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Border-Crossing and "Temporal Otherness" in the Greater Region SaarLorLux: Residential Migrants' Experiences of Divergence

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This article deals with border-crossing and the experiences of "temporal otherness" of residential migrants who move their home from Luxembourg to the German side of the River Moselle. Research on temporal borders is highly influenced by a particular spatio-political relation: the West creating its underdeveloped other and coping with this other by controlling border-crossing, which in turn results in maintaining the idea of the other's temporal remoteness. The Luxembourgish–German border region offers a complement to this perspective; here, one encounters migrants who move in the opposite temporal direction and appreciate certain forms of "being behind" in their new place of residence. These migrants must cope with divergences, i.e., with the fact that economic and socio-cultural conditions within their new socio-spatial universe, the cross-border region, have evolved differently. This article argues that the analysis of migrants' memories is illuminating with respect to the question of the moral legitimacy of moving, and thus regarding the conception and everyday construction of cross-border communities. It sheds light on the fact that borderland research—by focusing on national differences and related conceptions of cross-border mobility and exchange—tends to ignore borderlanders' notions of (regional) unity and related claims for convergence.

Keywords: cross-border residential mobility; divergence and convergence; temporal otherness; moral economy of belonging.

Introduction

At first glance, the Greater Region known as SaarLorLux[1] does not seem to be a promising field for the study of borders as temporal demarcations, as producing or maintaining "temporal otherness". We tend to locate this kind of divide and distancing at borders between East and West or South and North rather than in the "heart of Europe". The following article questions this limited view of temporal demarcation by focussing on Western Europe and thus questions the implicit association of borders and inequality with exclusion and discrimination. It is concerned with a specific form of border-crossing in the Greater Region, namely residential migration, i.e., the relocation of one's domicile across a national border to the adjacent region in a neighbouring country, more precisely with Luxembourgish residential migrants in German border villages. I argue that the relocation stories of these border crossers are indeed about different times, and that their narrations of temporal otherness or *Ungleichzeitigkeit* (non-simultaneity) do not only give insight in everyday experiences of divergence and social inequality but are also illuminating with regard to migrant's "moral economy of belonging".

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Relocation stories are essentially memories of life in the former place of residence and of the experience of arriving and living in the new place. These memories are interesting not least because they are about the acceptability and, more generally, the legitimacy of migration, i.e., about what justifies leaving the country of origin and what establishes the claim to the new place. This question is particularly compelling in the case under discussion because the conventional justifications are lacking. Coming from a place of affluence, Luxembourgish residential migrants can hardly recount a search for better living and working conditions and present their border-crossing as a "happiness project" (Gardner 2015, 198). Nor can they pretend to be contributing to the new country's prosperity, because their labour, and hence their tax payments, remains in Luxembourg.

The temporal structure of their stories, stories which cannot follow common narrative patterns, deserves special attention. It is revealing with regard to the relationship between the new and the old place, and thus also with regard to the nature and impact of the border that separates them. In most cases, this structure is characterised by the distinction between before and after. At the same time, however, the narratives often combine different temporalities, dealing both with memories of the recent past—developments in the family, the former neighbourhood, the country, and experiences in the new place of residence—and with conditions in a more or less indeterminate time in which territorial units and socio-spatial distinctions become blurred. By doing so, they do not simply juxtapose a "here" and a "there" but describe changes within a complex spatial and temporal entity that encompasses the old and the new places. Or, to put it in the language of memory research: the old and new places of residence, i.e., the two sides of the national border, form a "social frame of memory" (Halbwachs 1925) which, along with other such frames, shapes individual memories of relocation and experiences of socio-spatial belonging.

Memory research is increasingly interested in the "multi-scalarity" of memory processes and addresses the interconnectedness of local, national, transnational, and global scales of memory.[2] The study of borderlands, however, suggests yet another scale, namely that of the borderland or border region. My argument is that, in the relocation stories in question, comparisons are made not only between distinct (national) entities, but also between divergent developments within a comprehensive entity: the border region to which the individual belongs in a new and heightened way as a result of their move, and in which they must locate themselves not only socially and culturally, but also morally. The experiences of divergence described in these stories shed light on this dimension of borderland existence, i.e., on notions of good and bad developments, normality, and necessary or desirable convergence.

