



The power of language(s)

How multilingualism manifests itself in the museum - discussing matters of infrastructure and display in a case study of Luxembourg

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Abstract

[EN] The power of language(s):
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along a case study of Luxembourg

Language is ubiquitous in human life, yet it often remains unnoticed, or rather, it is taken for granted. With language staying under the radar, it is able to covertly exercise an immense amount of power in the museum. Beyond the concept of language itself, this paper addresses the meaning-making resulting from the coexistence and interaction between several different languages within cultural institutions in a linguistically heterogeneous society. In what ways does multilingualism manifest itself in the museum? What does multilingualism mean for the infrastructure of a museum, and its display practices? What limitations or opportunities might arise from a polyglot museum practice? How do ideology and capitalism factor in? The first chapter discusses matters of multilingual infrastructure and display along a case study of Luxembourg's museum landscape. The second part consists of a critical commentary on the use of national flags to indicate languages, a speculative excursion into the applied linguistics concept of “translanguaging”, that is, “the fluid and dynamic practices that transcend the boundaries between named languages”^{A1}, and an exploration into museums about language(s).

^{A1} - LI Wei, Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language, in: Applied Linguistics, Volume 39, Issue 1, February 2018, p.1.

[LU] D'Muecht vun de Sproochen:
Wéi manifestéiert sech d'Méisproochegkeet am Musée?
Etude vu méisproochegen Infrastrukturen an Zeenographie
an enger Fallstudie vu Lëtzebuerg

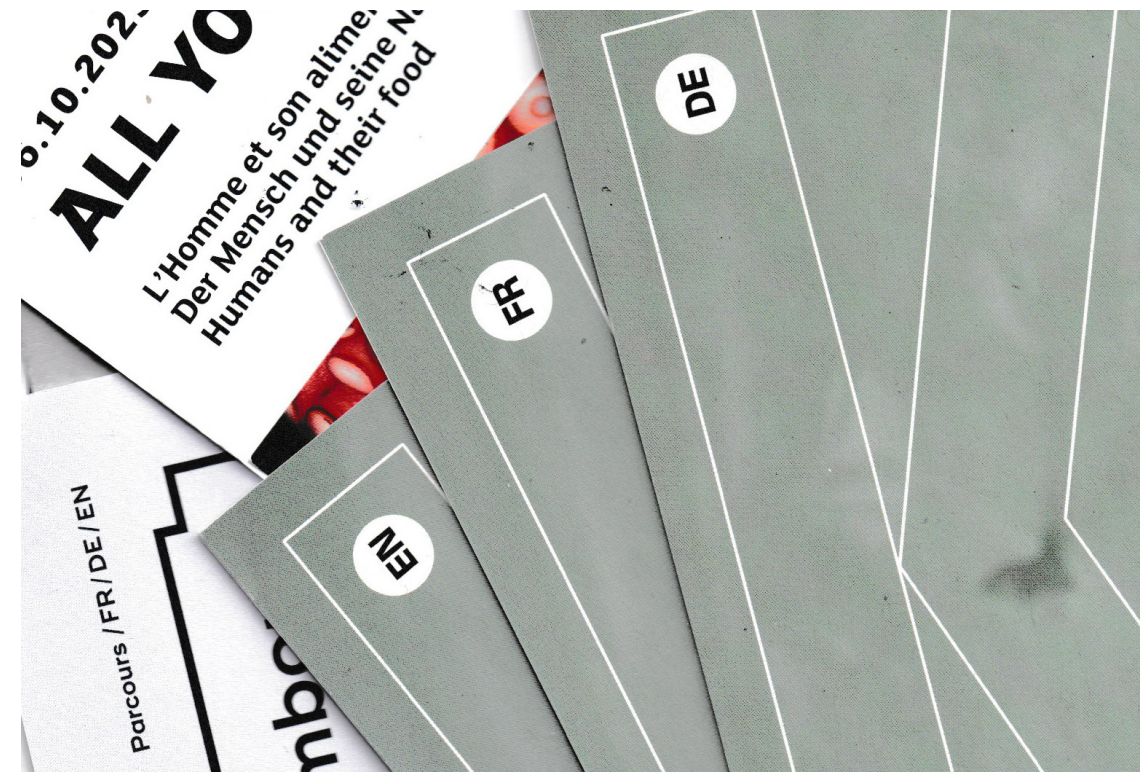
D'Sprooch ass omniprésent a gëtt dacks als selbstverständlich ugesinn. Doduerch ka Sprooch am Musée ënner dem Radar grouss Muecht ausüben. Nieft dem Konzept vun der Sprooch selwer, beschäftigt dës Dissertatioun sech mat der Bedeitung, déi aus dem Zesummeliewen an der Interaktioun tëscht verschiddene Sproochen an de kulturellen Institutionen an enger sproochlech heterogener Gesellschaft entsteet. Wéi manifestéiert sech d'Méisproochegkeet am Musée? Wat bedeit Méisproochegkeet fir d'Infrastruktur vun engem Musée a seng Ausstellungspraxis? Wéi eng Aschränkungen a Méiglechkeete kéinten aus enger polyglotter Muséepraxis entstoen? Wéi eng Roll spillen dobäi Ideologie a Kapitalismus? Am éischten Deel gi Froen iwwer méisproocheg Infrastrukturen an Zeenographie diskutéiert mat enger Fallstudie vun der Lëtzebuurger Muséeënlandschaft. Den zweeten Deel besteet engersäits aus engem kritesche Kommentar iwwer d'Benotzung vu Fändele fir Sproochen duerzestellen. Op der anerer Säit gëtt doriwuer spékuléiert, wéi een, a méisproocheg Muséeën, dat sproochlech Konzept vun Translanguaging (also déi „fléissend an dynamesch Praktiken déi d'Grenzen tëscht benannte Sproochen dépasséieren“^{A1}) uwendet kéint. Schliisslech kennt eng Exploratioun vu verschiddene Sproochmuseen.

[FR] Le pouvoir des langues :
Comment le plurilinguisme se manifeste-t-il au sein du musée?
Examen des infrastructures et de la scénographie
dans le cadre d'une étude du cas du Luxembourg.

La langue est omniprésente dans la vie humaine, mais elle passe souvent inaperçue. En restant sous le radar, la langue peut exercer secrètement un immense pouvoir au musée. Au-delà du concept de langue lui-même, ce mémoire traite de la signification résultant de la coexistence et de l'interaction entre plusieurs langues différentes au sein d'institutions culturelles dans une société linguistiquement hétérogène. De quelle manière le plurilinguisme se manifeste-t-il dans le musée ? Que signifie le plurilinguisme pour l'infrastructure d'un musée et ses pratiques d'exposition ? Quelles limitations ou opportunités peuvent découler d'une pratique muséale polyglotte ? Comment l'idéologie et le capitalisme interviennent-ils ? Le premier chapitre aborde des questions d'infrastructure et de scénographie multilingues dans le cadre d'une étude de cas portant sur le paysage muséal luxembourgeois. La deuxième partie consiste en un commentaire critique sur l'utilisation de drapeaux nationaux pour indiquer les langues, une excursion spéculative dans le concept de linguistique appliquée de « translanguaging », c'est-à-dire « les pratiques fluides et dynamiques qui transcendent les frontières entre les langues nommées »^{A1}, et une exploration des musées consacrés aux langues.

[DE] Die Macht der Sprache(n):
Wie manifestiert sich die Mehrsprachigkeit im Museum?
Untersuchung der mehrsprachigen Infrastruktur und des Displays
in einer Fallstudie von Luxemburg

Sprache ist allgegenwärtig und wird oft als selbstverständlich hingenommen. So kann die Sprache unter dem Radar eine große Macht im Museum ausüben. Über das Konzept der Sprache hinaus befasst sich diese Thesen mit der Bedeutungsgebung, die sich aus der Koexistenz und Interaktion zwischen mehreren Sprachen innerhalb kultureller Institutionen in einer sprachlich heterogenen Gesellschaft ergibt. Auf welche Weise manifestiert sich die Mehrsprachigkeit im Museum? Was bedeutet die Mehrsprachigkeit für die Infrastruktur eines Museums und seine Ausstellungspraxis? Welche Einschränkungen und Möglichkeiten könnten sich aus einer polyglotten Museumspraxis ergeben? Welche Rolle spielen dabei Ideologie und Kapitalismus? Im ersten Teil werden Fragen der mehrsprachigen Infrastrukturen und des Displays anhand einer Fallstudie der luxemburgischen Museumslandschaft erörtert. Der zweite Teil besteht zum einen aus einem kritischen Kommentar über den Gebrauch von Flaggen zur Kennzeichnung von Sprachen, zum anderen aus einer Spekulation über mögliche Anwendungen des linguistischen Konzepts von Translanguaging (also den „fließenden und dynamischen Praktiken, die die Grenzen zwischen benannten Sprachen überschreiten“^{A1}) in mehrsprachigen Museen und schließlich aus einer Erkundung mehrerer Sprachmuseen.



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1. ***Introduction***

1.1. Language, museum, multilingualism

Language is ubiquitous in human life, yet it often remains unnoticed, or rather, it is taken for granted. In the words of Ludwig Wittgenstein: “one is unable to notice something because it is always before one’s eyes”¹. With language staying under the radar, it is able to covertly exercise an immense amount of power in the “archetypal knowledge factory”² known as the museum. The museum as an institution is entangled in a complex web of power dynamics that Oliver Marchart calls a “Wissen-Macht-Dispositiv”³ (knowledge-power-system). He argues that the knowledge produced and communicated in the museum cannot be separated from specific power and subordination relations surrounding the institution. Language plays an instrumental role in these power structures and it is therefore a crucial field of research within museology.

1 - MAHER John and GROVES Judy, Chomsky A Graphic Guide, London, 2013, p.10.

2 - ROBERTSON Hamish, Engines of Knowledge: The Museum and the Exhibit, in: Discovery Society 2017, p.1.

3 - MARCHART Oliver, Die Institution spricht. Kunstvermittlung als Herrschafts- und Emanzipationstechnologie, in: SCHNITTPUNKT, JASCHKE Beatrice, MARTINZTUREK Charlotte, STERNFELD Nora (ed.), Wer spricht? Autorität und Autorschaft in Ausstellungen, Vienna, Austria 2005, p.35.

The *concept* of language is a social product⁴ and a cultural construct⁵, and as such it is a constitutive part of the museum. Language is, to a great extent, an indispensable mechanism inside and outside the museum. Furthermore, language as a tool for communication also contributes to the production of knowledge in the museum, thus becoming a formative instrument, giving the museum its shape. From exhibitions (wall texts, labels, catalogues...) over to communication (signage, marketing...) all the way to interaction with and among staff (enquiry, mediation, work meetings...), language is everywhere in the museum.

Beyond the concept of language itself, this paper addresses the meaning-making resulting from the coexistence and interaction, both physical and conceptual, between several different languages within certain institutions and their exhibitions. In what ways does multilingualism manifest itself in the museum? What does multilingualism mean for the infrastructure of a museum, and its display practices? What limitations or opportunities might arise from polyglot museum practices? In order to discuss these questions, the field of museology has to be expanded all the way to sociolinguistics, that is, “the study of language in relation to its social context”⁶. An important notion within sociolinguistics is that of *linguistic culture*, which the linguist Harold Schiffman defines as follows:

[T]he set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language. That is, the beliefs (one might even use the term myths) that a speech community has about language [...] in general and its language in particular (from which it usually derives its attitudes towards other languages)⁷.

4 - “it [the commodity] is just as much a social product as language.” - MARX Karl, *The Fetishism Of The Commodity And Its Secret*, in: *The design history reader* ed. by Rebecca Houze, London, UK, 2010, p. 389.

5 - SCHIFFMAN Harold F., *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy*, London, UK, 1996, p.5-12.

6 - Collins Dictionary (online) definition of sociolinguistics (accessed 27.05.2024).

7 - SCHIFFMAN Harold F., *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy*, London, UK, 1996, p.5.

Consequently, it is not primarily the syntactic or grammatical aspects of languages that are relevant here, but much rather their inherent linguistic culture, and how these coexist and interact in and around the museum.

Another important aspect to consider at this stage is that in the majority of cases, written language is the only form of communication between an institution and their audience. This promotes text to one of the most powerful instruments of meaning-making: the institution speaks through its texts⁸, text becomes a “vermittelnde Instanz”⁹ (mediating entity). The power lies specifically within the fact that museum texts tend not to position themselves within a certain discourse, thus producing a “fake’ sense of objectivity”¹⁰ by the simple fact that they are displayed within the museum. This brings us back to the aforementioned aspect of language being ubiquitous yet unnoticed, and consequently covertly powerful. To this framework for the analysis of linguistic infrastructure and museum meaning-making, one can also add the distinction between *symbolic* and *institutional* power, a distinction that Henriette Lidchi makes in her analysis of ethnographic exhibitions¹¹. Symbolic power refers to the meaning produced by an exhibition. When an exhibition takes place in an institution, one has to add a level of institutional power to the symbolic one. Therefore, the choice and degree of use of any given language in a linguistically heterogeneous society has major implications.

8 - MARCHART Oliver, *Die Institution spricht. Kunstvermittlung als Herrschafts- und Emanzipationstechnologie*, in: SCHNITTPUNKT, JASCHKE Beatrice, MARTINZUREK Charlotte, STERNFELD Nora (ed.), *Wer spricht? Autorität und Autorschaft in Ausstellungen*, Vienna, Austria 2005, p.34-35.

9 - MERAN Eva, *SUBTEXTE Der Text als Medium der Vermittlung in Kunstaustellungen: Funktionen, Haltungen, Perspektiven*, Vienna, Austria, 2016, p.5.

10 - idem, p.2-3.

11 - LIDCHI Henriette, *The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures*, in: *Representation. Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, Milton Keynes, UK, 1997, p.183-184.

1.2 Methods and structure

This thesis is based on primary and secondary research. The primary research consists of a case study, including a survey, interviews and field research. Secondary research draws from literature and online data sources.

While there is a lot of research being made into the topic of multilingualism itself, often with a focus on education or child development, considerably less has gone into the specific implications of multilingualism within museums and exhibitions. Thus, this thesis is situated at the crossroads between several different fields of theory: sociolinguistics, institutional critique and display analysis.

The research process building up to this paper has shown that English has established itself as a dominant language in the scientific field, made apparent by the relative scarcity of sources relevant to Luxembourg in other languages. Numerous research papers produced at the University of Luxembourg itself use English and, as a result, only one relevant source could be found in Luxembourgish.

In the first part of the thesis, the findings of the case study will be presented and evaluated, with a particular focus on infrastructure and display approaches. The second part of the thesis consists of a critical commentary on the use of national flags to indicate languages, an excursion into the applied linguistics concept of “translanguaging”, that is, “the fluid and dynamic practices that transcend the boundaries between named languages”¹², and an exploration into museums dedicated to language(s), be it out of linguistic interest or in an effort to conserve or revitalise specific languages.

12 - LI Wei, Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language, in: Applied Linguistics, Volume 39, Issue 1, February 2018, p.1.

1.3. Case study: Luxembourg

In order to set the scene for this case study, a distinction should be made between two types of multilingual museums: on the one hand there are museums in predominantly monolingual countries that provide a translation (most often in English) alongside their dominant language. On the other hand, there are museums that are embedded in a multilingual context and therefore have a multilingual approach. This case study focuses on the latter type: Luxembourg.

What is of interest in this particular example of a polyglot country is the fact that, unlike other multilingual countries such as Belgium, Canada, Cyprus or Switzerland, the distribution of languages in Luxembourg is not geographical but functional and varies depending on the social setting and purpose of use. In terms of linguistic policy, there are three official languages in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: Luxembourgish (national language), French (official and legislative language) and German (official language). In the next chapter, the history, role and status of the Luxembourgish language will be further outlined, however it is important to note here that it has been placed on the list of endangered languages in 2018.¹³ Moreover, the current demographic situation in Luxembourg is particularly interesting to look at when researching the topic of languages. Luxembourg’s population in 2023 was around 670.000 inhabitants¹⁴, with nearly half of it being non-Luxembourgish citizens (47% in 2023¹⁵), and only one third of the workforce being of Luxembourgish nationality (the Grand-Duchy counts 212.000 cross-border workers, who make up 46% of all employees country-wide¹⁶), this brings about numerous sociolinguistic and political questions, which also affect the museums.

13 - UNESCO World Atlas of Languages (accessed 07.04.2024).

14 - STATEC, Luxembourg La Démographie Luxembourgeoise en Chiffres, Édition 2023. p.5.

15 - idem, p.7.

16 - STATEC, Panorama on the Luxembourgish working world [...]: Statistiques.lu (accessed 26.04.2024).

