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg a l'intention de construire une nouvelle Ecole industrielle et commerciale. Les plans et devis de ces bâtiments se montant à 500000 francs ont été élaborés par l'architecte communal Mr. Flesch. Seulement M. le médecin inspecteur ainsi que M. le directeur de l'école industrielle ont présentés différentes observations sur ce projet, d'un autre côté M. l'Architecte de l'Etat propose de faire procéder à l'examen des plans Flesch, par un architecte de l'étranger.

Customary practice or contempt for the city's architect expertise⁶⁶¹, who incidentally had been an architect trained in Munich and Paris⁶⁶²? We ignore the reasons behind having gone so far abroad to have their doubts solved. The premise was that there would be no political objection to the addition of the scientific school. The District Commissioner Braun reiterated, in a letter dating from March 1904, the need for the addition of the technical section to the existing school:

His Excellency the Minister of State [Paul Eyschen] had instructed me to examine the question of the creation, in Esch, of a technical section to be annexed to the industrial school which exists there at present; this school would be to be organised on the basis set out in the explanatory memorandum of the DG of Finance (...) During my visits to the canton of Esch I examined the question (...) with the competent people, the industrialists and the colleges of Esch, Dudelange and Differdange and after this examination I was convinced that this vocational training would be a good idea. (...), that this professional and technical teaching would entirely answer the vital needs of the county and the industrial part of the canton of Esch-sur-Alzette (Letter from District commissioner Braun to DG Internal Affairs Kirpach, 2 March 1904).⁶⁶³

Pierre Braun returns the matter on whether an actual new building was needed to the appreciation of the State Architect Biver⁶⁶⁴, whose resistance to approve the local council and special commission's was starting to build up. In a letter to the DGI on 27 April 1904 the State Architect exposes his doubts and concerns. His irritation is because the city's administration did not take into consideration his various remarks:

In a first letter in March 1904, "pedagogic concerns", are raised for the first time from the part of the State Architect:

Before a project can be examined from a technical point of view, which is the task of the undersigned, it is first necessary to know whether the premises provided for in the plans will meet the school's current and future needs and educational principles.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶¹ Narjoux was referred to in one of the minutes of the Special commission as "architect-referee" (Séance du 10.11.1904 Commission spéciale pour l'examen des plans de l'école industrielle, ANLux – INT 612.

⁶⁶² Paul Flesch attended the *Königliche Bayerische Technische Hochschule* in Munich (1892-1895) followed by a traineeship in Paris (Scuto 2006).

⁶⁶³ **In the original** : Monsieur le Ministre d'Etat m'avait chargé d'examiner la question de la création, à Esch, d'une section technique à annexer à l'école industrielle y existant actuellement; cette école serait à organiser les cas échéant sur les bases établies dans l'exposé des motifs du DG des Finances (...) Lors de mes tournées dans le canton d'Esch j'ai examiné la question (...) avec les personnes compétentes, les industriels et les collèges échevinaux d'Esch, Dudelange et Differdange et après cet examen j'ai pu acquérir la conviction, que cet enseignement professionnel et technique répondrait entièrement aux besoins vitaux de la contrée et de la partie industrielle du canton d'Esch-sur-Alzette

⁶⁶⁴ Prosper Biver, whose name is also often spelt "Biver", was born in 1854 in Diekirch. After his studies in architecture in Aachen, and some work experience in Algeria he is appointed as state architect in 1897.

⁶⁶⁵ **In the original** : Avant de pouvoir examiner un projet sous le rapport technique, examen qui est la mission du soussigné, il faut d'abord savoir si les locaux, prévus aux plans répondront aux besoins actuels et futurs de l'établissement et aux principes pédagogiques.

He evades his responsibilities by stating that such part of the dossier is missing:

The examination of these questions is the responsibility of the Department responsible for the Service for Middle and Higher Education (...) that (...) has failed to provide the file in question ⁶⁶⁶ The objections made by these authorities [Inspector-Doctor and Director of the school] are of such a nature that a simple reworking of the plans will not suffice, but in order to satisfy them it will be necessary to have a new project drawn up. In these circumstances, (...) I regret that I am unable to propose approval of the project presented. The Esch-sur-Alzette administration felt it had no choice but to disregard the advice and material indications contained in my reports (...) But since it acted contrary to existing instructions, it need only accept all the consequences. (Letter from State Architect Biver to DG Internal Affairs Kirpach, 27 April 1904)⁶⁶⁷

The State Architect carries on against what he finds to be a waste of taxpayers' money: "It is essential that a building intended for education should be completely in keeping with its purpose in terms of service, hygiene and teaching".⁶⁶⁸

In this same letter and the subsequent one, he regrets the municipal administration failed to comply with his requests and suggestions and instigates the DGI Kirpach to involve the Department of Finances as well.

It will be however the opinion of the DG Finances Mongenast⁶⁶⁹ to kill any hopes left, of the addition of a technical school. In two letters, to the DG Internal Affairs, dated December 1904 and March 1905 respectively he expresses his opinion against what he finds to be the "exaggerations of the moment":

I believe, however, that I must share with you certain misgivings that I have when I consider the course that the population of the Esch-sur-Alzette school has followed up to now [follows a statistic] (...). It follows from these data that the commercial section of the upper division can hardly be considered viable and that its maintenance is seriously compromised; the industrial section is only lightly attended, which confirms the view expressed by the Government in its explanatory memorandum accompanying the first bill on the creation of an industrial school in Esch-sur-Alzette: "an establishment which does not take sufficient account of the vocational education of the working classes would only very imperfectly meet the needs of our mining and metallurgical region. The teaching at the industrial school - particularly in the upper division - is aimed above all at young people who are destined for a career in engineering, commerce, public and private administration, and not at professions based on manual work. It should therefore come as no surprise that the school in Esch,

⁶⁶⁶ L'examen de ces questions est du ressort du Département chargé du Service de l'Instruction Moyenne et Supérieure. (...) celui (...) fait défaut au dossier

⁶⁶⁷ **In the original** : Les observations formulées par ces autorités sont de telle nature à ne pas pouvoir se contenter d'un simple remaniement des plans, mais il sera nécessaire afin d'y satisfaire, de faire dresser un nouveau projet. Dans ces circonstances, (...) je regrette de ne pas pouvoir proposer l'approbation du projet présenté. L'administration de Esch-sur-Alzette a cru devoir ne pas prendre en considération les conseils et indications sur la matière indiquée dans mes rapports (...) Mais puisqu'elle a agi contrairement aux instructions existantes, elle n'a qu'à en assumer toutes les conséquences.

⁶⁶⁸ **In the original** : Il est indispensable qu'une construction destinée à l'instruction soit complètement en rapport avec sa destination tant en ce qui concerne le service, l'hygiène et la pédagogie.

⁶⁶⁹ Another Diekirch born (1843-1926) politician, Mathias Mongenast was director-general (Minister) of Finance from October 1882 to November 1915. He also served for twenty-five days as prime Minister of Luxembourg from 12 October of 1915 to 6 November 1915, following the death of Paul Eyschen.

which does not have its roots in the broad spectrum of industrial professions in the region, does not show the vitality that was expected and which is a guarantee of success and future (...).⁶⁷⁰

Furthermore, if the plans of the new school building were to go ahead, it should be through the solo perils and risks of the local administration:

The buildings to be constructed are based on a population of around 400 pupils. It is doubtful whether the Esch School will ever reach this figure in its present organisation and conditions. The pupils are recruited - apart from about thirty - exclusively from the municipality of Esch. Young people from other parts of the canton prefer to go to Luxembourg as in the past. During the 3 years following the creation of the Esch School, the canton of Esch continued to send to the Luxembourg Industrial School, on average, the same number of pupils as during the 3 years immediately preceding it, (...) Events have therefore vindicated the Government (...) in its original draft law. (...) It is up to the municipality of Esch to provide the premises needed to properly house the establishment that the public authorities have endowed. I have set out the conditions that it will have to meet in order to fulfil its obligations. In any event, the buildings will have to meet the needs of the present while allowing for any alterations and extensions that may be necessary (...).⁶⁷¹

In a letter of March 1905 (21.03) again addressed to the DG Internal Affairs Mongenast reinforces his arguments:

A four years' experience seems to have proved that the establishment will always have a predominantly local character. Most of the pupils are from Esch itself. The counties at either end, Bettembourg, Dudelange, etc, and on the other side, Petange, Rodange, etc, continue as in the past to send their sons to the Industrial School in Luxembourg, because of the great ease of communication. The rest of the country is not to be taken into account. An establishment which is aimed at the sons of a minority of well-to-do people: civil servants, clerks,

⁶⁷⁰**In the original** : Je crois cependant devoir vous faire part de certains scrupules que j'éprouve en envisageant la marche que la population de l'école d'Esch-sur-Alzette a suivie jusqu'ici[suit une statistique] (...) Il résulte de ces données que la section commerciale de la division supérieure ne peut guère être considérée comme viable et que son maintien est sérieusement compromis; la section industrielle n'est que faiblement fréquentée, ce qui confirme la manière de voir que le Gouvernement a exprimée dans sa l'exposé des motifs, accompagnant le premier projet de loi sur la création d'une école industrielle à Esch-sur-Alzette: "un établissement qui ne tient pas suffisamment compte de l'éducation professionnelle des classes laborieuses, ne répondrait que très imparfaitement aux besoins de notre région minière et métallurgique. Or, l'enseignement de l'école industrielle - notamment dans la division supérieure- s'adresse surtout aux jeunes gens qui se destinent à la carrière d'ingénieur, au commerce, aux administrations publiques et privées, et non aux professions reposant sur le travail manuel. Et cependant celles-ci forment l'élément essentiel et prédominant du canton d'Esch. Il ne faut pas donc s'étonner de ce que l'école d'Esch qui ne pousse pas ses racines dans les larges couches des professions industrielles de la région, ne donne pas signe de cette vitalité à laquelle on s'attendait et qui est une garantie de succès et avenir.

⁶⁷¹**In the original** : Les bâtiments à construire sont calculés sur une population d'environ 400 élèves. Il est permis de douter que dans son organisation, dans ces conditions d'existence actuelle, l'Ecole d'Esch atteigne[sic] jamais ce chiffre. Les élèves se recrutent - à une trentaine près- exclusivement dans la commune d'Esch. Les jeunes gens des autres parties du canton préfèrent aller à Luxembourg comme par le passé. Pendant les 3 années qui ont suivi la création de l'Ecole d'Esch, le canton d'Esch a continué à envoyer à l'Ecole Industrielle de Luxembourg, en moyenne, le même nombre d'élèves que pendant les 3 années qui l'ont immédiatement précédée, (...) Les événements ont donc donné raison au Gouvernement (...) dans son projet-de-loi primitif. C'est à la commune d'Esch qui doit fournir les locaux nécessaires pour loger convenablement l'établissement dont les pouvoirs publics l'ont dotée. J'ai indiqué les conditions qu'elle aura à remplir, pour s'acquitter des obligations contractées par elle. En tout état de cause, les bâtiments devront répondre aux besoins du présent tout en permettant de faire les transformations et les agrandissements éventuels (...).

whose recruitment takes place in such a limited and restricted field as that of Esch, does not seem to me to be called upon to achieve the level of development which was taken as the starting point in drawing up the plans.⁶⁷²

Followed by another accusation April 1905:

I must therefore admit that, in agreement with the local administration, you consider the affair in its present state to be a purely communal affair; and I must relinquish to the organs of the communal administration the right to involve themselves at their own risk in the enterprise which has met with your approval.⁶⁷³

It is noteworthy that a friction can be sensed between Mongenast and Kirpach on the subject which also reveals the tensions between Ministries and likely, that of their personalities, potentially even political allegiances. Mongenast was an independent whereas Kirpach was a liberal. In his response to Mongenast, Kirpach stands by the Esch administration. Mongenast had since the inception of the project, manifested his skepticism as to whether the school would ever reach a number of 400⁶⁷⁴ students. The DG for Internal Affairs (Kirpach) argues precisely the contrary, that is, that not knowing how the school population would evolve the administration would not want to be faced with the opposite situation, that the school was too small to welcome its (future) students:

You insist on the dismantled extension that will be given to the planned building. As it is hardly possible to foresee events today, it would be imprudent to give the project dimensions which, in the more or less near future, could be found insufficient. This possibility, which has preoccupied the municipal administration, would be all the more regrettable as this is a very important building, and yet involves considerable extraordinary expenditure, on which it is not advisable to linger. Moreover, the premises which may remain available could usefully be used for the installation of other municipal services (Letter of DGI Henri Kirpach in reply to DG Finance Mongenast, 10.04.1905).⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷² **In the original** : une expérience de 4 ans semble avoir prouvé que l'établissement aura toujours un caractère plutôt local. La majeure part des élèves est d'Esch même. Les contrées qui se trouvent aux deux extrémités, Bettembourg, Dudelange, etc, et d'un autre côté, Pétange, Rodange, etc, continuent comme par le passé à envoyer leurs fils à l'École industrielle à Luxembourg, à cause des grands facilités de communication. Le reste du pays n'entre pas en ligne de compte. Un établissement qui s'adresse aux fils d'une minorité de gens aisés : fonctionnaires, employés, commerçants, dont le recrutement se fait dans un champ si limité et si restreint que celui d'Esch, ne me parait pas appelé au degré de développement qui a été pris comme point de départ dans l'élaboration des plans.

⁶⁷³ **In the original** : Je dois donc admettre que d'accord avec l'administration locale vous considérez l'affaire dans son état actuel comme une affaire purement communale ; et je dois abandonner aux organes de l'administration communale de s'engager à ses risques et périls dans l'entreprise qui a rencontré votre approbation

⁶⁷⁴By 1943 the school had 334 students, it is from 1944 that the number more than doubles to reach 727 students (Konsbruck 2001).

⁶⁷⁵ **In the original** : Vous insistez sur l'extension démesurée qui sera donnée au bâtiment projeté. Comme il n'est guère possible de prévoir des aujourd'hui les événements, il serait imprudent de donner au projet des dimensions qui dans un avenir plus au moins rapproché, pourraient être trouvées insuffisantes. Cette éventualité, qui a préoccupé l'administration communale, serait d'autant plus regrettable qu'il s'agit d'un bâtiment très important, et pourtant d'une dépense extraordinaire considérable, sur laquelle il ne convient pas de lesiner, d'ailleurs les locaux restant éventuellement disponibles, pourront utilement servir pour l'installation d'autres services communaux.

In May 1905, a report of the envoys of the District Commissioner Braun, Chief Engineer Rodange and Henrion criticizes further the plans of the city's administration for the new school. Things like a music class are considered a luxury that not even Luxembourg city granted itself⁶⁷⁶, for its own Industrial School. Their observations focused primarily on the optimization of the space in the plans provided by the City's administration. Nevertheless, what should have been in principle, yet another technical opinion soon turns into one vested of a political nature:

First of all, we would point out that you don't build a building for an establishment that hasn't yet been created, especially in view of the fact that the Government's bill, which specifically provided for this creation, i.e. the addition of a technical section to the three [existing] lower classes of the industrial school, was not approved by the Chamber. This is a bad omen! ⁶⁷⁷(Report by Rodange and Henrion, May 1905 to DG Internal Affairs and District Commissioner Braun).

This allusion to bad luck comes to encounter what the position of the Government had been since the first law proposal in 1901, and which numerous members of the different Government departments seemed to ultimately support, that the addition of a technical section had never been a sincere aspiration of theirs.

Upset about the intransigence of the local council, which refused to accept the modifications suggested by the Government, this opinion too questions the financial participation of the government. Against the construction of school which they find too onerous, by giving as example schools in the districts of Echternach and Diekirch that were built without any financial assistance of the government.

Megalomania of a small town or plain sabotage from a government which had previously frequently stated that the need for a scientific curriculum was due also in Esch? Had Esch local rulers seen and wished too big for their working and middle classes?

The whole dimension of the State apparatus, its bureaucracy and decision-making process added to the lengthy implementation of changes, brought about by the city administration. It is a complex judgement, the facts are there, the much desired technical/scientific sections did not see the light until the 1940s (Buchler et al. 2020) and never under the same building as had been the wish of

⁶⁷⁶ ANLux, INT 612, p.49 of report of engineers Henrion and Rodange: « Nous voyons [y] figurer de plus une salle spéciale de musique et de chant. C'est un luxe que la nouvelle école Industrielle de Luxembourg n'a pas cru devoir se permettre et que nous chercherions en vain dans les autres établissements ».

⁶⁷⁷ **In the original** : Nous ferons remarquer d'abord, qu'on ne construit pas un bâtiment pour un établissement qui n'est pas encore créé, surtout en présence du fait que le projet de loi du Gouvernement qui prévoyait précisément cette création, c'est à dire l'adjonction d'une section technique aux trois classes inférieures [existantes] de l'école industrielle, n'a pas eu l'heur d'être agréé par la Chambre. C'est de mauvais augure!

the precursors of the school in Esch (Biltgen 2001). The construction of the building of the new premises went ahead amidst the controversy on whether the Government should or should not contribute financially, also given that it was in principle against the plans as presented by the municipality. The building was completed and inaugurated in 1909 with the Government finally contributing for half the amount of the expenses (Flies 1979).

A comparison of the discussions at the local and national levels reveals that the government was displeased with any local initiatives that exceeded their standards. The involvement of Flesch with various entrepreneurs may have prompted the government to adopt a cautious approach to any further initiatives from the city that might have resulted in increased costs. The government's approach to the local council can be described as a strategy of divide and rule, which could have been detrimental to the council's interests. The council's stance oscillated between supporting the entrepreneurs and siding with Flesch. The dispute over the premises of the Industrial School ultimately led to the dissolution of the council in 1912.

This multifaceted analysis of council meetings, conducted in parallel with those of higher instances and their actions at the level of the government and its various departments, reveals a complex web of contradictory sentiments. The sources transport the reader from the optimism, pride and enthusiasm of the educational aspirations of the small city to the pragmatism, inflexibility, rigidity and admittedly contempt of a State that was little opened to change. Furthermore, the local council had claimed to be in ignorance of many of the government's views, which may help explain their enthusiasm for proceeding without thinking they would eventually be deprived of the technical/scientific section. Mongenast's trenchant opinions emerge, in fact, only three years after the Industrial School had been established in Esch. This is a relatively short period of time for any educational institution to come out of an embryonic stage and acquaint itself with its public and target population. Furthermore, his account was unwavering in its assertion that a working-class city would remain working class. Interestingly, the then Minister of Finance provides at least partial insight into the success of the capital's Industrial School compared to that of Esch. We recall here again his words: "because of the great ease of communication," as to why other students from the Esch region continued to privilege Luxembourg City with its *Athénée*, to the offer available in Esch. This can be interpreted as a matter of transportation, and we are reminded of the first reason why parents in Esch desired a secondary school: the cost of accommodation and transportation elsewhere.

The words of C. M. Spoo, uttered a decade before the inauguration of the new building of the Industrial School, in response to fellow deputy Simons⁶⁷⁸ at the Chamber, resonate with clarity once more:

(...) For the rich, the Athenée, with a few exceptions for young people from the Luxembourg area; for the working people, primary school; that is the exact situation (...). I thank Mr. Simons for reminding me that I am a son of the people (...) That is the great difference between us two. But three quarters of the workers have not had the same luck. Their cradle is next to the primary school and they never receive any other education (Intervention of C.M. Spoo, 15.07.1897).⁶⁷⁹

The status quo of the city of Luxembourg as a centre of excellence for higher education was to be maintained. Esch received only a part of the educational facilities for which it had fought for a quarter of a century. It had its industrial school, but for decades to come the town would still be deprived of a technical school.⁶⁸⁰ A list of pupils from 1902 to 1925 (Manternach 1926), with the names of the 283, who passed the school's qualifying examination (*Examen de capacité*), bears witness to the variety of careers these pupils went on to pursue, even in the most disparate regions⁶⁸¹. Furthermore, an investigation into their families of origin (eventually father's profession) should help better establish their social and geographic origins and thus possibly debunk some myths around social mobility in the industrial region and namely those evoked by the Government in their intransigent stance against the creation of a technical section.

