



Changing Lusospheres

**Europe, Brazil, Africa. On old and new connections
between centers and peripheries**

*Elisabeth Boesen, Karl Heinz Arenz,
Cristina Donza Cancela & Antonio Otaviano Vieira Junior*

Introduction

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Changing lusospheres – Europe, Brazil, Africa. On old and new connections between centers and peripheries. Introduction

Elisabeth Boesen

Most of the chapters in this volume were originally contributions to a symposium that brought together an international and interdisciplinary group of migration scholars at the University of Luxembourg in November 2022. The topic of the symposium was historical and contemporary connections between Portugal, Brazil, Luxembourg, and certain African countries. The vagueness of the title—“old and new connections”—hints at the objective of this joint project: to understand the migrations and relationships between Portugal, Brazil, and other parts of the world as historico-politically and socio-culturally interconnected processes. The papers deal with specific migrations and diaspora experiences, as well as with the complexity and multiplicity of the relationships within the space that is created by these processes and that we tentatively describe as “changing lusospheres.”

A starting point for the idea of a meeting in Luxembourg was the fact that the diverse—and in part, intensive—movements and encounters between Brazil and Luxembourg are currently attracting considerable attention in academia, as well as in the wider public perception in Luxembourg. One reason for this is the recent immigration from Brazil, which is connected to historical relations of migration between the two countries and has added a new element to Luxembourg’s significant lusophone population. The choice of location was thus related to the resolution to mark Luxembourg as part of a universe of migrations and encounters that is histori-

cally and contemporarily constituted by Portuguese and wider lusophone mobilities.

The idea was strongly supported by colleagues in Brazil: Karl Heinz Arenz from the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA) in Belém, who is working on early modern migration and missionary history and, in that context, on the link between the Amazon and the River Alzette in Luxembourg (Arenz 2020); as well as Carlo Krieger, anthropologist and diplomat, who, during his time as Luxembourg's ambassador to Brazil, gained insight into the very heterogenous group of descendants of Luxembourgish immigrants.

These specific research interests and objectives met with the intensive work on migration in the *longue durée* as it is undertaken within the framework of the research group População, Família e Migração na Amazônia (RUMA) at the UFPA and with parallel structures and research priorities at the Faculty of Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences of the University of Luxembourg (Key Research Area Migration and Inclusive Societies/MIS). The project was also supported by representatives of Portuguese research institutions (Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa and Departamento de História, Universidade de Lisboa) with whom there are longstanding collaborations. These brief notes give an idea of the institutional framework and the related support of cooperation. Mention must also be made of the support provided by the Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines (CDMH) in Dudelange/Luxembourg, whose research and documentation activities have for some time already included diverse projects on lusophone migration to Luxembourg¹.

The fact that about 15 percent of Luxembourg's inhabitants hold Portuguese citizenship and the resulting presence of the Portuguese language in the country has inspired a multitude of social science studies in recent years². In comparison, the connections between Luxembourg

¹ We would also like to thank the City of Dudelange for supporting the symposium.

² The following selection of doctoral theses completed at the University of Luxembourg may give an impression of the range of topics covered: Martins (2019); Hinger (2017); Schiltz (2013).

and other parts of the lusophone world—both those that go further back in history and those that are more recent—have received relatively little attention. Systematic research on these historically and culturally complex migration processes is still largely lacking, not least comparative interdisciplinary work on longstanding relationships and movements that connect Europe, Latin America, and Africa.

One objective of the symposium was to reveal this complex and, in part, still invisible field by a broadening of perspective, more precisely, by a partial shift of focus to the “periphery”, which is represented by Luxembourg in a factual as well as in an emblematic sense. As implied by the title of this volume, it is important to emphasize that center and periphery do not constitute a clear and static relation. By bringing together scholars with different geographical research foci and disciplinary approaches, we hope to foster curiosity about the spatial and temporal complexities of migration and socio-cultural relations in changing lusospheres. Combined, these contributions not only reveal historical change but also show that change can become a fundamental epistemic attitude. The space changes with the object of study, the specific groups and individuals who migrate, and their movement; the relationships that produce space overlap and become visible in their compactness. This becomes particularly clear when following the life paths of individuals and families which are off the major routes usually conceived as movements between center and periphery. With the present volume, we hope to contribute to overcoming the bipolar—and mostly binational—perspective that despite the recent interest in transnationalism, transmigration, and diaspora continues to dominate migration research.

Most of the articles collected here are already available in a publication in Portuguese (Vieira Junio et al. 2025). The English version of the publication has been expanded to include three further texts (by Goergen, Santana, and Tavares) that deal with movements to and from Luxembourg. The volume is organized in three parts, which can be roughly described as follows: (1) From and to Portugal; (2) Luxembourgers in Brazil; and (3) Coming from Africa. The first four contributions are dedicated to migrations from and to Portugal between the nineteenth century and the twenty-first century. The authors’ disciplinary and methodical approaches range from the historical analysis of serial data to qualitative social sciences research and media analysis.

The opening text by Cristina Donza Cancela looks at Portuguese immigration to the Amazon region in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. This immigration had its starting point in the state of Pará. The author is interested in the social differentiation of the migrant group, the workplace conditions, and the social networks. She combines the analysis of serial data with a micro-historical study that is based on the examination of ego-documents. The second paper is by João Cosme; it is concerned with the same migration movements but looks at their starting points in two districts in the interior of Portugal. Cosme is interested in the quantitative development and demographic composition of the group of emigrants in the period from 1878 to 1911.

