DWELLING TRENDS IN BORDER REGIONS –
TOWARDS AN INTER-URBAN DISCOURSE ANALYIS

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Abstract

Effects of population mobility resulting from uneven development in border regions can be perceived very differently by city councils or planners and the local population. This paper focuses on the perceptions of the effects of population mobility and dwelling in a transnational cross-border polycentric metropolitan region in Western Europe. The economic development of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg calls for a constant expansion of the labour market, attracting cross-border commuters and a 'highly mobile elite'. The concomitant rise in property prices as well as the extreme housing shortages in Luxembourg have led to an expansion of the housing market into the border regions. So far studies have mostly dealt with the socio-demographic characteristics of the transmigrants. This research aims to detect people's perceptions of the phenomenon by applying a discourse analysis, thus helping to trigger an increasing awareness for the emerging transnational housing market.

Keywords: housing markets, residential mobility, discourse and space, qualitative methods, perceptions

Introduction: population mobilities and transnationalisation in border regions

According to Pries (2009: 592) the term transnationalization can be considered as a type of internationalization that "refers to the quantitatively and qualitatively growing importance of pluri-local and trans-national social relations, networks and practices." Ernste, van Houtum and Zoomers (2009: 577) state that "The fact that many mobile people and migrants have become trans-mobile and trans-migrants, hence that they find themselves neither here nor there, but in several places at the same time, has important consequences for spatial container concepts like place, nation and identities." Pries (2009) puts an emphasis on the maintenance of boundaries, political regulations and national identity attributions even though (or perhaps because) these are exceeded or broken by transnational communication and social practices. While literature on transnationalization mostly refers to relations of rather widely distant geographical locations, this case does predominantly deals with population mobilities in a rather small geographical area. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind, that without the "unusually high degree of both international and interregional connectivity and circulation" (see Hesse 2014b) in Luxembourg, the situation would presumably differ. As a result of the opening of the borders (Schengen Agreement) and accompanying progressive Europeanization, transnational linkages within the European Union internal borders have expanded significantly in recent years. This has resulted in far-reaching consequences for the economic and settlement structure in border regions (see for instance Diop 2011; Gaunard-Anderson 2012; Geyer 2009). The effects of population mobility resulting from uneven development due to differing regulations in border regions can be perceived very differently by city councils or planners and the local population.

"*Je t'aime, moi non plus*"[1]: this is how the French newspaper *L'Express* (2011: II) summarises the transnational linkages of Luxembourg with its neighbouring countries. On the one hand, the

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[1] "I love you... nor do I."

'economic engine' Luxembourg offers workplaces for many commuters, positively affecting the development of this European cross-border polycentric metropolitan region; on the other hand, negative consequences such as the overcrowded real estate market in Luxembourg continue beyond the national border and affect neighbouring housing markets. The '2020 Concept for the Region Trier' shows that city councils perceive the proximity to Luxembourg as an opportunity for the development of the city. Simultaneously, locals that do not have their job in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg might feel displaced and develop resentment vis-à-vis their new neighbours from Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany, and France that moved to the border region to work in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. These labour migrants/highly mobile elite bring higher purchasing power and are driving increasing rental and housing prices. Depending on the context, similar effects can thus be perceived very differently by city councils or planners and the local population.

Until now, studies dealing with the processes of residential mobility in border regions have mostly focussed on individual motives of transmigrants, whereas impacts on the regions of destination remain often unexplored. Furthermore recent findings suggest, that the situation in neighbouring cities differs to the situation in rural areas. Assuming that abstract societal processes become concrete and experienced at the local level, this paper interrogates the discursive framing of the consequences of the transnational linkages in regard to housing situations in the Greater Region, also referred to as a transnational cross-border polycentric metropolitan region. To do so, guiding principles of municipal policy, urban planning documents and the local media are analysed. Furthermore stakeholder interviews are conducted to gain deeper insights. To set the scene I will start with a brief presentation of the research area. A theoretical-conceptual framework building on mobilities research and housing studies will follow. Thereafter discourse theory and methodology and their linkage to space will be elaborated. A proposition for the research design will follow. Building on material related to the City of Trier some insights of work in progress together with a discussion and a reflection will deliver first impressions.