6.6.4 An education for teenage girls – Das Mädchenlyzeum

At the beginning of the 20th century, men held the political reins and held influential positions in the professional and cultural life of the Grand Duchy. It became evident that political and social equality for women would only become a reality when the world of work would open to them, guarantee them equal pay, obtain the right to vote and, above all, provide them with a better education. An essential condition for the social advancement of women was a solid general education and vocational training adapted to the new demands of the labour market. The parliamentary debates which preceded the vote on the law of 17 June 1911, in favour of the creation

⁶⁷⁸ Charles-Jean Simons (1841-1912), president of the Banque Internationale in Luxembourg, deputy and president of the Chambre des Députés (1896-1905).

⁶⁷⁹ C. R., 1897-1898, 15.07.1897, p.1907.

⁶⁸⁰ A professional school will be temporarily created in 1914 with a distinct structure approved by law only in 1924 (Buchler et al. 2020, 129).

⁶⁸¹ See *L' Ecole industrielle et commerciale* (Manternach 1926, 34–44).

of a secondary education for girls are revealing. They reflect the Luxembourg society's conception of the role of women at the beginning of the 20th century. Furthermore, they demonstrate the profound ideological divide between liberal and clerical circles.⁶⁸²

Circumstances evolved-positively in favour of girls' education. A change in mentalities was slowly happening, and especially in the South, about the role of women in society at large and education. Deputy Xavier Brasseur⁶⁸³ had been one of the promoters of such change. Far were the days in 1897, where deputy Prüm praised the essentials of a girl's education and of which values it should have consisted of⁶⁸⁴:

(...) Literary and scientific studies should not be over-emphasised in a girl's education. What was true in Molière's time is still true today:

*Il n'est bien pas honnête, et pour beaucoup de choses,
Qu'on femme étudie et sache tant de choses :
Former aux bonnes mœurs l'esprit de ses enfants
Faire aller un ménage, avoir d'œil sur ses gens
Et régler la dépense avec économie
Doit être son étude et sa philosophie.*

What a young girl needs to know above all is housework, cooking, sewing, washing, ironing, hygiene, home economics and household accounts. We must congratulate ourselves on the fact that, in recent years, so many domestic schools have been set up across the country (Intervention of Deputy Prüm, at the Chamber of Deputies, 16 February 1897)⁶⁸⁵.

A secondary instruction⁶⁸⁶ for girls was also on the cards for the city of Esch. At the request of the local special education commission headed once again by Hoffmann-Schaedgen. On 16 April 1910, a committee for the foundation of a girls' lyceum was formed. Besides Hoffmann-Schaedgen, its members were: C.M. Spoo, member of Parliament; Albert Clemang, also a deputy; Karl Hoffmann, industrialist; Mathias Wirtz, surveyor; Johann-Joseph Franck, mine director; J.Baptiste Ensich, professor.

Councillor Wester: Dr Welter⁶⁸⁷ has given a striking example: A father has 3 children, 2 sons and 1 daughter. The two sons are not very capable, while the daughter is very intelligent. Why should the latter not be given

⁶⁸² See Baldauff-Beck (Baldauff-Beck 1989) for a reflection on the mentalities on the subject of the opening of secondary schools for girls.

⁶⁸³ Social Democrat Deputy for Esch (1901-1910).

⁶⁸⁴ In the original : Il ne faut pas accorder une place exagérée aux études littéraires et scientifiques dans l'éducation de la jeune fille. Ce qui était vrai aux temps de Molière, l'est encore aujourd'hui (...) Ce qu'une jeune fille doit connaître avant tout ce sont les travaux de ménage, la cuisine, la couture, le lessivage, le repassage, l'hygiène, l'économie domestique et la comptabilité de ménage. Nous devons nous féliciter d'avoir vu, depuis quelques années, un si grand nombre d'écoles de ménage s'établir dans le pays

⁶⁸⁵ C. R. 1896/1897. 16 February 1897, p.1045.

⁶⁸⁶ Highschool.

⁶⁸⁷ Social Democrat MP for Esch (1897-1900).

the opportunity to educate herself intellectually? **Councillor Schaack:** In any case, it must be a good thing, because in the *Luxemburger Wort* they are upset about it.⁶⁸⁸

On 30 July (and 27 August) 1910, the municipal council decided to abolish the existent girls' upper primary school and to replace it with (Flies 1979) a municipal girls' lyceum⁶⁸⁹. On 17 June 1911, the new school was recognised as a state girls' lyceum.⁶⁹⁰ This institution was operative from 1910-1911 with two classes and a total of 58 pupils (Flies 1979). Some councillors deemed it essential for Esch and the canton as interest had grown, from girls' parents also in surrounding towns of Obercorn and Belvaux. There was nevertheless resistance, even from within the local council, as to whether this addition to the school offer in Esch was needed and whether the existent upper primary school was not enough:

Councillor Hoferlin: There are people who do not want to send their children to the high school. **Dr Joerg:** In one year, an upper primary school can't work miracles either. At the *Athenaeum*⁶⁹¹ I have experienced that students who came from an upper primary school thought they could skip a class. But it did not work. **Councillor Hoferlin:** I know people here in Esch who only attended the upper primary school and who have better positions than those who attended the entire *Athenaeum*. (...) Why do you want to abolish this school [Upper primary]? **Mayor Spoo:** We want to put something better in its place. **Dr Joerg:** We determine the minerval and will be very generous to those who have no means. **Councillor Hoffmann:** The poor people who cannot buy books will receive them from us. **Dr Joerg:** There are those among them who are more talented than the rich. Look at our industrial students, who are all working-class children and whom we educate freely have done better in their exams than those who only breathed *Konvict*⁶⁹² air. **Councillor Hoferlin:** Ours have passed with the congratulations of the jury. **Dr Joerg:** It will be the same with the girls.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁸ See local council meeting 16.6.1910, p.8-9. **In the original:** Hr. Wester. Herr Dr. Welter hat in der Kammer ein frappantes Beispiel darüber angeführt: Ein Vater hat 3 Kinder, 2 Söhne und 1 Tochter. Die beiden Söhne sind wenig fähig, während die Tochter sehr intelligent sind. Weshalb soll denn der letzteren nicht Gelegenheit geboten werden, sich intellektuell auszubilden. Hr. Schaack. Es muß jedenfalls eine gute Sache sein, denn im „Lux. Wort“ regt man sich darüber auf.

⁶⁸⁹ See local council discussions around the creation of a Girls' Highschool, 26.04.1910.

⁶⁹⁰ The government wanted to keep a hand on the teaching curriculum. “Dr Joerg: Übrigens hat die Regierung uns mitgeteilt, daß sie uns nicht im Stiche [sic] lassen will, wenn wir das Programm desjenigen von Luxemburg nnehmen. Local council meeting, 16.6.1910, p.1910.

⁶⁹¹ Athenée in Luxembourg.

⁶⁹² Boarding catholic school in Luxembourg city were considered a “vehicle for extraordinary social advancement” without which “pupils from the countryside, the children of peasants, would not have been able to go on to secondary and higher education (Amicale des Anciens 1997, 302)“.

⁶⁹³ **In the original:** Hr. Hoferlin. Es gibt Leute, welche ihre Kinder nicht in das Lyzeum schicken wollen. Hr. Dr. Joerg. In einem Jahre kann eine Oberprimärschule auch keine Wunder wirken. Im Athenäum habe ich das erlebt, daß Studenten, welche aus einer Oberprimärschule kamen, eine Klasse überspringen zu glauben konnten. Aber es ging nicht. Hr. Hoferlin. Ich kenne Leute hier in Esch die nur die Oberprimärschule besucht haben und die besseren Stellungen haben als diejenigen, die das ganze Athenäum absolviert haben. (...) Hr. Hoferlin. Weshalb wollen Sie diese Schule denn abschaffen? Hr. Bürgermeister. Wir wollen etwas besseres an die Stelle setzen. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Wir bestimmen das Minerval und werden sehr weitherzig sein für diejenigen, die keine Mittel haben. (Zustimmung des Hr. Cravatte.) Hr. Hoffmann. Die armen Leute, die keine Bücher kaufen können, erhalten dieselben von uns. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Es gibt bereit darunter, die viel mehr Talent haben wie die der Reichen. Sehen Sie mal unsere Industrieschüler,

It was envisaged that this new intermediate education school could take up some of the space free in the premises of the Industrial School. This raised the concern of mixing girls and boys, something unusual:

Councillor Wester: Is there no more room in the industrial school? **Councillor Weisen.** Yes, yes, put the girls with the boys too. **Councillor Schaack:** In the church they are together, too. They should be boldly put together, then they would be free to look into each other's eyes⁶⁹⁴

The Girl's Secondary schooling discussion was again embedded in the matter of religion education. The local council feared the doubts of the Government concerning the establishment of yet another school that would grant Esch's municipality some independence on its management and programme. The government was particularly concerned with which teachers were to be authorised to teach the courses. Usurpingly, given the *air du temps* still loaded with the secularisation tensions, the Esch local council wished to push away any approach to a religious indoctrination:

welche doch durchgehende Arbeiterkinder sind und frei erzogen wurden, die haben bessere Prüfungen gemacht wie diejenigen, welche nur Konvikts Luft geatmet haben. Hr. Hoferlin. Unsere haben mit Beglückwünschung der Jury bestanden. Hr. Dr. Joerg. So wird es auch mit unfern Mädchen gehen.

⁶⁹⁴ Hr. Wester. Ist kein Platz mehr in der Industrieschule vorhanden? Hr. Weifen. Jawohl, setzen Sie die Mädchen auch noch bei die Knaben. (...) Hr. Schaack. In der Kirche sind dieselben doch auch beieinander. Man sollte sie überall kühn beieinander setzen, dann würden sie von Jugend an darin erzogen, sich frei in die Augen zu schauen. Local council meeting 16.06.1910, p.8.

Mr. Schaack. It is the same today as it was when the Industrial school was founded. At the beginning Mr. Kunnen⁶⁹⁵ also made a long face, but he had to withdraw *nolens volens*. You know, gentlemen, that we were opposed in this matter. The Sisters did not think they had to comply, If they don't like it, they can go to Nancy⁶⁹⁶. They are foreigners after all. they still pretend to make the laws for us. We have girls from Luxembourg who want these jobs. (...). I wish that we are unanimous in doing the necessary that the school will be established (...) for next autumn. Today we no longer need education for the other world, it is here where we must live. We are here to take care of the education of our youth, it is no longer enough catechism by heart, even the simplest labourer must be able to write and do arithmetic.⁶⁹⁷

The acknowledgment of the necessity of a girls' secondary education for the pure sake of women's educational needs came from the front of the socialists, who saw in it not only a defense of the working classes to access an advanced educational path but also a breakthrough for what had been this far women's chances in terms of education:

Dr Joerg: In any case, I have absolutely no reservations from a moral point of view and the girl who enjoys an intellectual education is also morally educated at the same time. These two go hand in hand.⁶⁹⁸

Moreover, all members of the local council voted in favour⁶⁹⁹ of extending the compulsory school attendance to the age of 13 for girls as well⁷⁰⁰, thus adopting locally the school law of 1881 Art. 3 whereby the school attendance could be extended to seven years up to the age of 13, in a way that would also include girls in the compulsory education. Not least, the school commission opposed to having the 7th year of the Housekeeping School (which included sewing and cooking courses for girls given by the Sisters' congregation). Thus far the latter had been compared on an equal

⁶⁹⁵ 1853-1925. Deputy representing the Diekirch canton.

⁶⁹⁶ Reference to the Congregation of Elizabethan sisters from Nancy (France) who had been partially responsible for the upper primary school's education.

⁶⁹⁷ Hr. Schaack. Anfangs machte Hr. Kunnen auch ein langes Gesicht, aber er mußte sich nolens volens zurückziehen. Sie wissen meine Herrn, daß wir in dieser Angelegenheit bekämpft wurden. Die Schwestern glaubten sich nicht fügen zu müssen, wenn es ihnen nicht gefällt, dann können sie ja nach Nanzig gehen. Es sind doch Ausländerinnen. Schließlich machen die uns noch die Gesetze. Wir haben luxemburgische Mädchen, welche diese Stellen wünschen. Ich bin also dafür und ich wünsche, daß wir darin einstimmig seien das nötige zu tun, daß für nächsten Herbst die Schule gegründet sein wird. Wir brauchen heute keine Erziehung mehr für die andere Welt, es ist hier wo gelebt werden muß. Wir sind da um für die Erziehung unserer Jugend zu sorgen, es genügt nicht mehr, daß man den Katechismus auswendig, schon der einfachste Arbeiter muß heute schreiben und rechnen können.

⁶⁹⁸ **In the original:** Jedenfalls hege ich vom moralischen Standpunkte aus absolut keine Bedenken und dasjenige Mädchen, das eine intellektuelle Bildung genießt, wird zu gleicher Zeit auch moralisch gebildet. Diese beiden gehen Hand in Hand.

⁶⁹⁹ Local council meeting 24.06.1911.

⁷⁰⁰ The Blochausen government (1874-1885) enacted a decisive reform of primary education by introducing compulsory schooling, despite opposition from conservative MPs. School absenteeism was particularly widespread in rural areas, where children helped out in the fields. The Kirpach law of 10 April 1881 (named after Henri Kirpach, Director General of the Interior) made school attendance compulsory between the ages of 6 and 12 (Thewes 2011).

footing with the other secondary schools, a view the local council wished to counter to attract girls to a more generalized type of education within the *Madchenslyzeum*.

The creation of advanced education for girls meant a, however shy, first realization of the potential of women students and labour force, something that socialists took at heart:

Councillor Schaack: Both sexes have the same have the same right to education. Give the education, gentlemen, then you can be convinced that many things will change. Women should not be treated in this way from above like a henpecked husband. (...) If the woman is educated, she will be able to free herself from some restrains⁷⁰¹.

In fact, the council meetings provide a unique insight into the local councillors's views on women and their role in the public, educational, employment and private sphere:

Councillor Schaack: I am very pleased that there is a married woman there [Mrs. Schleimer for the Girls' Secondary school]; at least she knows how to deal with children. **Councillor Hoffmann.** She has the experience of life.⁷⁰²

But the traditional role of women at home was hard to counter by some of the most traditional members of the local council. Not all of them shared the progressive views of socialism. No matter how benevolent the council was about the creation of a girls advanced education school, jokes were still being cracked on who would then cook and peel potatoes at home:

Councillor Weisen: But who goes behind the stove? Mayor Spoo: These girls will go there too.⁷⁰³

Henri Cravatte, himself a merchant, believed the girls' highschool would have made the perfect opportunity for young girls to get a different kind of training:

Councillor Cravatte: I think that we should train our young girls for a higher rank instead of [just] for commercial assistants; so they should be taught bookkeeping in the first year. **Dr Joerg.** But what can they do afterwards achieve afterwards. **Mayor.** We don't want to make scholars out of them. **Mr. Cravatte.** Precisely for that reason but at that age they already they already have an idea of what bookkeeping is⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰¹ Die beiden Geschlechter haben dasselbe Recht auf Erziehung. Geben Sie der Frau Bildung meine Herren, dann können Sie überzeugt sein, daß manches sich ändern wird. Man soll die Frau nicht aus dieser Weise von oben herab behandeln wie ein Pantoffelheld (...) Wenn die Frau gebildet ist, wird sie sich von manchen Fesseln losreißen können. Local council meeting, 16.6.1910, p.9.)

⁷⁰² Hr. Schaack. Ich bin sehr zufrieden, daß eine verheiratete Frau dort ist; dieselbe weiß jedenfalls mit Kindern umzugehen. (...) Hr. Hoffmann. Sie hat die Erfahrung des Lebens. Local council meeting, 10.9.1910, p. 3.

⁷⁰³ Local council meeting, 16.6.1910, p.8.

⁷⁰⁴ In the original: Cravatte: Ich finde, daß wir unsere jungen Mädchen für einen höheren Rang heranbilden, anstatt für kaufmännische Gehilfinnen; so müßte im ersteil Jahr schon Buchführung lehrt werden (...) Dr. Joerg: Aber was können die nachher leisten. Hr. Bürgermeister. Wir wollen keine Gelehrten aus ihnen machen. Hr. Cravatte. Gerade deshalb. (...) Hr. Cravatte. Dieselben haben jedoch in jenem Alter bereits eine Idee davon was Buchführung ist

In 1912, other issues potentially emarginating women resurface in the local council discussions. For example, in which concerned the place of women and children. The eventuality of a married teacher becoming pregnant and having children was the ultimate tabu:

Councillor Wester: We would also need to have a children's day care centre. **Councillor Schaack:** That will come. **Dr Joerg.** Why is that necessary? We have no industry here in which women are employed.⁷⁰⁵ The few women who go out of the house go out to do laundry (...) **Dr Joerg.** The women should stay at home, then they'll stay prettier. **Councillor Wester.** But the nursery school would be necessary, then no child would get under a carriage. **Dr Joerg.** That doesn't happen any longer if the women are careful.⁷⁰⁶

The question of women's right to an education was also projected in terms of whether married woman should be allowed to continue teaching. Much of the education had so far, been provided by the Sisters or by male teachers. Married women needed indeed to introduce a request to the local council on whether they were authorized to teach after their marriage. This upon a written agreement by their husband in his capacity as head of the family. Socialists like Dr. Joerg, dismissed the case as a meddling into people's personal affairs, instances, where in his opinion the local council's approval should not even be sought to start with. Confronted with the request of a married teacher to continue her duties, the council could not agree on the principle of letting married women in office.

Although the existing regulations did not oppose it, the matter was put on a vote to the local council. Nicolas Schaeftgen⁷⁰⁷, doctor reacted vigorously against the idea of having married women in office which seemed to him unacceptable. That was also the opinion of the two representatives from the steel companies ARBED and Gelsenkirchen, Gregoire Barblé and Donnersbach respectively. Their stance was countered by councillor Nickels, the Dr. Joerg another councillor and Mayor J.P. Michels who also opposed the Dr Schaeftgen's inflexibility:

⁷⁰⁵ The law of 6 December 1876 prohibited work by children under the age of 12, night work or work in mines by adolescents under the age of 16, as well as work by women in mines.

⁷⁰⁶ Wir müssten auch eine Kinderbewahrschule haben. Hr. Schaack. Die wird kommen. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Weshalb ist die denn notwendig? Wir haben ja keine Industrie hier in welcher die Frauen beschäftigt sind. Die paar Frauen, die aus dem Hause arbeiten gehen, gehen auswärts Wäsche reinigen. Hr. Wester. Das andere wird kommen. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Die Frauen sollten zu Hause bleiben, dann bleiben sie auch hübscher. Hr. Wester. Die Kinderbewahrschule wäre aber nötig, dann käme kein Kind mehr unter ein Fuhrwerk. Hr. Dr. Joerg. Das geschieht auch jetzt nicht, wenn die Frauen aufpassen. Local council meeting, 29.12.1911, p.12.

⁷⁰⁷ Dr Nicolas Schaeftgen (1879- 1950), the doctor. Not to be confused with previous councillor Nicolas Hoffmann-Schaedgen, former teacher, wood merchant, and Head of the local school commission.