1.4. Self-situating

The infographic above (see fig.1) depicts the distribution by nationality of the Luxembourgish population as of January 2022.

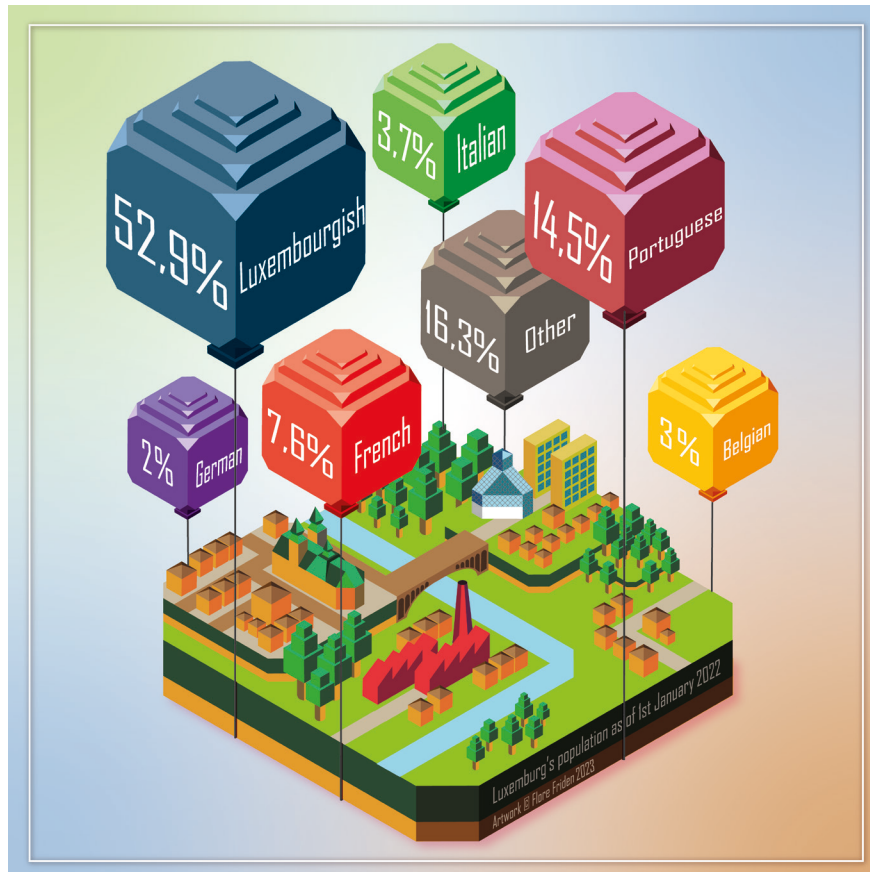


fig. 1

Before moving on to the heart of the thesis, I consider it relevant to delineate my own position within the subject of multilingualism as well as my relationship to Luxembourg. I have both the Luxembourgish and the French nationality. I lived in Luxembourg-City for 17 years, from birth to studies, with a two year interruption in Brussels (another multilingual city). I then lived in Scotland, briefly in Germany and then in Austria. The languages I use with my family are French, Luxembourgish and to an extent English. I use German at work. I have started learning Italian, Portuguese and Bosnian for various reasons and at various degrees of intensity. I do not have a clear-cut answer to the question of what my dominant language would be. Multilingualism is an inseparable part of my upbringing and my everyday life. As described by Olga Grjasnowa in her book on the power of multilingualism, I believe that language is not static, and our uses of and relationships towards certain languages change continually. With this in mind, I find myself writing and researching in this field from an “Insider-Outsider-Position”¹⁷. Nevertheless, for the purpose of my research, I see a certain advantage in my multilingualism in that “[m]eine Sprachen bewahren mich vor der Selbstgefälligkeit, zu denken, meine Weltanschauung sei die einzige und unfehlbar”¹⁸ (my languages protect me from the complacency of thinking that my worldview is the only one and infallible), a quote by the linguist Aneta Pavlenko cited by Grjasnowa.

This paper purposely avoids the use of the term *mother tongue*, because it bears an inherent nationalist connotation. It is part of the “one nation, one language”¹⁹ ideology and it implies that a person only

17 - GRJASNOWA Olga, Die Macht der Mehrsprachigkeit - Über Herkunft und Vielfalt, Berlin, Germany, 2021, p.94.

18 - idem, p.15.

19 - LØNSMANN Dorte, Linguistic diversity in the international workplace: language ideologies and processes of exclusion, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014, p.4.

has one *true* language, which stands above the others. The concept of mother tongue is rhetorically related to that of *fatherland*, and they have proven to be “keineswegs harmlos, sondern Ausdruck eines ethnischen Nationalismus. Sprachen wurden letztlich zu exklusiven Kennzeichen der einzelnen Nationen”²⁰ (not in any way harmless, but the expression of an ethnic nationalism. Languages ultimately became the exclusive hallmarks of individual nations). Instead, this paper draws upon an alternative concept that classifies a person’s languages in A-, B- or C-languages, A-language being the dominant language²¹.

Indeed, all Luxembourgish inhabitants, as well as cross-border workers from Belgium, France and Germany, find themselves confronted with multilingualism on a daily basis, which is what makes it such a fertile research ground to analyse how polyglossy manifests itself in the meaning-making institution that is the museum.

20 - GRJASNOWA Olga, Die Macht der Mehrsprachigkeit - Über Herkunft und Vielfalt, Berlin, Germany, 2021, p. 49.

21 - This system is used in translation sciences. - idem, p.11-12.

2. Case study of Luxembourg's multilingual museum landscape

2.1. Primary research parameters

The case study called for primary research methods, since there is no public record of linguistic data specifically in the field of museums in Luxembourg. Furthermore, the vast majority of museum websites do not indicate in which language(s) the respective exhibition contents are displayed.

Therefore, a survey was sent out to the institutional members of ICOM Luxembourg²², in order to unearth linguistic trends in the different areas of museal life, from labels to catalogues over mediation and marketing all the way to staff interaction. The survey was sent out in four linguistic variants (Luxembourgish, French, German, English) and respondents were free to choose the one they preferred. Institutions were contacted either in French or in Luxembourgish, depending on the languages

22 - In order to qualify as an institutional member, a museum has to meet the definition of an ICOM museum, comply with the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums and be recognised by ICOM and ICOM Luxembourg. The list includes 41 members, however only 39 were retained for the purpose of this study. One of the museums on the list has shut down, and the other rejected entry is the Grand-Ducal palace, which functions as a touristic site and therefore did not qualify for the study.

used in their online presence (website, social media). The answers from the 28 respondents have been compiled into a data set, which will be evaluated and discussed below. The data is visualised in infographics in the Appendix (5.1.).

Alongside the quantitative approach of the survey, four institutions were the subject of my field research, with a focus on display analysis. Both permanent and temporary exhibitions in four Luxembourgish museums have been examined using photographic documentation and ethnographic observation: *Naturmusée* (Museum of Natural History), *Luxembourg City Museum* (Museum of the History of the City of Luxembourg), *Konschthal* (the youngest contemporary art museum in the country, inaugurated in 2022), and *Casino Luxembourg* (an established contemporary art space).

Then, I conducted interviews with staff members from institutions and organisations in the museal field, in order to collect precise data on the subject of multilingualism in museums. The interviews were held in Luxembourgish. Translated transcripts can be found in the Appendix (5.2.).

2.2. Luxembourg and its languages

In 1946, the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg devises a law to give legislative birth to the Luxembourgish language. Indeed, a stronger national identity and with it a linguistic identity was born out of the oppression suffered in the Second World War. The 1940 invasion by Nazi Germany brought with it, among many other things, an aggressive linguistic repression. French, which was widely spoken in Luxembourg, was banned altogether and Luxembourgish citizens with French-sounding first names had to change their names to the closest

German equivalent.²³ Thus, the 1946 law, while laying down the basis of Luxembourgish orthography, was, in fact, more politically motivated than linguistically.

Fast forward to 1984, the Luxembourgish government decides to officially acknowledge its multilingualism and Luxembourgish, French and German are set as official languages. As per Schiffman's analysis of language policy, this was a “*de jure* recognition” of what was the “*de facto*” situation in the country. These policies “explicitly mirror the multiglossic reality”²⁴ of the Grand Duchy.

Before delving deeper into Luxembourg's linguistic complexities, a short economic and demographic contextualisation is necessary. “Since the decline of the steel industry and the subsequent rise of the financial sector in the 1970s, Luxembourg has benefited from a highly favourable economic situation”²⁵, that is, from the late 2010s onwards, it has consistently been ranked as one of the richest countries in the world when measured in terms of GDP per capita²⁶. The current “super-diverse”²⁷ demographic situation of the country is the result of various waves of migration, out of which to most significant are the following four: 1. Italian migrants from the turn of the 20th century in response to Luxembourg's shortage of workforce in the mining industry. 2. Portuguese migration from the 1970s onwards, caused by major political changes and financial difficulties in Portugal. 3. Refugees from the Balkan war in the 1990s 4. So-called “expats” moving to Luxembourg in order to work for EU institutions or international corporations, which have established their headquarters there because of “Luxembourg's

23 - Documentary film: LAHR Claude and PERELSZTEJN Willy, Heim ins Reich - Der misslungene Anschluss, 2005.

24 - SCHIFFMAN Harold F., Linguistic Culture and Language Policy, London, UK, 1996, p.1-18.

25 - DE BRES Julia, Multilingualism in advertising and a shifting balance of languages in Luxembourg, Luxembourg, 2015, p.4.

26 - EuroStat Statistics Explained (accessed 25.04.2024).

27 - DE BRES Julia, Multilingualism in advertising and a shifting balance of languages in Luxembourg, Luxembourg, 2015, p.18.

generous corporate tax regime”²⁸. These economic and demographic factors strongly influence the museum landscape of the Grand-Duchy.

As previously mentioned, the choice of which language to use in which setting tends to be of a functional nature. Formal education in Luxembourg takes place in its three official languages: alphabetisation is in German, textbooks are in German in primary school and switch to French in academic secondary schools. Vocational education tends to stick to German when it comes to writing, although some subjects such as mathematics are usually taught using French. Luxembourgish is used as a spoken language throughout education and is the main language of communication between students and teachers as well as among the students. Written Luxembourgish is barely taught in school (“officially one hour of instruction a week in primary school”²⁹) nor is it used in writing (which is one of the reasons why Luxembourgish has come to be categorised as an endangered language).

In the sector of hospitality and commerce, French tends to be the most used language, mostly due to the fact that the workforce in these domains predominantly consists of cross-border workers from the neighbouring countries of France and Belgium. Newspapers can be found in Luxembourgish, English and Portuguese but the vast majority are published in French and German, sometimes both alongside one another in a single publication. Public signage and road signs are in French, town signs are in French and Luxembourgish. Laws are in French. Official correspondence from the government or from municipalities is usually bilingual (French/German). Cultural production in Luxembourgish is slowly increasing but still relatively rare. Many artists turn to languages with a more international outreach in order to

28 - DE BRES Julia, *Multilingualism in advertising and a shifting balance of languages in Luxembourg*, Luxembourg, 2015, p.4.

29 - DE BRES Julia, RIVERA COSME Gabriel, REMESCH Angela, *Walking the tightrope of linguistic nationalism in a multilingual state: constructing language in political party programmes in Luxembourg*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 41:9, 779-793, 2019, p.3.

be more commercially viable.

With such a large number of languages coexisting across various domains, the boundaries between them have become blurred. A common occurrence of language use in Luxembourg is the practice known as “code-switching”³⁰, that is, the combined use of more than one language within a word or a sentence.

Furthermore, it is important to note that beyond its functions, each language has a certain status and image in society. Within Schiffman’s notion of linguistic culture, there is the concept of *attitudes* that one has towards languages (one’s own language and other languages). These attitudes reflect one’s *language ideology*, a key sociolinguistic notion in all multilingual contexts, which Dorte Lønsmann outlines as follows:

language ideologies are defined as ‘beliefs, or feelings, about languages as used in their social world’ [...]. Furthermore, language ideologies are seen as situated in specific socio-cultural contexts, i.e. language ideologies are seen as grounded in social experience and as subject to the interests of their bearer’s social position [...]. This means that multiple and potentially conflicting language ideologies are likely to co-exist in a society.³¹

In order to analyse how various different languages coexist in the Luxembourgish museum landscape, an outline of the language ideologies that surround each of the languages of Luxembourg will be drawn below. This is relevant in that “language ideologies are defined as both determined by power relations and as being instrumental in creating them”³². The selection below reflects the languages that have been listed in the survey³³: Luxembourgish, French, German, English, Portuguese, Italian and Dutch.

30 - LEARN - Learning Expertise And Research Network, *LEARN Newsletter Edition 2017: Méisproochegkeet*, University of Luxembourg 2017, p.6.

31 - LØNSMANN Dorte, *Linguistic diversity in the international workplace: language ideologies and processes of exclusion*, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014, p.4.

32 - idem, p.4.

33 - See the full results of the survey in the Appendix 5.1.

a) Luxembourgish

Luxembourgish remains a predominantly spoken language and is only slowly solidifying its written presence in the Grand Duchy. From 2018 onwards, the process of standardisation and general promotion of the language has been intensified, with (political) initiatives such as the *Aktiounsplang fir d'Lëtzebuenger Sprooch* (action plan for the Luxembourgish language), the founding of the *Zenter fir d'Lëtzebuenger Sprooch* (centre for the Luxembourgish language) and the launch of standardisation tools such as the *Luxembourg Online Dictionary* (lod.lu). Through this process, Luxembourgish is progressing from being confined to informal settings³⁴ to becoming a more fully-fledged *national language*. However, as a fundamentally trilingual entity, Luxembourg does not automatically lend itself to the “one nation, one language”³⁵ ideology, commonly at the root of the concept of nation-states, forcing political parties to perform “ideological gymnastics”³⁶ at each election:

[By] drawing simultaneously on the two competing ideologies of monolingual and trilingual linguistic nationalism, they are able to calm anxieties around the place of Luxembourgish in the country while protecting themselves against potential accusations of more extreme forms of linguistic nationalism.³⁷

Furthermore, Luxembourgish is also considered to be the language of integration³⁸, notably in the educational setting as it serves as

34 - DE BRES Julia, RIVERA COSME Gabriel, REMESCH Angela, Walking the tightrope of linguistic nationalism in a multilingual state: constructing language in political party programmes in Luxembourg, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 41:9, 779-793, 2019, p.3.

35 - LØNSMANN Dorte, *Linguistic diversity in the international workplace: language ideologies and processes of exclusion*, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014, p.4.

36 - DE BRES Julia, RIVERA COSME Gabriel, REMESCH Angela, Walking the tightrope of linguistic nationalism in a multilingual state: constructing language in political party programmes in Luxembourg, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 41:9, 779-793, 2019, p.11.

37 - “The term linguistic nationalism refers to the ideological mobilisation of language as a medium and object of collective self-definition as a nation.” *idem*, p.3 and p.12.

38 - Information drawn from the interview with the Centre for the Luxembourgish language (ZLS) - See full transcript of the interview in the Appendix 5.2.

a serendipitous lingua franca among very linguistically diverse classrooms.

b) French

In Luxembourg, the French language has a variety of different language ideologies attached to it. On the one hand, a good level of French skills is admired as something prestigious and proof of a high level of education. French and French-speaking Belgian culture is very present through media (TV, radio) and arts (music, literature...). On the other hand, French is also the language spoken by the majority of immigrants and cross-border workers when interacting with Luxembourgish nationals. Thus, it also bears a number of stereotypes associated with an immigrant population. In the right-wing political discourse of the last decade, there have been frequent complaints about the fact that one needs to speak French in shops (because many employees in sales and hospitality do not speak Luxembourgish). Pupils who grow up in a Luxembourgish-speaking household can find themselves being frustrated with being forced to learn French at a very high level at school. It poses a significant challenge due to its comparatively complex orthography and grammar, and the fact that it is not a Germanic language like Luxembourgish. Thus, French is sometimes seen as a burden, but it is a necessary language in everyday life in Luxembourg.

c) German

German also has a certain cultural presence (TV, music, literature) in the Grand-Duchy, predominantly in households that speak Luxembourgish, because of the linguistic proximity between these two languages. It is, otherwise, significantly less present in the public sphere than French. The historical connotation linking the German language to the period of Nazi occupation has faded. With numerous cross-border workers from Germany, it is not uncommon nor unfamiliar to have German-speaking colleagues. One can often observe a phenomenon known as “receptive

multilingualism”³⁹, where Germans speak German to Luxembourgers, who in turn speak Luxembourgish to Germans, and they mutually understand each other. This works well because in the Mosel region, one speaks a dialect that is closer to Luxembourgish than *Hochdeutsch* is. In the unofficial hierarchy of languages, German would probably score relatively high among Luxembourgish nationals, not least because it is one of the three official languages. Among the immigrant community, German is not considered to be particularly relevant, since it is not necessary to speak it in order to get by in Luxembourg.

d) English

The English language is a comparatively new addition to Luxembourg’s multilingualism. Its importance and spread have surged in recent years, along with the development of the financial sector and an increase in the immigrant population known as “expats”, working for EU institutions or multinational companies based in Luxembourg. Altogether, only about 40% of the population speak English⁴⁰, mostly the younger generation, who completed secondary education. The University of Luxembourg has also adopted English as a “lingua franca in research”⁴¹. Generally speaking, proficiency in English tends to come across as arrogant, amplified by the fact that “English has a lot of belief in its superiority as a language”⁴². Furthermore, in the field of advertisement, “English functions as a ‘non-national language’, appropriated by advertisers to index a social stereotype of modernity, progress and internationalism”⁴³.

