



Changing Lusospheres

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

*Elisabeth Boesen, Karl Heinz Arenz,
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Lusophone migration into Luxembourg: (post)colonial entanglements

Bernardino Tavares

Introduction

This paper sets out a history of lusophone migration to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It seeks to explore to what extent this lusophone migration pattern overlaps with colonialism, institutionally and from the perspectives of everyday interactions between lusophone migrants, at the intersection of struggles related to citizenship, race, and language. It builds on data collected between December 2021 and June 2023 within the scope of the Disentangling Postcolonial Encounters in Globalization (DisPOSEG)¹ project. DisPOSEG was a three-year ethnographic-sociolinguistic project funded by the Fonds National de la Recherche Luxembourg (FNR) at the University of Luxembourg. The project investigated lusophone postcolonial work and social interactions in Luxembourg. Because it was an ethnographic study, most of the data consists of narrative interviews, field notes, observations, and spontaneous conversations with research participants during intensive fieldwork at four sites in four employment sectors: service and retail, cleaning, construction, and life-long learning. In those sites, most of the workers, clients, and learners were migrants from Portuguese-speaking countries (Portugal and its former colonies).

The paper fosters a critical understanding of this migration pattern in a country that is positioned in the “colonial margins” (Purtschert & Fischer-Tiné 2015) and views itself as a “colonial outsider,” claiming an out-

¹ <https://disposeg.wordpress.com/>

sider status or exceptionalism in what concerns colonial involvements (Purtschert, Falk & Lüthi 2016). Nonetheless, it is important to note that even though they were not seen as colonial centers, all colonial outsiders and their cities gained economic and political advantages from their connections and collaborations with the more prominent European colonial powers. In the case of Luxembourg, this was evident from military and missionary activities, trade, and efforts to establish colonial associations and careers (Moes 2012 and in this volume; Bosma & Kolnberger 2017; Tavares & Vieira 2023).

Before historicizing lusophone presences in the Grand Duchy, we need to go back to the transformation of Luxembourg's position in the global system of mobility. Before the mid-twentieth century, Luxembourg was characterized mainly as a country of emigration. During the nineteenth century and up to World War I, many Luxembourgish emigrants set their sights on the American continent, heading in particular to the United States, Brazil, and Argentina to escape poverty and war. In addition, many in the agricultural sector moved to neighboring France due to poor living conditions locally (Wey 2003; Kollwelter 2007; Scuto 2010; Perrin 2020). Perrin (2020, 322) highlights that “more than 72,000 Luxembourgers are estimated to have left the country from 1841 to 1891 (out of a total population of 212,800 in 1891).”² Later, in the first half of the twentieth century, the Luxembourgers who migrated to the American continent, especially to Brazil, included engineers who were involved in the development of the steel industry (Hadžalić 2019). In return, that migration from Luxembourg to Brazil helped to form the most recent “route” of migration from Brazil to Luxembourg (as shown below), which today is mainly considered to be a migrant-receiving country and, with migrants making up almost half of the population, has one of the highest proportions of migrants in the world (Statec 2020).

Indeed, Luxembourg started to become a country of immigration at the end of nineteenth century, when migrants initially arrived from Germany, France, and Belgium, soon followed by those from Italy, to work in the expanding steel industry after iron mineral deposits were discovered in the country's south (Kollwelter 2007, 2). Portuguese people consti-

2 See also Murdock (2016).

tute the largest group of the more recent migrant population in Luxembourg, which also includes migrants from other European countries and other continents. Official Statec data (from 2020) indicates that about 16% of the resident population in the Grand Duchy has a Portuguese passport. Indeed, this small state at the heart of Europe has the highest proportion of migrants with a Portuguese nationality of all European countries. However, these so-called Portuguese/lusophone migrants come not only from Portugal but also from several other Portuguese-speaking countries. This creates an interesting luso-Afro-Brazilian colonial matrix of (re)encounters between individuals who are historically linked by Portuguese colonialism.

Yet, despite a considerable body of research on different aspects of migrants' presence in Luxembourg (such as education and entrepreneurship), there is still a dearth of studies aimed at elucidating the reality of the so-called lusophone migrant group(s). There has been little in-depth examination of relationships between groups or individuals from Portugal, as a former colonizing country, and from its former colonies of Africa, Brazil, and Asia. This is especially true in terms of the relationships developed in a "third space" (Bhabha 1994), that is, a place where ex-colonizer and ex-colonized subjects meet, sometimes with both groups finding themselves in the subaltern position of migrant. In this case, Luxembourg is a third and new space for them, where they are all in the position of migrants. To some extent, this third space is constituted by colonialism inasmuch as that the arrival of the Portuguese in the 1960s shows that colonialism was one of the origins of Portuguese-speaking migration to Luxembourg (see below).