Councillor Schaeftgen. For us it is a question of a question of principle. We need to know whether we should keep married female teachers in office so that those who are here today know where they stand. (...) It's no laughing matter, Mr. Nickels. By the way, you recently said here that Mrs. Nickels could not accept the post of a member of the poor administration because her household takes up all her time. **Councillor Nickels.** Please, my wife has 2 children and if Mrs. Clement⁷⁰⁸ ever has children, she may perhaps change her mind. **C. Schaeftgen.** I am not talking about Mrs. Clement, but I repeat that you have expressly stated that your wife could not accept the post in question because her household took her time. **C. Schaeftgen.** How is a married teacher supposed to teach and give 5 to 6 hours of lessons a day on top of doing the housework? (...) Either the teacher belongs to the school alone or as a woman she belongs at home. Of the married women, 90 per cent have children. At the beginning at the beginning of the pregnancy, when the complaints start the teacher would have to take 4 to 6 weeks leave. By the way, in this respect we are against it for the simple reason that a good mother is a bad teacher, and a good teacher makes a bad mother (...) There may be exceptions where so-called supernaturals do both jobs well, but in general the authorities must not rely on such supernatural support. **Mayor Michels:** In Germany there are also widows who are teachers. **Dr Joerg.** And there are also married female teachers there too. **Councillor Donnersbach.** No, there are only in Belgium. By the way, our teachers are paid well enough to let their wives be at home. **Councillor Barblé:** yes! I suppose there is something to the woman that belongs in the household.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁸ Henriette Clément (née Besseling, 1891-1958,) the teacher who asked to be continued in office. She was the wife of Hubert Clément (1889-1953). The couple were both teachers in Esch-sur-Azlette starting 1912. Henriette Clement-Besseling was one of the founding members of the Foyer de la Femme that she will preside until 1958 as well a responsible for the page *Frauenseite* in the *Escher Tageblatt*. Hubert Clement was editor to be of the *Escher Tageblatt* in 1928 and also of the magazine *A-Z* as of 1934. He will also become Esch sur Alzette's mayor in 1935 and socialist deputy from 1934-1940 (Bodry and Fayot 2016).

⁷⁰⁹ Local council meeting, 31.08.1913, pp.168-169. **In the original:** H. Schaeftgen. Für uns handelt es sich mit einer Prinzipienfrage. Wir müssen wissen ob wir verheiratete Lehrerinnen im Amt behalten, damit diejenigen die heute hier sind, wissen wo sie dran sind. (Lachen des Hrn. Nickels.) Es ist nicht zum lachen H. Nickels. Übrigens haben Sie Übrigens ist man in dieser Beziehung kürzlich hier erklärt Frau Nickels könne den Posten eines Mitgliedes der Armenverwaltung nicht annehmen, da ihr Haushalt sie ganz in Anspruch nehmen, (...) H. Nickels. Bitte, meine Frau hat 2 Kinder und wenn Frau Clement mal Kinder haben wird, so wird, sie sich vielleicht anders entschließen. H. Schaeftgen. Ich rede hier nicht von Frau Clement, sondern ich wiederhole, daß Sie hier ausdrücklich erklärten, Ihre Frau könne den fraglichen Posten nicht annehmen, weil ihr Haushalt ihre ganze Zeit beanspruche. H. Schaeftgen. Wie soll denn eine verheiratete Lehrerin täglich 5 bis 6 Stunden Unterricht erteilen können, abgesehen vom Verbessern der Hausaufgabe usw. ? (Interbr;) Entweder gehört die Lehrerin der Schule allein oder als Frau dem Hause. Von den Verheirateten bekommen 90 Prozent Kinder. Zu Beginn der Schwangerschaft, wo die Beschwerden sich einstellen, müßte die Lehrerin 4 bis 6 Wochen Urlaub doch mindestens so weit wie bei uns und dort ist man dagegen aus dem einfachen Grunde, weil eine gute Mutter eine schlechte Lehrerin und eine gute Lehrerin eine schlechte Mutter abgibt. (...). Es mag ja Ausnahmen geben, wo sog. Übernaturen beide Stellen gut ausfüllen, aber im allgemeinen dürfen die Verwaltungen sich nicht ans solche Übernaturen stütze». H. Bürgermeister. In Deutschland gibt es auch Witwen, die Lehrerin sind. H. Jörg. Und auch verheiratete Lehrerinnen gibt es dort. (...) H. Donnersbach. Nein, nur in Belgien gibt es deren. (...) Übrigens sind unsere Lehrer gut genug bezahlt, um ihre Frauen zu Hans lassen zu können. H. Donnersbach. Übrigens wußten Sie, daß diese hier heiraten würde. Sie hätten sie deshalb dort lassett sollen wo sie war. (...) H. Barble. ja! es ist wohl etwas darin zu machen, die Frau gehört in ihren Haushalt. kürzlich hier erklärt Frau Nickels könne den Posten eines Mitgliedes der Armenverwaltung nicht annehmen, da ihr Haushalt sie ganz in Anspruch nehmen, (...) H. Nickels. Bitte, meine Frau hat 2 Kinder und wenn Frau Clement mal Kinder haben wird, so wird, sie sich vielleicht anders entschließen. H. Schaeftgen. Ich rede hier nicht von Frau Clement, sondern ich wiederhole, daß Sie hier ausdrücklich erklärten, Ihre Frau könne den fraglichen Posten nicht annehmen, weil ihr Haushalt ihre ganze Zeit beanspruche. H. Schaeftgen. Wie soll denn eine verheiratete Lehrerin täglich 5 bis 6 Stunden Unterricht erteilen können, abgesehen vom Verbessern der Hausaufgabe usw (...) Entweder gehört die Lehrerin der Schule allein oder als Frau dem Hause. Von den Verheirateten bekommen 90 Prozent Kinder. Zu Beginn der Schwangerschaft, wo die Beschwerden sich einstellen, müßte die Lehrerin 4 bis 6 Wochen Urlaub.

The matter was resolved as per suggestion of Mayor Michels and the Board of Alderman, with an in-between solution. It was finally suggested in the municipal council on 16 September 1913, that the wife of the local teacher Clement⁷¹⁰ was provisionally authorized to continue in office as followed:

For the time being, the status quo is maintained and accordingly the teacher, Mrs. Clement, will remain in her position. On the other hand, the municipal administration retains a decisive influence on the further development of this special position granted to Mrs. Besseling⁷¹¹. Should it be the case, i.e. if the school should suffer from the new [setting], Mrs. Clement must appeal for her dismissal.⁷¹²

The advice was sent to the Government, which ruled on the matter siding with the municipality's decision and approving—the proposal tending towards the provisional reappointment of Mrs. Clement- Besseling. The law displayed a grey zone in this respect. That a married woman with children should want to keep her job teaching was seen as even more out of the ordinary.

In 1918, five years after the case Clement- Besseling the question was not yet resolved. There were indeed precedents in the country, where female teachers had married after their employment remained in the teaching profession the basis of an authorisation by the local council. This was also the case in Esch-sur-Alzette municipality. The recently settled Biwer⁷¹³ administration brought back the discussion on the rights to the continuation of their functions of two female teachers, who and got married during the holiday period. The then mayor showed consternation over the fact that a married teacher simply took for granted she would keep teaching and asked for no authorisations:

Mayor Biwer: Miss Neu replied to this [local council's] letter, by declaring unceremoniously her intention to remain in office. She did not say a word about an authorisation. She therefore seems to believe she did not need it. Miss Hamen, on the other hand, seeks for the authorisation and explains that she will continue to live in Esch and that her mother will continue to run her household⁷¹⁴.

⁷¹⁰ Hubert Clement, see above.

⁷¹¹ Interesting how by interchangeably using her maiden and married name the local council seems to play with her reliability.

⁷¹² 16 September 1913

⁷¹³ Nicolas Biwer, the construction entrepreneur.

⁷¹⁴ Local council meeting, 18.10.1918, p.200. **In the original:** Fräulein Neu beantwortete dieses Schreiben die Lehrerin bindend zu erachten sei dahin, daß sie kurzerhand erklärte, im Amt verbleiben zu wollen. Von einer Ermächtigung sagte sie kein Wort. Sie scheint also der Ansicht zu sein, derselben nicht zu bedürfen. Fräulein Hamen hingegen sucht in ihrem Schreiben um die Ermächtigung und erklärt, daß sie nach wie vor in Esch Wohnung haben werde und ihre Mutter ihren Haushalt weiterführen.

However, mentalities were changing. Councillor Theodore Kapp, teacher and head of the local school commission came to the defense of his female colleagues:

Mr. Kapp: As President of the School Commission of the town of Esch, I must protect these teachers against these attacks, without however commenting on the opportuneness of the step they have taken here. The School Act is silent on this point. (...) If the legislator finds that it should be forbidden, then it must say so, as in Germany, for example, where the teacher who marries ipso facto resigns from her post. But as long as no formal provision exists and as long as there are no complaints filed, nothing can be done. **Mr. Kersch:** I am of the opinion that we are masters to terminate the contract, but we cannot forbid the people concerned to marry. **Mr. Theisen:** I had no intention of taking the floor to speak, but as I see that the matter is developing is developing into a matter of principle, I am obliged to put forward my opinion. I base my remarks solely on the law. These ladies have made use of a natural right, which no one can deny.⁷¹⁵

According to the acts of the same meeting in all European countries, women teachers were allowed to marry. In Belgium, in France, in the USA, most of them were indeed married. Only in Germany, an authorisation was required. The question went beyond its legality aspects and introduced the real subject. That is of how much traditional views on the place of women, defended by some members of the local council⁷¹⁶ should be brought forward at the core of what were pure legal dispositions. The ideals of socialism and liberalism on the freedom of individuals began to show its strength. Times were changing for women in Luxembourg too, with the help of some unapologetical Esch-sur-Alzette female teachers.

The lengthy period of cultural conflict, which had commenced in the nineteenth century, was significantly influenced by the opposition between the State and the Church, between liberals, social-democrats and the clerical camp. The first two decades of the 20th century were characterised by the ongoing divisions and the frequent shifts in alliances between liberals and social democrats. The two groups were united by their anti-clericalism, but this soon began to erode. The Bloc des Gauches was unable to withstand the social unrest caused by the war, the rise of the trade unions and the ascendancy of the socialist tendency within the right-wing party (Hirsch 1989). This was also evident in Esch. What dominated the political debate was no longer the question of state-church relations but the social question, which reflected the country's

⁷¹⁵ Local council meeting, 18.10.1918, p.201. **In the original:** Als Präsident der Schulkommission der Stadt Esch muß ich diese Lehrerinnen in Schutz nehmen gegen diese Angriffe, ohne mich jedoch über die Opportunität des Schrittes, den sie hier gemacht haben, auszusprechen. Das Schulgesetz schweigt sich über diesen Punkt aus. (...) Wenn der Gesetzgeber findet, daß es verboten sein soll, dann muß er das sagen, wie z. B. in Deutschland, wodie heiratende Lehrerin ipso facto von ihrem Posten zurücktritt. Solange aber keine formelle Bestimmung besteht und so lange keine Klagen einlaufen, ist nichts zu-machen.

⁷¹⁶ The matter of married women staying in office received the negative vote of Kersch, Krein, Noesen, Origer, Pierrard, Salentiny, Donnersbach, Emeringer and Herschbach, against the votes of Theisen, Hamilius, Hoffmann and Kapp, with Schaack abstaining on the principle that in his opinion, such was not even a matter for the local council to vote on but rather a matter of individual choice.

industrialisation. In his review of the Christian-social party, (Biltgen 1989) asserts that the socialists were more closely aligned with Catholic politicians, who had wisely adopted universal suffrage – the Catholics for opportunist reasons because they believed women would vote for the Parti de la droite, not only for men but also for women. It is worth noting that liberals had expressed concerns about a "predisposition" of women to vote rightwards, which ultimately proved to be true.

This alliance between Liberals and Social Democrats, which proved its worth in the elections held between 1904 and 1914 by defeating the clerical in the cantons of Luxembourg and Esch, had culminated with the adoption of the school law of 1912. One can discern from the aforementioned divisions the reason why a path was opened for the success of a right-wing camp post-1914, at the Chamber level, at least. In Esch, liberals and social democrats held the helm, albeit in a much-fractured manner until the death of mayor Michels in 1917. It was not until the right-wing party adopted a pronounced social profile from its creation in 1914 that it sowed discord between the Liberals and the Social Democrats, leading to the break-up of the Bloc de la Gauche. Similarly, throughout the 1920s, the differences between progressive liberals and liberal-conservatives became increasingly pronounced. It is evident from the opinions expressed by those participating in the local council that there were significant differences of opinion regarding the role of women in society, their right to a professional occupation, to pursue further education, or rather, their "natural" place in the home. Furthermore, it is notable that some of these views were contradictory. The term "liberal" did not necessarily imply support for women's professional emancipation, as evidenced by the stances of Nicolas Donnersbach and Gregoire Barblé, or the views of Dr. Nicolas Schaeftgen, a man who will be seen fighting fiercely for the right of the city to its own hospital, on the grounds that working-class and women alike should be able to benefit from healthcare. However, he still believed that the woman's place and role was only the domestic.

It is not the role of the researcher to judge men in accordance with the standards of their era. It is notable that it was men who were engaged in the profession of teaching who came to the defence of women (Théodore Kapp), as well as men who acknowledged the added value of having women in some professions (Cravatte) and finally those, like Schaack, who by siding with the working class were among the first to realise that women's emancipation and participation in the public sphere was not only possible but achievable:

You're a working-class woman. Are you going to listen to me? Read these lines? Think about it? Of course you will. (...) And you work hard sometimes, very hard, don't you? Certainly. From early morning to late evening. (...) Why is that? Why do other women in silk and velvet, adorned with pearls and precious stones, well-fed, well-groomed - why? And yet they work little or not at all. Those women are the happy and unhappy ones. Wives of those gentlemen who let others labour for themselves, live off the sweat and blood of the poor labourers and then act as if they were divine beings themselves. "That cannot be changed ! It has always been like this, will always be like this!" So is what you usually hear people say. But we must not believe that today, because it's a lie. (...) As a woman, I have the same human rights as a man. We were not born as handmaidens but as human beings with equal rights. As long as I sat at my parents' table, there was no difference (...) We were equal siblings and children of our parents. When I got married, I was told that the husband was head of the woman, the woman had to be subservient to the man. (...) That is all a lie, because how can husband and wife live happily together if he considers himself master, she feels like a maid? How can they as " master and maid bring up free, happy children, educate capable people? No, dear reader, somewhere there's a snag that can only be removed by socialism.⁷¹⁷

Modernity was not only infrastructure, but modernity was also progressive thinking, different ways to conceive society where women and the working class could be an integrative part of as well. As the case for Esch proves, this was far from being the realm of liberals only, but also of men who were vanguardist enough to speak on behalf of women. They were often socialists. These achievements should not go overlooked in the history of the city.

⁷¹⁷ Ein Brief an die Frauen. *Der Arme Teufel*, 14.05.1914, p.2.

6.6.5 A hospital for Esch-sur-Alzette

The late 19th century had been a period of break through discoveries and medical advances, however at the beginning of the 20th century, hospital treatment in Luxembourg was usually only considered for the impoverished. The population was generally cared for in their own homes, especially in rural areas (Maas 2022), the authorities were hardly interested in building public state or municipal hospitals. As for the wealthier layers of society they often searched for private hospitals abroad⁷¹⁸:

As long as they want to consult a medical authority other than their family doctor, rich patients would always prefer to be treated by university professors or distinguished specialists with private clinics. In all cases, wealthy clients would require special facilities that are entirely separate from those of the poor (Intervention of deputy Emile Prüm in the session of 11 December 1900).⁷¹⁹

Apart from a few small hospitals in the industrial South, the country only had two hospitals created by expanding private clinics in the city of Luxembourg.

The younger generation of doctors who mostly completed their studies in Germany and Switzerland, countries with an advanced hospital system were highly dismayed by such backward conditions and so, following the introduction of the following the introduction of the Health Insurance Act in 1902, there was a lively propaganda campaign for the establishment of municipal hospitals. However, eventually they could not ignore the fact that working-class families living in cramped tenements could hardly do without hospital treatment.

In their poorly ventilated and extremely dirty rooms, occupied day and night, as seen previously, by ten or more labourers it was not unusual for some of them to suffer from an infectious disease, under such circumstances it is understood that such disease spread rapidly.

Furthermore, the sanitary and hygienic issues of that period came under a plethora of other evils: tuberculosis, insufficient vaccination because of defective campaigns, issues concerning the isolation of contaminated patients and school children, in particular. They all added to the public health concerns in Esch-sur-Alzette. The same did matters as diverse as the need for pasteurization

⁷¹⁸ Where incidentally a few of them would die as well, like for example the notary Charles Laval.

⁷¹⁹ C. R. 1900-1901, 11.12.1900, p. 65. Another fight of the clerical-agrarian Prüm, in the Government, was to impeach that secular doctors took the direction of the existent hospitals. **In the original** : Du moment qu'en dehors de leur médecin de famille ils voudraient consulter une autorité médicale, les malades riches préféreraient toujours se faire traiter par des professeurs d'université, soit par des spécialistes distingués qui disposent d'une clinique privée. Dans tous les cas, les clients riches demanderaient des installations spéciales et entièrement séparées de celles des pauvres

of milk and its byproducts, air pollution leading to respiratory ailments and sexually transmitted diseases.

In the local council too, talks of building a hospital had been in the air since 1907, by the initiative of Schaack. He even came to suggest that the steel plant Aachener Hütten, might use the promised sum of 20.000 Francs to the hospital building instead of a church.⁷²⁰ For Dr. Joerg no chance was ever lost at comparing and denigrating Luxembourg city's politics, especially if it involved attacking the Catholic Church.

Dr. Joerg: I am happy to admit that. There is no proper hospital in the whole country. In Luxembourg, a liberal-socialist local council built a new church instead of a hospital (...)
Mr. Nickels: With a beautiful parish villa.
Dr. Joerg. Yes, what would have happened there if a clerical local council had been at the helm⁷²¹

In 1913, the *Association pour la protection de l'Hygiène Populaire* regretted that the local councils throughout the country did little to improve the state of affairs but praised nevertheless the progresses met in the Esch canton (*L'Indépendance Luxembourgeoise* 1913).

In addition, to the listed concerns, prostitution was more than a pure moral issue, its repercussions at the level of the indigenous and foreign populations preoccupied the local council, for the impacts it was having beyond the borders and wider implications on public health:

Dr. Schaeftgen. An attaché of the Italian consulate in Cologne had been instructed by his government in Rome to make an enquiry with the doctors of the Rhineland, Westphalia and Luxembourg in order to find out the causes of the causes of the mass spread of incurable venereal diseases, which are widespread among the migrants from the Italians returning to their homeland from the above regions.(...) As can be seen from the reports of Italian doctors from all parts of Italy to the government these venereal diseases have contaminated whole villages. It has now emerged that proportionally most of these sexually transmitted diseases have come from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. (...) That is an unfortunate fact for our government.⁷²²

⁷²⁰ The subsidy was meant for the construction of a new Church in the Grenz neighbourhood. See local council meetings, 14.12.1907, p.120.

⁷²¹ Local council meeting 9.05.1913, p.100. In the original: **H. Joerg.** Das gebe ich gerne zu. Im ganzen Lande besteht kein ordentliches Spital. In Luxemburg hat ein liberal-sozialistischer Gemeinderat, anstatt ein Spital, eine neue Kirche gebaut (...) **H. Nickels:** Mit einer schönen Pfarrervilla dabei. H. Joerg. Jawohl, was wäre da erst geschehen, wenn ein klerikaler Gemeinderat am Ruder wäre.

