IDENT - Identités socio-culturelles et politiques identitaires au Luxembourg

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Individual and collective identity patterns are considered constitutive elements of communities and they substantially contribute to social cohesion. The aim of this project is to explore some specific facets of identity construction processes in Luxembourg from an interdisciplinary perspective.

The society of the Grand Duchy is a particularly rewarding terrain for such a study. The multilingual context as well as the immigration-related cultural diversity, for instance, create manifold linguistic and cultural identity patterns. Furthermore, the hegemonic identity discourses in Luxembourg are, to a relatively high degree, influenced by (greater) regional and international elements. This can be accounted for by historical aspects and the geographic location as well as the economic and political developments of the post-war era. The latter, for instance, have transformed the microstate into both a first rank banking center and one of Europe's three capitals. From an empirical and methodological perspective, the 'smallness' of the Grand Duchy offers an interesting study area that, in some respect, resembles a laboratory situation.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this project are situated at different levels. On a general level, we wish to deepen the understanding of identity-forming processes and their respective functioning and effects. In doing so, the different dimensions of identity will, analytically speaking, not only be taken into account in an interdisciplinary approach. They are also understood as constitutive elements of individual and collective identity patterns. Such an approach enables us to chart the day-to-day variety of identity patterns and discourses in the Luxembourgish society in a multifaceted way. On a more concrete level, we hope to reveal the interdependencies and inconsistencies between collective and individual identities that are actually 'lived' by the Luxem-bourgish population (appropriated
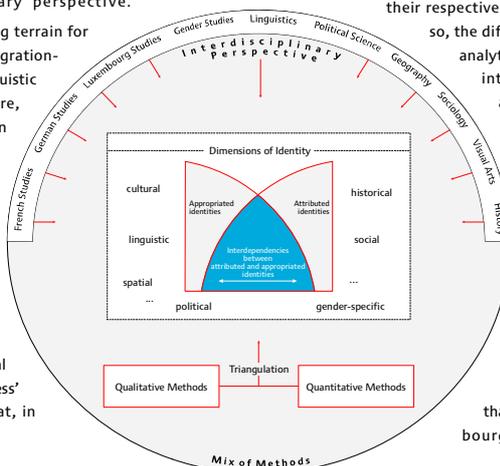
identities) and those that are politically desired and communicated by the media (attributed identities). These objectives are heuristically itemized into three empirical research areas, each of which is characterized by one core research question.

Attributed identities: This research area focuses on the analysis of the 'desired' identities of the Luxembourg population as they can be identified in the political and media discourses. The emphasis will be placed on the analysis of representative text corpora and societal practices of the normalizing institutions that shape or participate in identity-relevant attribution processes.

Appropriated identities: From this perspective, the appropriated identities as they are prevalent in distinct socio-cultural milieus of the Luxembourgish society are explored. For this purpose, we demarcate and characterize, in a first step, the different milieus by means of a representative survey. At the same time, qualitative research is being conducted in order to analyze the predominant identity patterns in the selected socio-cultural milieus.

Interdependencies between attributed and appropriated identities: The parallel consideration of the attributed and appropriated identities shows how their reciprocal and dynamic conditionality is set up. In addition, more fundamental discrepancies between the plurality of identities in a culturally and linguistically complex society, on the one hand, and the identity politics tools at work, on the other hand, can be unveiled.

Our approach is non-essentialist and involves an understanding of identity as dynamic. This allows for an analysis of identity as being both the result and a constituent of social constructions of reality.

METHODS

The multidimensional character of identity and the interdisciplinary project context require an equally diverse mix of research methods. A broad array of qualitative and quantitative research methods used in cultural studies and social sciences are being employed. Specifically, we use the following methods:

Standardized surveys/factor analysis: For the demarcation and characterization of socio-cultural milieus in the Luxembourgish society, a representative standardized survey is being conducted in cooperation with the polling institute TNS-ILRES. The data is subsequently evaluated by factor and correspondence analyses.

Qualitative interviews: Based on the representative survey, individuals from selected socio-cultural milieus are interviewed by means of focused, narrative, as well as in-depth, interviews.

Expert interviews: In order to frame the identity offers that transpire in the considered attribution processes, experts are being interviewed according to thematic focuses. These relevant persons stem from politics, the administration, the economy and the cultural professional sector.

Text, discourse and semiotic analyses: On the basis of a broad understanding of text, an ample corpus of material is being analyzed using textual, discourse and semiotic approaches. Objects of enquiry are, among others, law texts, official speeches, media reports, commercials, literatures, school books, topographical maps, signalisation, art and the like.

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