In the following section, I explore the link between colonialism, migration, and lusofonia and discuss the terms lusofonia and lusophone. Then, in Section 3, I give a more detailed background and present some important historical moments of lusophone migration to the Grand Duchy by mapping, in time and space, the enduring tensions, entanglements, and shiftings among race/ethnicity, citizenship, and language. I conclude by discussing to what extent lusophone migration to Luxembourg has been mediated by these entanglements, tensions, and shiftings from Portuguese colonial times to the current era of globalization.

Colonialism, lusofonia, and migration entanglements

To get a grasp of the extent to which interactions and encounters in “third space” (Bhabha 1994) migration contexts can produce effects of inclusion or exclusion or perpetuate postcolonial hierarchies, this paper takes a look at “entanglement” (Nuttall 2009; Kerfoot & Hyltenstam 2017). As Nuttall (2009, 2) posits, the notion of entanglement indicates “a set of relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness. [...] It works with difference and sameness but also with their limits, their predicaments, their moments of complication.” By examining the entanglements between colonialism, mobility/migration, and “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983) that are rooted in colonial languages, we can shed light on how the past is present in what concerns rearrangements at macro state levels and between their individuals in this era of globalization marked by political turbulence and incisive “imperial nostalgia” (Faraco 2011; Cahen 2012; Stoler 2016).

Thus, it would be an oversimplification to discuss “imagined communities” such as *a lusofonia*, *la hispanofonia*, *la francophonie*, or the commonwealth without acknowledging colonialism, because colonialism is fundamental to these transnational imagined communities (Vigouroux 2013; Del Valle 2011; Severo 2016). These types of “x-phonies” (i.e., language-based communities and related international associations) (Tavares 2025b) reflect the persistence of linguistic ideologies tied to nationalism and imperialism. They are discursive spaces where various economic, political, and social arrangements are negotiated (Del Valle 2011, 388). They represent reconfigurations based on the shared use of European (colonial) languages —Portuguese, Spanish, French, and English—among (former) colonized and colonizer nations and peoples. These reconfigurations extend beyond mere linguistic boundaries and the confines of former colonial administrations and structures (Maldonado-Torres 2007). They also signify new conceptualizations of political, economic, cultural, and social organization since the end of formal colonization, from former colonial and colonized countries to their “diasporas” in the postcolonial period.

To some extent, these x-phonies constitute a space for the reproduction of old hierarchies in interactions between former colonizing and formerly colonized countries. This is reflected in the interactions between their subjects: in their countries of origin, and beyond when they are both migrants, as in the case of “lusophones” in Luxembourg, for example. They are reminiscent of “coloniality” (Mignolo 2005), which “refers to longstanding patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Moldonado-Torres 2007, 243). These x-phonies often reflect colonial modes of interaction and ways of seeing or perceiving the other as superior or inferior. Several researchers consider these language-based communities to be neo-colonial projects because, at least to some extent, they are by-products of colonialism and continue to reproduce colonial power relations in the postcolonial period (Vigouroux 2013; Heller & McElhiny 2017). Concurring with these scholars, I stress here that the “semantic fuzziness” of lusofonia or lusophone “appears to have been skillfully exploited by those engaged in [its] endeavour—be they individual, states, or nations—to advance their own agendas” (Vigouroux 2013, 382).

The meaning of lusofonia or lusophone is not always agreed on, either in the academic world or in everyday life. Depending on the situation or context, it triggers different interpretations and mixed feelings when uttered. In general, the word lusophone is used in institutions to refer to Portuguese-speaking countries (where Portuguese is the official language) and their inhabitants. However, at the same time, many people who are considered to be lusophones or grouped into this broad category do not speak Portuguese and do not consider themselves to be lusophones. Certain questions can be raised from here: for example, can we say that lusofonia is mainly a construction of authoritative institutions or stakeholders and their imaginations that draws on the idea of “imagined communities,” as Anderson (1983) puts it?

From the point of view of some people who are considered to be Portuguese speakers or lusophones in Luxembourg, lusofonia or lusophone is, to quote a participant in the DisPOSEG project, “just a word for me! A word to characterize us, nothing more.” They relate the word lusofonia to festive events, because it is hard to see its relevance in their everyday life. In the context of their day-to-day difficulties, lusofonia is largely abstract.

