4. Space and Identity Constructions Through Media-Related Practises

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4.1 REPRESENTATIONS AND PROJECTIONS

The study of the relationship between media and identity received a new impetus in the 1990s through the work of radical constructivists such as Jean Baudrillard (1984 [1981]) and Siegfried J. Schmidt (1994). Drawing on the latter (among others), the BOAG (Bochumer Arbeitsgruppe für Sozialen Konstruktivismus und Wirklichkeitsprüfung) introduced the neologism "media identity" (*Medienidentität*). The authors advance that

"[globally ubiquitous] electronic mass media [...] have been feeding us for almost 50 years with the kind of 'implicit knowledge' we presume others have and we presume others presume we have. We know from mass media how to behave in certain contexts and situations and what we are allowed to say in them. The realities of local contexts are being infiltrated by acute media realities to such an extent that common knowledge has rather become secondary reality"[1] (BOAG 1997: 7).

Although media do not influence personal identity in a linear, causal or complete way (ibid.: 19), and the question concerning exactly how media shape personal

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1 | Personal translation of: "Geht es um die globale Allgegenwart elektronischer Massenmedien. Sind sie es doch, die uns seit nahezu 50 Jahren flächendeckend mit genau dem "impliziten Wissen" versorgen, das wir anderen unterstellen können und auch unterstellen können, daß diese anderen es uns unterstellen. Aus den Massenmedien wissen wir, wie wir uns in bestimmten Kontexten und Situationen verhalten sollen und was in ihnen sagbar ist. Die Wirklichkeiten lokaler Kontexte werden durch die akuten Medienwirklichkeiten infiltriert. Dies in einem Ausmaß, das kommunales Wissen eher zur Sekundärwirklichkeit werden läßt."

and collective identity constructions (and vice-versa) remains open to debate, there appears to be a general consensus among media theorists that media and identity are intrinsically linked. Thus, Hepp *et al.* (2003: 18, cited by Kneidinger 2013: 44) advance that current identities are – whether the concerned are aware of this or not – "media identities", since many of the pattern, structures, discourses and themes that shape and affect our identity have been internalized solely via media. Bernadette Kneidinger (ibid.) adds that it is only through media that Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" take shape, as media determine how geopolitical spaces are being represented, transporting certain ideas about a land and its people. Frequently, a territory, 'its' people and 'its' culture are constructed as a homogeneous, self-contained entity. Nonetheless, media are not simply providers of collective images and stereotypes users identify with or distance themselves from. They only have an influence on perceptions of reality and modes of behavior, if actively appropriated by individual users. Some media even offer a "platform for active self-presentation" (ibid.: 45), such as Web 2.0, but also traditional letters to the editors of a newspaper or to the producers of a TV show that are being (partially) reproduced and disseminated via those channels.

Media: Definitions of what may count as a 'media' vary widely. Following Herbert Marshall McLuhan's line of reasoning, anything that may be used as an extension of the human body and modifies the human sensory perception may be considered a media, including language, script, print, numbers, money, light, roads, any means of transportation, weapons etc. (McLuhan 1964, see Mein 2011: 14, Tore 2011: 19-20). On the other extreme, some definitions limit media to technology based aids or means of communication. The former seem too broad, the latter too restrictive for our purpose, which hinges on the relational character of media. Media are not viewed as machines that 'transmit' readymade identities, but as social arrangements whose particularity it is to link social actors to social situations and social actors among themselves. Thus, media may be seen as 'contact zones' where relations among different participants are being negotiated (see Clifford 1997: 188-219). Similarly, Jean Davallon defines media as a "place of interaction" (*lieu d'interaction*) as well as as a "place of production and reflection of social discourse" (*lieu de production et de réflexion de discours social*) producing meaning and contributing to the organization of the social space it builds on (Davallon 1992: 103). Moreover, media are at the same time products and producers of language and social ties and thus always linked to issues of power (ibid.). The "implicit knowledge" media feed us with (see above) is unstable and establishes the real solely through recitations, as Michel de Certeau (1984: 186) put it:

"Social life multiplies the gestures and modes of behavior (im)printed by narrative models; it ceaselessly reproduces and accumulates 'copies' of stories. Our society has become a recited society, in three senses: it is defined by stories (*récits*, the fables constituted by our advertising and informational media), by citations of stories, and by the interminable recitation of stories."

The statistical survey as well as the qualitative or expert interviews some case studies examine show the reception of media images and their integration into everyday speech and thought. As the interviewees were aware of the fact that their utterances (transcribed and thereby rendered anonymous) would be read by others and discussed in the present book, one could even argue that their statements may be considered as media themselves. At any rate, they help us to understand how media function.