These relocation narratives seem, therefore, to be an interesting subject for the study of "temporal demarcations", of the border as a distinction not only between "here" and "there" but also between "now" and "then". Borders, according to more recent views in border studies, also produce or are concomitant with "temporal otherness", notions of "non-simultaneity"[3] that are rooted in the idea of a universal linear progression. In Europe, these temporal differentiations—or "'allochronic' political cosmologies", as Hurd, Donnan and Leutloff-Grandits (2017, 6) put it, with reference to Johannes Fabian's conception of the usage of time as a distancing device in anthropology (Fabian 1983)—are most evident in the distinction between East and West.[4] Migration stories are typically based on a similar teleological conception, i.e., formed as a search for happiness in a place that is ahead, advanced, and developed. The stories we encounter at the Luxembourgish–German border, however, present temporal structures that are far less clear, but perhaps no less interesting with regard to intra-European differences and border experiences.

The following description is essentially based on the analyse of relocation stories that were told in interviews with Luxembourgish residential migrants. These interviews were conducted within the framework of an interdisciplinary research project on "Cross-border residence: Identity experience and integration process in the Greater Region" held at the University of Luxembourg, which comprised case studies in three selected German border villages.[5] The empirical research consisted mainly of narrative interviews with migrants and long-established village dwellers as well as of participant observation. While the project was completed in 2016, the conversations with autochthonous and newly arrived village dwellers and participant observation have continued ever since, which was facilitated by the fact that I live in the region myself.

Before going more deeply into the temporal complexity of cross-border residential migration in the Greater Region, I will give some general insight into this particular form of border-crossing mobility and how it is discussed in border studies and social sciences in general. Then follows a brief presentation of the specific conditions and forms of residential migration in the Greater Region, including a visual introduction that will give an idea of the inhabited border landscape and its temporal layers.[6] In the final section, I will turn to some concrete relocation stories and present the concepts of divergence and convergence as tools for capturing experiences of temporal otherness and the social and moral impact of those experiences on individual and collective identification processes.

Cross-Border Residential Migration

The past few decades have seen a considerable increase in cross-border residential mobility across various intra-European borders: examples include

the Polish–German, Dutch–German, Slovenian–Italian, and French–Belgian borders, to name but a few. This increase is linked to European integration policies that culminated in the Schengen Agreements, which brought about extensive freedom of movement and residence, as well as to regional politico-economic and related demographic developments. While empirical studies on these cross-border mobilities do exist,[7] research on the phenomenon has remained relatively marginal, both in border studies and in migration research. In-depth studies on the socio-cultural aspects of this specific type of border-crossing are rare (see, for example, Clément 2018; Strüver 2005b), and comparative work is almost non-existent.[8]

It is, however, widely agreed that cross-border residential moves occur above all in places where an urban centre, like Nijmegen (in the Netherlands) or Trieste (Italy), is located on a national border with a predominantly rural area on the other side (Jagodic 2012). In most cases, therefore, we are dealing with a cross-border variant of peri-urbanisation, which explains why research on cross-border residential mobility tends to focus on issues of spatial planning and politics while central topics of social science migration research—questions related to cultural identity and integration—seem to be less relevant.

This understanding is also reflected at the conceptual level. Many scholars do not define this form of residential move as migration, or they try to convey the idea of a somewhat reduced form of migration by coining terms like "elastic migration" (Houtum & Gielis 2006) or "short distance transnationalism" (Strüver 2005a). It can be argued, though, that a move across a border, while not intended and conceived as migration, often turns into it. The idea that residential relocation does not strongly affect an individual's "activity space"—including recreational activities, consumer habits, and social encounters—which has induced some authors to opt for the term "mobility" instead of migration (Gerber & Carpentier 2013; Kaufmann 1999),often proves to be wrong. By taking up residence across a national border, one enters a process of leaving one's former social world and creating a new one that is mainly located in another country. The relocation stories of these migrants are interesting because memories, and the intersection of different memory frames, constitute important components in this "processual migration". Here, the decision to leave the country of origin is made in hindsight, that is, by memories. In fact, there was no such decision, but the changes in their lives that have occurred since the move prove that it would have been justified. One could even argue that the decision to migrate could not have been made because the migration destination was then unknown. The residential migrants moved from a national to a transnational regional entity of which they had no clear idea before the move (Boesen 2020).