Thus, can we deduce from this that there is a certain denial of lusofonia among the population? Has lusophone culture been somewhat romanticized? At the same time, others understand that this imagined group of Portuguese speakers can be instrumentalized for administrative purposes and for getting by (for example, for networking in the context of migration). This is especially true in the sense of the value of Portuguese, which nowadays functions as an icebreaker for entering the labor market in industry sectors such as construction, cleaning, and retail, where a significant number of lusophone migrants make a living (Tavares 2025). However, it is paramount to stress that the prefix luso is problematic, because it denotes Portuguese possessions and origins, especially to colonial subjects who think critically and have more awareness and experience of the persistence of historical impacts in the present. The same goes for the suffix -phone, because not all Portuguese speakers use Portuguese in their daily life, consider it to be a big part of their identity or identify strongly with it (Lança 2008). Furthermore, one should not forget that within the assumed “community of lusophones,” there are unequal citizenships. On the one hand, there are those who hold a citizenship that gives them a worldwide “ease of movement” (Carling 2002), namely, European lusophones. On the other hand, there are those with more limited mobility, that is, non-European lusophones (Tavares 2025a).

In this paper, to frame the research, I use the adjectives lusophone or Portuguese-speaking as an “artificial model” (Abadia et al. 2018) to refer to migrants in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg who come from countries where Portuguese is the official language—Portugal and its former colonies.

Lusophone migration to Luxembourg: its ethno-racial, citizenship, and language entanglements

Several researchers posit that lusophone migratory flow to Luxembourg began with Portuguese people trying to improve their lives by escaping the dictatorial regime of Salazar—the Estado Novo. This regime lasted from 1933 to 1974, including the period of the wars of independence of

the Portuguese colonies in Africa from 1961 to 1974 (Laplanche & Vanderkam 1991; Hinger 2014). Lusophone migration is estimated to have gained ground toward the end of the 1960s. The Portuguese came to Luxembourg in the 1960s and early 1970s under labor agreements signed by Luxembourg and the (then fascist) Portuguese government to fill the vacancies left by Italian migrants who had returned to Italy or remigrated to other European countries where they could get better salaries (Laplanche & Vanderkam 1991; Scuto 2010). Those labor agreements between the Luxembourg government and Portugal allowed the reunification of migrants with their families from the 1960s onward.

It is interesting to clarify the diversity and heterogeneity of this group of individuals originating from not only Portugal but also the former Portuguese colonies in Africa and Brazil. By applying multiple temporal lenses (albeit that some practices are more permanent/transversal than others in time and space, and sometimes overlap), we can distinguish different “routes” and temporalities related to complex (re)migration strategies and motives, from colonial Portugal and (post)colonial lusophone countries to Luxembourg. Note that here I refer to “routes” in both time and space and in terms of pursuing not only geographic mobility to Luxembourg but also social/work mobility after that.

However, before delving into the different temporalities of lusophone migration/mobility to Luxembourg as a whole, it is essential to give an overview of the different paths to accessing Luxembourgish citizenship nowadays. If one looks at the official website of the government of Luxembourg (Guichet.lu³), one reads that there are at least ten specific cases for acquiring Luxembourgish “citizenship by option.” These cases encompass three main pathways to, and principles of, Luxembourgish citizenship: (1) *jus sanguinis* (by descent), (2) *jus solis* (by birth in a territory), and (3) *jus domicile* (by right of residence in a territory) (cf. Bauder 2012; Vink & Bauböck 2013; Rhoads 2023). These pathways are typical across countries and continents. In Luxembourg and elsewhere, they have been loosely forefronted or combined with language competence and demands

³ <https://guichet.public.lu/en/citoyens/citoyennete/nationalite-luxembourgeoise/acquisition-recouvrement/option.html>

according to the political, economic, and nations-branding conveniences of time and politics, as will be shown later in this section.

The “early routes” of lusophone migration to Luxembourg

Migration from Portuguese-speaking countries to Luxembourg mainly originated from or through Portugal. Most of the lusophone migrants to the Grand Duchy hail from Portugal, followed by Cape Verde, Brazil, and, to a lesser extent, other African Portuguese-speaking countries: Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, and Mozambique (Tavares 2020). There is a historical consensus that the lusophone presence in Luxembourg began with the arrival of the Portuguese in the 1960s; and it is worth noting that at that time, Cape Verdeans were also Portuguese (Laplanche & Vanderkam 1991; Matos, 2013; Jacobs, Manço & Mertz 2017). As several historians and migration scholars have posited, the Luxembourgish authorities had perceived the Portuguese to be a suitable labor force for filling the vacancies left by the Italians (Scuto 2010; Schiltz 2013). This Luxembourgish evaluation was largely based on and mediated through ideas at the intersection between religion and ethnicity. The fact that the Portuguese were religiously close to Luxembourgers, as most of them were Catholic, was assumed to be favorable for their integration into Luxembourgish society (*ibid.*). However, the focus of this paper is more on how lusophone movement to Luxembourg has been associated with (or accompanied by) entanglements of race/ethnicity and citizenship, and how language becomes entwined with these composites. With more exploration, this may allow us to understand the complexities of the past in the present in relation to lusophone presences and interactions in Luxembourg.