Research area – the Greater Region

In Western Europe, the so-called Greater Region extends over the small nation state Luxembourg and parts of Belgium (Wallonia and the German Speaking Part), Germany (Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate) and France (Lorraine, recent territorial reforms in France might lead to a change). Covering an area of 65,041 km^2 and hosting about 11,2 million inhabitants (Grande Région 2015), the Greater Region can be characterized as a transnational cross-border polycentric metropolitan region.

The small state Luxembourg (total area: 2,586 km^2), which lies in the centre of this political cooperation area, has undergone quite an extraordinary economic and demographic development in recent decades (Hesse 2014b: 1). In 2013 the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg hosted around 550,000 inhabitants (STATEC 2013). As a global financial centre and a centre for European Institutions, Luxembourg-City is a far-reaching international labour market (Hesse 2014b: 1) with a surplus meaning (Diop 2011). In 2013 EUROSTAT (2014) states that "Luxembourg has by far the highest GDP per capita among all the 37 countries included in this comparison, being more than two and a half times above the EU-28 average". With about 385,000 workplaces as of 2013 (STATEC 2014), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is attracting migrants from other - mostly European - countries (in 2013 about 44% of Luxembourg's inhabitants were foreigners) and about 159,000 cross-border commuters from the neighbouring countries (IBA/OIE 2014, for a spatial distribution see figure 1), working to a large extent in Luxembourg-City. These population mobilities do not only influence urban systems in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg itself but also have impacts on the neighbouring border regions.

Housing prices in Luxembourg are nearly twice those in the neighbouring border regions (Diop 2011), this prevents many commuters from moving to Luxembourg and even makes Luxembourgish citizens and expats move to the neighbouring countries. Apart from the concomitant rise in property prices as

well as the extreme housing shortages in Luxembourg, the small size of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and its geographical position between Belgium, Germany and France favour transnational practices such as cross-border commuting and short distance residential cross-border mobility. Large site developments, cheap land and building costs in comparison to Luxembourg and rather loose local building laws favour these processes. But not only the housing costs motivate people to settle in the border regions surrounding Luxembourg. For many consumers, the differences in the school systems or cultural differences are also reasons to settle in their county of origin or to move back to their country of origin, once becoming aware of the short commuting distances and the difference of housing costs. Therefore Germans usually move from Luxembourg to Trier, French nationals move to Thionville and Belgians move to Arlon (see Carpentier 2010). Add to this Luxembourg nationals and expats coming from various (mostly European) countries, which move to the border region while having a job in Luxembourg (Carpentier 2010). Whereas in rural areas like the municipality of Perl in the German federal state of Saarland the amount of Luxembourgian transmigrants is predominant: as of 2013 the Municipality of Perl (2015) reported 8,279 inhabitants and the amount of Luxembourg nationals reached 1,616[2] (for a study on transnational lifestyles in Perl see Nienaber & Kriszan 2013) this is not the case for the surrounding cities. With about 500 Luxembourgian, the amount of Luxembourgish citizens is comparatively low in neighbouring cities such as the City of Trier (Germany).

Although housing markets in the Grater Region show different constellations (Gaunard-Anderson 2012), most of the housing markets lying within the basin of the Luxembourg labour market are marked by an increase of real estate prices; this increase is even more prominent when it comes to the acquisition of property (IBA/OIE 2012).

Housing in transition

Because housing research "cannot be undertaken successfully in isolation from wider debates taking place in other social science disciplines" (Jacobs et al. 2004), theoretical perspectives from political science, economic and social geography, and sociology have to be taken into account. This project has to deal with a certain bias of housing research towards studying housing markets in larger metropolitan areas. Nevertheless border regions can be seen as spaces of reference for spatial policy matters (Spellerberg et al. 2012) and are referred to as test laboratories for European integration (van Houtum & Gielis 2006).

Demographic change and the mobility of the consumers are key factors to housing market developments. But as Coulter et al. (2015) point out, in recent academic research, processes of international migration are more prominent than internal migration, short-distance residential mobility and immobility. Therefore population mobility and dwelling are related in the following section. In parallel with the increasing heterogeneity of the demand side came the internationalisation of housing market activities and the change of housing market actors. To describe recent trends and developments of housing markets, the second section suggests to take a closer look at *structural forces* and housing market actors.