Residential Migration in the Greater Region

In the Greater Region SaarLorLux, cross-border residential migration essentially means movement from Luxembourg to one of the neighbouring border regions. The case is similar to others in that cross-border residential migration is related to peri-urbanization processes here as well (Sohn 2012; Becker & Hesse 2010). Luxembourg's capital, Luxembourg City, is not an actual border city, but all three neighbouring countries—Germany, France, and Belgium—are relatively near it, with the distances to the nearest border towns ranging from 15 to 20 kilometers. As in the examples mentioned above, individual villages and small towns beyond the borders are gradually turning into suburbs of the city. This common structural feature notwithstanding, Luxembourg and its border regions also show a striking peculiarity: the group of residential migrants is both remarkably rural and exceptionally cosmopolitan.

Due to international immigration, the population of Luxembourg has been continuously growing since the second half of the 20th century. Luxembourg City, which only attained the rank of "big city" (i.e., having more than 100,000 inhabitants) in 2012, has developed into a centre for the global financial and services industries. Today 70 percent of its population is comprised of non-Luxembourg nationals from more than 160 countries. The overall population of the country also shows a remarkably high proportion of non-nationals: currently they account for more than 47 percent of all residents (STATEC 2022, 11). However, aside from Luxembourg City, urban agglomerations are limited to three rather small middle cities and several rural towns of seldom more than 5,000 inhabitants.[9] In Luxembourg, diversity is thus a distinctive feature of small towns and rural communities, and this "rural cosmopolitanism"[10] extends to the adjoining border regions.

The sub- and peri-urbanization processes in question seem to confirm the view that the clear distinction between the spatio-structural categories "urban" and "rural" is becoming increasingly obsolete (cf. Hesse 2014; Boesen, Schnuer, & Wille 2014; Champion & Hugo 2004), but in the present case they also point to a specific non-simultaneity. The country's socio-spatial structures have not kept pace with the rapid economic change that began in the 1970s, and the demographic development that went with it. This non-simultaneity becomes strikingly visible in the composition of the group of residential migrants, and especially in the group of migrants who have opted for a new residence in the German borderland that is composed of native Luxembourgers from a largely rural background and members of Luxembourg's super-diverse and in part highly mobile migrant community.

By virtue of its small size, Luxembourg offers a threefold option to people considering cross-border residential

migration: a move to Belgium, to France, or to Germany. While all three border regions have experienced a massive influx of new residents from Luxembourg in recent decades, there are considerable differences in the composition of the three migrant groups. The vast majority of those who have moved to France and Belgium are French and Belgian nationals, respectively, whereas more than 50 percent of the migrants opting for a residence in Germany are of Luxembourgish nationality.[11]

The different compositions of the migrant groups in the three borderlands are certainly related to several regional and national characteristics, including particular landscape features and differences in infrastructural facilities, such as the existence or not of bilingual primary schools and daycare centres, but they are probably also due to differences in self-marketing. Many of the municipalities in the German borderland seek to attract foreign citizens and emphasize the international composition of their populations as an essential local quality.[12] They welcome Luxembourgish locals from nearby villages as well as members of the international financial elite from further afield. The village of Wincheringen, an old wine-growing community by the Moselle River, is an outstanding example of these local internationalization processes. In the past 20 years its population has increased by over 80 percent, growing from 1,390 in 2000 to 2,520 inhabitants in 2020. The proportion of non-German inhabitants has risen from 4.5 percent to almost 45 percent during this period, with Luxembourgers making up 50 percent of a foreign population from 57 different countries in 2020.[13]

Residential Migrants in German Border Villages

While ideas of temporal otherness are particularly prevalent and long-standing in relations between East and West, where they are accompanied by notions of relative modernity and backwardness and concomitant hierarchal structures, they seem to be weak or absent in relations between the countries that border each other in the Greater Region—i.e., Luxembourg, France, Germany, and Belgium—all core countries of the European unification process. What could "different temporalities" and "otherness" grounded in this difference possibly mean in Luxembourgish–German relationships? And, more concretely, do residential migrants in German border villages experience their relocation in some ways as a move into another time?