In reality, not everyone who has a Portuguese nationality is of Portuguese origin. In other words, Portuguese citizens are not necessarily white Portuguese. Historically (and in contrast with people from the other former Portuguese colonies in Africa), Cape Verdeans possessed Portuguese citizenship granted by the Portuguese colonial regime; this was largely on the basis of their lighter skin color than that of individuals from Guinea-Bissau, Angola, or Mozambique, who were attributed the status of *Indigenas*⁴ and thus were considered to be of an inferior race (Matos 2013). Citizenship based on racial distinction gave Cape Verdeans an advantage

in terms of mobility to not only the metropole (Portugal) but also other European countries, including Luxembourg.

However, due to the inclusion of some Cape Verdeans in the initial waves of Portuguese migration to the Grand Duchy, the Luxembourg government sought to amend the labor agreement between Portugal and Luxembourg in the context of a legal clarification of issues around social security. Through these negotiations, the government aimed to prevent Cape Verdeans from migrating to Luxembourg. A revised agreement stipulated that non-ethnic Portuguese were not desired (cf. Laplanche & Vanderkam 1991; Kollwelter 2007; Scuto 2010; Schiltz 2013).⁵ This marked an official racialization of lusophone migration to Luxembourg. As Schiltz (2013, 103–4) puts it:

Luxembourg was doing everything it could to hinder this immigration, which, in the eyes of the political leaders, was in danger of disrupting the social order ... [but], following repeated requests from the Portuguese government, Luxembourg finally included Cape Verde in the new Social Security Convention of 1972 [translation by the author].

To add nuance to this, it worth noting that to achieve the objective of barring Cape Verdeans, members of the Luxembourgish government proposed political support for the dictatorial colonial Portuguese government, which was under international pressure and criticism from the United Nations to end its colonization of African territories. On the insistence of the Luxembourgish government, the Portuguese government agreed “to intervene with the competent authorities so that no measures aimed at stimulating the emigration of workers from Cape Verde and

4 The *Indigenas* were “defined as individuals of the Black race or descendants thereof who, by their enlightenment and customs, cannot be distinguished from the bulk of that race. No other elements of identification were taken into account ... *Indigenas* could, however, be reclassified as *Assimilados* [assimilated people] and gain the right to Portuguese citizenship.” (Matos 2013, 50–51). For that, they had to fully relinquish “the usages and customs of the Black race; ... be able to speak, read and write the Portuguese language; adopt monogamy; and ... exercise a profession, craft or office compatible with European civilization, or to have income obtained by licit means which is sufficient to produce food, sustenance, housing, and clothing for him and his family” (Osório & Rodrigues 1940, 552–553, as cited in Matos 2013, 51).

5 cf. Dossier parlementaire No. 1659, Projet de loi portant sur l’approbation de l’Avenant à la Convention entre le Luxembourg et le Portugal sur la sécurité sociale, signée le 12 février 1965, fait à Luxembourg, 5 juin 1972.

their families to the Grand Duchy are taken” (Schiltz 2013, 104). That insistence shows that the question of race and ethnicity was key to the Luxembourgish migration policy. However, despite “no measures” (*ibid.*) being taken to encourage them, Cape Verdeans continued to migrate through the family reunification route or by crossing borders in secret.

To illustrate, Maria José, a retired Cape Verdean woman who, at the age of sixteen, came to Luxembourg in 1973 to join her father, shared that the amended labor agreement and negotiations made her journey from Portugal to Luxembourg more challenging. Her father sent her a *carta de chamada* [“calling letter”], which was the first required document that a migrant would send to a family member in Cape Verde so that they could migrate to Luxembourg under the reunification policies. She highlighted:

Excerpt 1⁶

I went to [Luxembourg’s] embassy at that time for the visa, ... as we came from Cape Verde, at the embassy they didn’t want to give me the visa because I wasn’t Portuguese from Portugal ... we’re here but we’ve had the same difficulties, the same difficulties at that time, we were Portuguese and at the same time there was already this discrimination because we weren’t from the continent, we were islanders who came from overseas and that marked me! There are lots of things in my life that I’ve forgotten, but I haven’t forgotten that moment ... I didn’t take it too badly but it stuck, with time and reflection I realized that it wasn’t right ... even though I thought I was grown up, I was just a child.

Excerpt 1 illustrates how the official (re)arrangement and negotiations between the (then fascist and colonial) Portuguese government and Luxembourg, on a racial impetus, challenged the racialized Portuguese citizenship of Cape Verdeans during what I refer to here as the “early routes,” when they arrived in Portugal to pursue their migration to Luxembourg. It shows the tension between race/ethnicity and citizenship in the management of Cape Verdean migration to Luxembourg. Although in

⁶ All the interview excerpts have been translated from Portuguese or French into English by the author.

different guises, to some extent this tension persists in both the subsequent “routes”, i.e., the “middle routes” and the “late routes.”