Population mobility and dwelling

In their timely book "Mobilities and Neighbourhood Belonging in Cities and Suburbs"[3], Watt and Smets (2014: 10) refer to Amin and Thrift (2002) who state that "cities are increasingly composed of mobilities" while at the same time pointing out Harvey's (1996: 7) critics: "the reduction of everything to fluxes and flows, and the consequent emphasis upon the transitoriness of all forms and positions has its limits". I suggest that dwelling and population mobility can be viewed as exemplary for the

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[2] Data of Luxembourg nationals that have moved tot he other side of the border is very imprecise. For several reasons, Luxembourg nationals prefer to stay registered in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.
[3] The book originates from the XVIIth World Congress of the International Sociological Association, which was held in Gothenburg, Sweden, July 2010.

mutually dependence of mobility and place (Hesse 2014a). But where does mobility start and were does it end? Is it the national border, the city district or the doorway? And how does mobility interact with the wider processes of urban structural change (Clark 2012: 66)?

Figure 1. Forms of spatial mobility
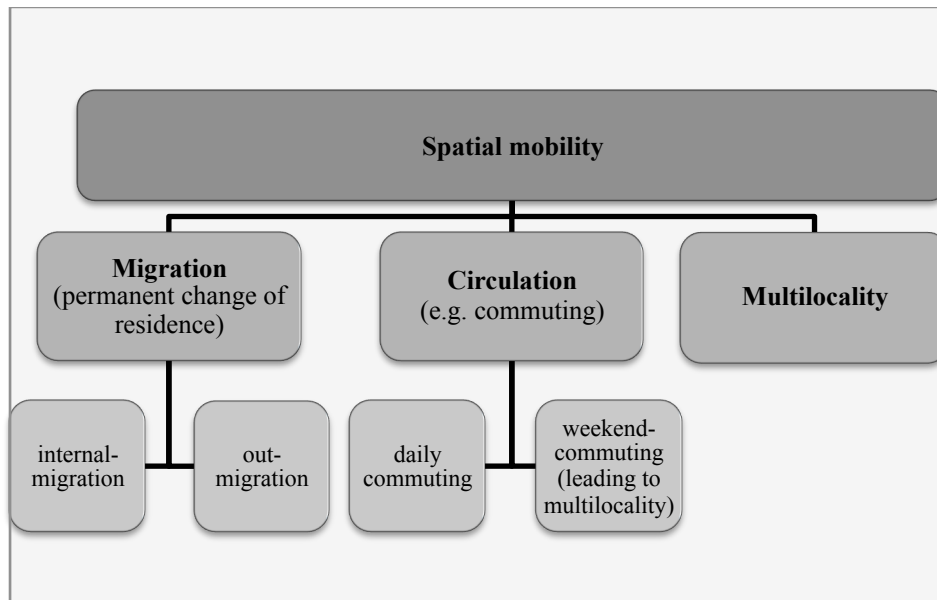
Source: own illustration after Weichhart 2009 (modified)

Weichhart (2009) distinguishes three forms of spatial mobility (see figure 2): migration, circulation and multilocality. But the sub-categories "internal migration" and "outmigration" already point to the difficulty of such categorisations, because it is unclear if these forms of migration are referring to national borders or European borders. In the present case national borders are transcended either for work (in the form of daily commuting) or as residential mobility (in the form of migration within one nation state, or migration state from one state to another). One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether looking only at the spatial mobility of the consumers is enough. I argue that attention also needs to be directed towards *structural forces* and housing market actors.

Structural forces and housing market actors

Knox and Pinch (2010: 115) identify landowners, investors, financiers, developers (also in the form of semi public urban renewal agencies), builders, design professionals/architects, construction workers, estate agents, business and community leaders and consumers as key actors in the production of the built environment. I suggest adding audit firms to this listing. According to them, "at the same time, the state – both local and national – must be recognized as an important agent in its own right and as a regulator of competition between various actors" (Knox & Pinch 2010: 115). It is important to add here, that a distinction of the consumers has to be made. Different groups of people have different choices and the degree of choice is "very unequally distributed in capitalist or market-based societies in that choice is, to a large extend, based on income and ability to pay" (Butler & Hamnett 2012: 150). Furthermore the state's role as a regulator changed in the past (e.g. diminishing of the state's role as a provider of social or public housing).