⁷²² Local council meeting 22.03.1913, p.66-67. **In the original:** H. Schaeftgen. Ein Attaché des italienischen Konsulates in Köln war von seiner Regierung von Rom aus beauftragt worden, eine Untersuchung anzustellen bei den Ärzten des Rheinlandes, von Westfalen und Luxemburg, um die Ursachen zu ergründen, aus welche die massenhaft verbreiteten ungeheilten Geschlechtskrankheiten zurückzuführen seien, die unter den aus obigen Bezirken in ihre Heimat zurückgekehrten Italienern herrschen. Wie aus den Berichten italienischem Arzte ans allen Teilen Italiens an die Regierung hervorgeht haben diese Geschlechtskranken in ihrer Heimat ganze Dörfer verseucht. Es hat sich nun herausgestellt, daß verhältnismäßig die meisten dieser Geschlechtskranken aus dem Großherzogtum Luxemburg gekommen sind. (...) Das ist eine traurige Tatsache für unsere Regierung.

Jacques Maas research on the history of the Esch Hospital (Maas 2022) casts light on one further aspect that had been so far gone underrated by historiography: the possibility of giving women and children a place to be taken care of and isolate in case of illness.

Women and children would not be cared for in any way, as the small private hospital of the Steelplant [Metz et Cie] only took in sick or injured male employees of the Metz company, forcing women and children to endure their serious illnesses at home under the most unfavorable conditions. They would thus remain a constant risk of infection for the other residents of the labour colonies. The lack of a municipal hospital could also have serious financial consequences for businessmen if the sanitary inspector had to close affected shops for 6-9 weeks in the event of an epidemic (Maas 2022, 78).

The plea initiated by Dr. Schaftgen⁷²³, in 1907, highlighted in fact this need. His document also points out that a municipal hospital treatment, would cut by half the illnesses and deaths among children. It would naturally be of great benefit to all working-class and artisan families. Thus far the Metz et Compagnie Hospital then in service, was private and under the monopoly of the company. Catering only to their all-male labour force, in case of gravity, patients from outside the plants were transferred to Luxembourg or to Echternach.

Among other things, the Doctor Schaeftgen, also defended the profitability of the project, guaranteed, as all Esch health insurance companies and the accident insurance cooperative would have their members treated there, all the more so as the patients "would also enjoy the benefit of the legally established free choice of doctor", according to Dr Nicolas Schaeftgen, who throughout his life was a staunch advocate of the liberal principle of free choice of doctor (Maas 2022). Maas' study highlights too the personal interests⁷²⁴ and disputes behind the lengthy three-decade decision making process before the Hospital was built. Initially, this idea met with quite lively resistance from the leading circles for fiscal reasons. Local opposition came from Dr Pierre Metzler, in his capacity as medical inspector of the canton of Esch, who issued a negative opinion on the proposal to build a municipal hospital in Esch. As it was a private company facility, the Metzler family⁷²⁵

⁷²³ He was to join as a member of the local council only in 1912 under J.P. Michels' presidency.

⁷²⁴ Namely the monopoly the Metzler brothers had over the existent hospital and patients. According to Maas, accusations related to the special position of the Metzler family of doctors at the Metz & Cie Hüttenhospital in Esch. Opened in 1874, this hospital for sick or injured mine and metallurgical workers of the company was under the management of doctors from the Metzler family from the very beginning and remained the only hospital in the industrial town of Esch until the late 1920s.

⁷²⁵ Dr Nicolas Metzler (1844-1894), older brother of Dr Pierre Metzler, father of Dr Joseph Metzler, and of the lawyer Léon Metzler. Studied medicine in Heidelberg, Würzburg and Vienna. When Metz & Cie built a company hospital in Luxemburger Strasse in 1873, it placed it under the management of Dr Nicolas Metzler. Appointment as cantonal physician of the canton of Esch (1891-1894). Dr Joseph Metzler (1876-1945), son of Dr Nicolas Metzler and nephew of Dr Pierre Metzler, established himself as a doctor in Esch in 1900 (Dr med 1899) and also practised at the ironworks hospital there (Maas 2022).

of doctors had a kind of de facto monopoly on medical hospital⁷²⁶ care in Esch for decades. This special position was reinforced by the company's requirement that its workers be treated exclusively by the Metzler family's contractually obliged physicians. They also had the exclusive right to admit patients for treatment in the steel plant's hospital, which led to various conflicts with the rest of the Esch medical profession, particularly in the event of medical emergencies.

Maas (ibid) argues further that since the Metzler also exercised their profession within the Metz's Compagnie Hospital it is no wonder that procrastination on the hospital issue by Mayor Léon Metz, director from Metz et Cie, was sought. However, the Board of Aldermen, chaired by Mayor Léon Metz, did not take any concrete steps to even begin to implement the municipal council's decision. This was thus another arena of confrontation between socialist Jean Schaack and the mayor. In fact, Schaack and Thilmany as Maas argues will be key in mobilizing the working classes in favour of the construction of a hospital.

Moreover, the construction of the city hospital seemed to have been deterred somehow again by the city's antagonizing relationship to the Government. But unlike with what had happened with the Industrial school the delays in finally seeing the hospital came, principally from the difficulties related to finding the right land and inevitably the war years.

In fact, in terms of its ideal location the local council traversed various stages of negotiations and opinions. Plots of land were discarded either for their unsuitable exposure, difficulty of transport or the predictable difficulties with convincing the owners to sell at a reasonable price. This left the 'Dellhöh' site north of the primary school of the same name- planned by city architect Paul Wigreux, and the industrial school behind it to the south- as the winner. The experts argued in favour of this site with the following arguments:

There is plenty of space to carve out a sufficiently large, well-designed plot. To the east is the Metz & Cie ironworks, to the north-west the Gelsenkirchen ironworks; however, both are at such a distance that there is no danger of nuisance (Maas 2022, 88).

Based on this report, the city council voted in favour of the 'Dellhöh' site at its meeting on 1 February 1913. The acquisition of the missing building land was to occupy the town councillors for a long time to come, with the town having to resort to expropriation proceedings.

The Esch hospital project took a decisive turn only in the summer of 1920, when ARBED President Emile Mayrisch contacted the Chairman of the Sanitary Commission of the town of Esch, Dr

⁷²⁶ Built in 1873 as the first hospital in the city of Esch-sur-Alzette, the Hospital of the Metz et Cie also known as *Bridderhaus*. See Esch-sur-Alzette - Guide Historique et Architectural (Buchler et al. 2020).

Nicolas Schaeftgen, to discuss the question of a possible involvement of the industrial company in the implementation of the project. The representatives of the steel plants expressed the wish that the future hospital should not only be used by the citizens of the town of Esch, but also by the residents and steel plants workers of the neighbouring villages.

The delays in the construction of the hospital were not without possible fatal consequences. Looking over the quarter of the century that took to the opening of the Hospital the Dr. Schaeftgen noted:

On the 15th March 1930, the new building will have opened its doors. 25 years have passed since the first preliminary studies, and even if the culmination of joint, uninterrupted endeavour is a magnificent work of art, the fact that the slow realisation caused irreparable damage to the health of some of the people. May the history of the Escher Hospital be an incentive for the responsible leaders to vigorously pursue further public health tasks, such as the eradication of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases and, despite all resistance in the interest of the people as a whole (Schaeftgen 1930).⁷²⁷

The hospital commission had to struggle with great difficulties, as the devaluation of money resulted in continuous substantial price increases. The building, initially estimated at 6 million was finally completed at a cost of 14 million. Of this 14 million, 11.4 million had at this point in 1930 been paid in equal shares by the municipality and the iron and steel companies, while the remaining funds of 2.6 million were still being negotiated between the municipal administration and the iron and steel companies (V. Wilhelm 1930). It remains to this day, as a testimony to the efforts made jointly by the steelworks and the town council in the pursuit of a public health service that could serve all sections of the population.

⁷²⁷ **In the original:** Mit dem 15. März 1930 soll das neue Haus seine Pforten eröffnen. Seit den ersten Vorstudien sind 25 Jahre dahingeflossen, und wenn auch als Krönung gemeinsamer ununterbrochener Anstrengung ein herrliches Werk daSteht, darf nicht vergessen werden, daß die langsame Realisierung für manchen Volksgenossen irreparablen Gesundheitsschaden bedingte. Möge die Entstehungsgeschichte des Escher Krankenhauses den verantwort liehen Führern ein Ansporn sein, weitere volkshygienische Aufgaben, wie die Ausrottung der Tuberkulose und der anderen Infektionskrankheiten energischer zu betreiben und ungeachtet aller Widerstände im Interesse des Volksganzen rasch zur Durchführung zu bringen.

6.7 1918 - 1922: The beginning of a new era

The war, with its trail of hardships, changed the balance of power. Faced with social tensions due to the dramatic supply situation and rising prices, the *Bloc des Gauches* crumbled, while the Party of the Right, which included Pierre Dupong⁷²⁸ and Émile Reuter⁷²⁹ who developed the Christian-socialist tendency⁷³⁰, gained in popularity.

In Esch, by 1917, these changes manifest with the right-wing oriented office of Nicolas Biwer and J.P. Pierrard. Both inherit the heavy burden of the last couple of years of the war, where the ordeal of food provisions, and that of finding meat in particular, hits unprecedented shortages.

Under the influence of the Russian and German revolutions, the question of the social system arose in Luxembourg after 1918. Politically, the First World War meant the demise of the liberals who had dominated political life from 1848 to 1915 and the rise of the right-wing party nationally and the socialist party in the south. In social terms, it brought workers, their organisations and their demands to the forefront and led to a second era of social legislation (Scuto 2013).

A parenthesis urges here to recall that the universal suffrage is about to be finally introduced and will grant the working class with a long due political credibility. It should serve as a reminder, that even in the liberal camp, some had resisted the idea of a universal suffrage, because they overall feared that women would be inclined to vote for the Catholic right (Maas 1983). That Emile Mayrisch, the husband of Aline de Saint-Hubert, herself a (self) proclaimed feminist, should have heralded such views serves only to reinforce an idea of contempt that was generalized towards women of all classes cofounded.

In Esch, the electoral body grew from 683 men in 1906 to 7266 men and women in 1919 (Buchler et al. 2020). When of the first proportional representation elections, in late 1920, the Socialist Party list won an absolute majority with eight seats. Two of the members of the new local council had

⁷²⁸ Pierre Dupong (1885-1953), founder of the CSV (Christian Social People's Party) as the main conservative party after World War 2. He had also been, together with Émile Reuter founding member of the Party of the Right (1914). He was Luxembourg's Prime Minister between 1937 and 1953.

⁷²⁹ Émile Reuter (1874-1973), Lawyer and politician. Founding member of the Parti de la Droite in 1914 as well as Prime Minister 1918-1925.

⁷³⁰ We had seen in Esch too how the emergence of politically independent trade unions soon met the Catholic circles.

already sat on it before 1918: the Socialist (dissident) Jean Schaack-Wirth⁷³¹ and the trade unionist from the People's Party Théodore Noesen, who were candidates on the list of the People's Party *Freie Ordnungs Partei*, along with representatives of the Right Party (*Rechts Partei*). Victor Wilhelm, a railway worker, was chosen by the Socialist Party because he was the only one of the party's eight councillors with a good command of the French language who could stand up to the local authority officials (Buchler et al. 2020).

Regardless of what may have been going on beyond the local political life of Esch-sur-Alzette, and namely the back-and-forth struggles between socialists and social democrats and social democrats and liberals, we see an absence, at the level of the local council, at least until 1918 of strongly opposed forces to liberalism. Esch had been “Red” indeed in their choice of representatives to the Chamber of Deputies, but locally other forces came into play. Despite the two right-wing presidencies of 1917-1919 and 1919-1920 of Biber and Pierrard respectively, a better organized socialist political force starts to make itself heard, inside the local council.

The immediate post-war period in Luxembourg was also characterised by social unrest among the workforce, some of which took on revolutionary characteristics.

One aspect stands out during this new period. That is the greater involvement of the working class in the decision-making process, locally. We saw, for instance, how the trade unions got involved in the appeal for the construction of the Hospital in Esch.

Until very late in the industrialisation process, a large part of the resident population and mostly immigrants, regular or seasonal, remained living, in extremely dire conditions. The number of immigrants that kept flocking to the city in the post war period became the main demanders for assistance to the poor.

As for the lower middle classes of employees of both state and private sector, they were not far from meeting the salaries of a skilled worker even though in many instances these appear to have been enough to secure decent housing.⁷³² The latter were in fact part of the clientele on which the builders and developers like Nicolas Biber and Alfred Lefèvre relied.

⁷³¹ Jean Schaack's political parcours will have included incursions in most political fronts, by 1924 he was even a candidate with his, until then, archenemy Liberal Party.

⁷³² The ARBED payslips for part of its employees during the period 1913-1921 show the little discrepancy existing between the salaries of a skilled manual worker and that of another low rank employee. Depending on seniority salaries of a chief-miner could even be higher than those of an office employee. At the discretion of the management, some could be entitled to an extra bonus for housing fees or indeed be eligible for housing free of cost. See Archives de la division ARBED, ANLux-AE-U1-342 and ANLux-AES-U1-344 (Stammrollen der Grubenbeamter – 1913/1914 – 1920/21).

The poorest of the population were an unprofitable market. Therefore, by far the greatest concern of the local council was housing for the poor or otherwise deal with the lack of it and its consequences. Irrespective of the politic camp chosen by the local councillors, some new entries endorsed a programme steered at resolving varied social questions. One of its vocal members was Bernard Herschbach.⁷³³

As the houses built by the steelworks were generally reserved for skilled workers only, the housing conditions of most new arrivals remained particularly precarious. Yet, until the end of the World War I, the State still refrained from intervening. The construction of housing was still restricted to private initiative. The trade-unionist Herschbach was among the first to instigate the local council to react:

Councillor Herschbach: In recent times it is particularly difficult for workers to find a flat, or to keep the one they have. The people who cannot meet the demands of the owners will soon be forced to sleep in the open. The rents are so high that people will have to move out. I suggest that the Board of Aldermen call the attention of the government on this issue. (...) We have to go ahead and buy those flats that are vacant are built on speculation for the accommodation our fellow citizens.(...) Why should unused flats remain empty, while in others people are crammed 4 or 5 into a room. Something must be done, we don't have enough flats here⁷³⁴(Intervention of councillor Herschbach, local council meeting,13.03.1918, p.91).

In Esch-sur-Alzette, where, furthermore, the risk of epidemics, was high, the efforts of the time's city administration was to lead the inhabitants of cellars and crowded chambers into more dignified and spacious flats, where better hygienic conditions could also be met. This dire hygienic and sanitary situation is palpable from the public announcements of the official gazette *Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, which updated the authorities and population regularly, through releases about the contagious diseases situation in its various districts. Typhoid fever, scarlatina,

⁷³³ Bernard Herschbach from Esch (1891-1978). A Master locksmith, he was one of the founders of the mining and metalworkers' association based in Esch. It was supported by the following organs: "Die Laterne" (1917/18), "Die Volksstimme" (1918) and "Der Wegweiser" (1918/19). In the 1st issue from 13 January 1917, editor P. Kappweiler, General Secretary of the association, wrote that at that time, on 1 September 1916, it was decided to reorganise the Luxembourg Miners' and Metallurgists' Association non-partisan, non-religious basis. The association was thus not to be regarded as social democratic (Flies 1979, 557).

⁷³⁴ **In the original:** Wir haben in letzter Zeit oft feststellen können, daß es besonders den Arbeitern sehr schwer ist, eine Wohnung zu finden, oder diejenige die sie haben, zu behalten. Die Leute, die den Forderungen der Eigentümer nicht nachkommen können, werden bald gezwungen sein unter freiem Himmel zu schlafen. Die Mietpreise werden so hochgeschraubt, daß die Leute ausziehen müssen. Ich schlage vor, daß Schöffen und Gemeinderat in dieser Frage der Regierung den Weg zeigt. (...) Wir müssen vor gehen und diejenigen Wohnungen die frei stehen und auf Spekulation gebaut sind zur Unterbringung unserer Mitbürger heranziehen. (...) Weshalb sollen unbenutzte Wohnungen leer stehen bleiben, während in andern die Leute zu 4, 5 in einem Zimmer zusammengepfercht sind. Es muß etwas darin geschehen, wir haben nicht Wohnungen genug hier.

foot-and-mouth disease, among others, were often at a higher risk of widespread in the mining areas of the South, presumably because of faultier hygienic conditions in the Minett's urban settings (Mémorial, 1910a).

Councillor Jacques Thilmany (in office between 1919-1933) was able to know the housing conditions of Esch in detail, in his capacity of member of the Sanitary Commission. The latter's survey, taken 13 years after the first glaring report on poverty in Luxembourg exposed the dramatic conditions several hundred of people were still living in Esch-sur-Alzette, in 1920:

The housing conditions, in a city or a country are a measure of the cultural level of the population. Where housing conditions are poor the level of education of the population is also low. The housing conditions are also an indicator of the health conditions. If the worker in his workplace has everything desirable but he lives at home in a stable, then the sacrifices that are made to improve hygiene in the in the workplace are in vain. (...) I have come across flats that are simply unworthy of description. We visited a house where from top to bottom not a single windowpane was whole. The floors are in such a state that when you step on them that if you step on them, you run the risk of falling from the second floor down to the ground floor. The walls have not been whitewashed for years and nothing has been nothing has been done for years. The staircase, it looks disgusting, not to mention the lavatory. There is a single toilet for no less than 38 people (...) despite the fact that our regulations stipulate that there must be one lavatory for every 8-10 persons. One must be ashamed to enter such a lavatory. The roof of the house is in such a state that, when it rains, the water falls into the beds and people can't stay in them. Nevertheless, they must pay rent. In the same house there are 6 people in one room, where there would be room for 2. (...) In the same house in which all these people are confined, lives a family whose son is tuberculous to such an extent that he has lost his voice. (...) And he lives there together with his parents and brothers and sisters in 2 rooms, whose condition it is impossible for me to describe. This is not only a danger for the occupants of the house, but in a broader sense. (...) It's all in the report of the Sanitary Commission. Another house is completely dilapidated and would have to be radically torn down. The floors up and down like the waves of the sea. One part of it is built up, the other collapsed. I didn't have the courage to walk across it. One room collapsed completely. Out of 3 adjoining rooms one is separated by a simple shed, the other two by a curtain (...) in the other a household with children. The toilets are dreadful. In another house, I had to go out, although I am already immune to many things(..). It's no longer a house, but a cellar. You reach your hand up to the ceiling. [another man] told me that he could no longer cope. "Children", he said at home, "I can no longer see you in rooms like this anymore and I'm afraid I'm going to become a criminal" (Intervention of councillor Thilmany, local council meeting, 12.05.1920, p.23).⁷³⁵

⁷³⁵ **In the original:** Die Wohnungsverhältnisse, die sich in einer Stadt oder einem Lande bieten, sind ein Gradmesser für das Kultur-niveau der Bevölkerung. Dort, wo die Wohnungsverhältnisse schlecht sind, ist auch der Erziehungsgrad der Bevölkerung aus niedriger Stufe. Die Wohnungsverhältnisse sind auch ein Gradmesser für die Gesundheitsverhältnisse. Wenn der Arbeiter in dem Betrieb, wo er beschäftigt ist in Bezug auf Hygiene und Gesundheit alles Wünschenswerte findet und er wohnt zu Haus in einem Stall, dann sind die Opfer, die zur Hebung der Hygiene in den Arbeitsstätten gebracht werden, umsonst. Wir haben da ein Haus besucht, wo von oben bis unten nicht eine einzige Fensterscheibe ganz ist. Die Fußböden sind in einem solchen Zustande, daß wenn man darauf tritt, man Gefahr läuft -vom zweiten Stockwerk hinunter ins Erdgeschoß zu fallen. Die Wände wurden seit Jahren nicht mehr getüncht, überhaupt wurde seit Jahren nah nichts mehr geschaut. In der Treppe sieht es ekelhaft aus, vom Abort nicht zu sprechen. Dort befindet sich ein einziges Abort für sage und schreibe 38 Personen, (...) trotzdem unser Reglement vorschreibt, daß für jede 8—10 Personen ein Abort da sein muß. Man muß sich schämen einen solchen Abort zu betreten. Das Dach des Hauses ist in einem derartigen Zustand, daß, -wenn es regnet, das Wasser in die Betten fällt und die Leute nicht darin liegen bleiben können. Dennoch müssen sie Miete bezahlen. In demselben Hause schlafen in einem Raum 6 Personen, wo Platz wäre für 2. (...) Im demselben Hause, in welchem all diese Leute eingepferdt sind, wohnt eine Familie, deren Sohn im tödlichen Grade tuberkulös ist, derart, daß er die Stimme verloren hat. (...) Und der lebt dort zusammen mit seinen Eltern und Geschwistern in 2 Zimmern, deren Zustand zu beschreiben mir unmöglich ist. Es ist das nicht nur eine Gefahr für die Hausinsassen, sondern in weiterem Sinne für die ganze

The question of housing for the working classes of the population arose in Luxembourg at the end of the 19th century and, more obviously, at the beginning of the 20th century. What is more, it is undeniable that it was mostly the industrialisation process and with it, its *employers*, which guaranteed large sections of the population with housing.