The “middle routes” of lusophone migration to Luxembourg

As mentioned previously, it is important to stress here that a significant number of Portuguese people came to Luxembourg and other European countries to escape being sent to Africa to fight in the wars of independence (Laplanche & Vanderkam 1991; Pereira 2012, 2013). Yet, among Portuguese migrants in Luxembourg, there are people who did experience these wars, which took place in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau, when they lived in those African colonies (mainly Angola and Mozambique). After war broke out, and as social hostility toward Portuguese colonists increased and the colonies gained independence, these colonists and their descendants who were born there were pushed to return to Portugal. They lost their homes, possessions, livelihoods, and, in some cases, members of their extended family (Smith 2003; Eldridge, Kalter & Taylor 2023).

On their return, these former colonists, known as *retornados*, also experienced a certain amount of hostility from Portuguese society (*ibid.*). They were somehow perceived as “internal strangers” (Lubkemann 2003). The case of the *retornados* illuminates the nexus and tensions between notions of race, descent, and ethnicity on the one hand, and language and citizenship on the other. One reason that society did not welcome them back was that many saw them as having been corrupted by the ‘decivilizing customs’ of the Africans (Saada 2005; Eldridge, Kalter & Taylor 2023; also cf. Åkesson et al. 2022). As Eldridge, Kalter & Taylor (2023, 20–21) put it, the *retornados* “were associated not only politically with a colonial world fallen into disgrace through decolonization, but also culturally. Their clothes were perceived to be too colorful and revealing, they were associated with prostitution and the spread of marijuana, in short, with social transgression and an African permissiveness.”

Consequently, poverty, unemployment, and their tenuous position in the Portuguese society impelled the *retornados* to re-emigrate to Luxembourg or to other European countries like France, Switzerland, and so on (Smith 2003; Lubkemann 2003; Eldridge, Kalter & Taylor, 2023). This adds to the

complexity of postcolonial lusophone mobility by taking into account the historical diversity that exists within the lusophone group and which, in some ways, has been neglected by existing research. Meanwhile, the significant presence of Cape Verdeans, Bissau-Guineans, and Brazilians in Luxembourg is also a result of their “re-emigration strategy” once they had obtained citizenship of Portugal or other European countries (Pereira 2012).

The “late routes” of lusophone migration to Luxembourg

The economic crisis of 2008 propelled a wave of emigration from Portugal to other European countries, including Luxembourg (Pereira 2012, 2013). This wave also included the above-mentioned African lusophones and Brazilians holding Portuguese citizenship (for instance, gained after legally living in Portugal for at least six years). Furthermore, it must be stressed that in part, the Brazilian presence in Luxembourg is also intertwined with the historical migration of Luxembourgers to Brazil during the nineteenth century and the first half of twentieth century, which then prompted a more recent mobility of Brazilians to Luxembourg (Sommarribas, Petry & Nienaber 2019) based on notions of ancestry and ethnicity. That is, very recently there was a phenomenon of mobility to Luxembourg among Brazilians of Luxembourgish descent, which started with the amendment of the Citizenship Law of 8 March 2017. This amendment allowed these Brazilians to acquire Luxembourgish citizenship through a ‘reclamation process,’ which involved providing proof of being “direct maternal or paternal descendants of an ancestor who held the Luxembourgish nationality on 1 January 1900” (*ibid.*, 4). Around 20,000 Brazilians have acquired Luxembourgish citizenship in this way.⁷ Some of them are descendants of Luxembourg engineer who participated in the creation (in 1921) and development of Companhia Siderúrgica Belgo Mineira (CSBM) in Brazil, a subsidiary of the Luxembourg steelmaker Aciéries reuniones de Burbach-Eich-Dudelange (ARBED). Most of them settled in the state of Minas Gerais (Brazil), where they helped to develop the pioneering Luxembourg steel industry.⁸

⁷ Contacto, 01.08.2022; <https://www.contacto.lu/luxemburgo/veterin-ria-do-brasil-espera-h-oito-meses-autorizac-o-para-trabalhar-no-luxemburgo/503967.html>

It is important to underline that the majority of these ‘new Luxembourgers’ of Brazilian origin do not reside in Luxembourg, have never been there (Sommarribas, Petry & Nienaber 2019), and do not necessarily know any of the three officially recognized languages. But both groups—those who moved to Luxembourg and those who did not—had access to Luxembourg citizenship through *ius sanguinis*, i.e., a citizenship that dispenses with the notion of linguistic community. Consequently, those who did move to Luxembourg have added a layer of complexity to the Portuguese-speaking community, providing insight into the general question of how citizenship is unequally founded in shifting entanglements of race, ancestry, and ethnicity on the one hand, and language and the length or category of residence permit on the other.