Looking at media produced or consumed in Luxembourg and the border areas, we examine a variety of questions: how dominant a role did state borders play in the twentieth century? Have they disappeared following the Schengen agreements or have they been replaced by other types of borders? What other material and immaterial borders emerge when examining multilingual advertisements, the cross-border *Robert Schuman Art Award* launched by the Quattropole[2], museums as means of mediation between visitors and the content they display, paratexts generated by a multilingual publishing houses, *facebook* walls of teenagers and films featuring petrol stations – a symbol of different types of border zones? What spatial identities do they project and reflect?

Spaces: Media analysis led to the identification of a variety of spaces that were often immaterial rather than material: two or more spheres coexist or collide, producing a certain tension and amalgamation. Depending on the case studies, these spaces are linguistic (advertisements). They concern the interaction of art with commerce (art awards), everday spaces and the world of arts, culture or science (museums) or the subtle interplay of literary and non-literary concerns (paratexts). Content analysis allows us to question binary constructions, such as public and private (*facebook*) or reality and fiction (films).

In order to understand how these spaces intersect in the media, different metaphors may be used. They allow us to examine how these binaries are being constructed and deconstructed in social and cultural spaces in which identities are subject to constant (re)negotiations.

Co-spatiality: Spaces can be connected in different ways, categorized by Jacques Lévy and Michel Lussault (2003: 523-524) as three types of "interspatiality": "interface", "spatial scaling" (*emboîtement*) and "co-spatiality". The first one, interface, concerns actions that establish, shift or question a border dividing adjacent spaces, for instance a religious, political or linguistic delimitation (ibid.: 522). The second one, spatial inclusion, posits a multiscalar approach, combining different levels of analysis, such as the local, the regional, the national, the continental or the global (ibid.: 306). Finally, co-spatiality infers that one space can mean different things to different people. Drawing on the findings of the Chicago School in the 1920s, which examined the various cities within a city, co-spatiality acknowledges the

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2 | Quattropole is a cross-border city network linking Metz, Luxembourg, Trier and Saarbrücken. URL: http://www.quattropole.org/en/home

subjective perception of individual actors and the coexistence of multifarious spatial arrangements. Lévy and Lussault link the concept of co-spatiality to the image of Deleuze and Guattari's "thousand plateaus" (*millefeuille*) and the microfissures that allow for communication between them (ibid.: 213-214). These passages or "commutators" (ibid.: 186) may be physical places such as harbours, train stations or airports, allowing types of different spaces to interact and people with different social backgrounds to mix and mingle. The absence of passages does not call into question co-spatiality, which may also consist of a number of hierarchically structured, impermeable spaces.

When looking at the representation of (material as well as immaterial) spaces in various media, the notion of co-spatiality appears to be the most useful one, as the spaces we shall examine are neither territorially adjacent, divided by a clear border, nor included in one another, but may rather be conceived of as superposed layers of existence with passages in-between. We would like to focus on these in-between spaces that allow for transformations and creative appropriations, while remaining alert to the refusal or impossibility to cross them.

Hybridity and Third Space: The study of in-betweenness has gained momentum since the 1990s under the impetus of postcolonial studies, where 'hybridity' has become one of the most widely employed and most disputed terms. Drawing on Marie-Louise Pratt's "contact zone" and notion of "co-presence" (2007: 390-396) and Homi Bhabha's "third space" (1994: 37-39), 'hybridity' commonly refers to the creation of new 'transcultural' forms. Based on Mikhail Bakhtin's description of the disruptive co-existence of diverse and sometimes contradictory voices and discourses within one speech utterance or language, 'hybridity' stands for a change of paradigm: "[Language] is transformed from the absolute dogma it had been within the narrow framework of a sealed-off and impermeable monoglossia into a working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality" (Bakhtin 1981: 1039-1040). In the wake of postcolonial studies, this paradigmatic shift from "sealed-off and impermeable" mono-entities to intersecting and cross-fertilizing diversities has also been applied to cultures. Over the past twenty years, "third space" has become "a talisman of the current academic endeavours to reconceptionalize difference by means of spatial thinking", despite the inherent logic of any spatial language, which "does not only allow for difference but also for the fixation of difference by locating identities" (Lossau 2009: 63). The positive normative connotation of hybrid forms and "third spaces" originate from a critical position, aiming at undermining and subverting the hegemonic power of dominating cultures and discourses. However, empirical transnational studies do not always bear out this celebratory subtext (Mitchell 2002: 81-82). This scepticism may hark back to a more traditional reading of in-betweenness as problematic.

