

**Title:** Border crossing and “temporal otherness” in the Greater Region SaarLorLux. Residential migrants’ experiences of divergence

**Abstract:** The paper deals with border crossing and the experience of “temporal otherness” in a Western European border region, namely with the experiences of residential migrants who move their home from Luxembourg to the German side of the river Moselle.

Research on this kind of temporal borders largely concentrates on a particular relation that implies a unidirectional perspective: the West (or Europe) creating its underdeveloped (or under-Europeanized) other and coping with this other by controlling and limiting border crossing, which in turn results in maintaining and strengthening the idea of the other’s temporal remoteness or backwardness. Research in the Luxembourg-German border region offers a complement to this perspective in as much as it encounters migrants who move, so to speak, in the opposite temporal direction. Their residential move does not come along with a striving for modernity and higher development, and many of them recognize and come to appreciate certain forms of “being behind” in their new place of residence.

By moving across the border, these migrants are confronted not only with difference but with disparate developments. To put it more pointedly, 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 in different directions. The paper argues that the analysis of migrants’ accounts of divergences is elucidating with respect not only to individual identity processes but also to the conception and everyday construction of cross border communities. Their “moving stories” show that experiences of divergence can refer to encompassing socio-political entities that do not depend on national categories. The study thus also sheds light on the fact that borderland research by focusing on national difference and related conceptions of cross-border mobility and exchange tends to ignore borderlanders’ notions of (regional) unity and ensuing claims for convergence.

**Biographical note:** Elisabeth Boesen is a senior researcher at the University of Luxembourg Institute for History. Prior to this, she worked at the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies (Berlin), at Bayreuth University, the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich and the Free University of Berlin. She holds a PhD in cultural and social anthropology from Bayreuth University, her thesis being on cultural identity and inter-ethnic relations in Northern Benin. She expanded her interest to issues of spatial mobility and rural change in the West African Sahel, especially Niger. Currently, she is engaged in research on border issues in the Greater Region SaarLorLux. In this domain, she directed a research project on cross-border residential mobility that was dedicated to the analysis of individual and familial migration narratives. A further field of interest is migration to Luxembourg from Lusophone countries.