Although those Brazilian Luxembourgers who relocated to Luxembourg did not have to pass the Luxembourgish language test or face the same regularization challenges encountered by other non-European (Portuguese-speaking) migrants, they share other struggles related to the Luxembourg labor market, namely, those related to limited language competence and gaining recognition of qualifications (Contacto, 01.08.2022). Hence, again one sees considerable tensions and dilemmas between these migrants’ accelerated Luxembourgish citizenship (anchored in their ancestry/ethnicity) and their limited competence in the officially recognized languages (Luxembourgish, French, and German), the “languages of authority” (Bourdieu 1991).

At an individual level, these tensions can be illustrated through the case of Rodney, a Brazilian architect of Luxembourgish descent who relocated from Brazil to Luxembourg seven years ago and has been working in the cleaning industry. He discovered his Luxembourg heritage accidentally when a friend who was living in the Netherlands visited him in Brazil and read a book entitled “Geonologia da Família Bley”.⁹ The book was a gift that Rodney’s parents had given him when he was a child, but he had never been curious enough to read the book. The friend noticed the word

⁸ Hadžalić 2019; see also Dominique Santana’s 2021 documentary *A Colônia Luxemburguesa*, <https://colonia.lu/prologue>, and Santana in this volume.

⁹ Waldemiro Bley Júnior, *Genealogia da família Bley* (Curitiba: Self-published, 1987); on the Bley family, see also Krieger in this volume.

Luxemburgo and said to Rodney, “you are a descendant of Luxembourg-ers.”

Rodney’s narrative shows tension between his Luxembourgish citizenship and his limitations in what Bourdieu calls the “languages of authority.” In the context of Luxembourg, one can assume that these languages of authority are the officially recognized ones: French, German, and Luxembourgish. Rodney pointed out:

| Excerpt 2

Migrants always have this problem. Imagine me, I’m a descendant and I don’t speak [the languages]. That’s a problem at the airport and everything. I show my passport and they start talking to me in Luxembourgish ... I had a [Portuguese] boss who always joked with me. She used to say to everyone: “Look, this one here is the only Luxembourger I know who doesn’t speak Luxembourgish.” I don’t have that to facilitate things. I have my difficulties because I don’t speak the language. But I don’t have any problems either. I’m comfortable here. It’s easy with citizenship, but the language challenges remain ... For example, it doesn’t make it any easier for me to get a job, because there’s no point in being a Luxembourgish citizen if I’m going to get a good job. If I don’t speak a language or if I don’t have the necessary skills for the job, I won’t get it, I’d say more languages! ... It’s that situation, every time I needed to go somewhere and do something, I anchored myself in English. And I knew that English wasn’t well received. So French, no way. So I had no other option. When I arrived at ADEM [Agence pour le développement de l’emplois], the young man on reception was Portuguese. I said, “Oh, it’s good that you’re Portuguese, because I need to register here.” He said, “Look, when you get to the counter, you won’t be able to speak to me in Portuguese.” I had to speak to him in English and he spoke Portuguese! Then he sent me to an agent, she started talking to me in French, and I said, “look, either you talk to me in English or we’ll talk in Portuguese.” She told me in Portuguese, I don’t know why, and she said, “Look, I can’t speak to you in Portuguese.”... People who are unemployed and go to ADEM are usually people who don’t speak the country’s official languages, because those who speak the

country's official languages have a much better chance of getting a job and don't need to go there.

Excerpt 2 reveals the delicate relationship between Luxembourgish citizenship and the official multilingual regime of Luxembourg. On the one hand, having citizenship helps Rodney feel more comfortable as a migrant: "I don't have any problems either. I'm comfortable here." However, on the other hand, his inability to speak Luxembourgish makes him feel embarrassed in certain circumstances and during administrative encounters, when Luxembourgish citizenship is expected or assumed to match Luxembourgish "speakerhood" (Márquez Reiter & Martín Rojo 2019). As Rodney pointed out: "I'm a descendant and I don't speak. That's a problem at the airport and everything. I show my passport and they start talking to me in Luxembourgish." His lack of this speakerhood, to some extent, has prevented him from getting a better job in the Luxembourg labor market, prolonging his condition of being sub-employed. His narrative shows that the (in)sufficiency of holding Luxembourgish citizenship is mediated by the load/ability of speaking Luxembourgish as one of the languages of authority, which are central to individuals' access to better jobs and their feelings of belonging in Luxembourg. Excerpt 2 also reveals Rodney's reflective capacity; he questions a certain level of paradox and the mismatch between several job seekers' language repertoire and the authoritative language regime of the national employment agency, ADEM, where Portuguese-speaking employees refuse (or are obliged to refuse) to speak Portuguese with the applicants and jobseekers.

