

Proposal

XII CONGRESO „CULTURA EUROPEA“ – OCTUBRE 2013

We, you, the others. Constructions of difference and identity in the Greater Region

Dr. Elisabeth Boesen, Dr. Gregor Schnuer and Dr. Christian Wille (University of Luxembourg)

Borderstudies research tends to be conceptually and empirically preoccupied with a range of binary oppositions relating to the border (e.g. majority – minority, inclusion – exclusion). Increasingly, however, these dichotomies are insufficient. One key example here is the “Greater Region,” a borderland involving Luxembourg and surrounding Germany, France, and Belgium. It distinguishes itself through high levels of mobility and the multifariousness of its ongoing debordering and rebordering. Our project is researching these processes, looking at three groups: a) autochthonous residents in the surrounding regions, who already have close ties to Luxembourg as the centre of the regional labour market; b) people resident in Luxembourg, who are a population that is heterogeneous and consists of an extraordinary number of foreign nationals (>40%); c) residential ‘migrants’ from Luxembourg that have relocated into a surrounding region, who as a group reflect the heterogeneity of the Luxembourg population.

The paper explores results of a quantitative survey of Luxembourg residents (n=1000) and residents of the surrounding border-regions (n=2000), and the results of follow-up qualitative interviews, hoping to show how achieved and ascribed identities in the region no longer align with a ‘simple’ binary based on national differences. Instead, so the hypothesis, more complicated processes of othering (and likening) occur, drawing on multiple categories, including local and national identities/histories (historical ties and interpretations of past events), spatial interactions (mobility and knowledge of spaces), and social status (employment, wealth, and cultural interests). The research is based on the results of the research projects IDENT2 and CB-RES at the University of Luxembourg.