39 - LØNSMANN Dorte, Linguistic diversity in the international workplace: language ideologies and processes of exclusion, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014, p.14.

40 - STATEC - Linguistic diversity - Statistiques.lu (accessed 07.04.2024).

41 - University of Luxembourg: Multilingualism policy, 2020, p.6.

42 - GAWN Lauren and MCCULLUOGH Gretchen : Lingthusiasm Episode 88 No such thing as the oldest language, timecode: 12:30.

43 - DE BRES Julia, Multilingualism in advertising and a shifting balance of languages in Luxembourg, Luxembourg, 2015, p.12.

c) Portuguese

The case of the Portuguese language in Luxembourg is a complex one. With 14% of the population speaking Portuguese, it is a language commonly heard in the country. There are numerous Portuguese-speaking cultural associations, social events and gastronomy across the country. However, from the perspective of conservative Luxembourgish nationals, it is ideologically linked to a working-class immigrant population, which leads to situations of discrimination. Cases of what Grjasnowa qualifies as “Linguizismus”⁴⁴, that is, racism based on language, often happen in schools and in work contexts: There have been cases where, in job application processes for public office, individuals were ruled out based on their Portuguese names. Portuguese is mostly absent from political programmes and seldom present publicly in written form, “reflecting its very low status in the linguistic construction of the nation”⁴⁵.

f) Italian

Naturally, with almost 4% of Luxembourg’s population being Italian, and with a long migration history, the Italian language has a certain cultural presence, predominantly in the capital city and the south of the country. One can find Italian language bookshops, cultural associations, social events and gastronomy. As opposed to Portuguese, it no longer seems to suffer association with immigration anymore. Luxembourgish nationals have grown more accepting of Italian culture over time. With Italy as a popular holiday destination for Luxembourgish nationals, the Italian language is often associated with a certain holiday charm.

44 - GRJASNOWA Olga, Die Macht der Mehrsprachigkeit - Über Herkunft und Vielfalt, Berlin, Germany, 2021, p.7

45 - DE BRES Julia, RIVERA COSME Gabriel, REMESCH Angela, Walking the tightrope of linguistic nationalism in a multilingual state: constructing language in political party programmes in Luxembourg, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development 41:9, 779-793, 2019, p.11.

e) Dutch

As a child growing up in Luxembourg, the first place where one encounters Dutch is often the back of the cereal carton (many food distributors opt for bilingual FR/NL - or trilingual FR/NL/DE - packaging to cover the BENELUX market). Dutch therefore has a certain written presence in Luxembourg, at least in supermarkets. Other than that, one may encounter it verbally in the north of the country, which is a popular holiday destination for Dutch camping tourists. Due to the linguistic proximity and phonetic similarities between Luxembourgish and Dutch, these two languages are often mixed up in international settings and it is not uncommon, as a Luxembourgish speaker, to be asked whether one was speaking Dutch. However, both of these languages are not mutually intelligible. Dutch is thus both familiar and unfamiliar to Luxembourgish citizens.

This rough summary of linguistic ideologies barely scratches the surface of the linguistic complexity of the Grand-Duchy, but it helps to set the scene for a deep dive into the museums of Luxembourg.

2.3. Museum landscape of Luxembourg

To some extent, the Luxembourgish museum landscape mirrors its demographic composition. In the capital city, one finds the largest institutions with the greatest collections and largest budgets. These museums are embedded in an international context, attracting visitors from the neighbouring countries and beyond and collaborating with international curators and artists (National Museum of Art, History and Archaeology *Nationalmusée um Fëschmaart*, *Luxembourg City Museum*, Museum of Modern Art *MUDAM*, Contemporary Art Forum *Casino*

Luxembourg, Art museum of the city of Luxembourg *Villa Vauban*, National Museum of Natural History *Naturmusée*, History Museum of the fortress *Dräi Eechelen*). These are the ones people know about without having necessarily been there.

The second largest city in the country, Esch-sur-Alzette, located in the very south, near the French border, has been undergoing a transition from an industrial site (mining industry) to a cultural hub, i.e. undergoing a process of gentrification. Old factories are being repurposed into cultural spaces. The city houses the Museum of Resistance and Human Rights as well as the recently inaugurated contemporary art museum *Konschthal*.

Beyond this and the “big seven” in the capital, in the predominantly rural areas that make up the rest of the country’s territory, one finds numerous small to very small museums, often run by associations of passionate individuals, on a volunteer basis (Fire Brigade Museum, Museum of the Battle of the Bulge, Mining History Museum, Slate Museum, to name just a few). The latter are less known (even by people who have lived in the country for their entire lives), but also tend to function as a cultural and social meeting space for the village where they are located. Finally, there are a handful of rural museums concerned with the topic of rural life itself, mostly with a historical lean. Their primary focus is on education, with school classes as their main audiences.

It is important to mention, however, that out of the 39 museums that make up the study at hand, the vast majority do not have the means to be open to the public all year round, and have opted for spring to autumn or summer openings.

2.4. Beneath the multilingual infrastructure of the museum: identity and capitalism

In this chapter, the focus is on museum infrastructure in its broadest sense, including but not limited to staff, buildings, logistics (budgets, work processes...), hardware and software, audiences, and of course languages. The data collected using the survey has unearthed several insights and trends pertaining to the linguistic infrastructure of museums in Luxembourg:

a.) Across the board, French is the most used language by a fine margin just ahead of German, followed a bit further down by English.

b.) Luxembourgish is rarely used in written form, but used verbally in 100% of the institutions that took part in the survey. Only two museums out of 39 use Luxembourgish on their respective websites.

c.) Dutch is the only language that comes up in written content and mediation, but not in the languages spoken among staff members.

d.) Italian is the only language spoken among staff members that is not represented anywhere in written form.

e.) Portuguese is strongly underrepresented considering the fact that Portuguese speakers make up 15% of the population of Luxembourg.⁴⁶

f.) There is a very diverse range of language combinations used in each institution. For example in the case of marketing, 13 different language combinations were recorded: FR-EN, FR-DE-EN, DE-EN-LU, FR-DE-PT, EN, FR-LU, DE-LU, FR-DE, FR-DE-EN-LU, FR-DE-LU, FR, FR-EN-LU, FR-DE-EN-LU-NL. This data is symptomatic for the linguistic

situation in Luxembourgish museums.

g.) There is a strong correlation between the languages spoken in the teams and the languages offered in mediation programmes. Thus, the programmes often seem to be down to the individuals working in an institution rather than to a strategic linguistic framework or precise language policy.

h.) Beyond standard spoken languages, one institution offers mediation programmes in sign language. Another one offers mediation in *Leichte Sprache* (meaning simplified German).

i.) One institution claims to be trying to avoid using any language at all for their posters.⁴⁷

All in all, it has become apparent that Luxembourg's linguistic diversity has started making its way into museum practices, with up to seven different languages being used in institutions across the country. The linguistic skills and linguistic cultures of staff members strongly influence the languages of mediation programmes. Inclusive language practices such as sign language are still mostly absent from museums.

2.4.1. How linguistic infrastructure influences museum meaning-making

Taking all of the findings above into account, one must ask whether multilingual practices in Luxembourgish museums are born out of necessity, follow economic concerns or rather constitute an ideological, socially-motivated choice.

Research has shown that, in general, there does not seem to be an

46 - STATEC - Linguistic diversity - Statistiques.lu (accessed 07.04.2024).

47 - Original survey response: "Pour les affiches, de préférence sans langue."

overarching, explicit policy or framework pertaining to the use of language(s) within museums in Luxembourg. Here, an analysis by De Bres et al. may help to shed light on the consequences of language policy being implicit rather than explicit:

If language policy is implicit in most areas of public life in Luxembourg, it is no less influential for this fact. Garcia (2018, 68) observes that, while ‘in theory, language choice is free [...] in reality [...] this freedom is heavily constrained by the weight of tradition, the continued impact of past choices, and complex social logics’. While these implicit policies exert considerable power, they are not uncontested: on the contrary, language is a topic of near constant discussion in Luxembourg.⁴⁸

It has been confirmed through research and interviews that also among museum staff, language is a consistently contested domain. These “near constant discussions”⁴⁹ reveal the existence of certain power dynamics at play within museum teams. This has serious consequences on the (collective) curatorial processes and the meaning they produce. For example, when a museum chooses to display content in English rather than in Luxembourgish, it can lead to the alienation of the local public. As a result, one could establish a correlation between the personal and the communal levels of language(s).

The linguist Noam Chomsky defines two common uses of language: “social relations and self-expression”⁵⁰. Beyond being used to “clarify one’s thoughts”⁵¹, language is also sometimes considered to be a “‘core value’, that is, a defining characteristic”⁵² of someone’s culture. In fact, some linguists argue that each individual produces an “idiolect, [a]

48 - DE BRES Julia, RIVERA COSME Gabriel, REMESCH Angela, Walking the tightrope of linguistic nationalism in a multilingual state: constructing language in political party programmes in Luxembourg. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 41:9, 779-793, 2019, p.4.

49 - idem, p.4.

50 - MAHER John and GROVES Judy, Chomsky A Graphic Guide, London, 2013, p.12.

51 - idem, p.12.

52 - SCHIFFMAN Harold F., *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy*, London, UK, 1996, p.11.

unique, personal language”⁵³. Another fact to be taken into consideration here is that multilinguals tend not to “think unilingually in a politically named linguistic entity”⁵⁴. Languages are thus a constitutive part of one’s identity, which means they are at the root of any curatorial process.

The aforementioned power dynamics arise when a curator’s multilingual idiolect is confronted with the multilingual idiolects of the rest of the museum’s team and infrastructure. In other words, different *linguistic cultures* and *language ideologies* collide and compete, sparking a constant process of negotiation between personal and communal levels of language, which eventually results in meaning-making through hierarchy.

In the Luxembourgish context, this can mean negotiating whether or not to use Luxembourgish within the exhibition, whether English has become more important than German, whether one has to use all of the official languages of the country, whether one can justify using a new language.

Another factor to be taken into account here is the language of the material infrastructure of the museum (archives, documentation, database software, keyboards...), which also has an influence on the choice, extent of use and prioritisation of individual languages. This is particularly relevant when it comes to the Luxembourgish language: since it is still in the process of being standardised and only a relatively small number of people speak it (around 400.000 individuals world-wide⁵⁵), there is very little software available in Luxembourgish. This hampers the increase of the quantity of written Luxembourgish content within museums.

53 - LI Wei, Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language, in: *Applied Linguistics*, Volume 39, Issue 1, February 2018, p.15.

54 - idem, p.13.

55 - UNESCO World Atlas of Languages (accessed 07.04.2024).

When looking at Luxembourgish museums as linguistically diverse workplaces, a number of social dynamics arise. Schiffmann describes language(s) as a “social passport”⁵⁶, meaning that proficiency in a certain language can be a door-opener. This is all the more relevant in a workplace setting, where research “has shown that employees may be excluded from informal interactions and from access to power structures on the basis of language skills”⁵⁷. The cultural industries are known to be a very competitive field, thus proficiency in numerous languages may play a major role in cultural career progression in Luxembourg.

2.4.2. Through the capitalist lens

Beyond sociolinguistic theories, multilingual infrastructure cannot be separated from the capitalist reality it operates in. Historically, multilingualism has always been closely related to commerce: in ancient times, one can imagine members of a settlement would learn their neighbouring settlement’s language in order to be able to trade with them. The knowledge of another language becomes an economic asset. Fast forward to today, multilingualism is still very much anchored in a commercial context, and that also manifests itself in museum operations.

On the one hand, the increased commodification of culture has pushed museums to adopt neo-liberal strategies to stay profitable. Similarly to how the neo-liberal self-optimising trend has pushed individuals to learn new languages in order to add a commercial asset to their profile (as illustrated by the proliferation of language self-learning apps as

56 - SCHIFFMAN Harold F., *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy*, London, UK, 1996, p.5-12.

57 - LØNSMANN Dorte, *Linguistic diversity in the international workplace: language ideologies and processes of exclusion*, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2014, p.2.

well as university degrees focusing on multilingualism⁵⁸), museums have started adding new languages to their offering, in order to reach out to new audiences. In the case of Luxembourg, that would be the addition of English in order to accommodate the linguistic needs of the most recent type of immigrants known as expats (and to increase the national touristic appeal). Capitalist motivations are also the reason why this new population came to Luxembourg in the first place: multinational companies establish their headquarters in Luxembourg in order to be more profitable (saving on tax), bringing along an English-speaking workforce, which results in English being added to local museum practices. In other words, capitalism can foster a certain type of multilingualism in museums.

The capitalist aspect of multilingualism is also addressed in the permanent exhibition of the *Luxembourg City Museum*, which retraces the history of Luxembourg chronologically, with one room dedicated to how it became an international financial centre. One panel mentions multilingualism (see figures 2 and 3 on page 36) as being one of the key assets for Luxembourg’s financial success, broadening the term multilingualism to not only the concept of knowing several languages, but also knowing several legal, fiscal and cultural systems.

On the other hand, multilingual museum practices also automatically mean more production costs. From translations fees to additional display material costs over to proofreading processes, the list of extra items to be budgeted for is long. Many museums cannot necessarily afford it. Consequently, capitalist constraints often mean that certain languages have to be omitted. The financial implication of producing an exhibition in an additional language most often outweighs the representational,

58 - The University of Luxembourg offers a master’s degree in learning and communication multilingual and multicultural contexts.

URL: <https://www.uni.lu/fhse-en/study-programs/master-in-learning-and-communication-in-multilingual-and-multicultural-contexts/> (accessed 14.05.2024).
The Universität Wien offers a master’s degree in multilingual technologies.
URL: <https://transvienna.univie.ac.at/en/studies/master-programme-multilingual-technologies/> (accessed 13.05.2024).

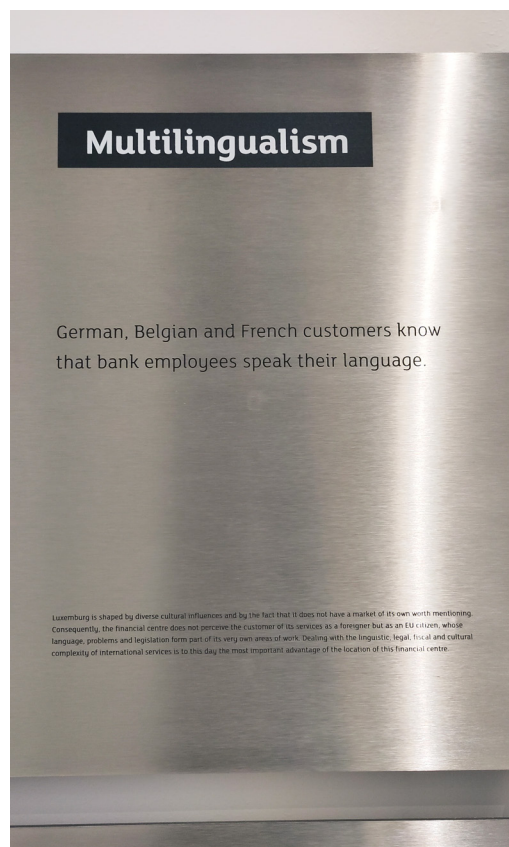


fig. 2

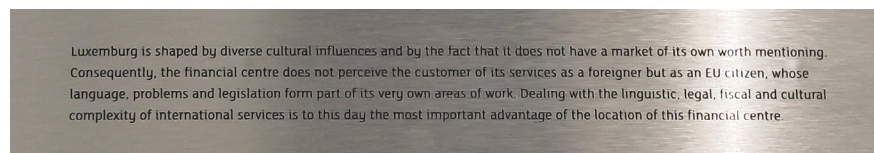


fig. 3

cultural and ideological implications.