Beyond his Luxembourgish citizenship-language tensions, Rodney shares that there is another dimension/layer of his struggles in Luxembourg. As a citizen originally from a former Portuguese colony, he has had to deal with several dimensions of "coloniality" (Mignolo 2005) in his workplace and social interactions in Luxembourg. That is, his social, workplace and language tension due to the persistence in his interaction with Portuguese work colleagues of what Stoler (2013) calls "imperial debris." Rodney highlighted:

Excerpt 3

From the first time I spoke to the Portuguese ..., everyone says, "you don't know how to speak Portuguese. You speak the wrong

Portuguese, which isn't that Portuguese," that's what they call me. ...but here we live in the same country. His theory is always correct, you have to do it, that's how it has to be done. I work with them. Sometimes some come in ... I don't even say anything. I say, no, you're right. So as not to make the conversation any more difficult ... Because it's unbearable. And for us too, this issue of prejudice is very strong in them, in the Portuguese, because we see that they don't respect, ... So I don't go into these ways because it's what I said to him: it's not worth it, it doesn't change our lives. Yes, you have to set limits too. But it's a very complex relationship.

Excerpt 3 also indexes some components of coloniality regarding Portuguese perceiving Rodney as inferior, especially what Veronelli (2015) calls “coloniality of language” which is part of “coloniality of being” (Mignolo 2005) manifested through language. Interestingly, Rodney is a white Brazilian Luxembourger, but the fact of being of Brazilian origin serves as an incentive for white European Portuguese work colleagues to assume the position of lecturership and superiority over him at their workplace and linguistic interactions even if they occupy the same work position. In this case one can see the manifestation of coloniality rather through ethnicity, place of birth and colonial history than the question of race itself.

Ulus (2015, 890) points out “colonial dynamics and attendant power relations are daily reproduced and subverted at work.” For the context of lusophone migrants’ interactions at work, one may assert that their historical divisions still impact their workplace interactions in lusophone diasporas, such as in Luxembourg, outside the dichotomous geographies of former colonizer and former colonized countries, as Rodney’s case illustrates. Instead of “speaking back,” (Curington 2020) Rodney used a more passive tactic at work to subvert coloniality and the “emotionally charged postcolonial relations, which are often reproduced and experienced unconsciously ... their effects are longstanding and survive political and historical changes” (Ulus 2015, 890–891).

However, all of the abovementioned circumstances/routes and the post-colonial, language and citizenship tensions of lusophone migration to the Grand Duchy, including this late-move of Brazilians of Luxembourgish descent, have contributed to strengthening lusophone networks and cre-

ating an interesting luso-Afro-Brazilian (re)encounter. It has made the use of Portuguese quite prominent in certain sectors of work, predominantly in the construction and cleaning industries, and service and retail, in which most of these migrants work (Jacobs, Manço & Mertz 2017; Marques 2019; Decamps & Monthéard 2020). Taking the abovementioned circumstances of migration and lusophone presences in Luxembourg into consideration, I suggest that there exists a “lusophone market” in the Grand Duchy and that its ongoing establishment is happening in parallel with and is constrained by the country’s “legitimate linguistic market” (Bourdieu 1991), in which German, French, and Luxembourgish are the officially recognized languages, and English has a high value, even dominating in the financial sector for example (Kingsley 2009). Lusophone migrants’ access to certain resources (e.g., more qualified jobs, education, etc.) has been constrained by specific linguistic and identity ideologies operating throughout this legitimate linguistic market. Consequently, to a certain extent, this constrain has forced them to eke out a “lusophone niche market” as a pathway to survival as migrants (Tavares 2025a).

Concluding reflections: a presence rooted at the entanglements of citizenship, language and race

This paper demonstrates how luso-Afro-Brazilian presences in Luxembourg were and are mediated, both institutionally and individually, at the entanglements, tensions and shiftings between ideologies of race/ethnicity, citizenship and language, from formal Portuguese colonialism to contemporary Portuguese-speaking (re)migration to Luxembourg, including the late mobility of Brazilian Luxembourgers. For instance, from the institutional perspective, the paper shows how the idea of race and ethnicity was overtly used to determine what kind of lusophone migrants were desirable according to the Luxembourgish migration policies, without language requirements, at the early stage of lusophone migration to Luxembourg. The question of race was very incisive, to the point that Cape Verdean migration to Luxembourg was instrumentalized and racialized as part of rearrangements between the then fascist colonial Portuguese government and Luxembourg, with the latter even politically supporting

the former despite the strong criticism from the UN on the former's maintenance of its colonies in Africa. The justification of that official attempt to bar Cape Verdeans from Luxembourg suggested that black lusophone migrants would bear characteristics that were negative for good integration and social order in Luxembourg (Schiltz 2013).