Unlike *idealized market models*, housing markets are characterized by a set of particularities (see Eekhoff 2006: 3 ff.; Krätke 1995: 194 ff.):

- a lack of transparency of the market and imperfect information about the market, especially because the division into sub-markets hinders a complete market survey and favours the

development of monopolies
- a close link with the land market, designation of building land
- a low adaptation elasticity and a long life expectancy, because lengthy production processes and economically considerable remaining useful life, delay and impede short-term adaptation to changing patterns of demand, apartments are immobile goods
- the existence of personal preferences, if for instance non economic criteria such as discrimination and preferential treatment play a role in the allocation of housing
- the lack of factual similarity of the goods, since apartments differ significantly in respect of their regional, factual and tenancy situation from one another and can not be regarded as a uniform market. In addition, the residential value is also determined by investments of third parties, that is to say the use value also depends on the quality of the buildings in the neighbourhood.

Hesse and Preckwinkel (2009) consider the changes of housing market activities and actors as a sub process of the globalisation of services. Investment in residential property is considered as a lucrative investment by large investors and private individuals alike. The ongoing financial crisis and the regulatory and fiscal frameworks are stimulating the run on *concrete gold*. Additionally, practices of local government and credit institutions affect the supply and demand for types of housing in particular locations (van Ham 2012). Furthermore "Builders, brokerage firms, consulting and services firms, real estate finance firms and investors have extended their area of operations beyond local markets to a world-wide base" (Bardhan & Kroll 2007: 1). Thus concurring logics of action at different scales bear potential for conflicts (Hesse & Preckwinkel 2009).

Excursus: housing as a (social?) good

 "Place of residence is a very important social marker for many people. Not only is it very important in terms of quality of life (or the lack of it) but also it tells others a great deal about the sort of person that lives in an area" (Butler & Hamnett 2012: 147). The place of residence is thus not only or primarily an economic good, but also holds the status of a *social* good, which fulfils an important social function (see Jenkis 1994 and Sailer 2002 quoted in in Hesse & Preckwinkel 2009). It is not a conventional consumer product, which you could do without for financial reasons (Hesse & Preckwinkel 2009). Häußermann (2006: 62) states that the place of residence satisfies a fundamental basic human need and is as a "place of privacy and seclusion" an important part of a decent life. But the offer also has to be seen a response to the demand of some consumers and complex requirements of customers unfold in an increasing competitive pressure (Hesse & Preckwinkel 2009: 160). Furthermore housing also has to be seen as a form of stored wealth that is subject to speculative activities (Knox & Pinch 2010: 116).

Linking discourse and space - theory and methodology

Real estate has historically been viewed as a local phenomenon (Bardhan & Kroll 2007) but the context of housing has altered significantly (Jacobs, Kemeny & Manzi 2004) and global, national, regional (national & transnational) and local interests are involved. Nevertheless housing market analysis is described as being rather reductionist (Maclennan 2012: 16). To account for *the multiplicity of stories* (Massey 1999) and potential contradictions (Clarke 2005; Bauriedl 2007), a constructivist perspective is adopted. Since a variety of theoretical roots and methodological strands of discourse exist (Lees 2004; Clarke 2005; Keller 2005) and it was criticized that the elaboration of this approach by urban geographers and housing researchers is often unclear (Lees 2004: 101), discourse theory and methodology are elaborated in-depth in the following section.