To improve hygienic conditions was also the ultimate goal of the SNHBM⁷³⁶, established in 1919 who had it translated it into a better space versus number of people ratio, better materials, better “health in all of its accessions: physical, psychological, moral and social “(Bob Frommes⁷³⁷, 1940 as cited by SNHBM & Lorang, 2019).

The actions of the municipality need to be seen as only complimentary to those of the social institutions created from the 1870s onwards by the "Metzeschmelz" (who as mentioned owned a private hospital, employees' and workers' homes, relief funds, various allowances) and subsequently developed by ARBED, of which the completion of the Hospital in 1930 can be seen as culprit. These institutions met a need: they had to deal with the absence (or inadequacy) of infrastructures capable of accommodating an increasing workforce and to compensate for the inadequacy of social legislation. They also corresponded to a well-established employer tradition: abroad (in Prussia and the Saarland example,), that of resorting to "paternalistic" type of measures, which the Metz had pioneered in Luxembourg of building along the roadways or railways (Lorang 1991).

However, the ARBED was itself partially responsible for the situation of the sky-rocketing prices according to councillor Victor Wilhelm (April 1920), mayor to be:

The "Arbed" has bought or rented houses at unreasonable prices and then rented them back to its officials and workers at cheap prices. That is why rents went up so significantly everywhere. Most owners are now demanding rents that they would never have dreamed of. These are facts and the rest of us have to suffer. The

Ortschaft. Das alles ist im Bericht der Sanitätskommission niedergelegt. Ein anderes Haus ist vollständig baufällig u. müßte radikal niedergerissen werden. Die Fußböden geben auf und ab wie die Wellen des Meeres. Ein Teil davon ist aufgebraucht, der andere eingefallen. Ich hatte nicht den Mut darüber zu gehen. (...) in dem andern ein Haushalt mit Kindern zusammen. Die Aborten sind scheußlich. In einem weiteren Hause, da mußte ich ausgehen, obschon ich ja auch schon gegen manches gefeit 'bin. Das ist kein Haus mehr, sondern ein Keller. Man reicht mit der Hand an die Decke. [ein Mann] Der hat mir erklärt, er könne es nicht mehr über sich bringen. „Kinder“, habe er zu Haus gesagt, „ich kann Euch nicht mehr in solchen Zimmern sehen und ich fürchte, ich werde zum Verbrecher.“

⁷³⁶*Société Nationale d'Habitations à Bon Marché*. It was against this backdrop that, on 19 October 1919, the first and, to date, only company to be set up under the name of "Société anonyme pour la construction d'habitations à bon marché" was founded. The first step was taken in 1906 with the enactment of the Law on low-cost housing Act. Under this law, the State authorised the Caisse d'Epargne to invest part of its funds in loans for the construction of low-cost housing. This was the birth of *Service des habitations à bon marché* (Lorang, Antoinette 2019).

⁷³⁷ Bob Frommes (1915-1995) Engineer, president of SNHBM from 1935 to 1980.

steelworks must therefore also be forced to build themselves, but under the condition that the tenant can become the owner of the house. Furthermore, the steel plants must provide us with the raw materials at cost price for the houses to be cost price for the houses we build, as compensation for the general which they have brought about. Furthermore, Mr. Mayor must exert all his influence that the houses are not built outside not be built outside Esch, but rather the centre of the town, where there are still whole neighbourhoods are still undeveloped.⁷³⁸

Faced with this situation, the public authorities had to take action. The State became more involved in solving economic and social problems, particularly housing, through the creation of the SNHBM⁷³⁹ in 1919. The improvement of working-class housing, whether provided by ARBED or SNHBM, did not hinder the proliferation of a significant property black market, whereby workers paid lower rents to hostel and café owners but shared rooms with many other workers, often seasonal or illegal.

Esch's urban development was impressive, but still slow to accommodate the thousands of workers in need of a housing solution. It is therefore not surprising that as seen many among the traditional landowners in Esch turned to the "sleep business", buying houses to build inns and cabarets where workers could live as tenants and spend their money on food and drinks. In the same vein, speculation around land parcels meant an ever-increasing hard task for the local council:

Councillor Kieffer: The housing shortage is already being exploited unscrupulously. The workers are played off against each other and if and if there is someone here who is not registered [foreigners] he is probably being exploited by some entrepreneur. **Councillor Schaack.** A soul merchant (Intervention of councillors Kieffer and Schaack 5.03.1920, p.3).

Its left-wing majority (1920-1924), now represented by Jacques Thilmany, a trade-unionist, Jacques Kieffer an electrician of the steelworks, Peter Bukovac, a miner and the mayor himself Victor Wilhelm, a railway employee, made of social housing their warhorse.

The relationship with higher authorities, such as the government and the SNHBM, translates into an umpteenth attempt to get more for Esch than the former originally intended. In terms of social housing the Government offered 24 apartments, Esch's municipality wanted at least 50, a number

⁷³⁸ Local council meeting, 12.05.1920, p.26.

⁷³⁹According to what was stated in the local council meeting of March 1920: the share capital of the SNHBM amounted to 6 million francs. Esch had contributed with 300,000 francs. Luxembourg city also contributed with the same amount of 300,000 francs, Hollerich with 200,000 Francs, Dudelange with 100,000 francs and Differdange with 100,000 francs. The state's contribution amounted to 3 million, 1 million that of the ARBED and that of the social insurance companies also one million. The Company's exclusive purpose was the construction, purchase, sale and rental of dwellings intended as housing for people who, such as workers, craftsmen, small farmers or employees, live in low-cost housing, who live mainly from their work or wages and who did not yet own a home. In industrial areas, the Company bought plots of land at low prices.

still far behind the glaring needs of the city⁷⁴⁰. The location of such “cités” was also cause for concern, since the SNHBM proposed a site in Mondercange⁷⁴¹ street far from schools, transports, and the city centre. Such discussions highlight though the precedent of a somewhat social segregation and the pioneer suggestions of its new left-wing members:

Councillor Kieffer: (...) In Luxembourg 50 houses are being built, for Esch only 24 and in [the Rue de] Mondercange, so that we will be forced to build a school there. Or should the children of the working-class families who settle there - others don't go there - have to come here. They seem to be expected to do so. In view of this situation, I propose to withdraw from the company [SNHBM] and to provide a loan of one million francs for the construction of workers' flats in Esch. I also request that a petition be sent immediately to the Chamber in which we demand the introduction-the introduction of the capital gains tax. The land here in Esch has reached exorbitant prices (...) If it weren't for the steelworkers and the labourers, it would all still be farmland and if the land increases in value through the work of the-value through the work of the general public, then the-increase in value must also accrue to the general public. We must put a stop to the speculators who want to enrich themselves in this way-by immediately introducing a capital gains tax.⁷⁴²

⁷⁴⁰ The fact that the city of Luxembourg, with the same financial contribution as Esch, was to receive more housing units (50) and that Hollerich, with a contribution of only 200,000 francs, was also to receive 24 housing units (the same as Esch), especially as the housing shortage was greatest in Esch, was a matter of concern to the local council. Esch also did not get to have a representative at the public company's Board of Directors.

⁷⁴¹ Despite the resistance of part of the local council, the construction of the first social housing in this area went ahead.

⁷⁴² **In the original:** bei einem geringeren Lohn an die Stelle eines andern gesetzt worden fein. Ich glaube, wir können darin eine andere Lösung finden. Ich bin nämlich mit dem Vorgehen der Gesellschaft für den Bau billiger Wohnungen nicht einverstanden und im besonderen nicht mit dem von ihr hier ausgesuchten Bauterrain. Zuerst hieß es, in Esch sei das Terrain am teuersten und nun sehen wir nachträglich, daß anderwärts die Terrains mindestens ebenso teuer sind. In Luxemburg werden gleich 50 Häuser gebaut, für Esch nur 24 und dazu sollen sie noch nach Monnerich kommen, so daß wir gezwungen sein werden, eine Schule dorthin zu bauen. Oder sollen die Kinder der Arbeiterfamilien die sich dort niederlassen,— andere gehen ja nicht hin — bis hierhin in die Schule kommen müssen. Man scheint denen das zuzumuten. In Anbetracht dieser Sachlage schlage ich vor aus der Gesellschaft auszutreten und einen Kredit von einer Million bereit zu stellen für den Bau von Arbeiterwohnungen in Esch. Ferner beantrage ich sofort eine Petition an die Kammer zu schicken in welcher wir die Einführung der Wertzuwachssteuer verlangen. Die Terrains haben hier in Esch unerhörte Preise erreicht und die betreffenden Eigentümer setzen diesen Umstand auf das Konto ihrer Intelligenz. Wenn die Schmelz [sic] und die Arbeiter nicht da wären, so wäre das alles noch Ackerland und wenn die Terrains durch das Werk der Allgemeinheit an Wert zunehmen, so muß auch der Wertzuwachs der Allgemeinheit zufallen. Wir müssen den Spekulanten, die sich auf diese Weise bereichern wollen, das Handwerk legen durch unverzügliche Einführung der Wertzuwachssteuer.

Councillor Bach too deplored the choice of the location in the extreme outskirts of the city:

Councillor Bach: I can assure those who have managed to ensure that the cheap workers' flats on the Rue de Mondercange the worst service ever rendered to the proletarians. 1. these will not be cheap, but rather expensive workers' housing, because of the high transport costs for the materials. 2 the houses must be lined on the rain side without plank walls on the rain side otherwise the wallpaper will not hold on the walls and the occupant rots everything he puts against the wall. 3. the houses are located far away from the school and church, so that in rainy weather rainy weather - that is, for most of the year - the children arrive home twice a day arrive at home soaked twice a day. And do these children have the necessary clothes to change into? certainly not. A worse building site could have not be found anywhere⁷⁴³ (Intervention during the local council 12.05.1920, p.26).

The ideas of going solo in the construction of social housing did not go ahead but reflected once again the frustration of some members of the local council of having to abide by the Government's proposal, deemed unfit because Esch contributed with more money than other municipalities which would still receive the same number of housing units. Some believed the SNHBM committee's approach just to be a conspiracy maneuver according to a by now all too familiar pattern.

In any event, the fact is that ARBED's general management heralded its broad-based social policy of the post-war period by contributing to the construction costs of a municipal hospital and a forest school for needy children in Esch.

Other events enflamed the left, namely the imminent construction of the headquarters of the ARBED⁷⁴⁴ in Luxembourg city. Joseph Kieffer expressed his anger at this splurge:

Councillor Paulus: Even if Arbed is free to build its administration building wherever it wants, the fact that it is being built is very worrying, because there will be a lot of civil servants living around it, and workers' housing will be built around it. Many of our taxpayers will be robbed of their money. So I ask you, should ARBED taxes be paid where the money is earned, yes or no? Then there is the other fact that the low-cost housing company will build 50 houses in Luxembourg and only 24 here. These facts, which will damage Esch economically, cannot be accepted in silence. I therefore propose that we make a presentation to the government to complain and make a noise (Intervention at the local council meeting 5.03.1920, p. 4).

⁷⁴³ **In the original:** Ich kann denjenigen versichern, die es fertig gebracht haben, daß die billigen Arbeiterwohnungen an den Monnericher Weg gebaut werden, den Proletariern den schlechtesten Dienst geleistet hat, der ihnen jemals geleistet wurde. 1. werden das keine billigen, sondern teuren Arbeiterwohnungen, wegen der hohen Transportkosten für das Material. 2 die Häuser müssen zur Regenseite mit Zinkblechen oder Bretterwänden ausgeschlagen werden, sonst halten keine Tapeten an den Wänden und dem Bewohner fault alles was er zu jener Seite gegen die Wand stellt. 3. Die Häuser liegen derart weit von Schule und Kirche weg, daß bei Regenwetter — also bei uns die Halste des Jahres über — die Kinder zweimal täglich durchnäßt zu Haus ankommen. Und haben diese Kinder die nötigen Kleider zum Umkleiden?, sicherlich nicht. Eine schlechtere Baustelle war überhaupt nicht zu finden.

⁷⁴⁴ Jacques Maas (Maas 2022) also suggests that this luxurious expenditure, and the “noise” it generated, may have been at the root of the company's decision to contribute financially to the construction of the hospital in Esch.

There was also worry that in this way, the middle class in Esch were heading for ruin. Arbed may have its headquarters in Luxembourg, but some believed the taxes had to be paid where the profits were made. The ARBED moving its headquarters to Luxembourg city and with it, possibly 500 families with its employees worried the local council. As this was another example of Luxembourg city getting richer and grow in importance thanks to the work efforts done and taxes paid in Esch. In the words of councillor Thilmany:

Esch was just a village before (...) Thanks to the labour, thanks to the workers, it has reached the height it has today. On the other hand very little was done for the civil servants and the workers, even though they have created this wealth through their labour. Other people have taken advantage of the rapid growth of the city and made a lot of money. Some entrepreneurs have also got their money's worth, either by carrying out building for the municipality or through house speculation. In all cases, the workers had to bleed so that the others to get their money's worth. It is therefore only right and proper that we provide a million today to give the workers at least a part of what is due to them. If we build these houses, it will not only be in the interests of the workers, but also the other classes and especially the business community. If there are enough flats available, rents fall and state of health, hygiene is promoted for everyone's choice. Those who rent out such abominable flats, of which I spoke earlier are not small owners, but the very rich and who flaunt their piety on a daily basis (Intervention at the local council, 12.05.1920, p.25).⁷⁴⁵

Other aspects stand out from this left-wing administration. Firstly, a renewed boycott from the minority right-wing (Jules Heisten, Theodore Noesen, Emering Reichlich, Salenty, Paulus and Schaack) who defected the local council meetings for six months straight in 1921, including those where vital decisions on the construction of social housing for decision was at stake. They are believed to be getting support from former mayor and councillor respectively Biber and Donnersbach in the outside.

Secondly and not least revealing, this new left-wing era marks a mute period in Jean Schaack's interventions, very far from his "loud" presence until here. Was he perhaps feeling threatened by Thilmany's eloquence and experience? Schaack too will boycott this left-wing local council to

⁷⁴⁵ **In the original:** Esch war vor Fahren nur ein Dorf. Dank der Arbeit, dank der Arbeiter ist es zu der Höhe gelangt auf der es heute steht. Andererseits wurde jedoch sehr wenig für die Beamten und die Arbeiter getan, trotzdem sie durch ihre Arbeit diesen Reichtum geschaffen haben. Andere Leute aber haben sich den rapiden Aufschwung der Stadt zunutze zu machen gewußt und schweres Geld gewonnen. Auch manche Unternehmer kamen reichlich auf ihre Kosten, sei es, daß sie für die Gemeinde Bauten ausgeführt haben oder durch Häuserspekulation. In allen Fällen mußten die Arbeiter bluten, damit die anderen auf ihre Rechnung kommen sollen. Es ist deshalb nur recht und billig, wenn wir heute eine Million bereitstellen. um den Arbeitern wenigstens einen Teil von dem zu geben, was ihnen zukommt. Wenn wir diese Häuser bauen, so ist das übrigens nicht nur im Interesse der Arbeiter, sondern auch der andern Klassen und besonders der Geschäftswelt. Sind genügend Wohnungen vorhanden, so sinken die Mietpreise und der allgemeine Gesundheitszustand, die Hygiene wird gefördert zum Wähle eines jeden. Diejenigen, die solch abscheuerregende Wohnungen vermieten von denen ich vorhin sprach, sind keine kleinen Eigentümer, sondern Schwerreiche und die dazu noch täglich ihre Frömmigkeit zur Schau tragen.

side with the right-wing party.⁷⁴⁶ His “floor” seemingly taken by the eloquence of Thilmann and Kieffer.

Another left-wing member marks yet another cleavage within the left itself. With Jean Bukovac, the first communist entering the local council and the first with overt revolutionary ideals. His direct confrontations with fellow trade union member Thilmann will pave the way for yet another wound inside the left:

Councillor Bukovac: As a communist, I went further to the left, I can therefore not go to the right and make concessions to a bourgeois party. I don't do that and I never will. I declare that publicly here. I will do no opposition here, but will always cooperate, and always agree to it as soon as something good is done that is in the interests of the workers. On the other hand we will also submit proposals, and then we will see whether workers interests are actually workers' interests are actually represented here (Intervention at the local council 19.08.1921, p.3).⁷⁴⁷

Bukovac represents in our story of the bourgeois middle classes, the epitome of what Marxian historic materialism defended, the existence of two poles, the workers and the bourgeoisie. He is indeed the first to politically depict and manifest against the “bourgeoisie” as the enemy, a fight which will lead to his fall out with Thilmann whom Bukovac will accuse of having become part of the establishment and defend “bourgeois interests”. Thilmann, will, instead reproach his former colleague of having changed his mind and behaviour only after his trip to "Moscow".

Mayor Victor Wilhelm will also eventually dissociate from trade unionism⁷⁴⁸ (Bodry and Fayot 2016), plus accept a coalition with the right and would have become in the long run a member of the DP⁷⁴⁹, a party, which is these days far removed from anything connoted with the extreme left. If the fractures inside the left were many, in Esch there is one fight that holds strong, after 1918 and that is the left's strong Republicanism. Even after the defeat of the Republican ideals in 1919, Wilhelm's office did not shy away from overtly criticizing the meddling of the church in State Affairs, and namely by dictating the celebration of monarchic festivities.

⁷⁴⁶ The criticisms levelled at Schaack relate to his rather personal policy of alliances within the Esch-sur-Alzette local council. He will be criticised for his alliance with Emering, a former Christian Socialist.

⁷⁴⁷ **In the original:** Als Kommunist ging ich ja weiter nach links, folglich kann ich nicht nach rechts gehen und einer bürgerlichen Partei Konzessionen machen. Das tue ich nicht, und werde ich niemals tun. Das erkläre ich hier öffentlich. Ich werde hier keine Opposition treiben, sondern stets Mitarbeiten, und hin auch stets einverstanden, sobald etwas gutes gemacht wird, das im Interesse der Arbeiter liegt. Andererseits 'werden wir aber auch Anträge stellen, und dann sehen wir ja, ob hier tatsächlich Arbeiter Interessen vertreten werden.

⁷⁴⁸ When in 1921 the first clashes between Thilmann and Kieffer on the one side, and Bukovac on the other arise, Wilhelm impatiently stated:” Trade union issues should be dealt with in the trade union and not in the city council.” (Gewerkschaftliche Fragen sollen in der Gewerkschaft und nicht im Stadtrate ausgetragen werden, 19.08.1921.)

⁷⁴⁹ The Democratic Party is the major central-liberal political party in Luxembourg. The DP sits on the center right. Its views combine a mix of social and liberal political values.