This is one of the reasons why Luxembourgish almost never makes it into an exhibition in written form. Since all Luxembourgish speakers also know German, in most cases the use of German instead of Luxembourgish is considered to be sufficient, and using both languages alongside one another would be considered superfluous. And in capitalist terms, superfluous means a waste of financial resources.

Finally, when talking about capitalist environments, one cannot omit talking about advertising practices. In the realm of marketing, results from the survey show the broadest range of language combinations used in museums (13 language combinations between 28 respondents). This shows that marketing strategies are more tailored towards their target audience than museum contents themselves. Indeed, my research has revealed that the languages used in museum advertising (including social media) are continually reassessed. The data from the survey largely coincides with the data from a research paper on general multilingual advertising in Luxembourg⁵⁹: French is the most used language, and there is more English than there is Luxembourgish. The main difference between the data sets is that German seems to play a bigger role within museum practices than in general advertising. The research paper also found that advertising is one of the fields where one finds more written Luxembourgish than in most others: “This is not surprising given that advertising is often a site of transgressive, creative or progressive language use”⁶⁰.

All in all, the capitalist system is both a catalyst and an obstacle to multilingualism, as it can both foster or restrict the addition of new languages in museum practices. Advertisers have seen that there is money to be made with multilingualism, and this trend has also reached

59 - DE BRES Julia, *Multilingualism in advertising and a shifting balance of languages in Luxembourg*, Luxembourg, 2015.

60 - idem, p.19.

the museum field. However, certain types of multilingualism are not considered a commercial asset and therefore only rarely make their way into an exhibition.

Be that as it may, since most of the museums that make up the study are publicly funded, one may ask whether following neo-liberal capitalist trends really answers the educational and social mission public institutions are meant to follow.

2.4.3. On resources and translation

Building on the aforementioned considerations on the influence of capitalism on language choice and use in museums, the practical implications will now be analysed in further detail.

One of the main obstacles that multilingualism faces in museums is the finite amount of resources (time, space, expertise, ...) available for the production of any given exhibition or project. From interviews with professionals in the field it has become clear that time, or the lack of it, is one of the main hindrances to adding more languages to an exhibition. Processes of translation, revision and additional material production take up a significant amount of time that cannot always be accommodated.

Practical limitations are often in the way of what one might call an egalitarian treatment of languages within a multilingual institution. The physical room an exhibition can take up is always finite, and therefore the extent to which an exhibition can be multilingual is also finite (disregarding the digital domain). In very practical terms, that means “it is often not possible to fit all languages onto one panel in a visually compelling way”⁶¹ (see fig. 4). This leads to cuts in the amount

61 - Quote from the interview with Naturmusée - See full transcript of the interview in the Appendix 5.2.

of content that is on display, which, in turn, leads to less content depth. Consequently, exhibition makers have to weigh out how much content they are willing to sacrifice for the sake of multilingualism. In a broader context, less depth and less content altogether may also result in a general devaluation of exhibitions and even reduce visitor numbers and public engagement.

From the interviews I carried out for this paper, it has become clear that “some museums do not always have the budget to get everything professionally translated, which can be one reason why in certain cases things do not get translated at all, or it can lead to texts being translated in-house or with automatic translation software, where there can be a loss in the quality of the text.”⁶²

62 - Information drawn from the interview with ICOM Luxembourg - See full transcript of the interview in the Appendix 5.2.

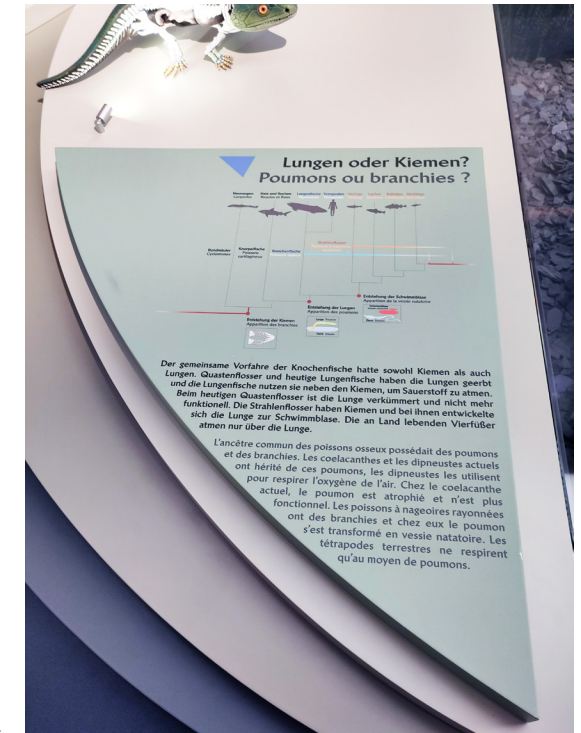


fig. 4

Another resource that is finite is the attention span of visitors. Neuro-linguistic research has shown that a multilingual's languages are permanently activated in parallel⁶³. In multilingual exhibitions cluttered with numerous versions of the same text, it can be difficult to stay focussed and receptive.

In the case of the Luxembourgish language, there is another resource that is often lacking: expertise. Since the language is still in the process of standardisation, it is not a given that staff members (or visitors) know its orthography. It is therefore far from being an established part of the process and requires a significant surplus of resources to include Luxembourgish in written form in an exhibition.

Research has shown that there are no nation-wide regulations policing the use of languages in museums in Luxembourg. Many teams work on a case by case basis. For each new project, they re-evaluate their linguistic strategy and, as previously mentioned, they discuss their language choices. The fact that these reflections on languages happen very regularly (inside and outside the institutions) also makes the museums agile - they can easily adapt to changes in their target audiences, changes in society, even changes in the languages themselves. Whereas in large monolingual institutions discussions on language choices and addition of new languages might come about more rarely, thus making change and progress slow, in Luxembourg the seemingly chaotic linguistic situation also means that institutions are more flexible and adaptive.

In conclusion, unless languages are considered to be a priority or an inherent conceptual element of an exhibition, there will always be shortcomings due to a lack of resources.

63 - LEARN - Learning Expertise And Research Network, LEARN Newsletter Edition 2017: Méisproochegkeet, University of Luxembourg 2017, p.8.

Lost in translation: untranslatables and asymmetricality

When discussing matters of multilingualism, one cannot omit addressing the issue of translation. Conceptually, translation means changing words from one language into another one. As established before, languages are a cultural construct, full of cultural references. Furthermore, language is sometimes qualified as a lens that renders certain things visible, and other things not⁶⁴. Depending on the language(s) a person speaks, they will be more attentive to certain things they see than others. For instance, speakers of Russian will be more attentive to the shade of blue, because their language forces them to distinguish between dark blue and light blue. Similarly, some languages do not have separate words for hand and arm as English does, and will therefore be less attentive to that specific distinction in their everyday life. This means that it is virtually impossible to create direct equivalents between two languages, and that there will always be a certain bias in a language, and there will always be some content lost in translation. Consequently, this very thesis would have turned out differently if it were written in another language.

Moreover, there is the problem of untranslatable words, i.e. cultural concepts that have been worded in a certain language but not in others. A testimony to this issue is given by the “Dictionary of Untranslatables” edited by Barbara Cassin, which describes itself as a “one-of-a-kind reference to the international vocabulary of the humanities”⁶⁵. Among the untranslatables one can name words such as *Schadenfreude*, which has found its way into English from German, filling a conceptual gap that English had not yet catered for.

For multilingual museum practices however, this means that ideally one would need a completely new text for each language on display,

64 - ARTE, Wie stark prägt uns die Muttersprache?, 42 - Die Antwort auf fast alles, 2023.

65 - CASSIN Barbara (ed.), Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon, Princeton, US, 2014.

rather than a carbon copy. One example going in that direction will be discussed in chapter 2.5.1.

Another phenomenon that can be observed when multiple languages are at play in an exhibition, is an asymmetrical treatment of information between the language versions: pieces of information are omitted in certain languages. One possible explanation for this would be that the information is deemed too culture-specific, and that it would require too much additional text to contextualise it appropriately. One such example can be found in fig. 5, depicting the label of an artwork hanging in the permanent exhibition of the Wien Museum in Vienna. The mention “in modischer ‚Markart-Kleidung‘” (in fashionable “Markart-clothing”) was left out from the English version, probably assuming that it constitutes a too specific cultural reference, and at the same time excluding visitors who do not speak German from this extra level of conveyed knowledge.

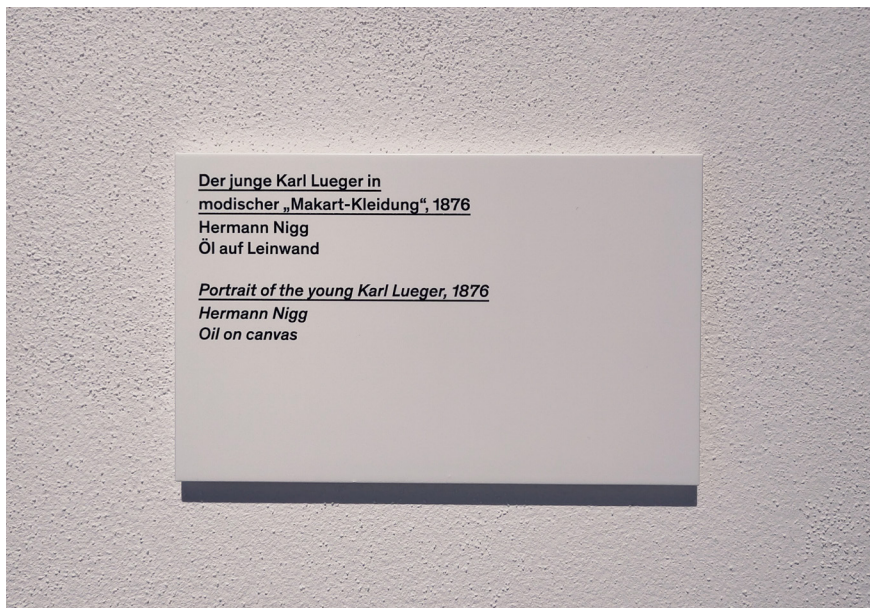


fig. 5

The challenges of translation are amplified when it comes to the organisation and storage of collections and archives. Museums might run into problems related to the fact that each linguistic community has its own (art-)historical conception and terminology. If a museum works in languages that have discrepancies in their classifications, they will have to set up complex organisational systems to accommodate it. Objects may have to be catalogued and filed in more than one language. In many regards, the case of Luxembourg is comparable to that of Switzerland, in that they both work with French and German, among other languages. In his analysis of the challenge of four languages and cultures in the Swiss Theatre Collection, Martin Dreier observes the following:

In 1993, a guidebook to the [permanent] exhibition was published in German, and a French edition is under way. Problems of translation have arisen, of course, providing a clear demonstration of the main obstacles to intercultural exchange. In terms of the history of the theatre for instance, the ‘classical’ period in the French theatre is different from that of the German theatre: for German speakers, it means the era of Goethe and Schiller (the latter half of the eighteenth century) whereas in a French context, it designates the seventeenth century with the works of Racine and Corneille.⁶⁶

Both Switzerland and Luxembourg are liminal spaces, where different linguistic cultures meet, clash and overlap. As a result, these countries have to make logistical, and inevitably political decisions as to which languages they use to which extent, and which cultural doctrines of their larger neighbours they want to adhere to. Many of these decisions become visible through exhibition practices in museums.

⁶⁶ - DREIER Martin, The Swiss Theatre Collection: the challenge of four languages and cultures, in: Museum International (UNESCO, Paris, France), No. 194 (Vol. 49, No. 2, 1997), p.18.

2.4.4. The affective component

As previously established, language is very personal and closely linked to a person's identity. Consequently, there is an affective component to language, which manifests itself in the museum in at least two ways that will be outlined below.

The first affective aspect is what Grjasnowa words as a “warmes Gefühl”⁶⁷(a warm feeling), which one experiences when one's A-language is perceived around one, in the public sphere. Museums are part of this public sphere and can contribute to what Gretchen McCulloch calls a sense of “state-level-validation”⁶⁸ of a language. This is what people may experience when encountering their A-language in museums. Since the insights from the case study have revealed that written Luxembourgish is very rare in museums, visitors with Luxembourgish as their A-language will only very rarely experience such feelings as things stand. The communication through what one might call a school language is less *immediate*.

This very immediacy is what curators can deliberately make use of when they want to go beyond the intellectual level of communication and address their audience on an emotional level. This is the second affective component. One very poignant example of such a strategy was found in the permanent exhibition of the *Luxembourg City Museum*, in the room that addresses the Nazi occupation suffered in the Second World War (see fig. 6).

The words “Kollaboratioun” (collaboration), “Resistenz” (resistance), “KZ an Deportatioun” (concentration camp and deportation), “Juddeverfolgung” (persecution of the Jews) and “Liberatioun” (liberation) are the only words in the entire permanent exhibition that are found written in

67 - GRJASNOWA Olga, Die Macht der Mehrsprachigkeit - Über Herkunft und Vielfalt, Berlin, Germany, 2021, p.8.

68 - GAWN Lauren and MCCULLUOGH Gretchen : Lingthusiasm Episode 67: What it means for a language to be official - timecode: 24:40.

Luxembourgish. It comes across as a very conscious decision by the curators in an attempt to appeal to the Luxembourgish population in the most immediate way possible. It also seems to try to involve the visitors emotionally, reminding them of the complexity of the occupation period, and implying that not all of Luxembourg was on the side of the victims.



fig. 6

2.4.5. The role of audiences

In contemporary museum practices, there is a general consensus on the fact that “audiences are part of the interpretive schema of exhibitions”⁶⁹. Viel and Girault would even argue that visitors are new actors in the construction of museum knowledge⁷⁰. Indeed, each visitor brings along their own linguistic ideology and sociolinguistic attitude. In a multilingual setting, this often means contrasting ideologies and attitudes. Viel and Girault conceptualise a “nouvelle forme relationnelle entre lieu, objet et public”⁷¹ (a new relational form between location, object and audience). One could then argue that language is the bridge between each of the elements in this conceptual trilogy. As a result, the choice of which language to use for which aspect of museum life is of great significance in the shaping of museum knowledge. The extent to which exhibition makers decide to take into account the linguistic diversity of their audiences has a direct influence on the meaning produced within exhibitions.

2.4.6. Multilingual museum mediation

Another domain that concerns the audience is that of museum mediation⁷². Multilingual museum mediation is a hugely complex topic that would necessitate further research in order to be adequately addressed. This chapter therefore only looks at the overarching, infrastructural aspect of multilingual museum mediation in Luxembourg, and not at the deeper, conceptual side of it. How do

69 - MOSER Stephanie, *The Devil is in the Detail: Museum Display and the Creation of Knowledge*, in: *Museum Anthropology*, Vol. 33 Issue 1, 2010, p.30.

70 - VIEL Annette, GIRAULT Yves, *Diversité narrative, nature et muséologie*, in: *Pratiques : linguistique, littérature, didactique*, 2007, 133/134, p.152.

71 - idem, p.153.

72 - The use of the term museum mediation has been chosen here as it contains less implicit hierarchy than the more commonly used term museum education.

museums communicate about their mediation programmes in such a linguistically diverse setting? On which levels do museums interact with schools?

Communicating about mediation

In terms of public communication, museums use channels such as their websites, the press and physical communication through flyers and posters. All things concerning mediation, i.e. guided tours, workshops, readings etc., come with detailed information about the languages one can expect when attending any of these events. For each event, a text specifies in which language(s) it will be held. In contrast, none of the websites of the 39 museums that make up the study indicate in which languages the exhibition contents are displayed.

Often, the language used to announce the event is also the language that the event is going to be held in, which easily leads to museum calendars in up to seven languages⁷³. Alternatively, museums use language codes within the event title: “Guided tour of the temporary exhibition (EN)”. In a number of cases, Luxembourgish and German are grouped together, implying such a strong linguistic proximity that it would not make sense to separate them. A general trend in mediation programmes is that events targeted at adults tend to be monolingual, allowing for a more in-depth approach in terms of the content they convey. Conversely, programmes for children tend to be offered in four languages on average (French, German, English, Luxembourgish), indicating a stronger focus on activities and less focus on content mediation.

Some Luxembourgish museums have started adopting more inclusive museum practices. One of the institutions participating in the survey offers mediation in “Leichte Sprache” (simple language), specifically

73 - Survey finding: mediation in museums in FR, DE, EN, LU, NL, PT, IT.

meaning simplified German. The choice of simplified German over French is evocative and seems to indicate that the German language community is more progressive when it comes to inclusion. Another reason for this choice, however, may be the linguistic proximity between Luxembourgish and German, as they stem from the same linguistic family. In a linguistically diverse context, the implementation of exhibition or mediation contents in simplified language is a significantly more complex task than in a monolingual setting. It requires in-depth linguistic skills in several different languages and a social motivation from the exhibition makers. Since adding content in simplified language versions requires the same amount of resources as adding a standard language, this inclusive practice will always be faced with financial obstacles. In other words and as established previously, unless inclusion is considered a priority, there will be shortcomings due to a lack of resources.