Before turning to the experiences of individual migrants, I offer some impressions of the material signs of cross-border residential mobility in the immediate border landscape, and of the temporal relationships that they bring to the fore. I shall begin, however, with a look into the future, or rather into a past future as it was documented in a cartoon from 2013 (Figure 1) that draws attention to the scope and significance of residential migration from Luxembourg. It shows a grandfather in the year 2023 explaining to his grandson that the country on the other side of the river is Luxembourg, where they as Luxembourgers once lived when they could still afford housing there.

The cartoon addresses the mundane issue of real estate prices. However, it also tells us that Luxembourgers could not keep up with certain developments—that they were, so to speak, behind the times. They could no longer afford to live in Luxembourg and therefore had to cross the border, move to the other side of the Moselle river, where different conditions prevail—where times have not changed at the same pace.

The border can be identified as the Luxembourg–German border and, more precisely, the border near the German village of Wincheringen, from where grandfather and grandson gaze at an idyllic vineyard landscape on the opposite side of the river, the quasi-iconic panorama above the Luxembourgish town of Wormeldange.

The second illustration (Figure 2) shows a view in the opposite direction, from the Donatus Chapel in the vineyards above Wormeldange, looking down at the border river. In the background you can make out the bridge that makes Wincheringen, behind the hill, a particularly attractive place of residence for Luxembourgers and other people working in Luxembourg.

Figure 1. Cartoon from the Luxembourgish TV guide *Télécran*. The cartoon appeared in an article called "Adieu Heimat. Wenn Drüben Daheim ist" (no. 8, 2013). The Luxembourgish caption translates: "Look, that's Luxembourg. That's where we Luxembourgers lived before. Back then one could still afford apartments and houses there" (author's translation). Image credit: © Ken Barthelmey.

Figure 2. View from the vineyards above Wormeldange to the border river, 2016. Photo credit: © Carlo Rinnen.

Figure 3. View of the new residential area "Auf Mont" above the village of Wincheringen, 2015. Source: the author.

Figure 4. Street view in "Auf Mont", 2015. Source: the author.

Figure 5. Apartment complexes, new village style of architecture, 2021. Source: the author.

In the next photo (Figure 3) you see Wincheringen with its church, vestiges of a castle, and the hill over which the new homes and neighbours are, so to speak, approaching. This view suggests that the border is only a limited bulwark against the developments that the migrants have tried to escape in Luxembourg. The number and style of the houses on the hill indicate that the real estate market across the border in Germany is undergoing a similar sort of development to that in Luxembourg.

This impression is corroborated by the following photo (Figure 4), which gives an idea of the interior of the new housing development, a neighbourhood called "Auf Mont", with streets named after EU capitals, and where almost 400 residential homes are planned and more than 225 have already been built.

Real estate prices are rising rapidly, not only in Moselle villages with views of Luxembourg but also, to a lesser degree, in localities 20 kilometers and more from the national border. For the moment, however, a building plot in Luxembourg, say in Wormeldange, is still roughly twice as expensive as in Wincheringen. The final photo (Figure 5) illustrates the next step in the process of rural urbanism: the first apartment complexes being built on the German side of the border, here a block of 18 apartments in the neighbouring Moselle village of Palzem.

Residential migration from Luxembourg has brought about important changes in the rural communities concerned, changes that are not only reflected in population numbers and the material aspect of the villages but also, as has already been mentioned, in their socio-economic and cultural composition. The group of residential migrants mirrors the diversity of the population of the Grand Duchy, which means that villages like Wincheringen welcome not only native Luxembourgers but also members of the international elite working, for example, in the finance industry, as well as classic labour migrants, especially from Portugal.

In what follows, I will ignore this diversity and focus on migrants with a Luxembourgish background, i.e., on individuals and families for whom the move across the national border involved leaving their country of origin. By analysing their border-crossing narratives, I ask whether their identification needs and possibilities,

including the moment of moral legitimacy, tell us something about the effect of border-crossing on feelings of identity and distance—in place and time—and thus on the development of supranational or "regional" social entities.