Foucault (1972: 49, 1980) defines discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak". "Discourses are ways of knowing, acting, organising and representing things in particular ways. They are repeatable systems of communication, devices of understanding and instruments of power: linguistic articulations, socio-spatial material practices and power-rationality

configurations" (Jensen & Richardson, 2004: 56). Discourses can thus be illustrated as "flows of knowledge through time" (Jäger 1993: 156; Schmitt 2007), which "guide the individual and collective creation of reality" (Jäger & Maier 2014: n. pag.). According to Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002: 56) "Spaces, then, may be constructed in different ways by different people, through power struggles and conflicts of interest. This idea that spaces are socially constructed, and that many spaces may co-exist within the same physical space is an important one. It suggests the need to analyse how discourses and strategies of inclusion and exclusion are connected with particular spaces". If we consider spaces as socially constructed, "local, regional, national and global are not automatic, taken-for-granted social arenas but categories to be investigated as constructed and often-contested social facts" (Khagram & Levitt 2008, p. 8-9). "Social space" is thus both a "field of action" and a "basis for action" (Lefebvre 1991: 191). It is thus also important to see from where a person speaks (geographical location) and from which social world/arena a discourse arises.

The sociology of knowledge approach to discourse, developed by the German sociologist Reiner Keller and the situational analysis developed by Adele Clarke who is an American Sociologist can be deployed for discourse analysis. The sociology of knowledge approach to discourse is highly influenced by Berger and Luckmann's (1967) "The Social Construction of Reality", while Clarke's situational analysis strongly builds/elaborates on ideas of the Chicago School of Sociology and scholars such as George Mead (1934) and Herbert Blumer (1969). Both approaches are combining symbolic interactionism and Foucauldian concepts and ideas. The authors basically intend to supplement basic grounded theory approaches (mainly based on Strauss) by including discourse theory/analysis inspired by Foucault. They both insist that one rather has to speak of theorizing than of forming big theories. Building on Foucault's notion of power/knowledge, which means accepting "power as unavoidable, recognizing its all pervasive nature, and emphasising its productive as well as destructive potential" (Flyvbjerg & Richardson 2002: 49) is considered as a means to analyse planning processes. Jacobs et al. (2004) promote the use of a grounded theory approach and thus *in situ* contextualized data collection and analysis to account for local particularities and context-related knowledge (Kemeny 2004: 63).

Clarke and Keller are referring to each other's work and have some joint projects; therefore a combination seems to be promising. Clarke's intention is to push grounded theory through the postmodern turn and her look on situations is a main idea of the Chicago School of Sociology. Her situational analysis is inspired by a number of metaphoric and often overlapping and/or hybrid approaches to the social sciences and intends to represent complexities/relationalities with a special emphasis on social worlds/arenas (Clarke 2005). Strauss started theorizing social worlds/arenas in the late 1970s, proposing the idea that social life is organized through our commitments to various collectivities (Clarke 2005). Clarke (2005) describes it as a way of introducing the meso-level, recognizing that in practice no boundaries between micro-, meso- and macro-level exit, just complex fluidities.

> "It is where the macro-level long duree forces of urbanization, industrialization, gender/racial/ethnic formation, neoliberalism and globalization/transnationalization are temporally, geopolitically and temporarily instantiated—grounded in local/regional practices that become routinized, normalized, mundane." (Clarke & Keller 2014: n. pag.).

Situational analysis is thus employed to show that similar effects can be perceived quite differently and that positions might vary in different situations (Clarke 2005: 38). Nevertheless social worlds/arenas might intersect/overlap (Clarke 2005, Clarke & Keller 2014).

Research design

This research aims to detect people's perceptions of the phenomenon by applying a discourse analysis, thus helping to trigger an increasing awareness for the emerging transnational housing market. The main research questions are: How is housing in the cities Arlon (BE), Thionville (FR), and Trier (DE) framed in terms of transnational linkages? Who are the actors involved and how does governance

work? What can be said about agenda setting – practices, policies and strategies?

Empirical basis & methods

Clarke (2005) and Keller (2005) are in favour of multisite research, which is in line with grounded theory, building on the Chicago tradition of analysing different genres of data. But time and capacity constraints call for a preliminary determination of the corpus. In addition, consistency of the data is necessary for de-/re-constructing discourse structures (Keller 2013: 95). Table 1 includes major categories and approaches to the research project.