Beyond spoken languages, one museum participating in the survey mentioned that they are trying to incorporate more sign language in their mediation programmes. In this particular case, the sign language in question is German Sign Language (Deutsche Gebärdensprache - DGS), which was adopted as an official language of Luxembourg in 2018. In other words, the domain of sign language in museums is still monolingual, even though it is embedded in a multilingual environment. Further research and development into this aspect of linguistic infrastructure is pressingly needed.

Museum mediation and schools

A number of museums in Luxembourg have dedicated their programmes to education and are in close cooperation with schools. Among them there is the *Thillenvogtei* museum, a rural history museum focusing its programmes on school classes and children and the Museum of Natural History *Naturmusée* in the capital city, which has adjusted its display height to be suitable for children.

These museums tend to work with the languages of instruction, which are predominantly German, and to a lesser extent French. Consequently, pupils do not expect to find written content in Luxembourgish in museums, because there is practically no written Luxembourgish in schools. One could ask then, what the implications would be for children not able to experience exhibitions and museum visits in their A-language (besides the oral level). Especially at a young age, museums have a strong symbolic value and tend to be seen as an authority when it comes to knowledge. Robertson qualifies museums as an “articulation of the nation-state mythos”⁷⁴. Is there a subconscious level where the lack of written Luxembourgish impacts pupils in a certain way? Further research into this specific domain would help elicit any such implications.

Generally speaking, however, insights from the survey and the interviews have shown that museums tend to be more dynamic and adaptive than schools when it comes to language use. De Bres et al. observe the following in their paper on linguistic nationalism in a multilingual state:

If the language situation has changed dramatically, language policies have not always followed suit. French and German have been official languages of instruction since 1848, with the basic approach not having changed since, despite enormous changes in the ethnic and linguistic makeup of students.⁷⁵

A look beyond the primary and secondary school system into the University of Luxembourg’s Policy on Multilingualism reveals a comprehensive examination into the role of languages in teaching and knowledge production. The policy includes principles such as: “Multilingual teaching in the form of bi- or trilingual study programs is used to foster a deeper understanding of different academic cultures

74 - ROBERTSON Hamish, *Engines of Knowledge: The Museum and the Exhibit*, in: Discovery Society 2017, p.2.

75 - DE BRES Julia, RIVERA COSME Gabriel, REMESCH Angela, *Walking the tightrope of linguistic nationalism in a multilingual state: constructing language in political party programmes in Luxembourg*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 41:9, 779-793, 2019, p.3.

within a given discipline and to enrich learning outcomes”⁷⁶. The policy even includes a detailed set of rules pertaining to the recruitment of staff such as a maximum percentage of monolingual employees, as well as a rule for the languages to include on business cards. This shows that the University has thoroughly addressed and extensively researched the complex matter of multilingualism, in resonance with the political and societal discourse of the country.

76 - University of Luxembourg: Multilingualism policy, 2020, p.5.

2.5. Matters of display: display matters

The most compelling way in which multilingualism manifests itself in the museum is through display. To an outsider, walking through a Luxembourgish museum might convey a sense of being in an airport. Similarly to a transport hub, the whole of Luxembourg is a liminal space, where multiple languages collide. This results in busy museum walls, where design choices are crucial to help lead visitors through without a headache. In the multilingual context, as in any type of exhibition, display can be very evocative in and of itself. Design elements ranging from typeface, character size and colour combinations to material choices and display heights each convey varying amounts of symbolic content and unspoken meaning. Indeed, “far beyond being mere trifles in the scheme of manufacturing knowledge, the attributes of museum display have long asserted themselves as key epistemic devices”⁷⁷. The latter is further intensified when several languages are competing for space and attention.

Museum exhibitions are almost always multimodal, that is, they use “textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual resources, or modes, to construct [...] messages”⁷⁸. This means that a great number of factors are involved in the construction of meaning, and in this context, multilingualism acts as a multiplier: each mode of each language interacts with the modes of the

77 - MOSER Stephanie, The Devil is in the Detail: Museum Display and the Creation of Knowledge, in: Museum Anthropology, Vol. 33 Issue 1, 2010, p.30.

78 - LI Wei, Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language, in: Applied Linguistics, Volume 39, Issue 1, February 2018, p.18.

other languages. The linguist Li Wei further expands on multimodality:

The ways in which the modes are assembled contribute to how multimodality affects different rhetorical situations, or opportunities for increasing an audience's reception of an idea or concept. Take a textbook or a web page, for example; everything from the placement of images to the organization of the content creates meaning.⁷⁹

Therefore, the field research carried out in the context of this case study was especially focused on matters of display, specifically on how exhibition texts in three different languages were arranged. The upcoming analyses follow the methodological framework delineated by Stephanie Moser in her paper on museum displays and the creation of knowledge, that is, questioning the “key attributes involved in creating meaning in exhibitions”⁸⁰. Moser defines seven areas of analysis, ranging from architecture (location), space, design (colour and light) to layout, subject, display types, and finally exhibition styles⁸¹.

2.5.1. Approaches to multilingual exhibition display

Four set-ups from four different exhibitions have been selected for analysis and will be examined below.

Example no. 1 : Introductory wall text at the start of the temporary exhibition “Joyeuse Apocalypse” by Jérôme Zonder, curated by Kevin Muhlen at the contemporary art space *Casino Luxembourg* (cf fig. 7).

The most apparent key attribute of this set-up is the white cube setting in which the text has been placed. A long established exhibition container;

79 - LI Wei, Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language, in: Applied Linguistics, Volume 39, Issue 1, February 2018, p.19.

80 - MOSER Stephanie, The Devil is in the Detail: Museum Display and the Creation of Knowledge, in: Museum Anthropology, Vol. 33 Issue 1, 2010, p.22.

81 - idem, p.22.



fig. 7

the white cube simulates a sense of neutrality, which upon further analysis, quickly turns out to be full of covert significance. “Once the wall became an aesthetic force, it modified anything shown on it”⁸², observed Brian O’Doherty after retracing the historical development of gallery spaces from impressionist salons to the white cube. Generally speaking, the use of black, sans serif typeface on a white background is an ongoing trend in the contemporary art world (both commercial and non-commercial) and would be an interesting research subject in and of itself because it follows the same approach of dissimulating meaning behind a façade of neutrality, as does the white cube.

82 - O’DOHERTY Brian, Inside the White Cube, Berlin 1996, p.29.

Furthermore, this set-up shows wall text in three languages: French on the left, English in the middle, and German on the right. This breaks with the traditional hierarchy of French followed by German (because German is an official language in Luxembourg, and English is not). All but one component of this set-up has been translated into three languages: the title is only in the original language (in this case French). One could infer then, that the exhibition title is an integral part of the artistic creation and thus cannot be translated without losing the original artistic intention behind it. Each language is displayed in the same exact typeface (size, style and classification), same exact colour and alignment (left align) - the only visual distinction in this example is the use of language codes (FR/EN/DE) at the top of each version. The latter results in a flattened hierarchy between languages, at the cost of a minor lack of orientation points for the visitors to find their preferred language.

Example no. 2 : Intermediate wall text introducing a new chapter within the permanent exhibition of the *Luxembourg City Museum* (cf. fig. 8)

Unlike Example no. 1, this set-up uses the more traditional order of French first, then German, and finally, as a relatively new addition, English. This trilingual wall display shows titles separated from the corresponding body text. The visitor has to make the connection between the positioning of the title and the positioning of the corresponding body text in the same language. The visual distinction between the three languages is made using slightly different font weights for each one. This helps with visitor orientation as it functions like a visual code, but it is subtle enough as not to disturb the general aesthetics of the wall display.

As this set-up is located in one of the underground floors of the building, which is located in the medieval old town of the capital city, there is a striking contrast between the heavy, rocky medieval foundations

(visible in numerous rooms) and the airy, almost floating text (an effect generated by the lack of general left alignment). All the text has been given ample space, which makes it appear less cluttered and easier to digest for visitors. The design and colour of this set-up are very unobtrusive, which marks a clear priority on the objects on display. As each language practically gets an equal treatment in this set-up, the hierarchy between them is very subtle.

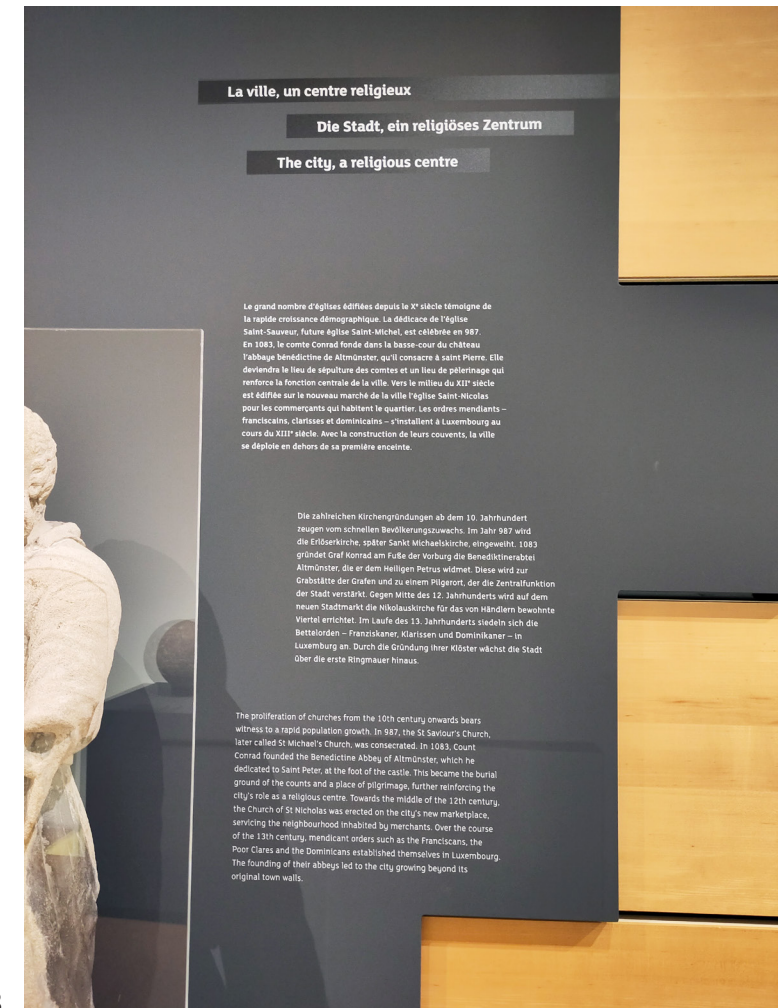


fig. 8



fig. 9

Example no. 3 : Intermediate wall text in a diorama about life in the desert in the permanent exhibition of the Museum of Natural History *Naturmusée* (cf. fig. 9)

This particular set-up is bilingual (German and French). The panel is inserted into a diorama showing plants in the desert, and it tries to blend into the background using a picture of a desert landscape. Both languages are displayed in the exact same typeface (size, style,

classification), however the positioning is not consistent: at the top of the panel, German is displayed above French, while at the bottom of the panel, German is displayed alongside French. There is a barely discernible colour difference between each language version: German is printed in black, while French is printed in a very dark shade of red. The fact that the same typeface is used for both languages and that the positioning (and alignment) changes within the panel makes for a disorienting, cluttered end result, where the colour difference is too subtle to function as a colour code (especially if one takes into account visitors with degrees of colour blindness). What adds to the confusing layout is the fact that the main title is separated from its corresponding body text. Consequently, there is virtually no hierarchy between the languages, because there is virtually no visual, discernible distinction between them.

Example no. 4 : Intermediate wall text in the temporary exhibition “Asteroid Mission” at the Museum of Natural History *Naturmusée* (cf. fig. 10)

This trilingual (English, French and Luxembourgish) set-up shows a more radical approach to visual differentiation between languages. A large title and a subtitle in English overlook the entire panel. The English version of the text is displayed on a black background with white font, generating a relatively high visual contrast. Placed alongside, there are two white sheets of papers less than half the size, where one can read a French or Luxembourgish (a rare occurrence) translation. The latter are marked using language codes (“FR” and “LU”) at the very top of the page. In the translations, some elements from the English version are missing, namely the subtitle and the infographic: one can observe an asymmetrical treatment of information between the language versions. Furthermore, the display height of the translations is surprisingly low, which adds yet another obstacle towards legibility. All this shows a clear prioritisation of English as the main language.

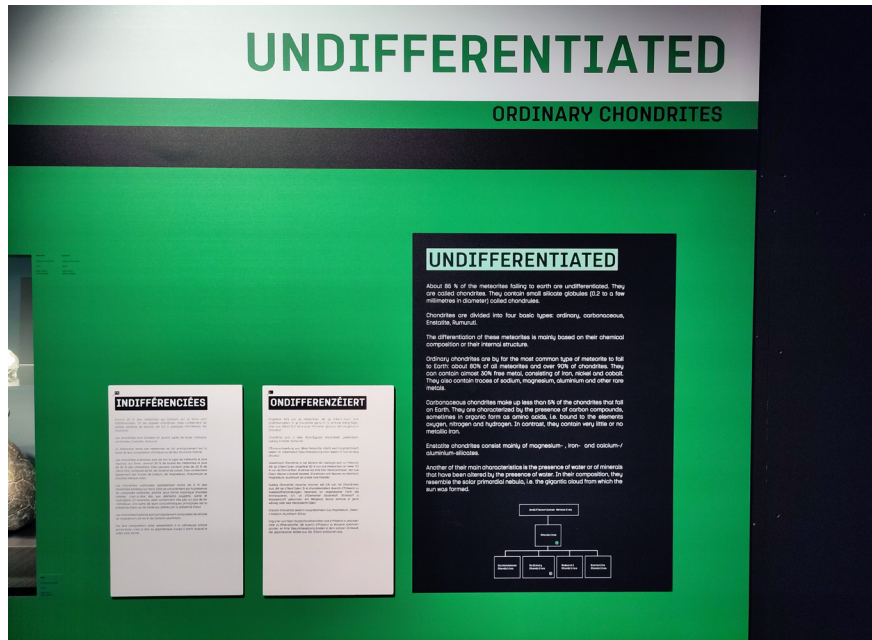


fig. 10

From the analyses above, it becomes apparent that text and context are merged together to create meaning. Through display decisions (colour coding, space allocation, positioning and alignment), certain languages are given more importance than others. Considering that each language bears a specific set of language ideologies, they take on a representative role when used in museums. The museum positions itself in a broader political discourse when prioritising certain languages over others.

The physical display also brings the different languages together and makes them interact: a layer of meaning is produced in between them. Sometimes, multilingualism is embraced and forms a harmonious part of an exhibition, other times it seems to constitute an obstacle and disrupts the exhibition. Jean Davallon conceptualises exhibitions as

an “écriture des choses”⁸³ (a writing of things), comparing exhibition making to the act of writing, thus highlighting the role of linguistic systems in the curatorial process. He observes that “[a]ucune exposition n’est qu’esthétique et aucune exposition n’est que sémiotique. Toutes sont à des degrés divers des agencements formels et des ensembles signifiants”⁸⁴ (no exhibition is only aesthetic and no exhibition is only semiotic. They are all, to varying degrees, formal arrangements and signifying systems). In other words, content can never be dissociated from its context, and context always contributes to the production of meaning.

A multilingual exhibition on Luxembourg’s multilingualism

The topic of Luxembourg’s multilingualism has found its way into the realm of exhibitions in the form of an itinerant show by the *Centre for the Luxembourgish Language* (ZLS) titled “The Language(s) of Luxembourg” (see figures 11 and 12).

This exhibition was produced in four languages (Luxembourgish, French, German, English). An interview with a member of the exhibition team has revealed that initially, they considered working with even more languages, but they quickly ran into physical constraints as well as limitations of time, which prevented the addition of other languages. Although this is currently an itinerant exhibition, which can be booked by external partners, there are plans to eventually turn it into a permanent exhibition in a specific location. This shows that there is a broader interest in the topic and the exhibition is in touch with the ongoing political discourse on languages.

The display is bold and deliberate: a methodical colour-coding system using four colours (yellow, red, blue and white) differentiates each

83 - DAVALLON Jean, L’écriture de l’exposition : expographie, muséographie, scénographie, in: Culture & Musées, n°16: La (r)évolution des musées d’art, 2010, p.230.