Divergence and Convergence

I have already hinted at the fact that these identification processes are complicated. Luxembourgish residential migrants are pushed out of their own country and are at the same time financially strong invaders in their new environment. This ambivalence is often present in interviews and informal communications, e.g., in a private conversation with a woman who recently bought and moved into a big house in a small village adjacent to Wincheringen. She expressed her concerns as to whether she, as a Luxembourger who makes German real estate prices rise, is welcome in the village, and then declared that her children will not be able to buy a property in Luxembourg, which is the same as saying that they will not find a place to live there. She is a victim of turbulent economic structural changes in the Grand Duchy. On the other side of the border in Germany, she becomes a financially highly compensated and potent victim of this turbulence; she might even be regarded as a profiteer who, by selling her house in one of the most expensive residential areas of Luxembourg, could afford to buy a fine property in Germany and to move her family to safer climes and into less turbulent times.

Like many other residential migrants, this woman did not move across the border in search of change and difference, but with the expectation of finding similarity with her former life in Luxembourg, a life that seemed to be threatened there and did not allow projection into a plausible future. Here, we have the somewhat paradoxical situation that movement promises constancy. However, the move also brings about new and intensified forms of confrontation with divergence.

Divergence and its antonym, convergence, are terms we rarely encounter in social and cultural studies on migration and borderlands, and when we do they are often used imprecisely as synonyms for difference and similarity (for an exception, see Decoville et al. 2013). We find their exact use in the social sciences above all in macro-economic studies of the 1960s and 70s that are influenced by classical convergence theory (see, e.g., Ludz 1969) and more recently and closer to our field of interest in Europeanization research, i.e. in comparative analyses of economic and social developments in Western European countries and ensuing projections. In the 1980s, economic and socio-political convergence in the European Community, for instance in the field of wages, was widely regarded as ongoing and irreversible. In the field of education, convergence was considered a necessity, resulting in enormous efforts being made to promote it. Other domains of study are, for example, media landscapes and legal systems, but we also find research on cultural convergence, i.e., on the extent to which value orientations and attitudes in the EU are becoming increasingly harmonised.[14] Convergence in social systems is a continuous development towards homogeneity, and divergence its opposite: a development towards difference or dissimilarity. In contrast to "difference" and "similarity", the terms do not describe states but processes, developments over time (cf. Scholz 2019, 30–31).

In the present context, the question of whether convergence, say in the EU context, is desirable and should be promoted, or whether divergence might be desirable in certain areas, is not of concern. I am interested in the perception and evaluation of such developments by residential migrants, i.e., by persons who are confronted with them in a specific way. Border studies and borderland research have not, as far as I can see, been sufficiently attentive to these aspects of everyday experiences and their importance for social relationships and identity processes.[15] While being increasingly interested in the everyday practices of bordering and debordering, researchers have largely focused on difference and otherness, and on the particular skills of "transnational borderlanders" (Martínez 1994, 60) or "regionauts" who are able to use both sides of the border (Löfgren 2008, 196).

A more complex approach, starting from the observation that people are in general reluctant to cross a national border, was proposed by Bas Spierings and Martin van der Velde. In their research on the complex interplay between the rational and emotional factors involved in the decision to cross a border, they explored the notion of familiarity/unfamiliarity and developed the model of a "bandwidth of (un)familiarity", suggesting a range of proportions of interacting push-and-pull and keep-and-repel factors that promote cross-border mobility the most. This model helps to illustrate the fact that too much integration and homogenization—or convergence—along a border may lead to increased cross-border immobility, a finding described as "border paradox" by Spierings and van der Velde (2008, 503).

Despite efforts at conceptual clarification (Spierings & van der Velde 2013; Szytniewski & Spierings 2014), the notion of (un)familiarity is used inconsistently, denoting both similarities and differences and their emotional effect, i.e., a specific feeling related to what is encountered or expected on the other side of a border (cf. Boesen & Schnuer 2017). In the present context, another weakness of this approach is perhaps more important to note, namely the fact that it assumes individual instances of border-crossing and more or less stable and distinct socio-spatial entities between which the movement occurs. This conception may seem adequate when analysing cross-border shopping, as Spierings and van der Velde did, but it does not do justice to the dynamic brought about by residential

migration and the complex temporal structure of the identification and memory processes it involves.