Table 1. Discourse analysis of local housing policies within the Greater Region

Level of analysis	Empirical focus	Empirical material	Empirical approach
Preparation	Academic literature	Literature on transnationalism, housing, discourse and space	Close reading
Accompanying analytic exercises	Situations, social worlds/arenas, positions	Entire data corpus	Situational analysis
Investigation of discourses	Discursive practice of the spatial structuring, materialization, urban discourses	Actor documents, mission statement of project development, future development plans	Qualitative content analysis
	Local discourse context, discursive events	Local press	Qualitative content analysis
	Stakeholder opinions	Urban planners, policy makers, urban developers, landlords, tenant associations, real estate agents, …	Semi-structured interviews

Source: own illustration

The starting point was a close reading of the transnationalism (including migration & mobility), housing and discourse literature. While different variations of grounded theory methodology exist, Clarke and Keller recommend the use of pre-existing theoretical concepts and ideas. Because Keller (2013: 14) states that discourse analysis "moves from macro to micro levels of talk, text, context or society, and vice versa", I argue that the awareness of *existing* knowledge is essential to discourse analysis. Furthermore I contend that this preparation is essential for conducting expert interviews.

The three main cartographic approaches of situational analysis: (1) situational maps, (2) social worlds/arenas maps, (3) positional maps (Clarke 2005) are used as analytic exercises. Their focus lies "on elucidating the key elements, materialities, discourses, structures, and conditions that characterize the situation of inquiry" (Clarke 2005: xxii). They will be adapted during the research process and can help break up the data (Clarke 2005).

Discourses can be linked to places through 'local stories', which Bauriedl (2007) defines as space-specific interpretative models and discourse analysis is considered as an appropriate manner to view neighbourhood in a dynamic perspective (Galster 2001: 2116). Localizations, demarcation of boundaries and regionalization processes can be scrutinized as contingent and analysed in regards to their constitution (Mattissek & Reuber 2004). The media treatment of events and specific issues follows the laws of the print media and reflects social conflicts in a selective manner. These

interpretation offers thus contributes to the dynamics of the public debate (Bauriedl 2007). The sample for qualitative content analysis is composed of newspaper articles from the local press to grasp public discourses (Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Keller 2013) and documents related to the cities trajectories of housing and urban development. Expert interviews will be conducted to widen the corpus of empirical material. The experts shall represent the variety of perspectives (politics, business, administration, landlords, tenants, etc.), they are identified during document analysis and are chosen after a maximal contrast principle in order to gather a broad set of views. A semi-structured interview was constructed based on material gathered thus far.

The data analysis is oriented to the open research logic of qualitative social research (Flick 2009). Qualitative content analysis will follow major steps of grounded theory using categories generated inductively from the research material (e.g. Strauss & Corbin 1996). The ideas of coding, commentaries and memos from grounded theory are used during the research process (Strauss & Corbin 1996; Clarke 2005; Keller 2005). This allows a traceable documentation of the research process. Because several forms of discourse analysis exist and authors often make use of the same terms while supposing different meanings, a toolbox allowing the clarification of the vocabulary in use is set up. Building on material related to the City of Trier some insights of work in progress together with a discussion and a reflection will deliver first impressions.

Focus on the City of Trier – Observations/Work in Progress

The City of Trier (area: 117,13 km²) is a German city, located in the west of the state Rhineland-Palatinate. Trier is a regional centre and a university city. Furthermore the city is home of the administration of the district Trier-Saarburg. The distance from Trier to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is about 14 km (to Luxembourg-City 50 km). Counting 104,796 inhabitants (as of December 2012, City of Trier 2015) the City of Trier is considered as a small major city according to the German Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development for (*Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung*, BBSR 2015). About 5,800 were foreigners, 562 of these were Luxembourg nationals, the department of city development and statistics (2013) estimated that these were mostly students at the University of Trier. As in many German cities, a negative birth rate is declared, but net immigration gains are reported (see table 2). In 2013, IGSS/STATEC counted about 6,000 cross-border commuters (since 2002 the amount has doubled), settling in Trier while working in Luxembourg.