84 - idem, p.233.



fig. 11

language from the next and helps orient the visitor. The hierarchy between the languages is broken up by alternating which language is placed on the top left of each panel. All the languages are treated with equal importance.

The exhibition flyer (see fig. 13) is very striking in that it contains the four languages of the exhibition, but the content is not the same in each language. The authors have taken into account the specific cultural and social references that a speaker of a specific language may have and therefore produced four completely unique pieces of text, rather than translations of the same content.

This leads to the matter of multilingual editorial design, which is a major factor in multilingual museum practices and will therefore be discussed below.

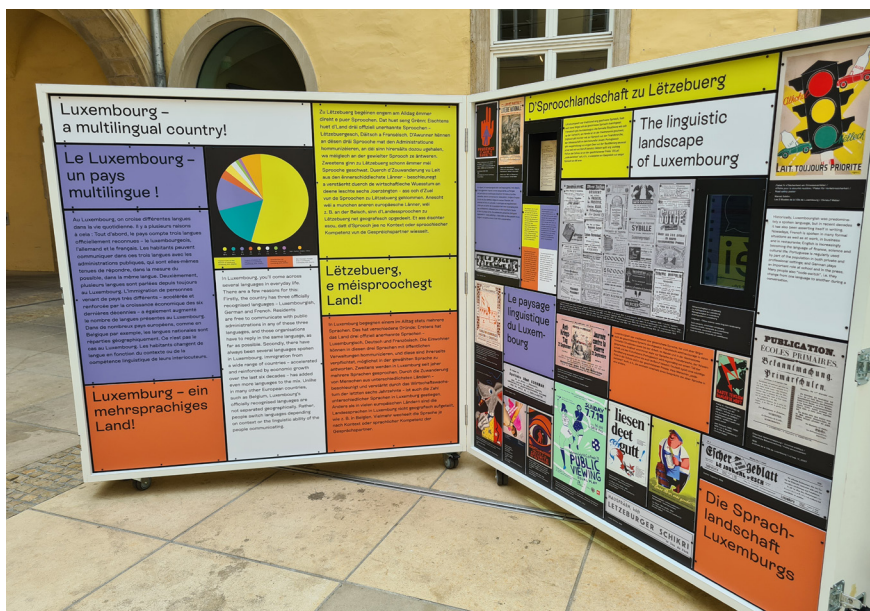


fig. 12

The Luxembourgish language(s)

Does Luxembourgish have an official orthography?

Do geographical factors have an impact on multilingualism in Luxembourg, similarly to Switzerland or Belgium?

Is it true that everyone living in Luxembourg speaks at least three languages?

Come and discover the new travelling exhibition by ZLS:

- Multilingualism
- Evolution of Luxembourgish
- Luxembourgish in everyday life
- Media & culture
- Discover language in a participatory manner

Free entry

Expo on tour!

Informationen zu den Datumen, de Visite-güdeën an dem Kaderprogramm: → www.zls.lu

Informations sur les dates, les visites guidées et le programme cadre : → www.zls.lu

Informationen zu den Daten, den Führungen und dem Rahmenprogramm: → www.zls.lu

Information about dates, guided tours and supporting events: → www.zls.lu

À bientôt! Bis geschwënn!

Bis bald! See you there!

The Luxembourgish language (s)

Luxemburger (S)

Sprache (n)

Sprooch (S)

D'Lëtzebuurger (S)

Lingue (en)

luxembourgeoise

D'Lëtzebuurger Sprooch(en)

Schreifs du an dengem Alldag vill Lëtzebuergesch?

Gees de an der Vakanz op de „Strand“ oder op „d'Plage“?

Wéini hues de fir d'lëscht e Buch op Lëtzebuergesch gelies?

Gratis Entrée

Lingue(s) luxembourgeoise(s)

Combien de variétés régionales existe-t-il en luxembourgeois ?

Est-ce que le Grand-Duché a une langue officielle ?

Y a-t-il des groupes de hip-hop qui rappent en luxembourgeois ?

Entrée gratuite

Luxemburger Sprache(n)

Warum gibt es in Luxemburg so viele verschiedene Sprachen?

Ist Luxemburgisch eine eigenständige Sprache oder ein Dialekt?

Warum verwenden viele Menschen im Luxemburgischen verschiedene Schreibweisen für ein und dasselbe Wort?

Freier Eintritt

Komm an entdeck déi nei mobil Expo vum ZLS:

- Méisproochegkeet
- Evolutioun vum Lëtzebuergesch
- Lëtzebuergesch am Alldag
- Medien & Kultur
- Sprooch partizipativ erliewen

Viens découvrir la nouvelle exposition itinérante du ZLS :

- Plurilinguisme
- Evolutioun du luxembourgeois
- Le luxembourgeois au quotidien
- Médias & culture
- Découverte de la langue de manière participative

Komm und entdecke die neue Wanderausstellung des ZLS:

- Mehrsprachigkeit
- Luxemburgisch im Wandel der Zeit
- Luxemburgisch im Alltag
- Medien & Kultur
- Sprache partizipativ erleben

ZLS Zentrum fir d'Lëtzebuurger Sprooch

LE GOUVERNEMENT DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG, Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse

fig. 13

2.5.2. Multilingual editorial design: sketching out a basic typology

One of the most frequent types of design one encounters in a museum is editorial design: hand-outs, flyers, catalogues. To an extent, wall texts and labels could also be considered to be editorial design in that they consist of the same core elements: titles, headings, subheadings, body text - sometimes even headers and footers. In a multilingual setting, editorial design faces a number of challenges: Which language comes first? How does one distinguish languages visually? How much space is allocated to each language? How can one achieve an aesthetically pleasing yet functional layout that accommodates the needs of each language (special characters, lower and upper case characters, sentence and word length)?

Theoretical concepts and scientific literature on multilingual editorial design seem to be very rare and very little of it is publicly available. A possible explanation for this could be the proximity between graphic design and marketing, or in other words, the predominantly commercial nature of multilingual design. This chapter therefore attempts to delineate a basic typology of multilingual editorial design based on current practices (field research as well as museum publications available online).

The typology is organised into three factors (see fig. 17 on page 67) that are to be outlined below:

The first factor (A) to consider for this typology is the number of languages being used simultaneously (2 - bilingual, 3 - trilingual, etc.), and more precisely whether this number is even or odd. Compositional aspects such as symmetry/asymmetry and the balanced use of white space are defined by this factor. Layout patterns can be classified along the number in question.

The second factor (B) builds on the first factor: the design approach. Depending on the value of factor A (even or odd), certain design approaches might be more or less suitable. Drawing from concrete examples found during field research, two different approaches are to be delineated below. This basic typology has no ambition of completeness because, somewhat obviously, there is no finite amount of potential design approaches.

The first approach is that of *separation*, meaning that languages are physically and visually separated from one another, i.e. one language per page (sometimes in opposite directions in turnaround publications: see fig. 14). This approach could also be qualified as the *clone* approach, sometimes leading to separate copies altogether (see fig. 15). This approach allows for little compromise and only very soft hierarchies between languages, since each language follows the same template and is therefore allocated the same amount of space. Depending on the format, separation is suitable for an even or odd number of languages: when in book format (two facing pages), it is suitable for an even number of languages; when in leporello format, it is suitable for an odd number of languages.



fig. 14

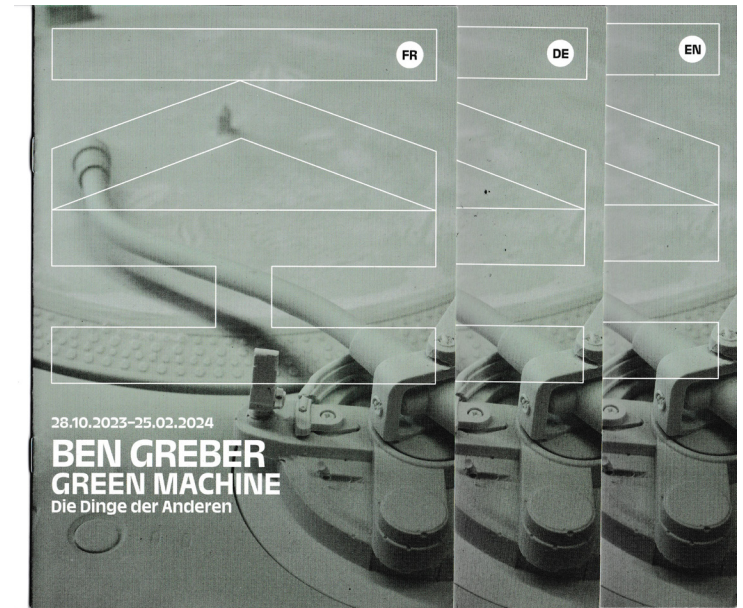


fig. 15

The second approach is one that might be called *integration*. Each language version is fitted onto the same page, or across multiple pages, not necessarily following a strict template (see fig. 16). This approach allows for more flexibility than the first, but is also subject to considerably more compromise and stronger hierarchies between each language. It constitutes a space allocation challenge and asks for a clear prioritisation of languages. It can be used in a variety of publication formats.

Generally speaking, the *separation* approach is the more pragmatic, time-saving approach whereas the *integration* method requires more time and creativity. However, the latter method also creates opportunities to fully embrace multilingualism and use it as a visual element. Research has shown that separation is the most common approach between the two. This also correlates with insights from a study in the field of multilingual advertising in Luxembourg, which found that just under

60% of advertisements in newspapers were monolingual⁸⁵. This shows that integrated multilingual graphic design represents a considerable challenge because it has to take into account references from various different cultures within the same visuals. Therefore, there seems to be a tendency to avoid multilingual design whenever possible.

The third factor (C) pertains to the tools of distinction that can be used in order to visually distinguish the different languages to help navigate the reader through a multilingual publication. Among the most common methods used one can find colour coding (one language, one colour), variations in typefaces (font size, font width, etc.) and the use of standardised language codes (e.g. FR for French).

85 - DE BRES Julia, Multilingualism in advertising and a shifting balance of languages in Luxembourg, Luxembourg, 2015, p.8.

A BASIC TYPOLOGY OF MULTILINGUAL EDITORIAL DESIGN

FACTOR A no. of languages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ bilingual, trilingual, multilingual ■ odd or even number

FACTOR B	
separation	integration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ not more than one language per page ■ sometimes separate copies altogether ■ very suitable for bilingual publications (in book format) ■ when in leporello format, suitable for more languages ■ little compromise and soft hierarchies between languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ very suitable for publications with more than two languages ■ space allocation challenge ■ more flexible ■ subject to much compromise and strong hierarchies between languages
FACTOR C	
tools of distinction	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ colour coding ■ language codes ■ print formats: traditional facing pages book, leporello, turnaround book ■ typefaces, typeface classifications (serif, sans serif) typeface styles (bold, italic) 	

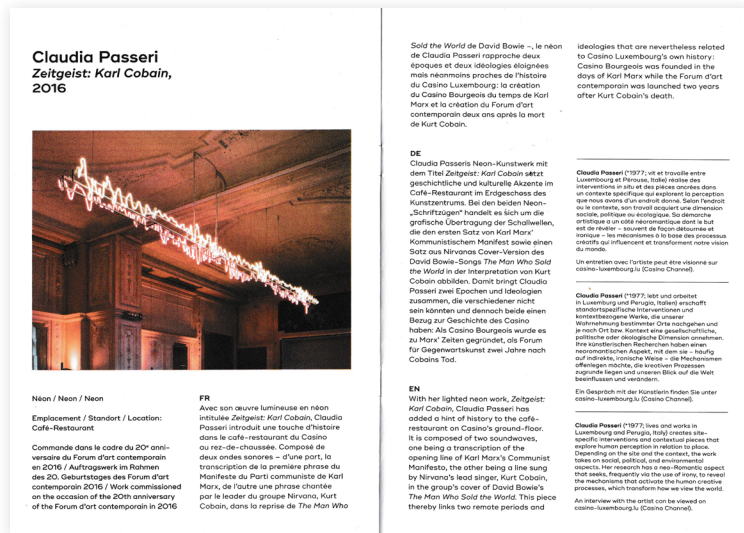


fig. 16

fig. 17

2.5.3. When the object itself is multilingual

A logical consequence of exhibiting in a multilingual context is that one will, inevitably, end up with multilingual collections, and in them objects that are multilingual in and of themselves, i.e. they bear inscriptions in several languages. This adds another layer of complexity and meaning-making. It also poses a number of infrastructural questions: how does one set up an archive for multilingual objects (keywords, categories), especially when the software is monolingual? How does one create a multilingual label for a multilingual object? Does a multilingual object necessitate several different labels, where the content varies depending on the language in order to accommodate the appropriate cultural references? Effectively, exhibition makers are having to “decode - unravel the meaning of that which is unfamiliar”⁸⁶ while simultaneously “encode - [...] transform that which is alien into that which is comprehensible”⁸⁷ the content across each language version.

Two such pieces found in the permanent exhibition of the *Luxembourg City Museum* serve as powerfully symbolic examples of the phenomenon. The examples, historical posters bearing proclamations addressed to the people of Luxembourg (see fig. 18 and fig. 19) are very interesting not only because of their content, but because of their form. The English caption of the trilingual label for the first poster (fig. 18), which dates from 1847, reads “The aldermen inform the public of the closing times of the fortress gates”. The second example dates from 1848 and is described as “Governor Gaspard Théodore Ignace de la Fontaine announcing constitutional reforms” (fig. 19).

These objects show a 19th century approach to dealing with bilingual editorial design: for each of the two languages, German and French,

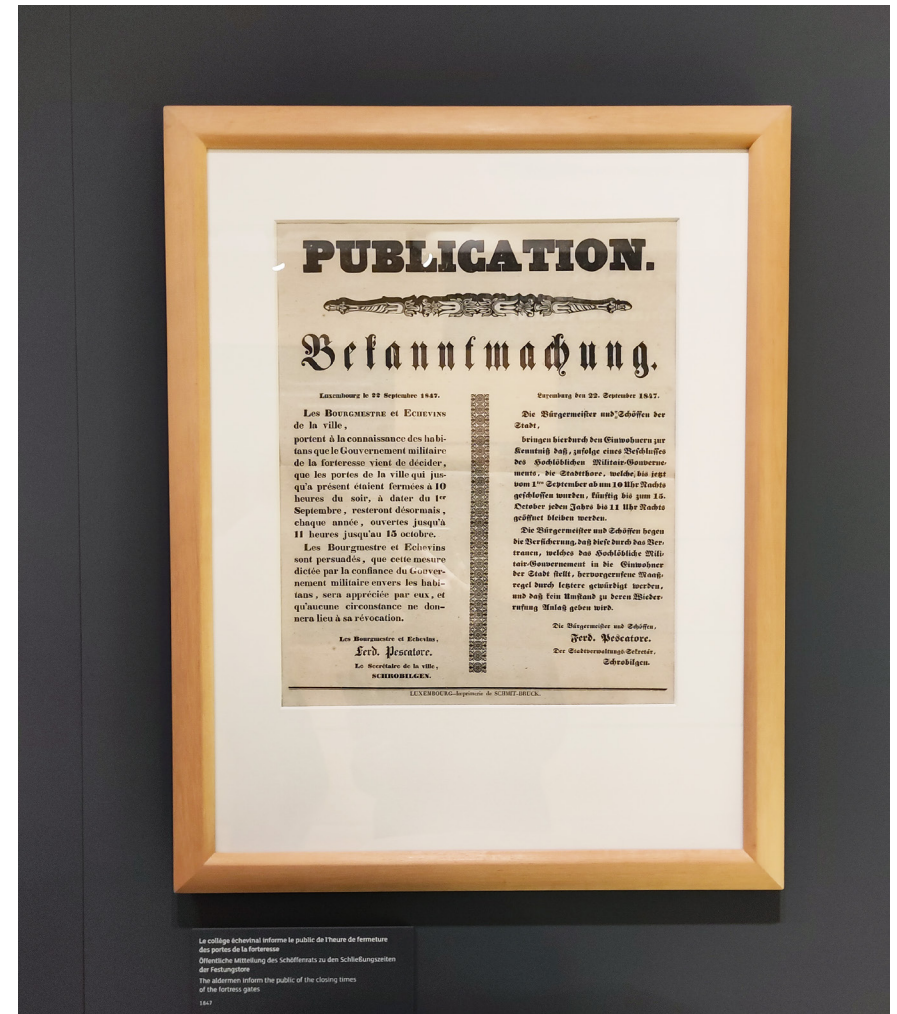


fig. 18

86 - LIDCHI Henriette, *The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures*, in: *Representation. Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, Milton Keynes, UK, 1997, p.166.