Moving into the twenty-first century, Thaís França and Beatriz Padilla also focus on Portuguese-Brazilian migration relations, but they look at the complementary movement across the ocean from America to Europe. The authors present an overview of these migrations from the 1980s onwards, focusing in particular on female immigrants. They are mainly interested in the question of how changes in the social composition of this specific group in the wake of the financial crises during the years 2008 to 2014 are reflected in the group's representation in the Portuguese media.

The last contribution to the first part is dedicated to Portuguese migrants in Luxembourg. Isabelle Albert presents the results of a large-scale social sciences study on the characteristics and conditions of multiple belonging to Luxembourg and Portugal. The survey is specifically interested in the importance of intergenerational relations and in the question of how the link between the two cultures and identities is realized by the first generation of migrants and their children, respectively.

The second part of this volume brings together four articles concerned with connections between Luxembourg and Brazil. The examples cover a long period and encompass a wide range of types of movement. The first contribution takes us to the Amazon of the seventeenth century. Karl Heinz Arenz traces part of the life path of Jean-Philippe Bettendorf, a Jesuit from Luxembourg whose work contributed to the consolidation of the Jesuit missionary project and thus influenced the development of colonial society in the Amazon region.

The second paper seeks to portray a comprehensive picture of Luxembourg's presence in Brazil. Carlo Krieger takes the reader on a search for places and forms of memory. This leads to Minas Gerais and the important immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century, which was associated with Luxembourg's steel industry. It also takes us to immigration communities from the early nineteenth century, whose descendants have only recently recovered their origins in the context of the (temporarily introduced) possibility of regaining Luxembourgish citizenship.

In Dominique Santana's article, we get to know the previously mentioned industrial colony in Minas Gerais in more detail. The author provides a brief introduction to her doctoral thesis, which, among other things in the form of an interactive transmedia platform, gives some insight into the history of the "Colônia Luxemburguesa," the social life of its inhabitants, and the close relationships to their country of origin and to Brazilian society.

The chapter that follows also deals with Luxembourgish–Brazilian relationships; however, these are presented as part of the more-encompassing luso-luxembourgish colonial entanglements. Using the example of a Luxembourgish biologist and explorer, Régis Moes illustrates "the possibilities that global coloniality offered to people from a non-colonial country." He also mentions the activities of the private Société coloniale luso-luxembourgeoise, which have remained largely unexplored until now.

The first chapter in the volume's third and final part is an excellent complement to Moes' article. This paper, by Kevin Goergen, also deals with an individual life path, albeit a radically different one. Taking a micro-historical approach, the author explores the migration pathways of Amélia Lopes da Cruz and her family from Angola, through Congo, to Luxembourg, her husband's country of origin. By shedding light on the frequently overlooked experiences of marginalized people in colonial structures, Goergen offers an unusual perspective on the interconnectedness of different colonial empires.

As we see in the articles by Moes and Goergen, Luxembourg's colonial entanglements were not limited to its widely known engagement in the Belgian Congo but extended to other regions, including lusophone Africa. However, similar to the case of Belgium, these engagements rarely

resulted in significant movements in the opposite direction—the migration of Amalia Lopez Da Cruz being a rare exception³. The African presence in Luxembourg, which only began to become significant in the 1970s, has its origins in lusophone colonial and post-colonial regions. The next two articles of the third part concentrate on this presence.

The massive immigration of Portuguese workers to Luxembourg is already touched upon in Isabelle Albert's contribution. Among these migrants there were numerous Cape Verdeans, who, different from the inhabitants of other Portuguese colonies in Africa, held Portuguese citizenship until the archipelago gained independence in 1975. In my contribution, I discuss the funeral culture of the Cape Verdean inhabitants of Luxembourg. Focusing on public and collective forms of mourning, the article explores the question of how cultural differences are perceived and experienced as an element of coexistence in a super-diverse society like Luxembourg. In doing so, I also intend to contribute to the broader field of research on the mobility of religion, and especially on migrations and re-migrations within the Christian churches.

Bernardino Tavares studies Luxembourg's Cape Verdean inhabitants as part of the country's encompassing and increasingly diversified lusophone population, which, as already mentioned, also includes a growing number of Brazilians with Luxembourgish nationality. Tavares is interested in the "Luso-Afro-Brazilian colonial matrix of (re)encounters of people historically connected by Portuguese colonialism." His analysis shows how, in a country at the "colonial margins," colonialism has shaped migration patterns and conflicts over citizenship, language, and race.

The final chapter provides an example of African lusophone mobility to Brazil. This article, by Antonio Otaviano Vieira Junior, takes us back to the Amazon. The author investigates the eighteenth-century displacement of an entire city, where more than 2,000 people set sail from Mazagão, Morocco, and anchored in Grão-Pará (Amazonia). They were "immigrants of Portuguese origin, but who since the sixteenth century have lived surrounded by the desert and Islam." Beyond the physical displacement, the author addresses the immigrants' attempt to adapt to their new

3 On Belgium, see Swyngedouw & Swyngedouw (2009).

land, valorizing their agency associated with multiple social markers of difference.

The collection thus closes with several papers in which the described problem of overcoming binary perspectives and rigid spatial conceptions becomes especially clear. The conditions described in the contributions by Tavares, by Vieira and by me not only call into question the center-periphery relation but also show that the categories “Portuguese,” “European,” “African,” and “Brazilian” hardly do justice to the historical and contemporary encounters and identifications.

To conclude, it should be noted that some of the contributions are exploratory sketches, which are intended to draw attention to the relevant topics and research lacunae. This is the case for the chapters by Moes, Goergen, and Krieger, that is, for the papers on colonial movements from Luxembourg and Luxembourgish immigrants in Brazil, two research fields that have only very recently begun to attract attention. With this edited volume, we hope to help strengthen these recent research efforts by presenting them as part of a larger international and interdisciplinary collaborative endeavor.

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