Table 2: Demographic development - City of Trier

	2005	**2007***	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Citizens (overall)	111,042	105,411	105,076	105,602	105,800	105,998
Citizens (with main residence in Trier)	98,537	102,899	103,432	104,161	104,523	104,796
German nationals	102,749	97,328	69,814	97,213	97,262	97,140
Foreigners	8,293	8,083	8,262	8,389	8,538	8,858
Migration balance (main residence)	-347	+621	+66	+607	+533	+464

Source: City of Trier (2015)
* strong changes compared to 2005 because of the introduction of a secondary residence tax.

From a national point of view, the city can be considered as a city in the peripheral borderland, but its geographical location at the national border changes its catchment area. For instance a study of the BBSR (2012) declares that nationally, rents rose fastest in the self-proclaimed *provincial town* Trier within the years 2007 to 2012 and the city landed seventh in a ranking devoted to the highest rent increases within the years 2007 to 2012. From 2005 to 2013 building land costs increased of 27%, rents of 26,3% (BBSR 2012). Although compared to real estate prices in Luxembourg, housing costs in Trier are still low. According to major banks of the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate (e.g. the *Investitions- und Strukturbank Rheinland-Pfalz* in 2013) housing costs in Luxembourg influence

Trier's housing market. According to local developers and real estate agents, Trier is not a special case and similar developments can be observed in many German cities because the offer is insufficient in comparison to the demand. And while the phantom of the economic crisis is ever-present, housing market actors react to the current situation and promote the investment in *concrete gold*.

The Luxembourg-effect as a regionalized metaphor for the border paradox

A quick review of recent media coverage could easily lead one to describe the situation as a sort of love-hate relationship. The city is often constructed as a relational city, which strongly builds on the proximity to its neighbouring country. On the one hand, the 'economic engine' Luxembourg offers workplaces for many commuters, positively affecting the development of this European cross-border polycentric metropolitan region. On the other hand, negative consequences such as the overcrowded real estate market in Luxembourg continue beyond the national border and affect neighbouring housing markets. German media and urban planning documents refer to the ‚Luxembourg-effect', summing up several developments such as cross-border commuting and related traffic collapses (short distance becomes relative in this concern, because travel time is increasing extremely in rush hours), the increase of housing costs but also cross-border shopping etc. This term can be regarded as a regionalized metaphor for the *border paradox* (Knotter 2003) representing the complexities of the development. The '2020 Concept for the Region Trier' for instance shows that city councils perceive the proximity to Luxembourg as an opportunity for the development of the city and a means to combat *demographic change/shrinkage*, an ever-present narrative in German planning discourse/policy. The term 'city region TriLux' (City of Trier 2012), which can be regarded as an example for the construction of a certain in-between scale linking the City of Trier to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was coined to illustrate the connections and opportunities for regional development. In the preliminary draft of the highly contested land-use plan, the urban planning department (2013) refers to the proximity to Luxembourg in regard to settling and mobility. At the same time, city officials also associate displacement in relation to the Luxembourg-effect (City of Trier 2014) and in 2013 a "Letter of intent regarding the provision of affordable housing space" (*Bündnis für bezahlbares Wohnen in Trier*) was signed (City of Trier 2013). Depending on the context, similar effects can thus be perceived/constructed very differently by city councils or planners and the local population and even within the same social world/arena.

There is some evidence to suggest that perceptions of the outcomes of these transnational linkages vary, while urban planners and investors often relate positive affects to the situation, people that do not profit from the situation (for instance people that have their jobs in Germany and earn less) might feel/become displaced. The construction of spatial stereotypes, images, mental pictures adds to the problems of housing and urban integration well known from the literature (Anderson 2008; Karsten 2007). With Ernste et al. (2009: 577) places and borders can be seen "as multi-dimensional and dynamic concepts which can be applied to almost any kind of relationships transgressing and reconfiguring borders and places at all scales". They also state "Borders are increasingly carried around over space by the human body and mind" (Ernste et al. 2009: 578). Wille (2011) and IBA (2012) already pointed out, that the demand-induced increase of the housing prices, the coexistence of old and new settlements lead to social tensions and new challenges of integration at the respective settlements. The built environment (such as new built condominiums adding a new metropolitan flair to the urban fabric), place-making strategies (e.g. conversion) and other goods carrying symbolic meanings such as high-class cars (which are often company cars) marked with national symbols such as the "yellow number plate" (while the surrounding countries' plates are white, Luxembourg plates are yellow) can be characterised as materialised manifestations of these borders. A household survey in such a new built area declares that a quarter of the people living in there work in Luxembourg (GIU 2013).