87 - idem, p.166.

a different typeface was chosen. These typefaces, blackletter on the left, roman on the right (see fig. 20), are greatly contrasting, almost antagonistic.

The visual distinction between the two languages is clear at first sight (even with one of the titles using the exact same word for each language version). The choice of using two different typefaces is vastly evocative and points to the fact that “typefaces are not merely receptacles for content”⁸⁸. A study found that typefaces are perceived to have political and ideological qualities⁸⁹, and to some extent one could infer that this proclamation is addressed to two distinct audiences living in the same territory. These posters also bear witness to the fact that visual multilingualism has been a part of Luxembourg ever since it started being an independent nation state (1839). On a broader scope, these museum pieces are a testimony to the nature of Luxembourg as a liminal space between two major civilisations with two contrasting visual cultures that blend together across the Grand-Duchy.

88 - HAENSCHEN Katherine and TAMUL Daniel J., What’s in a Font?: Ideological Perceptions of Typography, Blacksburg, Virginia, USA, 2019, p.3.

89 - idem, p.1-2.

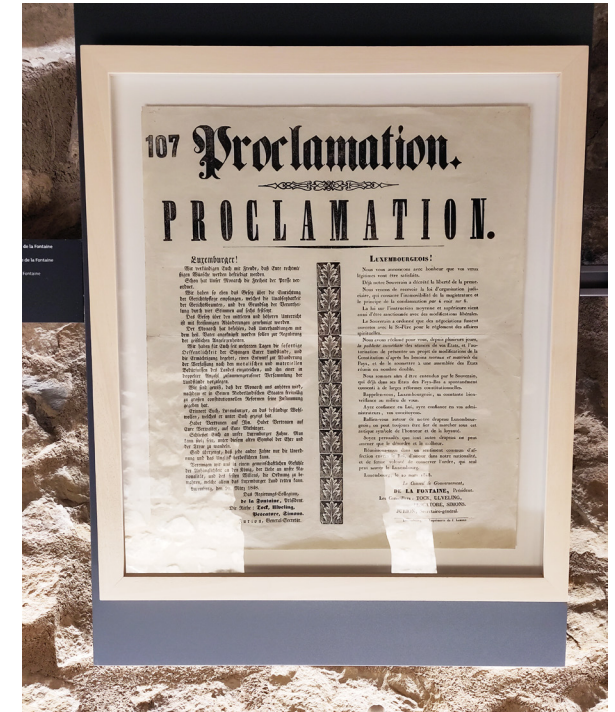


fig. 19



fig. 20

3. *Linguistic speculation in and around the museum*

After a deep dive into the multilingual ecosystem that is Luxembourg, time has come to broaden the field of discussion and look to the future. This is also a good moment to remind ourselves that multilingual museums, that is, museums where more than one language exists, are very common and not only an occurrence in officially multilingual countries.

This chapter starts with a critical commentary on the use of national flags to symbolise languages and will continue with two excursions: The first one will be borrowing the applied linguistics concept of “Translanguaging”⁹⁰, in order to hypothesise about possible future strategies and attitudes for multilingual museums. The second one will be an exploration of existing projects of museums about language(s).

90 - LI Wei, Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language, in: Applied Linguistics, Volume 39, Issue 1, February 2018, p.1.

3.1. The problem with languages and flags

In museums, although predominantly in the more touristic areas, one can observe a practice of indicating languages on printed items using the flags of certain nation-states (see fig. 21). This is also often the case on museum websites. This practice establishes an implicit link between a language and a geographically defined political entity.

A few aspects of this linkage are questionable. Indeed, with around 7.000 languages existing worldwide, and about 195 nation-states, one can see that multilingualism is, in fact, the norm⁹¹. Consequently, the use of a national flag to symbolise a language is not compatible with the fact that there are considerably more languages than there are nations. Beyond this mathematical impasse, there is also an element of nationalism and power asymmetry inscribed in the flags of nation-states. In a number of cases they bear traces of colonialism and linguistic repression, especially when it comes to what one might call the “big languages” such as French, English and Spanish. When it comes to geography, “regional variation is the natural state for languages to exist - the idea that everybody in what is defined as a nation should speak exactly the same way is something that people in governments decide”⁹². Going back to the example in fig.21: the use of the Chinese national flag to signify one of the many languages spoken in and around the Chinese territory becomes an act of negating linguistic minorities and linguistic diversity. Since this practice is mostly found in touristic sites, it reveals an international ambition, that is, a commercial ambition.

91 - GRJASNOWA Olga, *Die Macht der Mehrsprachigkeit - Über Herkunft und Vielfalt*, Berlin, Germany, 2021, p.17.

92 - GAWN Lauren and MCCULLUOGH Gretchen : *Lingthusiasm Episode 73: The linguistic map is not the linguistic territory* - timecode 10:40.



fig. 21

The presence of flags in this context reveals a strong link between language, the nation-state and the museum. What this trilogy entails is further delineated by Hamish Robertson in his analysis of museums as “engines of knowledge”⁹³:

Museums have acted as formalizing institutions for a great deal of social and cultural knowledge, and the period in which their expansion accelerated was that of the rise of nationalist state ideology – the singular people with a single language (often the dominant group’s dialect), a national anthem and a flag – so beloved by Europeans and others. To produce this kind of uniformity of identity and processes of identification requires institutions to promulgate the illusion of sameness, to historicise it, and to develop a neat linear narrative arc from the messiness of normal human societies and their complicated histories.⁹⁴

Interestingly enough, the artificial language Esperanto has also been ascribed a flag, using the same type of visual features as nation-state flags (geometric composition, colour fields, stars...). The latter bears witness to a long tradition of symbolic communication via flags. Meanwhile, a commonly used alternative to this historically laden practice is the use of two-letter language codes set by the International Organization for Standardization (e.g. LU, FR, DE, EN...)⁹⁵.

93 - ROBERTSON Hamish, *Engines of Knowledge: The Museum and the Exhibit*, in: *Discovery Society* 2017, p.3.

94 - idem, p.2.

95 - The “Code for individual languages and language groups” is the ISO 639:2023.

3.2. Translanguaging in the museum

If one considers that languages are not confined to nation-states, maybe their borders should be lifted altogether. Throughout the case study of Luxembourg, practices such as code-switching have been observed, referring to the use of several different languages within the same conversation or within the same sentence. Expanding on this, one could speculate on which potential opportunities for museums there might be if they were to draw on applied linguistics and adopt practices such as *translanguaging*.

The definition of translanguaging encompasses a lot, and different linguists see different elements in it. Translanguaging sometimes refers to “eng kommunikativ Praxis, wou Persounen hire gesamte sproochlechen an net-sproochleche Repertoire asetzen”⁹⁶ (a communicative practice, where people make use of their entire linguistic and non-linguistic repertoire). Moreover, the linguist Li Wei describes translanguaging as “using one’s idiolect, that is one’s linguistic repertoire, without regard for socially and politically defined language names and labels”⁹⁷. This means going between and beyond named languages. The concept of translanguaging builds on that of languaging, which considers language as a process rather than a finished product. There is an interesting parallel here with the on-going trend in contemporary exhibition practices where the exhibition is process-based as opposed to product-oriented, and where the meaning-making happens during and after the exhibition, rather than prior to it.

96 - LEARN - Learning Expertise And Research Network, LEARN Newsletter Edition 2017: Méisproochegkeet, University of Luxembourg 2017, p.6.

97 - Li Wei, Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language, in: Applied Linguistics, Volume 39, Issue 1, February 2018, p.15.

Li further explores the potential of translanguaging in the context of meaning-making:

Translanguaging is [...] not conceived as an object or a linguistic structural phenomenon to describe and analyse but a practice and a process—a practice that involves dynamic and functionally integrated use of different languages and language varieties, but more importantly a process of knowledge construction that goes beyond language(s).⁹⁸

Furthermore, Li argues that multilingualism is a “rich source of creativity and criticality, as it entails tensions, conflict, competition, difference”⁹⁹. Contrasting linguistic notions compete with one another within a multilingual speaker’s languaging practice. The latter is a fruitful starting point for any curatorial research and exhibition practice. Bearing in mind considerations of infrastructure and its influence on curatorial processes, another parallel can be drawn here between the museum space and what Li calls the *translanguaging space*:

Translanguaging Space, a space that is created by and for Translanguaging practices, and a space where language users break down the ideologically laden dichotomies between the macro and the micro, the societal and the individual, and the social and the psychological through interaction. A Translanguaging Space allows language users to integrate social spaces (and thus ‘linguistic codes’) that have been formerly separated through different practices in different places.¹⁰⁰

A multilingual museum could be this translanguaging space Li writes about. In concrete terms, exhibition makers could adopt a translanguaged approach to the content they display, and provide traditional translations in named languages below, to accommodate for non-multilingual visitors. A translanguaged approach would also help deal with untranslatable terms.

98 - Li Wei, Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language, in: Applied Linguistics, Volume 39, Issue 1, February 2018, p.11.

99 - idem, p.21.

100 - idem, p.20.

In conclusion, a translanguaged approach to museum practices might help them fulfil their duties as cultural and educational institutions by being more representative, fostering integration and accommodating the appropriate cultural references. Translanguaging could help museums make a move towards emancipating themselves from the boundaries of nation-states (although, considering how museums are entangled in a complex web of political and financial power dynamics, it may not be in their best interest...).

3.3. Museums for the intangible: language(s) museums

While museums often focus on physical collections of things, a number of projects attempting to archive and display the intangible, that is, language(s) have emerged in the last decades. Exhibition makers have to find inventive ways to convey what is essentially an abstract concept. They may use representations of language in the form of text, but in order to capture the full scope of language, a range of different media is necessary.

In other domains, museums often act as protectors of cultural goods, assuring their conservation for future generations. One could then speculate what would happen if one were to bring endangered languages into a museum in a bid to conserve them. Is there a risk that they might “die” as a living language and end up in the “archived” section? One could draw upon the example of the Luxembourgish language, which is currently facing the same issue. The challenge is to acknowledge the living and dynamic nature of languages (and museum archives) while acting to conserve them.

Museums specifically about languages are comparatively rare, namely it is not common to find one in every major city, as one would find an art museum or a history museum. What seems to be a common trait is that they are not big museums. The examples found in the context of this paper are not large institutions, but rather small projects run by passionate individuals. This shows that the conservation of languages through museum practices is not considered a priority on a broader cultural and political level.

In the Austrian capital city of Vienna, one can find the Esperanto Museum. It consists of a single exhibition room, and is not an independent museum but is part of a group of public museums run

by the Austrian National Library. Since it is concerned with planned or artificial languages, it falls under a separate category in terms of social relevance and political representation. In contrast, the Canadian Language Museum based in Toronto on the Glendon Campus of York University is primarily concerned with Canada's linguistic heritage, including but not limited to a diverse range of indigenous languages. The museum participates in the conservation and revitalisation of indigenous languages that have historically been repressed. As made apparent by their motto "Languages are the foundation of Canada's future"¹⁰¹, the museum acknowledges the country's multilingualism and addresses the linguistic hierarchy imposed by the official bilingualism (French/English).

On the other end of the spectrum, there are museums that are more focussed on the field of linguistics, and the concept of language itself, mostly disregarding the socio-political context. One such example would be Mundolingua, a small museum based in the French capital Paris, which endeavours to introduce "the world of language, languages, and linguistics"¹⁰² to a broad audience with a multimodal approach.

101 - Website of the Canadian Language Museum. URL: <https://languagemuseum.ca/> (accessed 27.05.2024)

102 - Website of the Mundolingua Museum. URL: <https://www.mundolingua.org/> (accessed 27.05.2024)

4. Conclusion

Since contemporary museum practices consider the audience to be an integral part of museum meaning-making, it is important to carefully consider the instruments of communication, that is the languages, one uses in exhibitions.

In a case study of Luxembourg's museum landscape, it has become apparent that the choice of language and the extent of use of any given language is heavily dependent on the resources available to the museum. This means that unless languages are an inherent conceptual element of an exhibition or are considered a priority, there will always be shortcomings due to a lack of resources. A strong correlation has been observed between the languages spoken among museum staff and the languages offered in mediation programmes. In multilingual curatorial processes, the confrontation between different linguistic cultures and language ideologies leads to constant negotiation between personal and communal levels of language within complex power structures.

Museum practices seem to reflect “changes currently underway in Luxembourg more generally, reflecting a shifting balance of languages from older (trilingual) to newer (multilingual) forms of

multilingualism.”¹⁰³. The increased use of English as a consequence of the neo-liberal political trends in the Grand-Duchy may bring more newly-arrived, English-speaking individuals into museums, but it does not necessarily help towards reaching out to locals that are currently not visiting museums. This amplifies the already significant societal divide between the population that regularly visits museums and those who have never stepped foot inside a museum. Of course, languages are far from the only factor at play in this matter, but they are a factor nonetheless.

The insights drawn from the case study of Luxembourg may be of broader interest for other multilingual settings facing similar challenges. In fact, even monolingual institutions may profit from the learnings gained from multilingual environments in an effort to de-hegemonise culture, especially institutions that work solely in English.

One of the museums that took part in the survey said that for their posters, they try to use no language at all. What could this look like? How could one circumvent the necessity to choose and prioritise a certain language with agile poster design? This is one of many related fields that may be of further scientific interest building on this paper. While the present paper researched the topic of multilingual museum infrastructure at large, it may also be of further interest to delve into specific types of institutions such as art museums, natural history museums, national museums: each of these will have their own infrastructural and visual specificities, with social, symbolic and political consequences. Another aspect worth exploring would be multilingual museums where the languages have different alphabets, which would add yet another level of complexity¹⁰⁴.

103 - DE BRES Julia, *Multilingualism in advertising and a shifting balance of languages in Luxembourg*, Luxembourg, 2015, p.20.

104 - With Luxembourg as the main focus of this paper, the result is an undoubtedly Eurocentric perspective. Broadening the scope of research to a more diverse range of multilingual environments would ensure a more balanced outcome.

With the ongoing major developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence and instantaneous translation technologies (both in written and in aural form), there may be new opportunities on the horizon for multilingual museums. More performant and affordable technological solutions will undoubtedly make it easier for institutions to introduce more linguistic variety in their programmes. Whether they choose to do so will, accordingly, be defined by ideological and political motivations rather than by the resources available. This may also open the door to more inclusive museum practices.

All things considered, one may wonder whether a museum could (or even should) play a role in saving an endangered language, namely Luxembourgish, from extinction? The museum as an institution has the power to institutionalise languages and one could argue that it has the responsibility to conserve not only the material heritage but also the linguistic heritage of a country.

5. *Appendix*

5.1. Survey data infographics

This survey contains nine questions. The data provided by 28 respondents (institutional members of ICOM Luxembourg) is displayed in the following pages. For each question, there is a graph showing the total number of occurrences of any language across the institutions and a second graph showing the sets of languages in use simultaneously within one institution.