Two Relocation Stories

With these conceptual problems in mind, I will now look briefly at two relocation stories and the temporal relationships they deal with. The presentation is based on the analysis of narrative interviews with two couples who, at the time of the interviews, had lived for seven and eight years respectively in their new homes in Germany.[16] Both couples live in the same village, which is 15 kilometers from the border, where building land is significantly cheaper than in immediate border towns like Wincheringen. The cases resemble each other insofar as both couples took the decision to buy a house relatively late in life—too late to buy in Luxembourg, as they would find out. In one case, the couple had previously lived in a company residence near the husband's workplace. By the time they realized, in their mid-fifties, that they would not be able to live there forever, the price of building land in Luxembourg had already risen to unaffordable levels. The second couple had lived in a rented flat and had planned to purchase a property for their retirement, but when the time came, prices had increased dramatically, and they had to accept that they would not be able to finance a decent residence in Luxembourg.

Now, years later, both couples assert that they are more than happy with the decision to move across the national border and very satisfied with their lives in their new place of residence. However, the economic divergences in the borderland, notably divergent developments in the real estate markets, have not only made it possible for them to build a house, they are also a permanent source of discomfiture in their current daily lives. Besides land prices, wages are an important field in which convergence does not prevail. In both interviews, the considerable differences in income were discussed in detail. The couples (now both retired) compared their own favourable economic situations, i.e., the amount of their pensions, with those of their German neighbours and acquaintances and underlined the disparity by illustrating the lack of "objective", and thus legitimate, reasons for these differences—giving as an objective criterion their comparative levels of professional training. In one case, the Luxembourg pension was higher than the pension of a German university professor, even though the person's former employment in the public sector in Luxembourg had not even required an academic education; in the other case, the Luxembourg pension being received as a retired unskilled worker was higher than the pension of a German craftsman.

Both couples felt uneasy about this unjustified difference and developed a desire to conceal their economic affluence. For one couple, the uneasiness was accompanied by fear of the envy of others and suspicion, which led, for example, to their speculation that pension slips sent by post had gone into the wrong letterbox and everyone in the village therefore knew how much they received each month. For the other couple, their material situation generated feelings of shame and an impulse to discard their own basis of evaluation: they felt it was wrong for them to consider basic consumer items to be cheap just because they cost considerably less than in Luxembourg.

These two examples give an idea of the complexity and ambivalence of the social relations associated with the experience of material divergence. The Luxembourgish villagers are not able to enjoy the advantages of their new place of residence in Germany light-heartedly, but instead have developed strategies of moral self-appeasement. However, I do not want to leave it at these examples that relate exclusively to divergence in the realm of material circumstances. While financial considerations appear in all relocation narratives, other factors are generally given significantly more weight. As already mentioned, relocation stories often contain memories of family relationships, but consist, above all, of descriptions of social and cultural conditions in the former neighbourhood, town, and country. In these areas, too, comparisons are made between the old and the new place of residence, and divergent, more or less acceptable developments are identified, thereby providing an answer to the question of the moral acceptability of crossing the border. While the above-mentioned observations on divergence in the realm of wages and pensions are to be understood as reflections on the legitimacy of taking up residence in the new place, accounts of divergent social and cultural developments deal with the complementary part: the act of leaving the former place of residence.

Apart from referring to material developments in Luxembourg that have made living there too expensive, many residential migrants also spoke of socio-cultural change that either directly prompted them to move, or made their decision appear to be the right one at least in retrospect, i.e., after arriving at the new place of residence and becoming acquainted with the conditions there. The interviewees complained about an increasing materialism in Luxembourg that was affecting social relations. They described status competition via conspicuous consumption, social coldness, and the decline of neighbourly relations. These negative developments were consistently contrasted with more positive conditions in the new place of residence. In their new homes, they noticed that people lived according to their own standards without being preoccupied with keeping up with their neighbours, that social life was richer, and that mutual help between neighbours was still the rule. For some, the routines of everyday communal life in their new place of residence have brought back memories of the Luxembourg of their childhood and idyllic images of life in former times.