The Transformatory Power of Interstitiality: Writing in the 1920s, Frederick Thrasher characterised "interstitial" urban areas – at the threshold of two concentric circles,

according to the then dominant explanatory model – by "deterioration, shifting population and cultural isolation" (cited by Cordasco/Galatioto 1971: 56). Half a century later, "interstitial communities" were still considered to be "plagued" by shifting population (ibid.). Following the observation that ethnic self-affirmation was neither limited to the "slums" nor to a transitory phase, scholars subsequently revised the findings of the Chicago School. Working on Paris, Albert Piette (1990) examined different types of "interstitial" neighbourhoods. His focus was on the interactions that took place in the "contact zone": either there was much contact but no sustainable interaction, no contact whatsoever or there were intensive exchanges. Nonetheless, the legacy of the Chicago School is still palpable, as the 'interstice' is defined as a meeting ground of various populations, as if it were surrounded by culturally homogenous neighbourhoods. This seems highly problematic when the focus is on social realities, but it may be applied much more adequately to the realm of imagination.

In our case studies, imagined spaces are indeed constructed as binaries (distinct languages or cultures, art/commerce, non-place/place etc.), whose very constructedness is revealed by investigating their meeting grounds. This 'contact zone' or 'interstice' – or rather the processes that constitute this unstable space, i.e. 'interstitiality' – is our object of analysis. The standard definition of the term 'interstice' refers to an intervening space, deriving its etymology "from Latin *interstitium*, from *intersistere* 'stand between', from *inter-*'between' + *sistere* 'to stand'" (Oxford Dictionaries). In biology 'interstitial space' refers to fluid compartments, surrounding individual cells. Interstitial fluid "provides a path through which nutrients, gases, and wastes can travel between the capillaries and the cells" (Concise Dictionary of Biology 2012: 107). Without taking the organic metaphor too far, we would like to stress the dynamic and liquid aspect of 'interstitiality', which denotes a passage between two (or more) clearly defined regimes.

The notion of 'passage' is a particularly popular spatial metaphor in literature and literary studies (Parr 2008). It is also used to describe the process of 'mediation' (Caillet/Lehalle 1995; Davallon 2004: 42, 46, 48). Moreover, 'passage' implies the idea of transformation of one's perception, that is the "transfiguration of the common place" (Danto 1974): when (tres)passing one implicitly challenges the strict dualism and separation of the distinct (linguistic, literary or symbolic) regimes. Even if one refuses to cross the threshold, one cannot negate its existence and the challenge it constitutes. Embracing the threshold, that is, constantly oscillating between different spaces and refusing to decide for one or the other, is the most radical way of experiencing the co-presence of both and the transformatory power of this middle ground. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 25) claim:

"The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. *Between things* does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one

and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle."

By investigating the representation of this in-between space or interstice in various media, our case studies will show whether the "river banks", that is, the strict delimitation of binary regimes, are being undermined, or whether they are being reinforced, or both.

More concretely, we will examine firstly whether multilingualism and references to the cross-border context in advertising in Luxembourg contribute to the construction of transnational spaces, or whether they merely reinforce national spaces. We will then turn to the cross-border *Robert Schuman Art Award* and the interstitial space opened by the exhibitions and their representations in the official catalogues. The third subchapter will deal with museums and analyse to what degree their thresholds allow for a passage between public space and the space of high culture. Focusing on the self-representation of the multilingual publishing house *ultimo*mondo, the following case study will examine how literature can escape its attribution to clearly delimitated, territorially bounded linguistic spaces and thus embed itself as it were in a linguistic in-between space. The self presentation techniques of teenagers in cyberspace constitute another angle of approach of spatial identities in a subchapter investigating how *facebook* online profiles supplement identity projections and how they influence offline friendships. Finally, we will turn to petrol stations as interstitial places, both by their physical location and by their symbolic ambivalence (between numb routine and creative appropriation) and explore how this oscillation is practiced and narrated, both by interview partners and in films.

4.2   MULTILINGUAL ADVERTISING AND REGIONALIZATION IN LUXEMBOURG

Julia de Bres

This contribution analyses the connections between multilingual advertising and regionalization in Luxembourg, from a sociolinguistic perspective. Advertising is a fertile area for examining identity construction. Advertisers seek to appeal to consumers through a variety of techniques, one of which is orienting to features of their assumed identities, including linguistic identities. While consumers may resist these identity constructions, their constant reiteration is still likely to have some impact on appropriated identities. Advertisers also play a role in reinforcing and/or reconstructing spatial boundaries, through both linguistic and extralinguistic means. Interstitiality in this context can be approached from two angles. First, linguistic interstitiality could be represented by the use of more than one language variety in advertisements, through code-switching between varieties