In 1921, Jules Heisten, of the clerical party asked Mayor Wilhelm to justify his absence from the *Te Deum* in honour of the Grande-Duchess's birthday, Wilhelm defended his position:

It is about a religious celebration that is to take place in the church. There is absolutely no mention of a profane celebration. Furthermore, the celebration should also be a thanksgiving to a higher being for the birth of the heir to the throne, and that was a matter that passed into the private sphere. (...) The announcement also states that "all authorities, officials and employees are requested to attend this religious ceremony." Everything that comes in the memorial is law and everyone is supposed to know the law. The notice announcement also appeared in all the newspapers in the country and everyone had to know about it. The announcement also states, "The aldermen of the towns and municipalities will arrange the programme for this public celebration, etc." But there is only talk of a "celebration" in the church and the announcement contains not a word about a "Uniform- Parade" in the streets (...) I would also like to add that not everyone has reverence for the Grand Duchess and that we respect her doubly as a wife and mother (Intervention of Mayor Wilhelm at the local council meeting, 4 February 1921, p.6).

To which councilor Thilmany added:

We socialists are republicans by nature. It is therefore evident that we have remained consistent. We are republicans because as socialists we regard men as men. We humiliate ourselves before no one; no one is above us; no one is below us. From this point of view, we are against praising anyone over the hedges. We do not agree with the monarchical system because it is based on capital⁷⁵⁰(Intervention of councillor Thilmany, 4 February 1921).

It is under the leadership of the long-serving mayor of Esch, Victor Wilhelm⁷⁵¹, and the Escher municipality architect Isidore Engler, that the construction of the municipal hospital is vigorously pursued from the 1920s onwards. Social housing construction takes place at a faster pace in the neighbourhoods of Uecht (Acht), Claire- Chêne and Brouch. Esch was, furthermore, the only municipality to build enough social housing before World War II (Buchler et al. 2020).

But far more telling is the fact that a purer form of socialism survived in the local council without ever making it to the central government. This aspect alone should make reflect on contemporary forms of political survival that do not thrive nationally but work locally. A powerful reminder that voting "small" can bring about major changes, even if only locally.

⁷⁵⁰ **In the original:** Wir Sozialisten sind von Haus aus Republikaner. Es ist sogar also evident, daß wir uns konsequent blieben. Wir sind Republikaner, weil wir als Sozialisten den Menschen als Mensch betrachten. Wir erniedrigen uns vor niemanden; niemand ist über uhs, niemand ist unter uns. Von diesem Standpunkt aus sind wir dagegen jemanden über die Hecken zu lobhudeln. Wir sind mir dem monarchischen System nicht einverstanden, weil es sich aus das Kapital stützt.

⁷⁵¹ Victor Wilhelm will be mayor between 1920 and 1934. Member of Chambre of Deputies 1935-1945. Both Wilhelm and Schaack will save their seats, at different occasions, thanks to a coalition with liberals and the Freie Ordnung Partei. Member of Chambre of Deputies 1935-1945 (Bodry and Fayot 2016, 200).

Converging different identities

In the 80 years that span this analysis we have seen how the town transforms into urban dwelling by slowly adhering to measures of sanitation and hygiene. Each mayor brings his trademark, from Metz the “good employer”, said to be behind most of Dominique Hoferlin’s decisions⁷⁵², to the debuts of social democracy with Armand Spoo, on to the presidency of J.P. Michel’s⁷⁵³, almost totally obscured by the vicissitudes of the World War 1. The brief couple of years of Nicolas Biwer and J.P. Pierrard translate little resistance to the dictates from “above”, be it in the question of the meat and food rationing be it in the difficulty of imposing a local stance in the management of recently created SNHBM. It cannot, however, be established what the reasons were, for decent housing not to be addressed properly in the local council before the era of Victor Wilhelm. As it cannot be denied either that, for the whole duration of First World War, the local council was almost exclusively concerned with the dramatic scarcity of food and that funds were unavailable for very little more than expenditure on the ordinary urban works, to which followed a period of economic recession as of uncertainty as to who were going to be Luxembourg’s new markets after the exit from the Zollverein.

Victor Wilhelm appears to put an end to the many stagnations the city had faced. He will indeed ensure that the Hospital construction and the procurement of land for social housing go ahead in the years of his mandate. In politics, not all is down to the work of one man, and the many stagnations that Esch faced, had unquestionably roots outside, even the deficient functioning of its local council.

One can easily trace the main themes of each of these presidencies, the secularisation and the school laws during Armand Spoo, the food provisioning during Michels, or the shy debuts of the social housing question starting with Biwer and Pierrard who will later boycott it. Parallely, we saw, across the office of the different mayors, a protectionism of Esch’s commercial interests. This can be seen as chief aspect, translated in the many fights for keeping Esch appealing in terms of its educational, recreational and commercial offer. Examples of it, are the diversification of the school offer, the attempts to root locals and attract tourists alike, the insistence of keeping Esch as

⁷⁵² It is namely what *Der Arme Teufel* argued.

⁷⁵³ Almost unnoticed was for example the fact that the tramway was realized under J.P. Michel’s presidency.

a central customs administration town, post the fallout from the Zollverein and the entry into force of the economic union with Belgium. Not least, the sole permanent effort to improve the image of a city tainted of dark imaginary. Parallel to these efforts into an urban prosperity, runs the theme of individual prosperity. The numerous rivalries within the local council allude to the needs of many of these economic bourgeoisie to keep their own businesses viable, amidst the extreme competition and the devastating financial consequences of the World War I.

As this analysis has shown, Esch was not always able to rise above its own internal conflicts and partisan disputes. In fact, during the period under study, the leadership of each of the local councils demonstrated the weakness of the union, with the exception of the resistance to the German army and, perhaps most surprisingly, during the battles for the secularisation of the school system, where even the most traditional members did not oppose the move towards secularism. And yet the community spirit seems to have been there, the common goals of the necessary infrastructure widely shared, but always sabotaged by the wanted and unwanted changes of mayor.

Furthermore, the internal rivalries took the toll, energy and time that may have been precious to proceed with pressing matters. After decades of separate battles, nothing is more striking than a local patriotism that cuts across parties and classes and pits the entire town against the common enem(ies): the Germans (more openly from 1917), the agrarian North and its owners (also prevalent since 1914), the capital Luxembourg city, accused of having and wanting everything for itself, and of course the Government, whose maneuvers are often denounced. Before anything else, the local council feels Eschois, and thus concerned with local interests. From then on, what may have seemed secondary in these events turned out to be at the heart of our subject: in these struggles, where merchants, small traders and manufacturers rallied almost unanimously local opinion around them, the commercial bourgeoisie justified their domination of a town until the advent of universal suffrage.

Interestingly these fights will more often than not defend, even if disguised, an even when they did not become concrete, the interests of an overwhelming working class and low middle class, who could until 1920 not even vote. As Rasquin credibly contends in his analysis of Esch's economic problems:

Nowhere than in Esch is the interdependence of the salaried classes and the and the so-called middle classes - tradesmen and artisans so neat (Rasquin 1956, 55).

In fact, this solidarity is visible since the inception of the first steelworks. It may well have happened for that “fear” of the *declassament*, of falling deeper into the working class that much of the historiography on the petty bourgeoisie claims. Did this class consciousness and the similarities of their ordeal, lower middle class and working class, lead to political cohesion at the polls, regardless of party preference, even in the motivational basis for that preference? Different indicators in the historiography and in the present empirical analysis seem to demonstrate that. It may have been the shared compact space they all lived in the city of Esch as Leiner well demonstrates, it may have been even before the universal vote, the preference for a political personality like that of Jean Schaack, by all means a petty bourgeois but one who took for most of his political life the ordeal of the lower of the basis of the class ladder at heart, as Wehenkel-Frisch also convincingly contended, it may have been if not their own, the average man in the street’s persistently awareness of their parent’s harsher lives and exclusion from the vote, it may have been the lower middle class awareness of the precarity of their own existence (because also threatened by big capital).

Two other factors stand out of these fights: on the one hand that foreigners were excluded for a long time from the benefits that their peer Luxembourger working class would eventually have access to. Nationality, being until the present day a *sine qua non* condition to exercise voting rights in Luxembourg⁷⁵⁴.

What is undeniable is that the possibility exists in politics, especially of a radical nature where even upper middle classes and working classes may meet. Indeed, the debuts of social democracy in Luxembourg needed both. Xavier Brasseur, Michel Welter, C.M Spoo were the active members of the educated and economic bourgeois and middle classes to serve as advocates and intermediaries within the Government. The latter two modest origins should not go underrated in having played a fundamental role in their political formation, and neither should the former’s parting from the liberal political tradition and perhaps the expiation of his own family’s “capitalist sins”. The fact that men like C.M. and Armand Spoo, Michel Welter, J.P. Michels, Schaack, and especially those working class themselves, Thilmány and Wilhelm all remembered where they came from, socially speaking, should help shed light on their roles in history of the city:

⁷⁵⁴ If we exclude municipal elections, to which foreign citizens can participate if they fulfill a number of legal requirements, such as a minimum residence period in the country. Paradoxically and unique in the world, in Luxembourg barely more than the 50% of the population consist of the bulk who can vote and decide, leading to a glaring deficit in the democratic process.

So much for theory. So much for discourse. In practice, most of those who have lived by these principles are still waiting for a street name to be dedicated to them. By being frank, upright, combative, tenacious and rebellious, they have very often come up against the powers that be. They had their ideas and suggestions. Because they were ahead of their time, they were asked to fall into line, to postpone their projects, let things be done the way they'd always been done. But sometimes, their stubbornness enabled them to overcome resistance and innovate or to safeguard the beauty of the city and nature. They have often been forgotten by men, but the city has kept their traces of them in its urban skin and body (Scuto 2006, 61).⁷⁵⁵

Jacques Thilmany, Jean Schaack-Wirth⁷⁵⁶, nor Paul Flesch for example have a street name dedicated to them in Esch, nor elsewhere in the country. However paradoxical some of their political paths may have been, it surprises that they are practically absent from public memory.

The initial empirical analysis of a portion of the history of the local council is presented here. There is still a paucity of knowledge regarding the private lives of these men and the experiences that shaped them beyond their public duties. The local council, in certain instances, served as a showcase of their professional challenges and the inherent questions of honour that arose from them. There were instances that were excluded from the analysis for various reasons. A glimpse was possible into their moments of greatest despair, when, for example, during times of war they fought over basic necessities such as flour, pasta boxes and even a cube of lard. During the First World War, almost every member of the local council attempted to exploit their privileged position in order to gain access to scarce food items on the market. Some did so more altruistically than others. The accusations and recriminations were numerous. The quantities they fought over were sometimes absurdly trivial. However, context is important to consider. Instead of making ourselves "judges" of who was right or wrong, their experiences should be used to illustrate the ordeal of four years of war, which would have been unthinkable in the 21st century Luxembourg. The war also interrupted their lives. There is still much that is unknown about what happened outside of the meetings from which they were excused, for example. A significant number of these men lost at least one child, with some losing children while in office.

⁷⁵⁵**In the original** : Voilà pour la théorie. Voilà pour le discours. Dans la pratique, la plupart de ceux qui ont vécu selon ces principes attendent toujours qu'un nom de rue leur soit dédié. En étant francs, droits, combattifs, tenaces, frondeurs, ils se sont bien souvent heurtés au pouvoir en place. Ils ont dérangé par leurs idées et par leurs suggestions. Puisqu'ils étaient en avance sur leur temps, on les a priés de rentrer dans le rang, de remettre leurs projets à plus tard, de laisser faire les choses comme on les a toujours faites. Mais parfois, leur caractère têtu leur a permis de vaincre les résistances, d'innover ou alors de sauvegarder la beauté de la ville et de la nature. Ils ont souvent été refoulés dans l'oubli des hommes, certes, mais la ville a gardé leurs traces dans sa peau et dans son corps urbains.

⁷⁵⁶ The few *Rue Jean Schaack* exist throughout the Grand-Duchy refer to an homonymous painter (1895-1959).

One overarching trait that emerges from the years under analysis is that of a small-town mentality, despite the context. Few of them seemed able to put their egos aside, with their squabbles undermining some ongoing projects and jeopardising others. An anonymous letter to the socialist newspaper *Die Volkstribüne*, published in advance of the municipal elections in April 1919, provides a clear indication of the prevailing malaise.

The town of Esch-s.-Alz is the capital of the industrial basin; its development has and is still taking on such proportions that it takes men of special foresight and extraordinary, and unassailable authority. Before the general interest, elected representatives should leave aside their preferences, ambitions, grudges and hatreds. The people have the right to impose on those whom they invest with their trust, the obligation to imbue themselves of qualities that are indispensable to the smooth management of communal affairs (...) the population's elite is staying away from any political movement. For why men who represent a force of science, value and maturity, in the study and advising on all the serious questions which will very soon arise be posed, are they disinterested or pretending to be in local politics? There are several more or less plausible reasons. Those who already had the opportunity to belong to belong to this corporation, and who entered the municipal council with the best of intentions, soon experienced disappointments that eventually gave way to complete discouragement. It should be noted that it was mainly men of strength, the most courageous citizens and therefore the most exposed to criticism who were pursued by the violence (...) the public opinion. In the Esch town council, as in many others and in many others, are men too preoccupied with the big issues of their own small personalities. They are not broad enough to support, for example, a proposal favourable to the general interest, when this proposal emanates from a man who has the wrong (or rather the right) to have a different view of politics. How many fruitful energies have been rendered sterile by this base demagogic envy, how much work has been lost and so many valuable results not achieved! (...) These high offices [aldermen] are not positions where men privileged by political fortune can flatter themselves to find the satisfaction of their vanity and even less opportunities favourable to their interests.(...) they are themselves by pitting their petty personalities and their petty politics against each other.(...) Many do not even have the necessary to carry out their duties as councillors, some were on the verge of Bolshevism, and others incapable of a radical solution, such is the composition of the municipal council in the most important town in the country.

The letter contains a number of judgments that are worthy of further analysis. One such judgment is the allusion to a lack of competence, which may be indicative of a necessity for professionalization in order to access local power. The letter also references the lack of competent individuals with scientific knowledge, as well as the disillusionment of those who had previously held seats on the local council but eventually resigned due to overwhelming opposition. Additionally, the letter evokes the fear of Bolshevism, which is likely a reference to councillors Kieffer and Bukovac.

The author of the letter correctly asserts that the situation in Esch-sur-Alzette was not unique. It is evident that the city grew at an accelerated pace, which made it challenging to implement the necessary adjustments. Nevertheless, these years are a testament to numerous advancements, including the introduction of sanitation infrastructure and basic commodities, the enactment of the school law, which was partially successful due to the efforts of Esch, the establishment of the

Industrial and Commercial School and the Girls' High School, the implementation of the tramways, the construction of the hospital and the introduction of social housing. Considering this took place in under two decades, such feats are not neglectable.

To conclude, it is noteworthy that, with the exception of Léon Metz, the "petit notables" ruled, although their tenure was never long-lasting. It is with the advent of universal suffrage and the election of mayor Victor Wilhelm that a certain stability is found within the local council. Further research may be directed towards the political history of the city in the period that follows.

The transformation of an agricultural town into an urbanised and industrialised setting was observed over the course of 80 years. However, the knowledge on how agriculture in Esch adapted to new markets, of supply-demand, and what their production was is still insufficient. Our sample revealed that a small group of major landowners benefited from the conditions made available to them via industrialisation, namely through profits made via the sales of land. Further research would benefit from more knowledge as to the nature of these farmers, including whether they worked the land themselves or let it to tenants. This study also suggests that other factors may have contributed to the decline of these landowner/merchant families, including an increasing access to advanced education and marriage alliances within and outside of Esch. The strategies employed by landowners may provide insight into the reasons why these agrarian middle classes did not require direct involvement with the industry, for example, through employment search. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the fate of farming families in the south of Luxembourg, it is necessary to examine the period before the 1840s, and beyond landed property as the sole source of capital. Furthermore, there is a paucity of historical research on social mobility in the agricultural sector as well as among white-collar workers and the lower middle classes. This lack of research hinders our ability to gain further insight into the relationships of this disappearing social stratum. A very diverse middle class was thus introduced, with the arrival of new better-off groups, post-1870. We attempted to map their professional occupations as well as their "social" positioning in the city. If social classes exist and define each other in relation to one another, part of our objective was to assess in which ways different social strata may have or may have not interacted. This was covered by the analysis of sociability. It was through this assessment and that of local power that many social forces, beyond the single variable of class, took on their full expression. In fact, class does not, nor did we expect it to, explain the dynamics of a city facing an exponentially quick growth along with its many structural and societal challenges. In Part IV, the

antagonisms at play in a society searching for its identity emerge in all force. The analysis of the different forms of antagonisms present in Luxembourgish society reveals that they had an embryo in Esch as well. One fight conceals the other. There were those who were concerned with class solidarity, those who were active in resisting social change, whether in the shape of a progressive mindset towards women or the role of the Church. Conversely, we see those who were fiercely fighting for radical change to take place. The first overt manifestation of anti-foreign sentiment emerges, at the beginning of the 20th century, yet it is important to note that some of these men resisted the temptation of identifying an easy enemy. The ongoing conflict between Esch - in its relentless attempt to see recognized its political and economic weight- against the central government appears as the overarching element of such fights.

7 Conclusions - Bourgeois or Eschois? a class on its own right

The people of Esch didn't just want beautiful houses, they wanted a beautiful city. After that, they asked for abstract conditions, such as justice, honour and a morally healthy atmosphere. So the city is not only leading the way in technical, hygienic, sanitary and social services, but it also achieves a unity between intellectuals and manual workers, repudiating conceptions of the ruling class and proletariat. Democracy here is a genuine of participants (Antoine Krier, mayor and deputy, on the occasion of 50th anniversary of the city of Esch (Krier 1956).⁷⁵⁷

Class structure in its historical evolution and implications for the present day

The microcosm of Esch-sur-Alzette encapsulates a part of the history of the Luxembourgish class structure, except for the absence of a nobility, the intellectual and proper bourgeoisie that could match that of the capital city. It can be argued that in Esch one can trace the origins of the present-day class structure, its genesis, its development, its continuity and its paradoxes. It is our contention that Luxembourg was composed of three major social groups because of the societal changes brought about by industrialisation. These were the proletariat (largely composed by immigrants), a heterogeneous middle class (including salaried professions and the business bourgeoisie), and a third, of agrarian stock, which by the end of this analysis, in Esch, is almost imperceptible. One might also consider a fourth category, namely the fact of living in Esch-sur-Alzette. It would appear reasonable to suggest that the city has been frequently overlooked, neglected, or subjected to prejudice from the central power as from the rest of the country. This contempt for Esch persists beyond the period of analysis, beyond the narrow scope of historical lenses, and manifests in the reality of a city that is often obscured and credited for its industrial past alone. A striking illustration of this disregard was the dismissal of one of its most distinguished intellectuals, Frantz Clement, from the broader intellectual circles of the bourgeoisie, including those oversaw by Aline

⁷⁵⁷ In the original : Les Eschois ne se sont pas bornés à avoir de belles maisons, ils ont voulu une belle cité. Après cela, ils ont demandé des conditions abstraites, telles que justice, honneur, une atmosphère moralement saine. Ainsi la ville n'est pas seulement tête du progrès en ce qui concerne les services techniques, hygiéniques, sanitaires et sociaux, mais on y trouve encore réalisée une unité entre les intellectuels et les travailleurs manuels qui répudie les conceptions de classe régnante et de prolétariat. La démocratie se trouve être ici un véritable régime de participants.