Relocation is thus, in part, described as moving across a border between different times not in the sense of progressing from backwardness to modernity, but of going in the opposite direction, from the isolation and estrangement that accompanies late modern individualism and consumerism, to a feeling of local belonging grounded in pre-modern reciprocal relationships. Elsewhere, I have argued that this form of temporal distancing from Luxembourg—by denouncing the conditions prevailing there and explicitly turning away from them—makes it possible for Luxembourgish residential migrants to experience and identify with a supranational socio-spatial entity that unites their new place of residence with the one they have left behind (Boesen 2020). Many interviewees were decidedly negative about Luxembourg, to the point of saying: "I could not have lived there any longer". However, this did not preclude them from being very positive about the transnational region in which they now live, and thus positive about Luxembourg as part of that region. Here, intraregional divergence acts as a kind of mitigation of national developments that are viewed critically and bring about uncertainty. At the same time, this divergence can, as we have seen, produce and stimulate moral uneasiness.

Concluding Remarks

The brief look at individual relocation stories has shown that they deal, among other things, with divergent developments within the border region and that these divergences are often experienced and narrated by the individual residential migrants as "non-simultaneity", or, put differently, as the co-existence of different stages of a—more or less desirable—development. To put it simply: Luxembourg is perceived as being well ahead of the German border municipalities regarding the development of the real estate market, consumerism, individualisation, and so on. The relocation stories also show that these temporal relationships, or, to take up again the expression elaborated upon by Koselleck, the "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous", which many migrants experience in a particularly pronounced way due to their new residential and living situation in the borderland, shed light on the problem of the legitimacy of migration. I will conclude with some further reflections on this problem.

Scholarly interest in the question of the social acceptability or legitimacy of migration and other forms of cross-border movement seems to be growing, as shown by recent publications in the field.[17] One study that deserves mention is Emmanuel Charmillot's study on "(im)moral mobilities" in Val-de-Travers, a Swiss municipality in the border region with France, an area that resembles the Greater Region SaarLorLux insofar as it is characterized by the same multiplicity of border-crossings: commuting, cross-border consumerism, and cross-border residential moves. In Val-de-Travers, a regime of (im)moral mobilities has emerged that, according to Charmillot, is based on clear ideas of what is necessary and right for the strengthening of the local community—an "imagined community of fate" that was essentially produced by "peripheralization". Immoral cross-border movements are deemed to be those that weaken the economic and social development of the community (Charmillot 2023).

Similar reflexes can also be observed in Luxembourg. Making grocery purchases in German border villages and shopping in the city of Trier are criticized as weakening Luxembourg's domestic trade.[18] The same applies to residential migrants who invest their money in neighbouring countries. The feeling is that money earned in Luxembourg should also be spent there and interviewees alluded to corresponding reactions from family members or work colleagues. At the same time, however, the country's development is not comparable to that of a remote Swiss border community. Luxembourg is not characterized by peripheralization but, on the contrary, by globalization, by economic and demographic growth based on internationalization, a process which, as described above, transcends national borders, and influences the entire Greater Region. The basis for the moral evaluation of cross-border mobilities is correspondingly more complex, or to put it differently, the "moral community" to which the individual belongs is less unambiguous. The brief glimpses into individual relocation narratives given here provide an impression of the ambiguity, the spatial as well as temporal variability or multiplicity of this moral community.

I will close by looking at Ghassan Hage's study on the "moral economy of belonging" and migration as a "guilt-inducing process", which is based on his anthropological work on Lebanese migrants in Australia (Hage 2010). Inspired by Nietzsche's *Genealogie der Moral*, Hage understands the benefits of communal life as "a gift that the community expects those who receive it to reciprocate. [...] One repays this gift through a life-long participation in the family and community or whichever communal group individuals feel has provided them with that gift of communality" (86–87). The migrant who has left the communal group to which he is indebted—be it his family, his nation, or another group—is thus guilty of neglecting his duty to repay the debt and, as Hage points out, dependent on symbolic forms of reciprocation.

In the present case, migrants leave a place of affluence without striving for existential betterment in their new place, and repaying the moral debt is therefore perhaps particularly difficult. Migrants' relocation stories show, however, that there are other ways of freeing oneself from that indebtedness, namely by doubting the persistence of the original community—by claiming, for instance, that it will no longer provide adequate housing for one's own children—and at the same time redefining, transforming, and re-membering it into a transnational regional community.