In the context of colonial Portugal and its African colonies, the differentiation was not solely between the Portuguese colonizers and the African colonized. Individuals in African Portuguese colonies had varied racializing citizenship statuses. Cape Verdean elites often served as administrators and were perceived as proxy colonizers for the Portuguese in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique (Meintel 1984). The privileged status of Cape Verdeans was based on the racial hierarchy of the colonial empire, which categorized them as "mixed race" (*mestiço*) due to their mixed African and European origin, resulting in lighter skin than that of individuals from other Portuguese colonies in mainland Africa. Consequently, Cape Verdeans were considered Citizens, while Angolans, Mozambicans, and Bissau-Guineans were deemed *Indigenas*, who were thought of as less intelligent and less civilized (Mattos 2013). The lighter skin color of Cape Verdeans, along with the selective formal education the elites received and their ability to speak Portuguese, were factors that favored their racialized Portuguese citizenship and facilitated their mobility to Portugal under colonial rule. However, when (re)migrating to Luxembourg, their racialized Portuguese citizenship became a hindrance to Cape Verdeans. The same skin color then hampered their migration. This illustrates the complex interplay of race/ethnicity ideologies, language, and citizenship and lusophone mobility. Furthermore, as described above, the incisiveness of race ideologies manifested in the case of *retornados*. That produced exclusion and social discrimination against white Portuguese (and their descendants) in Portugal, due to the assumption that these *retornados* had been corrupted culturally by African customs (Eldridge, Kalter & Taylor, 2023).

More recently, when the law of 8 March 2017 was amended on the basis of ancestry, the rule of *jus sanguinis* (which is closely related to ideologies of race and ethnicity) outweighed the importance of linguistic competence and the other citizenship pathways, such as the *jus domicilis* (duration of residence) and the *jus solis* (place of birth) to a certain extent. This shows how unequal access to citizenship is conveniently mediated

by nation-states according to their political and economic needs in time and space. It is important to note that despite the relative ease of gaining official inclusion from the nation-state through *jus sanguinis* citizenship, the tension between language and race/ancestry persists at the individual level. This is especially true when one holds this citizenship but lacks one of the languages of authority (in this case, Luxembourgish) which is declared “the national language” (Hawkey & Horner 2022). Thus, access to (accelerated) citizenship does not necessarily result in social mobility, as Rodney’s case shows. Neither does it trigger feelings of fully belonging in the individuals themselves or influence the extent to which they are perceived as Luxembourgers by others. Place of birth, language competences, and ancestry form complex and, in part, fragile elements of Luxembourgish citizenship. Therefore, there is a need to disentangle what it means to be a Luxembourger, especially the questions of how, when, why, and to what extent having competence in the language of Luxembourgish fosters and defines (or does not define) belonging to the Grand Duchy on both individual and state levels.

This paper has demonstrated that from the beginning, the question of race has been present in lusophone mobility to Luxembourg—either overtly or covertly, and for the purpose of exclusion or inclusion. Let us remember the racialized Portuguese citizenship of Cape Verdeans that led to the revision of the labor agreement between the fascist Portuguese government and Luxembourg, and the mobility/acquisition of Luxembourgish citizenship that was attained by Brazilians under the *jus sanguinis* logic. For a long time, the logic of inclusion and belonging has unequally excluded and included people from the boundaries of nation-states. This has created enduring inequalities and injustices, given that nation-states privilege their citizens and nationals over human beings or humanity.

The paper has also demonstrated that, both at the state level and the individual level, the way in which individuals from formerly colonized countries and the former colonizing country perceive themselves in the so-called era of globalization is still influenced by colonial outlooks and differentiations. This commonly occurs in administrative, social, professional, and linguistic interactions and encounters. Furthermore, the colonial differentiations have produced complex interactional effects between diversified Portuguese speakers from Africa, Portugal, and Brazil. To a certain extent, these differentiations are still present in their

encounters in Portuguese-speaking countries and beyond in diasporic contexts, including in the countries of migration that they all share, such as Luxembourg, as Rodney's and Maria José's cases illustrate.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the data collected within the framework of the DisPOSEG project has provided insights into how historical divisions and complicities are still influencing interactions between Portuguese speakers. In terms of hierarchies at work, there is a tendency to reproduce colonial models in their third space migration context of Luxembourg, as seen in Rodney's case. Our results reveal the existence of what Maldonado-Torres (2007) calls "coloniality of being" in the relationships between different Portuguese speakers in social and work contexts. That is to say, their interactions are often marked by friction and tension resulting from the internalization of superiority and inferiority that arises in colonialist racial relations. Considering the diversity and complexity of the migration processes in question, understanding the history and the colonial past will help us to develop an understanding of Portuguese-speaking interactions and of the specificities, trajectories, and important sociolinguistic challenges of lusophone migrants in Luxembourg.

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