Mayrisch⁷⁵⁸. The below exchange with her friend and writer Jean Schlumberger, urging him to exclude Clément from one of their “salons” in Pontigny is elucidating:

This letter is precisely to tell you about Pontigny (...). Here's what I'd like to say: first and foremost, I'd like to avoid Frantz Clément's application, who has just written to me to find out how to get to Pontigny, and who, although a good chap, is not at all of a sufficiently high standard of education and tact. (Lettre de A.Mayrisch à Schlumberger, 6.07.1926 (Mercier and Meder 2000, 158).⁷⁵⁹

From the outset, the analysis presented in this study reveals the peculiarities of Luxembourg's class structure at the beginning of industrialisation. In many respects, this class structure in Luxembourg does not follow the 'linearity' of other Western European countries. Indeed, developments did not occur at the same pace as elsewhere in Europe, and this may also help to explain some of the peculiarities of Luxembourg. We have seen that one of the factors contributing to this is the weak presence of the nobility, which can be explained in part by the various foreign monarchies to which the country has been attached over the centuries. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether there was ever a royal family in Luxembourg that could be considered autochthonous before the Nassau branch and, provocatively, how autochthonous even the Nassau branch is at the turn of the century.⁷⁶⁰

At the other end of the social ladder, Luxembourg's working-class struggle seems to have survived almost unscathed, in the context of major working-class movements taking place elsewhere on the European continent. The myth of the failed proletarianisation does in fact have plausible explanations, including, as historian Gilbert Trausch (Gilbert Trausch 1993) has argued, a late industrialisation which allowed social democracy and welfare to keep pace with, if not advance, social unrest. One should not be too quick to dismiss theories about the role that land ownership by the lower classes might have played in keeping the Luxembourgish middle class out of poverty. A piece of land and a house were of paramount importance in their quest for respectability, instrumentalised, it must be admitted, by the political views of the time, of which Prime Minister

⁷⁵⁸ With her passion for the arts and literature and her socialisation influenced by German-speaking countries, Aline Mayrisch, maintained contacts with the *Nouvelle revue française* and one of its founders André Gide, as well as with the *Décades de Pontigny*, intellectual gatherings of personalities from several European countries organised by the philosopher Paul Desjardins every summer from 1922 to 1931.

⁷⁵⁹ Cette lettre est précisément pour vous parler de Pontigny (...). Voici : et d'abord, surtout, éviter la candidature de Frantz Clément, qui vient de m'écrire pour s'informer comment on fait pour aller à Pontigny, et qui, quoique brave type, n'est tout de même pas d'un niveau d'éducation et délicatesse suffisant.

⁷⁶⁰ Vide Wehenkel (2020) for a critical stance around the notion of nationhood and ethnicity.

Paul Eyschen was the main instigator. It can hardly be a coincidence that individual housing is so deeply rooted in Luxembourg society.

The middle class and its many meanings are not only a concept that has evolved over time. The middle classes seem to have had different interpretations even within the same historical period. The overwhelmingly paternalistic view in the Chamber of Deputies was that a piece of land and every job, day labourer, farmer, domestic servant, turned an individual into an integrant part of the middle class.

Only future research can answer this question. Another Trausch, this time the economist (Gérard Trausch 2009) argues that the interwar period saw the integration of the working class into the national identity. A more sociological assessment could interpret this as "the dominant fraction of the dominated" reclaiming its role in history.

Indeed, this seems to be another aspect that has not been highlighted enough by historiography, save for the work of Denis Scuto (Scuto 2012) on how national identity was foremost built upon an autochthonal identity versus the otherization of foreigners as a social group apart. This negligence from historiography may well have led to the omission of as to who the real proletarians were. Fehlen (Fehlen 2009) picks up this subject on his overall sociological analysis of the social structure in Luxembourg, and highlights how this holds true for present day society with immigrants having to do the "dirty jobs". Such acknowledgment resonates with the profound changes that took place in the job markets at a global level, where minorities and immigrants have often become a synonym for a new disenfranchised working class.

The fact that nationality is *sine qua non* condition for voting in legislative elections, and that only 52.8% of the population of the Grand Duchy is Luxembourgish, means that this (just) majority of the population has the right today to vote in legislative elections, making the Grand Duchy a unique case in the world.

In many ways, industrialisation and the First World War can be seen as the real forgers of a Luxembourgish identity, not least because identity is always forged against "the other", which the First World War promptly offered in the form of German occupation. When discussing identity, it cannot be ignored that a significant part of the country was (then) still anchored in rurality, Catholicism and conservatism.

The other unifying and quintessential element of Luxembourgish identity, the Luxembourgish language, would still have a long way to go from being snubbed as a "patois" in the Chamber of

Deputies, much against the campaigns of C.M. Spoo, to becoming an official national language in 1984. More than ever, linguistic challenges permeate, in the present day, the social issues at the heart of public debate. Many of the debates that arose during our analysis, are not such a distant reality. 100 years later the roles of women in society as well that of the separation of the State and Church were still high on the agenda.⁷⁶¹

With no proper nobility to set apart from, was it the lower classes and their aspirations, which threatened the bourgeois and middle classes status? Esch's context provides a nuanced answer to this question. Again, something seldom highlighted in Luxembourgish historiography is that, admittedly for the first time in the country's history, a new type middle class, that was not necessarily represented by the liberal business bourgeoisie, emerged in the history of the Grand Duchy. This was this middle class of the liberal professions, (often stemming from a humble background), the middle class that got in touch with the reality of a growing working class milieu in the South, and the middle class of small artisans, and independent master-artisans who shared many of the ordeals of the working class.

From community to society

The analysis on the genesis of the Esch middle classes at the outset of industrialisation show that rural-agrarian dispositions of land and patterns of behaviour were not immediately discarded, at least not in the urban environment. Our attempt to trace the possible causes for the transformation and even disappearance of this ruling class, at inception, in Esch showed a variety of possible reasons to it. One being that part of the class who owned landed assets have ensured its survival through the sales of land during industrialization and urban transformation in Esch, but also by pursuing an education path that enlarged its professional endeavours and, not least by pursuing marriages that allowed for a continuation of their status quo in the same prestige, class group.

The landed middle-class seems to somewhat have resisted, the "temptation" of severing ties with the industry. We find but a few examples of individuals with a social background in the agricultural stock/old middle class, who actively engaged in professional occupations in the steel plants. It may

⁷⁶¹ A decriminalizing abortion law only saw the light in 2014 whereas in 2016 a law freed municipalities from their obligation to provide for the expenses incurred in maintaining the religious buildings on their territory and removed the duty of communes to provide free accommodation for parish priests, among other changes.

surprise since the educated professions were on the rise and in Esch, the steel plants provided an ample pool of job demand. Remains to be known and studied whether these old middle classes invested in the industrial companies through other means.

Could the fortunes that have been acquired with the sale of land have been enough to prolong a create a long-lasting status of “rentier” and thus prevented them from searching an occupation within the industry and its commercial, technical or administrative sections or was it simply down to a question of “different mindset”? The clashes at the level of the Chamber of Deputies show a profoundly divided vision of the country according to its different regions and it should not be excluded that an enduring landed middle class in Esch did not, to some extent, remain attached to those traditional values and societal views that predicted a natural distrust for the presence of anything “modern” and “progressist”. The industry was furthermore finger pointed as the main root for societal evils, drunk workers, working female population, distance from the church and poor health condition, whereas the return to the land was not only seen as healthy but as the only way to keep the true nature and culture of the country alive. Nevertheless, some sources have been able to attest of the declining state of the agricultural activity, already 15 years after the arrival of the first plants whilst hinting at a situation that had for long been dire. There seems to have been not only a non-organized agricultural population as well as a deficit in knowledge of how to work the land and breed animals, to cite these two examples.

Industrial work and urbanization characterized the new forms of life in the city of Esch. As Hobsbawm explains in the same line of thought of a complex Tönniesian (Harris, Jose 2001) analysis, the novelty of this world consisted in a conflation of the “old-fashioned town”, whether one wants to label it under “community” or “traditional” and “the capitalist city”, in all of its modern aspects (Hobsbawm 1984, 209). This may have less to do with the transition of working the land as peasants (as Hobsbawm also argues) than it has with structures and mentalities of the old town.

Industrialisation was undoubtedly the driving force behind the creation of a new middle class, bringing new money, new blood and new knowledge to Esch-sur-Alzette, especially in the form of commercial and salaried activities. But also the spread of the educational system. As we have seen, industrialisation did not have the "expected" effect on the class (trans)formation of the agrarian wealthy. On the contrary, and quite paradoxically, it helped them to maintain an influence and a standard of living that prevented change in the second and third generations. Their social

mobility was indeed "horizontal" and, with few exceptions, limited to marrying into the same class of wealth, often within the same professions, in short, in the comfort of the world they had always known.

In fact, this research shows how different strata emerge within the wider “middle classes” and throughout the different decades here under scrutiny. To start with, we mapped the somehow neglected (in historiography) agrarian middle class as well as advanced hypothesis for their transformation, in some cases decline. A small group that either blended in with the merchants and better educated middle classes in Esch or elsewhere, but who continued to enjoy some degree of ruling power linked to its landed possessions and marriage links. Secondly, we saw emerge the new Esch middle classes, again very heterogeneous both geographically, professionally and in terms of its educational background. They came from elsewhere in Luxembourg as well as from abroad, namely Belgium and Germany and Italy.

A shared world view? Unity and diversity within Esch’s bourgeois middle-classes.

For the historian it is equally illegitimate to overlook what they [a social stratum] had in common as it is to neglect the differences (Hobsbawm 1984, 174).

We delineated, first, who these bourgeois middle classes were at different stages and from a pure socio-professional and landownership standpoint three key aspects stand out:

- a) The absence of an intellectual bourgeoisie in Esch-sur-Alzette.
- b) the transitory traits of the Esch’s elites, with no particularly dominant families (save for Metz), nor landowners who dissipated into different trades and geographies. Transitory, also in the sense of know-how as well, engineers were by the very nature of the industrial companies, very mobile and tended not to prolong much their stay nor settle in Esch.
- c) At the level of the local power a dominating commercial oriented ruling class (ranging from the master artisan to the entrepreneur) rather than an industrial one.

It is in this third insight that categorisations become important again. Was this a grand bourgeoisie, a petty bourgeoisie, merchants, whole merchants, grocers, small craftsmen, master craftsmen? The nominal tax rolls have helped to shed some light, but the scale of their (unknown) wealth opens the way here for much needed further research into other types of property, inheritance, physical and monetary possessions.

Contrary to other more powerful groups of the city of Luxembourg, coming from the industrial bourgeoisie, the bourgeois middle class of Esch does not reflect a single personality, although we could perhaps find an exception in the person of Leon Metz, who de facto ruled the municipality for 30 years, while maintaining other informal roles that gave him social prestige through his presidency of a large number of associations.

Over the course of its existence, the Esch bourgeois middle class has been shaped by distinct groups of people revolving around commercial and manufacture activities. Without forgetting the liberal professions who contributed to both the private and public engagement with the city's embellishment. We can here name for example the architect Paul Flesch and the engineer André Koch, active both in local power and the world of associations.

In terms of political power, there were three distinct phases: the pre-industrial phase, characterised by landed property and a tight network of landowners and merchants linked by marriage; the commercial phase, dominated by artisans, entrepreneurs and merchants (with the exception of the period of Leon Metz); and the phase that owed its rulers universal suffrage and, finally, the election of representatives who represented the majority of the people of Esch, the working class and the lower classes of the civil service, for example.

We see in Esch some of the very antagonisms that define the country's divisions: agrarian versus urban, republican versus monarchical, conservative versus liberal values. As we have seen, perhaps the most surprising finding from the sources is that the clerical position did not offer any real resistance to the overwhelming secular position defended by the majority in the local council throughout the years under study.

The attempt of studying Esch-sur-Alzette through the prism of the social stratum of the bourgeois middle classes was made difficult by the lack of homogeneity of such class. Engaging with class thus requires a degree of conceptual precision that no historian nor sociologist for that matter would be able to deploy. For the simple reason that class is not static nor straightforward. That is when the lenses of the city of Esch-sur-Alzette comes in as useful in identifying the many aspects that make this diverse middle class and local elite, peculiar. The social space of Esch-sur-Alzette thus shaped the behaviour and manifestation of such class consciousness. As seen in many examples, this manifests principally in its contrast and clashes with Luxembourg city, if we wish with the *grande*, powerful and established bourgeoisie represented at the level of the central power.

The main difficulties in identifying and distinguishing between the Esch local elites arise in connection with the lack of consistent sources on their sources of income, and assets. This urges the need to fill this gap in future research.

The work of Quiqueret (Quiqueret 2022) portrays Esch in its consolidated industrial existence, as a city characterised by insecurity and tension at every level. In his book, these tensions appear to unfold, primarily at the level of lower classes, striving to secure a place in the economic and social scene.

It is noticeable in the marked presence of the professions of master artisans and innkeepers, presumably a lower middle-class, at the heart of the local council, that Esch diverges in terms of who counted at the level of decision-making process. Alas, Esch was too a city where the low middle classes had a say, even ahead of the universal suffrage in 1919. Marked is also a sense of detachment between the “intellectual” professions and those whose wealth and social esteem was rather dictated by profit. The liberal professions were regarded as a new form of professional respectability incarnated by their scientific knowledge.

The artisans and small traders of this town-turned-city are the part of the petty bourgeoisie we know the least about. Moreover, some sources suggest that the salary of a skilled worker was at times similar to, if not higher than, that of some of the administrative positions within industrial companies, such as clerks and accountants. In the same vein, recent research also suggests that blue-collar occupations are not comparable across the different periods under consideration here. In fact, the expertise required for some types of occupations at the beginning of industrialisation decreases as a result of increasing innovation (Richter 2024).

In this sense this peculiarity of the Esch low middle class defies that of an otherwise European narrative whereby the bourgeoisie and middle classes searched to detach themselves from its lower strata. In fact, in Esch the line of separation is, if not thin, blurry.

Other sources confirm the hypothesis of a more financially secure lower middle class. The fact that property developers like Lefèvre and Biwer found a large part of their clientele in a pool of different professions invites us to look carefully at individual categories or even classes. Were their clients, after all, not coming from different social backgrounds, ranging from the liberal professions to civil servants, master craftsmen and even skilled workers?

Did the Esch bourgeoisie, come to understand itself as unity, as was so often the case in other European settings - without wishing to generalise, such as France or Germany - by the process of

differentiating itself from others, the numerically dominant working class on the one hand, and an old-style type of "better families" by birth on the other?

What was there in common between people so different in their professions, their geographical origins, their financial situations, their beliefs and their political allegiances? One might as well dare to answer by saying that they were more *Eschois* than bourgeois.

The differences between them sometimes faded when the interests of the city as a whole came to the fore.

Politically this translated into an empowerment of the low middle classes, in whose vote central power was increasingly more interested after the drop to 10-franc tax with the census law in 1892, and even more with the introduction of universal suffrage in 1919. The lowering of the poll tax gave them the right to vote: factory workers, railway workers in factories, on the railways and in banks, but also with the development of the public sector, civil servants, teachers with the development of education, shopkeepers and employees in the distribution and services sector and services, foremen, skilled workers.

At the same time, the industrial revolution opened up the country to the modern world and led to a new society with social groups eager to be informed and heard.

Giving voice to the mass working class still meant for some, allowing for radicalization and the threat of communism. Which does not mean that even among traditional deputies there was not a respect for the new forces (social democrats) in the Government⁷⁶².

If on the one hand, it was in the petite bourgeoisie that the bourgeoisie saw its most important reservoir, because they shared some of the same political sensibilities, on the other hand artisans and shopkeepers, were not fundamentally separated from the ordeal of the working classes either. Moreover, this "vicinity" of the lower middle class and working class happens at a time, in the beginning of the 20th century, when the middle classes start to be regarded as a "societal issue", struggling to make ends meet, unable with their salaries (here the example of lower rank civil servants being the most explicit) to afford the purchase power needed for a private home, for example.

Times changed between 1842 and 1922. Different phenomena dictated the rhythm of this research. New professions, industrialization, tertiarization, a new momentum brought by an enlarged access

⁷⁶² The independent but conservative Baron de Tornaco being a vocal supporter, in many instances, of the work of Spoo and Welter.

to education, the end of rurality and new uses for land. All these reflect the bourgeois and middle classes in Esch at different stages of this long-term analysis. The section on local power highlighted more than anything else the contradictions of this heterogeneous group while challenging the very usefulness of a frame of analysis based primarily on class. Because if there is something the analysis demonstrates is the blurriness of this belonging with so many others at the intersection of politics, worldviews, and even psychology. We had to stop to assess the internal coherence of class perspective at a given moment, and then pick up again back and forth in the chronological thread to see how this coherence was dissolved. For what glues these middle classes together is the defense of its self-interests, whilst paradoxically they also try to defend Esch's goals as a community, so different to any other in the country. Even at the core of the municipal council we see its prominent figures surprising us. Jean Schaack Wirth was an unquestionable force of the municipal council, his rhetoric always defending the working class but his later political sidings with the Right wing betraying a pure working-class interest.

Marxism and its enemies

In a post-cold War, post-communist World, post-modernist identity led research has replaced Marx socio-economic interpretations based on class as the major alternative to liberal views of past and present societies.

Among the shortcomings of the usefulness of the concept of class, past and present, is the fact that social and individual identities are increasingly intersected by other 'non-class' identities such as gender, sexual orientation or ethnic background. It can be argued that some of these intersecting identities have always been present, and Esch's local elites are a case in point. However, different scholarship argues that class identity as analytic tool is still central to explaining many aspects and determinants of people's lives such as health and morbidity.

The existence of class presumes conflict. That conflict permeated through the 15 years of local council meetings from the sources. It was there that the more traditional dichotomy of working class and bourgeoisie, in Marxist terms, was to be found. Claims to internationalism, based on class feelings, were rarely evoked in the local council. On the contrary, it was there where the prejudice against the foreign working class was best represented. One struggle concealed the other, and for some members of the local council the plight of the working class was only worth fighting

for Luxembourgers. Different factors help explain why Luxembourg has not remained the stereotyped “two class society” of working class against the bourgeoisie which employed the former. However, it would be simplistic to portray only these two antagonisms in Esch. On the one hand, because it is undeniable that part of the local elite acted towards improvement of the life conditions of its working classes. Although not as revolutionary as some on the far left would have wished, the progressive change brought about by the only two (at the time of its foundation) members of the Democratic Party was radical. Both Welter and Spoo were in fact two unlikely members of the bourgeoisie. Spoo explained in a parliamentary debate how he came to appreciate the accidents of fortune in his education and upbringing. There was little in their professional backgrounds - Welter in medicine, Spoo in business - to suggest a future involvement in political radicalism.

These two social democrats were often accused of not being radical enough, of being too moderate, of not really wanting to change the status quo. There is certainly some truth in this, but one cannot forget the stigma surrounding communism at the turn of the century. The fear that social levelling would be a danger to the country is palpable in the Chamber discussions, of which the creation of the industrial school in Esch is just one example.

There were other social forces at work, more powerful than historical materialism. One of them was the conservative force of rural Luxembourg. Conservative in its way of life, in its beliefs, in its morals, in its attitude to anything new. Luxembourg was not only its industrial south and its capital, but the vast majority of its territory was rural. It is therefore not surprising that among this population and its representatives, whose interests remained those of a rural existence and survival, the demands and pleas of the working class made little or no sense.

Defining oneself as a "propriétaire" did not in fact make one a bourgeois. Owning property, whether in the form of a house, capital, means of production or even a salaried job, certainly lumps a wide variety of people into a single "property" group. It does, however, make it possible to distinguish them from those who did not own anything at all (the proletarians) and were therefore excluded from participating in political decision-making until 1919. The second last group were the foreigners and especially those who did not own any property.

Foreigners as a social group

Another element remains to be further researched and that is the fundamental differences in treatment of the autochthonous working class and the foreign working class.

National belonging was then more strongly felt than class belonging. Class per se not a factor capable of dominating the culture induced by the national factor. When individuals faced with major social or economic problems, class solidarities no longer applied and new solidarities were formed. In social conflicts, members of separate categories can come together. So was the case during the economic crisis and the aftermath of the 1st World War.