As published by the German magazine Spiegel online, the Internet portal immobilienscout24 recently analysed how advertised prices of condominiums and rents developed in 82 major German cities (Spiegel online 2015). The City of Trier was allocated the unpopular first place of the ranking and a housing bubble alert was declared. The author made "citizens from the rich Grand Duchy" responsible

for the significant increase of housing costs (Spiegel online 2015). This publication provoked high media coverage in Germany and Luxembourg. Meanwhile the fear that Luxembourg's labour market will crash is an ever-present scenario.

Discussion and reflection

The relationships between population mobility and urban ecology are a key dimension of the sociospatial dialectic (Knox & Pinch 2010: 256) and "because changes to the urban fabric introduce new sources of positive and negative externalities, they are potential generators of local conflicts." (Johnston 1984: 232 quoted in Knox & Pinch 2010: 273). This case reveals several of the aforementioned forms of spatial mobility: due to its global connections, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg itself is attracting people from all over Europe and beyond. Labour migrants move to the neighbouring border regions in order to work in Luxembourg. These cross-border commuters are often weekend commuters and thus circulating in different geographical locations and most likely also in different social worlds. It was also shown that housing costs are not the only reason to live in the border region: social factors such as the national culture, language or the school system are also important. Nevertheless, tensions can be observed and contrary to what is often reported in neighbourhood literature, the tension goes beyond ethnicity linked to a certain national belonging: for instance German cross-border commuters are called Luxembourgian (recent findings suggest that these attributions are amongst others linked to symbols such as the car plate). Luxembourg as a financial centre and a centre for European Institutions has a specific need for labour, sometimes referred to as a 'highly mobile elite'. The zoom in city districts still needs to be extended, but it emerges, that housing in the City of Trier is framed very diverse in terms of transnational linkages. Setting these findings in relation to the other research sites will help to trigger an increasing awareness for the emerging transnational housing market and related perceptions. It is likely that "new logics of inclusion and exclusion seem to lead to new divisions of social segmentation and spatial segregation" (Pries 2009: 587), a combination of the life-course perspective, and the social worlds/arenas can offer meaningful insights in this regard.

While the generalisation of such a study has its limitations, which resonates already in the use of the term *theorizing*, ongoing debates about the access to housing find their local encoring in this region with its transnational linkages. Data limitations (partly a result of the major interest dedicated to international migration) and the problem that quantitative data itself does not reflect discursive representations/negotiations call for a social constructionist approach. For instance preliminary findings show that the often-assumed escape to suburbs of young families is strongly related to their struggle to find affordable housing in the city. In his review of social constructionist approaches in housing research, Clapham (2012: 174) addresses the difficulty of this approach of dealing with a 'material world', stating that it is a "[…] limited paradigm within which to work but one that lends itself to adaption and extension". "[…] in a field such as housing research, the relationship between a person and the material world of the body and the house are very important topics." (Clapham 2012: 181). To address Clapham's (self-)critique, a closer look at Actor Network Theory or at Foucault's dispositive analysis seems promising, but this research step still needs to be accomplished.

Social constructionism "provides a means by which the subject matter of housing research can be extended beyond the confines of a ´state´ versus ´market´ narrative" (Jacobs et al. 2004: 4). The presented theory and methodology are considered as means to combat reductionism and to account for the "complex relations between discourses, power and knowledge" (Richardson 2002: 353) by asking: "what is going on?" (Richardson 2002: 359). As it is interpretative work, results of the interpretation may turn out differently depending on the attitude of the reader (Keller 2013: 112) or as Leick (2014: 5) puts it: "Every summary of research results is a reading among many possible […]" (see also Clapham 2012: 180). A total explanation or generalizations cannot be the target (*are impossible*); one rather has to speak of an exploration of (alternative) perspectives (Richardson 2002: 359). Discourse analysis thus allows "unfolding concurring opinions on the urban development of past and present" (Hesse 2010: n. pag.) and tackling representations (of space).

Acknowledgements

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