Endnotes

1 "Greater Region SaarLorLux" designates a Euroregion created in 1995 that initially consisted of the German Bundesland Saarland, Lorraine in France, and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and was then extended to include Belgium's Wallonia and the German Rhineland-Palatinate.

2 See, e.g., de Cesari and Rigney's understanding of memory as "a dynamic operating at multiple, interlocking scales and involving conduits, intersections, circuits, and articulations" (2014, 6); and for a brief introduction to recent approaches to multiple and intersecting memories, cf. Pfoser (2020).

3 On the "*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*" ("simultaneity of the non-simultaneous"), see Koselleck 1972.

4 See also Hartog's more complex conception of East and West—meeting in the city of Berlin—as developing and going through different "*régimes d'historicité*", which "*pouvaient, mais par des chemins différents, se retrouver sur le présent*" ("regimes of historicity" that "might, but by different paths, meet in the present") (Hartog 2022, 60, translation by this author).

5 See https://history.uni.lu/research-cross-border-residence/.

6 Cf. Koselleck's concept of layers of time (*Zeitschichten*), i.e., "several temporal levels of diverse duration and origin, which nevertheless exist and are effective at the same time", which is rendered in this concept (Koselleck 2003, 9, translation by author).

7 Cf. inter alia Balogh 2012; Clément 2017; Houtum & Gielis 2006; Jagodic 2012; Jańczak 2017; Strüver 2005a.

8 See, however, Jagodic's conceptual reflections that are based on a (limited) comparative analysis (Jagodic 2012).

9 The formal degree of urbanization, defined as the overall proportion of inhabitants living in cities, is nevertheless in Luxembourg one of the highest in Europe: https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/249029/umfrage/urbanisierung-in-den-eu-laendern/. On the country's sub- and peri-urban scenery, see Hesse 2014.

10 The notion of "rural cosmopolitanism" draws attention to the fact—largely neglected in migration studies—that mobility and diversity can co-exist with rural socio-spatial structures. For a brief introduction into recent work and different views on the topic, see Woods 2018; see also, on the related notion of "translocal ruralism", Hedberg & Carmo 2012.

11 Cf. Brosius & Carpentier 2010. While we do not have more recent statistical evaluations of the overall evolution, the demographic developments in individual border municipalities suggest that the trend towards a preference for the German border region among residential migrants of Luxembourgish nationality has continued to increase in recent years.

12 As an example, see a citation from the website of Wellen, one of the German Moselle villages that have developed several new residential areas in recent years; the mayor's presentation of his village is given in German, English, and French and starts as follows: "Wellen is situated in the beautiful Mosel valley opposite the town of Grevenmacher in Luxembourg. Both Grevenmacher and Wellen are directly interconnected through a newly built state-of-the-art bridge which makes Wellen a gateway to the picturesque city of Luxembourg City … Because of our own history and the proximity to Luxembourg and France, Wellen not only considers itself but also acts as a welcoming town for all people who want to join and play a part in enriching our community": https://www.wellen-mosel.de/. On differences between French and German communal "politics of attraction", cf. Gerber in Forum 362, May 2016.

13 Nationalitätenstatistik Verbandsgemeinde Saarburg-Kell; extract March 21, 2023.

14 For a brief overview of both the socio-political and the economic processes of convergence and divergence in post-war Europe, and of theoretical approaches to convergence and divergence in the social sciences, see Scholz 2019. See also the rapidly growing field of research on "left behind places"; cf. Hendrickson, Muro, & Galston 2018.

15 In contrast, the problem is—albeit largely implicitly—addressed in works on counter-urbanization (cf. Halfacree 2004) and lifestyle migration or amenity migration (see, for example, Cretton 2018).

16 This article is mainly based on the results of empirical research conducted in the years 2012–16, which consisted of narrative interviews and participant observation in three German border villages; cf. https://history.uni.lu/research-cross-border-residence/.

17 See the following examples, which cover different geographical and cultural contexts: Cassidy 2017, Carling 2008, Velayutham & Wise 2005.

18 In a survey conducted by a major Luxembourg daily newspaper in 2022, 35% of respondents stated that they "prefer to spend their money in the Grand Duchy" rather than in the neighbouring city of Trier: https://www.wort.lu/luxemburg/kaufhof-schicksal-ungewiss-fahren-sie-nach-trier-shoppen/1171345.html.

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