By analysing the relations between individuals, we realise that the feeling of class does not succeed in going beyond the national framework in the event of conflict. Class is only a group within the nation. The research on local power, sociability and the discussions at the level of the central government in Luxembourg city demonstrate well the intense paradoxes the different members of the bourgeois middle classes carried. The turn of the century saw, foremost conflicts of identity and belonging arise. Luxembourg risked after the 1st World War and with it the end of the *Zollverein* to be relegated to the orbit of its neighbouring countries or worst-case scenario to being annexed by one of them. After having “integrated” its working class into the nation, the identity of Luxembourg as a nation could be forged and so could the city of Esch’s.

The central government as opposition

Irrespective of the apparent mobilization in favour of the improving of living conditions to the working class, it is difficult to claim whether the middle classes truly aspired for the working classes to achieve what the former took for granted. Inequality was structurally part of the system that few dared to challenge.

Most significantly though is the fact that class consciousness in Esch-sur-Alzette also takes shape into a competition, which appears to have been as much at odds with Luxembourg City as with other (presumably threatening) classes. More than a clash between classes locally, this was a clash of a city against the rest of the country. Indeed the other opponent to some of the Esch bourgeois middle-classes, was Luxembourg City and the central government.

A wish to be less dependent from the capital as well as for a visibility that went beyond the borders meant that efforts were taken to “self-assure” better access to education to the population of Esch across different classes of the population.

The debate and exchanges with central government on the need for a local industrial and technical school was intense and demonstrates the emergence of an assertive local elite in Esch-sur-Alzette. Whilst the turn of the century seemed like a golden period for the working and lower middle classes, with the education offer having become wider, the latter were at the same time being barred by costs of transportation and housing in Luxembourg city, where the best schooling was available.

Moreover, some were being prevented from acceding to certain posts because of their handicap in French language, something some associations catered to solve.

Other conflicts translated into the relationship city of Esch - central government. For many deputies Esch had already received enough benefits, wanting its own school where its own middle classes (and eventually lower classes) could be formed spoke of outrage.

Mingling through education and associations

Well-being and instruction possibilities grew in Esch-sur-Alzette but so did inequalities. The upper classes could trust the success of the firm blastaces and were active in associations which supposedly operated with the wellbeing of the working class in mind. The *Association pour l'Education Populaire* (AEP), the *Société d'Embellissement* and the associations in favour of the promotion of French language all had members of the “bonne société” as leaders. However, the balance between solidarity and safeguarding their own class interest was a difficult one to strike. This research has shown that, in Esch, the members of the middle-class attempted to create ties with the working class, by means of associations that could help improve their general education, their leisure, their free time, thus operating beyond the state and local power. Increasingly present in the city, such associations came to define the common sense of a middle-class culture according to other loyalties, one more liberal and secular, the other more conservative and Catholic.

That manifested, both in right- and left-wing circles, in their advocacy for the working classes to have access to some land (*Coin de Terre*), some education (*AEP*), to improve their language skills, to be entertained. The contacts between these different promoters of social education and leisure were real, albeit uneven. Under the expression, of social, friendly education, lied very contrasting ideologies. They do, however, converge on a number of points. Firstly, bringing the social classes

closer together was seen as a necessity. Society needed to move towards greater well-being, and this would not be achieved through revolution, class warfare or 'selfish' liberalism. The aim being to bring peace to social relations. The ever-present paternalistic stance from some of these associations invites to questioning on whether the latter were not conceived as mere buffer between the proper bourgeoisie and proletariat, without however wanting any fundamental changes.

The role of women in the view of the different camps takes the spotlight here. Women were becoming an increasingly part of the work force but were deemed by the elites to be worthy of the realm of their homes only. How the stance on the women's role in society came to threaten the foundations of the bourgeoisie itself is something also advanced by Kocka (Kocka, Jürgen 1993), among other scholarship acknowledging the increasingly importance of a gender perspective in historical analysis. The evidence from Esch indicates that the advancement and empowerment of women in society was primarily driven by socialist circles, rather than liberal or Catholic ones.

How much was the working class allowed to benefit from this generalized education offer also differed according to the modalities in which this education offer was envisaged as well as depending on the people at the helm of such organizations. We believe the different visions provided by the two French language associations to be good examples of how the bourgeois middle classes opened or closed the gates of their own privileges to their liking.

Clues for future research

This research mapped a very diverse local elite from its origins in 1842 to the post war period in 1922, albeit with many lacunae.

Its originality lies in bringing to light the role played by local authorities, among others, in the construction of what was to become a pillar of national education, the school act of 1912, the end of church interference in school affairs, an influence so far neglected by historiography. By uncovering the work of local authorities this other history of the public service, told 'from elsewhere', nuances the vision of a hegemonic State.

We argue moreover that this demarcation, this setting off one class stratum from another becomes the most visible in Esch, essentially in the demarcation the city took from the capital and its bourgeoisie little implicated in wanting to change its status quo.

Future research should thus look into better identify this elusive middle-class, namely by performing a thorough inventory of property/capital/assets it owned.

Moreover, should a comprehensive history of class be compiled for this period, in the Grand-Duchy, more knowledge is needed on the relationship to land and societal structure prior to the French revolution, so that landownership can be fully grasped in its own social, professional and hierarchical relationships and the implications for the turn of the century societal structure. This includes thus a plea for future research that can claim a thorough understanding of the destiny of nobility, which remain “hazy”, and perhaps, most importantly, the history of the country’s rurality, namely its peasantry which remains largely unknown.

More data on censuses also needs to be worked in order to give a clearer picture throughout different periods on the evolution of class structure.

It may appear as only a part of history, of a small city and of a small country. It remains a contribution to a thus far little know history of its middle-classes. It aims to be a departure point to other research that can come and complement its limitations.

8 Annex 1: Time in office (1841-1922) of the different members of the local council professions

year_entry	year_exit	surname	name	profession
1841	1859	Stoffel	Dominique	farmer
1841	1859	Schmitz	Nicolas	tax collector/tanner
1841	1852	Ollinger	Nicolas	farmer
1841	1854	Gudemer	Pierre	mason
1841	1845	Kayser	Jacques	cabaret owner
1841	1865	Motté	Henri	notary
1841	1852	Nuel	Nicolas	farmer
1841	1843	Rollinger	Nicolas	farmer
1841	1861	Schmit	Jacques	farrier
1841	1867	Brasseur	Dominique	notary
1841	1848	Vandyck	Nicolas	farmer
1843	1848	Arendsdorff	Charles	farmer
1845	1848	Kayser-Schmatz	Henri	farmer
1843	1876	Paquet	Michel	tanner
1845	1848	Lowenbruck	Jean Volatire	miller
1845	1848	Hoferlin	Jean Joseph	post officer
1852	1877	Claude	Pierre	dyer
1852	1854	Neuens	Nicolas	cabaret owner
1852	1854	Bestgen	Bernard	farmer
1852	1859	Arendsdorff	Nicolas	farmer
1852	1854	Lacave	Jean Nicolas	herald
1852	1854	Hartz	Dominique	dyer
1852	1854	Ries	Pierre	wagoner
1852	1854	Thill	Nicolas	wagoner
1852	1900	Bivort	Jean Hypolite	veterinary
1852	1867	Schmitz	Nicolas	tanner
1854	1865	Kirpach	Nicolas	carpenter
1854	1859	Marx	Nicolas	farmer/innkeeper?
1859	1869	Brendel	Jean	unknown
1854	1864	biver	Jacques	farmer

1859	1867	Hamilius	Jean-Pierre	farrier
1859	1861	Origer	Nicolas	baker
1861	1867	Origer-Stoffel	Nicolas	unknown
1861	1864	Schmit-Clees	Jacques	tax collector
1864	1868	Frisch	Pierre	farmer
1864	1868	Kersch	Pierre	mason
1865	1867	Paulus	Jacques	farmer/innkeeper?
1867	1874	Arendt	Jean Laurent	farmer
1867	1870	Hoferlin	Jean-Pierre	farmer/innkeeper
1867	1870	Ries	Jean Pierre	wagoner
1868	1869	Peporte	Pierre	farmer/innkeeper
1868	1869	Jaans	Jean Nicolas	worker minette
1868	1869	Marx	Georges	farmer
1869	1870	Thill	Bernard	farmer
1869	1870	Felgen	Jean	draper/farmer
1869	1870	Noel	Michel	farmer
1870	1876	Boever	Bernard	draper/innkeeper
1870	1885	Garcon	Nicolas	butcher
1870	1874	Wollf	Victor	notary
1873	1907	Metz	Leon	steel plant director
1873	1918	Kersch	Jean Baptiste	sculptor/entrepreneur
1874	1876	Scheftgen	Michel	landowner
1874	1876	Rousseau	Michel	notary clerk
1876	1903	Tabary	Jean-Pierre	landowner
1876	1877	Weber	Jean	unknown
1876	1888	Weinand	Jacques	Landowner
1876	1885	Kolbach	Jean Baptiste	teacher
1879	1906	Hoferlin	Dominique J.	farmer
1879	1900	Hemmer	Jean	collector (State/Enregistrement)
1879	1882	Welschbillig	Etienne	pharmacist
1879	1885	Metzler	Nicolas	doctor
1885	1892	Buchholtz	Sebastian	merchant
1885	1886	Schmiedeler	Nicolas	veterinary (State)
1886	1912	Claude	J.P.	accountant
1886	1888	Kayser	Henri	landowner

1886	1890	de Roebe	Theodore	manager steel plant/engineer
1888	1892	Laboulle	Jean	director des mines
1888	1900	Leclerc	Charles	farmer
1888	1908	Origer	J.P.	baker
1888	1906	Kessler	Joseph Arnold	unknown
1892	1900	Spo	C.M	manufacturer
1892	1910	Stoffel	Jacques	unknown
1900	1907	Bucholtz	Albert	merchant
1900	1902	Koch	Andre	engineer
1900	1910	Wagner	Jean Pierre	unknown
1900	1902	Metzler	Pierre	doctor
1902	1910	Garcon	Jean Pierre	butcher (master)
1902	1903	Nilles	Antoine	wood merchant
1902	1910	Vandyck	Jean	farrier
1903	1912	Hoferlin	Jean Pierre	accountant
1903	1912	Weisen	Jean Pierre	manufacturer
1906	1924	Schaack	Jean	Master -tailor
1906	1910	Hamilius	Jacques	farrier
1910	1912	Spo	Armand	merchant
1910	1912	Hoffmann-Schaedgen	Nicolas	merchant (wood)/teacher
1910	1912	Joerg	Jules	doctor
1910	1912	Cravatte	Henri	merchant
1910	1912	Deitz-Arendt	Jean Francois	farmer
1910	1912	Reiff-Hamilius	Pierre	employee (steel plant)
1910	1912	Wester	Joseph	entrepreneur
1910	1919	Freylinger	Francois	unknown
1912	1914	Wilwert	Francois	blacksmith
1912	1913	Flesch	Paul	architect
1912	1913	Weisgerber	Nicolas	butcher
1912	1924	Putz	Jean	clerk
1912	1917	Michels	J.M	merchant
1912	1917	Barblé	Gregoire	manager steel plant/engineer
1912	1917	Bettendorf	Nicolas	merchant
1912	1913	Beissel	J. Sebastien	manufacturer
1912	1913	Boeres	Pierre	innkeeper
1912	1913	Ensch	J.Baptiste	Director (Lycee des Jeunes filles)

1912	1917	Bock	Nicolas	unknown
1913	1924	Biwer	Nicolas	entrepreneur
1913	1914	Nickels	Jean Nicolas	unknown
1913	1915	Schaeftgen	Nicolas	doctor
1913	1918	Donnersbach	Nicolas	Employee (steel plant)
1913	1918	Wagner	J.P.	master artisan
1914	1916	Brausch	Nicolas	entrepreneur
1914	1919	Pierrard	Pierre	mastor tailor
1914	1918	Noesen	Theodore	entrepreneur
1917	1920	Salentiny	Jean	master artisan
1917	1920	Emering	Nicolas	master artisan
1917	1918	Hamilius	Eugene	butcher
1917	1918	Hoffmann	Henri	worker(miner)
1917	1918	Kapp	Theodore	teacher
1917	1920	Kersch	Dominique	manufacturer
1917	1918	Krein	Mathias Vicotr	accountant
1917	1918	Origer	Jean Pierre	butcher
1917	1917	Witry	Jean	Wagenermeister (Railway)
1917	1918	Herschbach	Bernanrd	Master metalworker
1917	1920	Theisen	J.Francois	master teacher
1919	1920	Bach	Dominique	merchant
1919	1941	Heisten	Jules	merchant
1919	1926	Kieffer	Nicolas Joseph	electrician
1919	1920	Paulus	Joseph	land surveyor (geometer)
1919	1939	Reichling	Eugene	accountant
1919	1933	Thilmany	Jacques	cutler
1919	1944	Wilhelm	Victor	Railway employee
1919	1926	Buckovac	Peter	miner

Source: Flies (Flies 1979) and Archives municipales de la ville d' Esch-sur-Alzette.

9 Annex 2: List of members of local council and their functions. 1861- 1924

mayor (M.); Councillor (C.); Alderman (A.). Source: (Flies, 1979):

Pierre Claude, mayor, 12. 3. 1861-1878
Nicolas Schmitz-Olinger C 1861-1867
Pierre Frisch C 1864-1868
Jean-Laurent Arendt C 1865-1873
Pierre Kersch C 1865-1868
Jacques Paulus C 1865-1867
Nicolas Paquet, C 1865-1869, Alderman 1. 3. 1869-1876
Pierre Peporté, Alderman 8. 2. 1867-1869, C 1872-1874, Alderman 1876-1879, C
1885-1888
J.-P. Ries, Councillor 1867-1885
J.-P. Hoferlin, A. 1867-1874
Jean-Nicolas Jaans C. 1868-1870
Georges Marx C. 1868-1869
Jean Felgen C. 1869-1870
Michel Noel C. 1869-1877
Bernard Thill C. 1869-1870
Nicolas Garçon C. 1870-1882
Victor Wolff, Notar, C. 1870-1874
Bernard Boever C. 1870-1876
J.-Bapt. Kersch C. 1873-1910, A. 1911-1912, C. 1917-1918
Leon Metz C. 1873-1877, A. 16. 1. 1877-1906, Mayor 1906-1909.
Michel Rousseau C. 1874-1876
Michel Schaeftgen C. 1874-1876
J.-Pierre Tabary, A. 1876-1877, C. 1877-1899, A. 1900-1903
Jean-Hippolyte Bivort, C. 1876-1900
Jean Nau, C. 1876-1877
Jean Weber, A. 1876-1879
Jacques Weinand, C. 1876-1888
Nicolas Metzler C. 1877-1882
Dominique-Joseph Hoferlin, C. 1879
Etienne Welschbillig, C. 1879-1885
Dominique-Joseph Hoferlin, Mayor, 13. 6. 1879-1906|
Jean Hemmer, A. 13. 6. 1879-1900
Sébastien Buchholtz C. 1882-1892
Nicolas Schmiedeier C. 1882-1886
Henri Kayser C. 1885-1890
Théodore De Roebe C. 1886-1900

Francois Arendt C.1888-1900
 Jean Laboulle C. 1888-1892
 Charles Ledere C. 1888-1906
 Pierre Peporté C. 1899-1902
 J.-Pierre Origer C. 1890-1897, A. 1907-1909
 C.-Mathias Spoo, C. 1892-1900
 Jacques Stoffel, C. 1892-1903, A.13. 3. 1903-1909
 Albert Buchholtz, C. 1900-1909 (A. 1906-07)
 Fritz Fischer C. 1900-1902
 Andre Koch C. 1900-1902
 Pierre Metzler C. 1900-1902
 J.-Pierre Wagner C. 1900-1914
 J.-Pierre Garçon C. 1902-1906
 Antoine Nilles, C. 1902-1903
 Jean Vandyck, C. 1902-1909
 J.-Pierre Hoferlin, C. 1903-1911
 J.-Pierre Weisen, C. 1903-1911
 Jean Schaack C. 1906-1917, A. 1917-1918, C.
 1921-1928; 1933-1934
 Jacques Hamilius, C. 1906-1908, A26. 2.-20. 10. 1909
 Armand Spoo, mayor, 25. 9. 1909-1911
 Nicolas Hoffmann-Schaedgen, A. 20. 10. 1909-1911, C. 1912
 Dr. Jules Joerg, A.1909-1911, A. 1912, C. 1912
 Henri Cravatte, C. 1909-1912
 J.-Pierre Deitz-Arendt, C. 1909-1910
 Leon Metz C. 1909-1910
 Joseph Wester C. 1. 2. 1910-1911; 1914-1917
 Pierre Reiff C. 1909-1910, A. 1911-1912
 Nicolas Weisgerber C. 1911-1916
 Armand Spoo C. 1911-1912
 (?) Wilwert, C. 1911-1912
 Paul Flesch, C. 1911-1912
 J.-Pierre Michels, mayor, 4. 6. 1912-7. 2. 1917
 Pierre Boeres, C. 1912.
 Nicolas Bock, C. 1912-1916
 J.-Baptiste Enschede, C. 1912
 Jean-Sébastien Beissel, C.1912
 Grégoire Barblé, A., 1912-1916
 Nicolas Bettendorf, A. 1912-1916
 Dr. Nicolas Schaeftgen C. 1912-1915
 Nicolas Nickels C. 1912-1916
 Nicolas Biwer C. 1912-1916
 Nicolas Donnersbach C. 1912-1918
 (J.-)Pierre Pierrard C. 1913-1916, A.1917-1919
 Nicolas Brausch C. 1914-1916
 Théodore Noesen C. 1915-1918; 1920

Jean Salentiny C. 1916-1919; 1920
Nicolas Biwer, mayor, 1. 5. 1917-1919
Mathias Krein, C. 1917-1918
J.-P. Origer, C. 1917-1918
J. Witry, C. 1917
Théodore Kapp, C. 1917-1918
Nicolas Emering, C. 1917-1918, A. 1919, C. 1920
Eugene Hamilius, C. 1917-1918
Henri Hoffmann, C. 1917-1918
Jean-François Theisen, C. 1917-1920
Bernard Herschbach, C. 1917-18
Victor Wilhelm, C. 1919-1920
Joseph-Henri Paulus, C. 1919; 1920
Dominique Kersch, C. 1919-1920
Eugene Reichling, C. 1919-1928, A. 1929-1939
Jacques Thilmany, C. 1919, A. 1920-1928, C. 1929-1933
Joseph Kieffer, C. 1919, A. 1920-1924, C. 1925-1926
Dominique Bach, C. 1919-1920
Jules Heisten, C. 1919, A. 1919, C. 1920, A. 1921, C. 1922-1940, A.
1940-1941
J. Pierre Pierrard, mayor, 1. 8. 1919-18. 9. 1920
Victor Wilhelm, mayor 1. 1. 1921-1934
J.-Pierre Beck, C., 1921
Pierre (known as Jean) Bukovac C. 1921-1926
Mathias-V. Krein, C. 1. 1. 1921-7. 9. 1921
Francois Donven, C. 1921-1955
Jean Berg C. 1921-1945
Nicolas Funck, C. 1921-1924

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ANLux FCI-0215/CI-019 - Etude du problème des classes moyennes - conférences de Hector Lambrachts

ANLux FCI 0210-0224 Union des villes et centres touristiques du Grand-Duché - création d'un secrétariat

ANLux FCI-0264 Associations et coalitions des fonctionnaires

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MCN-07190- - Répertoires - Wolff Victor Charles Jonas

MCN-04611/ MCN-04612 Répertoires Charles Laval

MCN-08342/MCN 08343/MCN05348 Répertoires Henri Motté

MCN-02532 Répertoires D.L. Brasseur

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