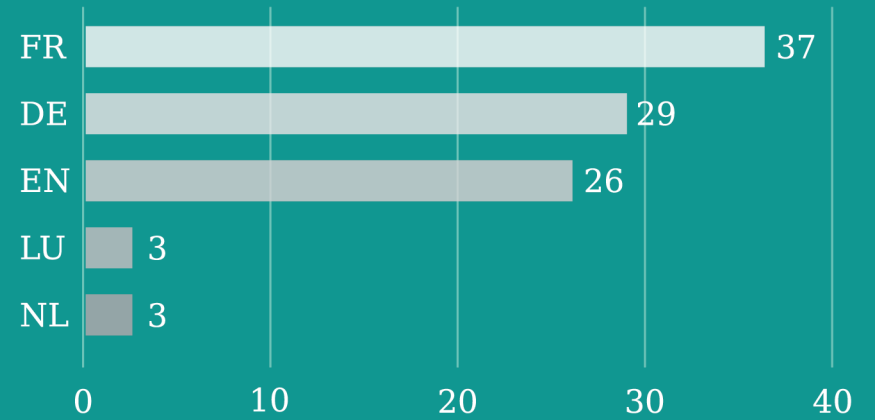
Language codes:

French : FR
German : DE
English : EN
Luxembourgish : LU
Dutch : NL
Portuguese : PT
Italian : IT

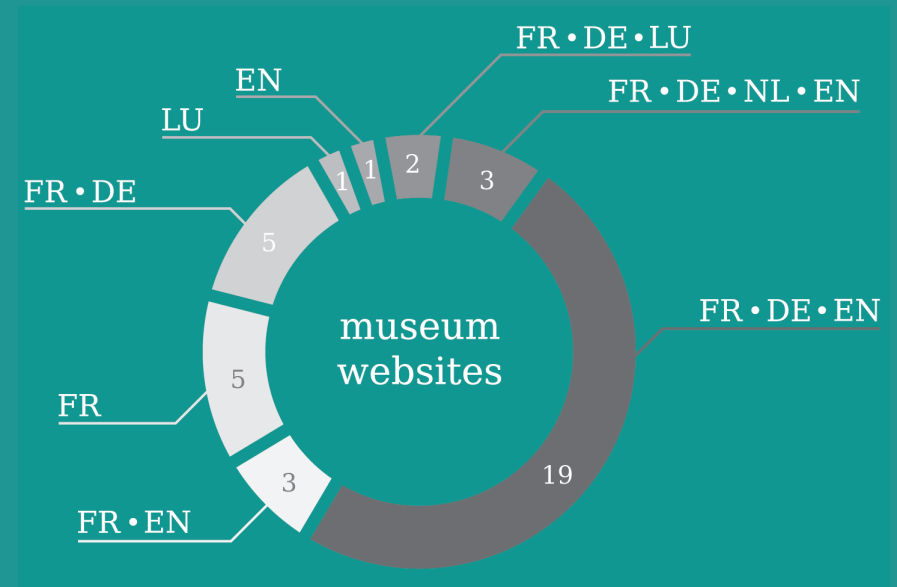
Q0: What language options do the museums offer on their websites?

total websites (39)

Museum websites language options: total occurrences



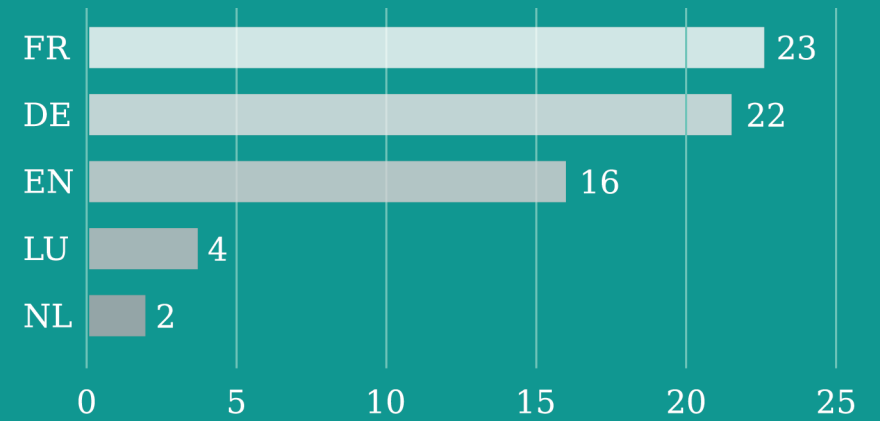
Museum websites language options: combinations



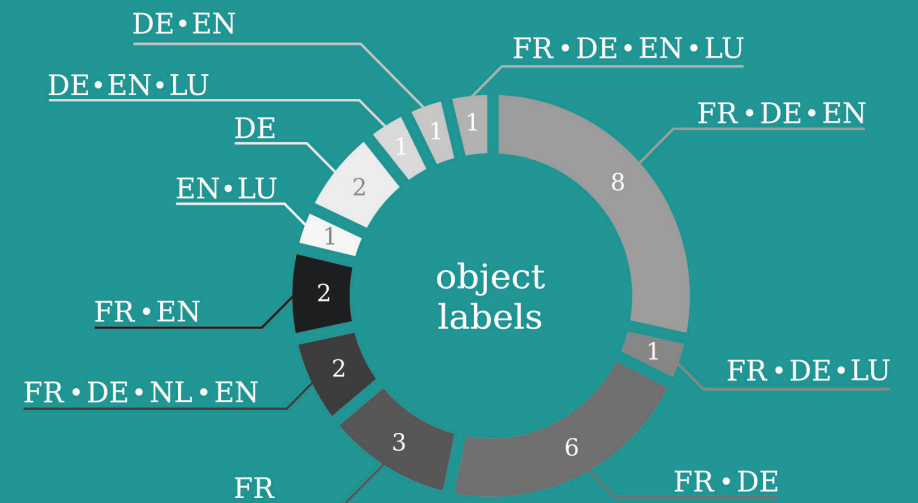
Q1: Which languages are used for labels/object descriptions?

total respondents: 28

Languages used for labels: total occurrences



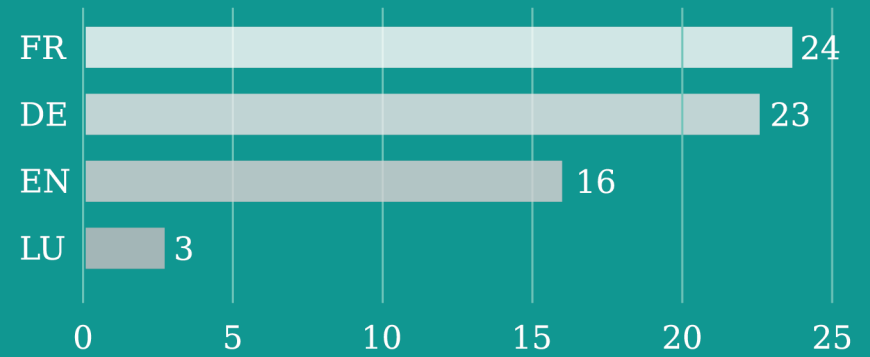
Languages used for labels: combinations



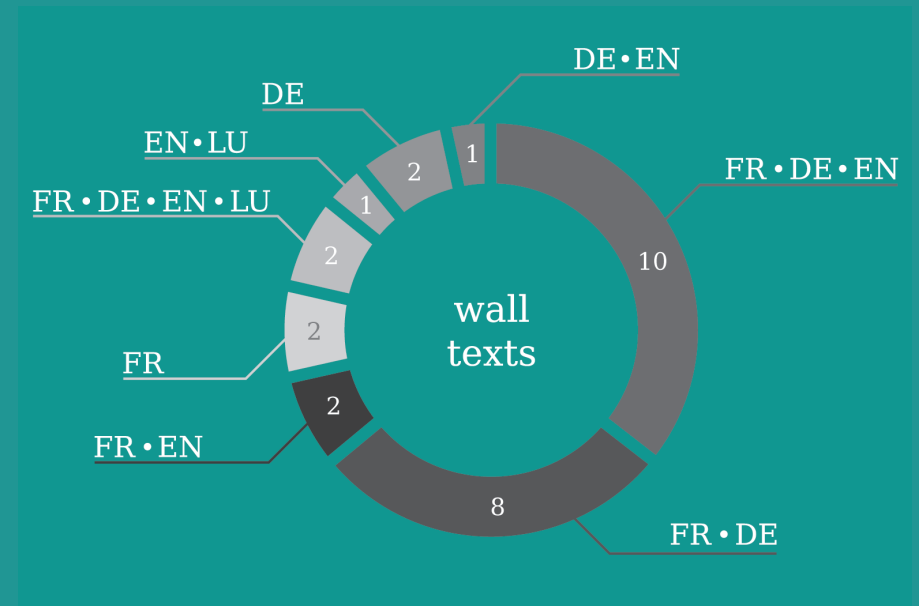
Q2: Which languages are used for wall texts?

total respondents: 28

Languages used for wall texts: total occurrences



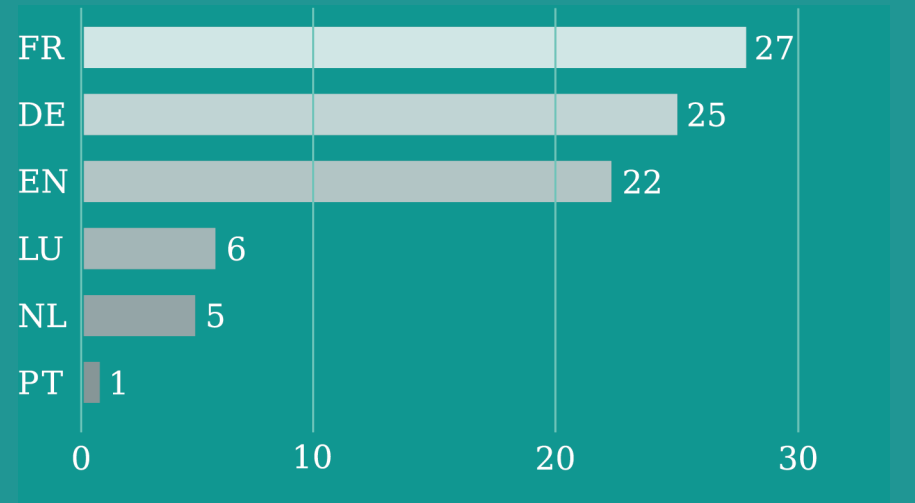
Languages used for wall texts: combinations



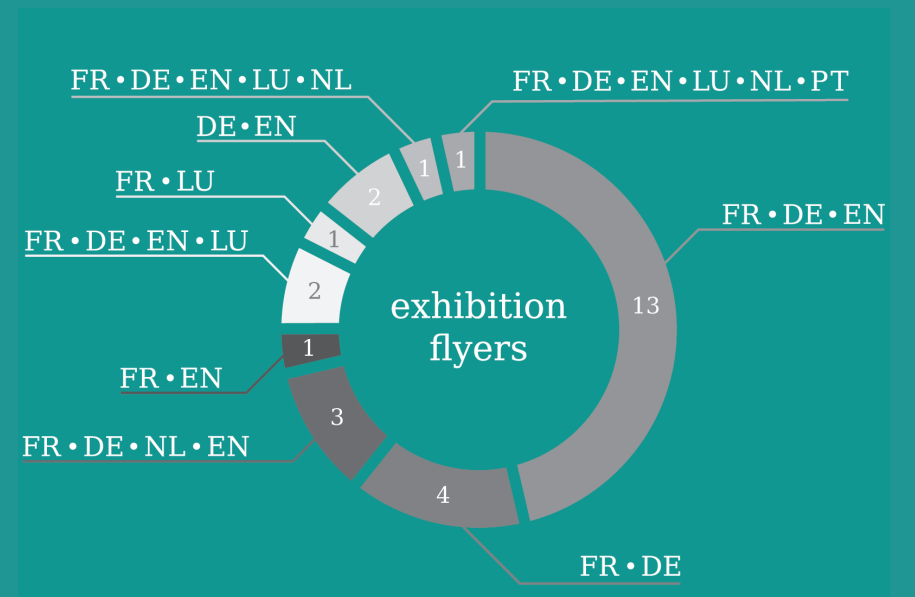
Q3: Which languages are used for exhibition flyers/hand-outs?

total respondents: 28

Languages used for exhibition flyers: total occurrences



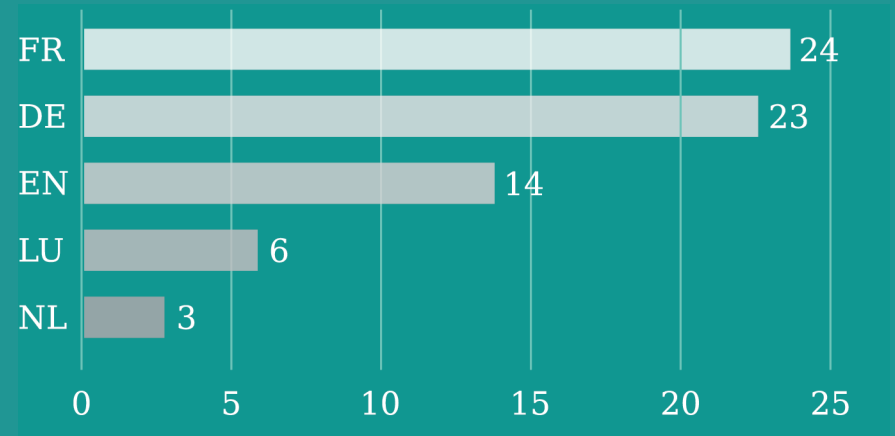
Languages used for exhibition flyers: combinations



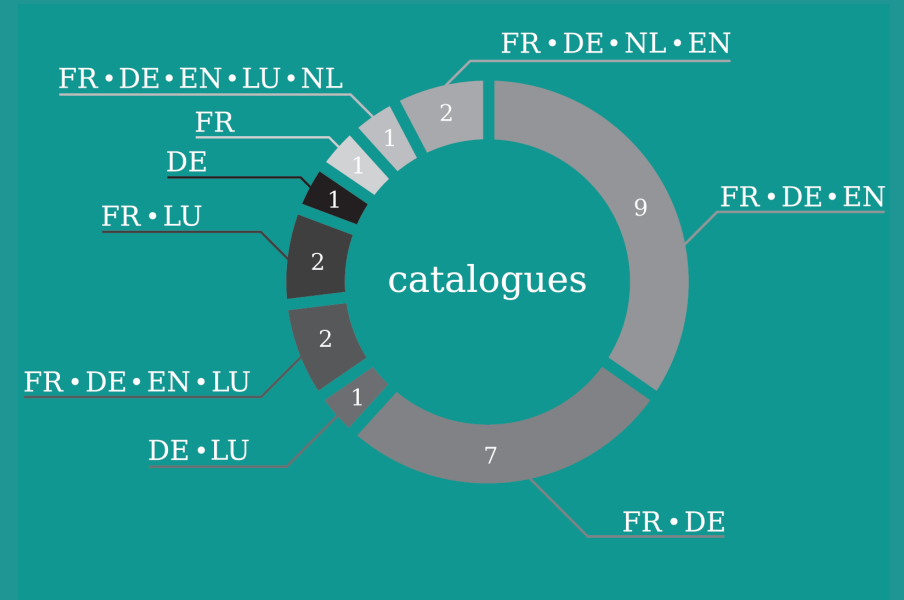
Q4: Which languages are used in catalogues/publications?

total respondents: 26

Languages used for catalogues: total occurrences



Languages used for catalogues: combinations



Q5: Which languages are used in mediation? (guided tours, workshops...)

total respondents: 28

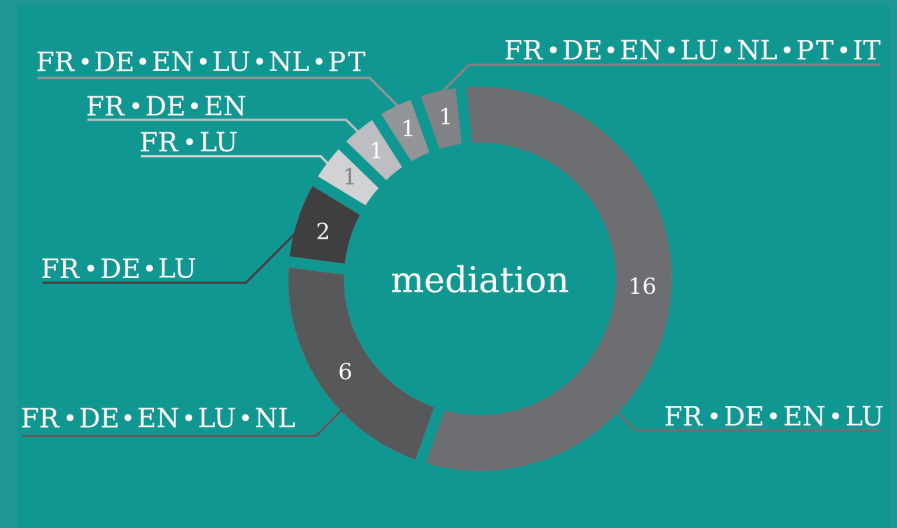
Languages used for mediation:
total occurrences



Note:

Beyond standard spoken languages, one institution offers mediation programmes in sign language (Deutsche Gebärdensprache - DGS). Another one offers mediation in Leichte Sprache (meaning simplified German).

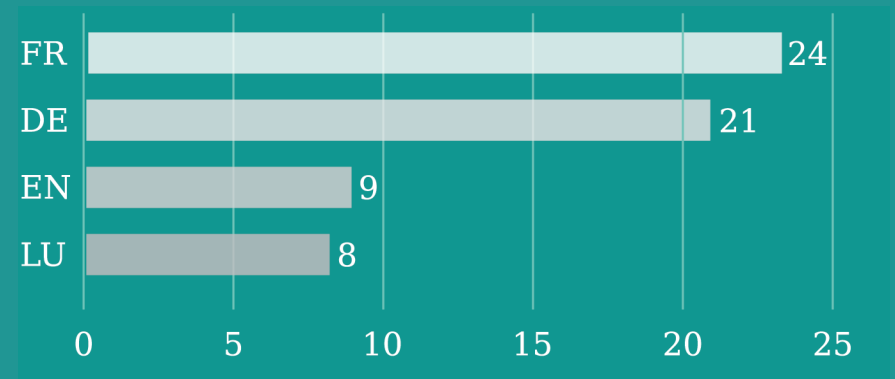
Languages used for mediation:
combinations



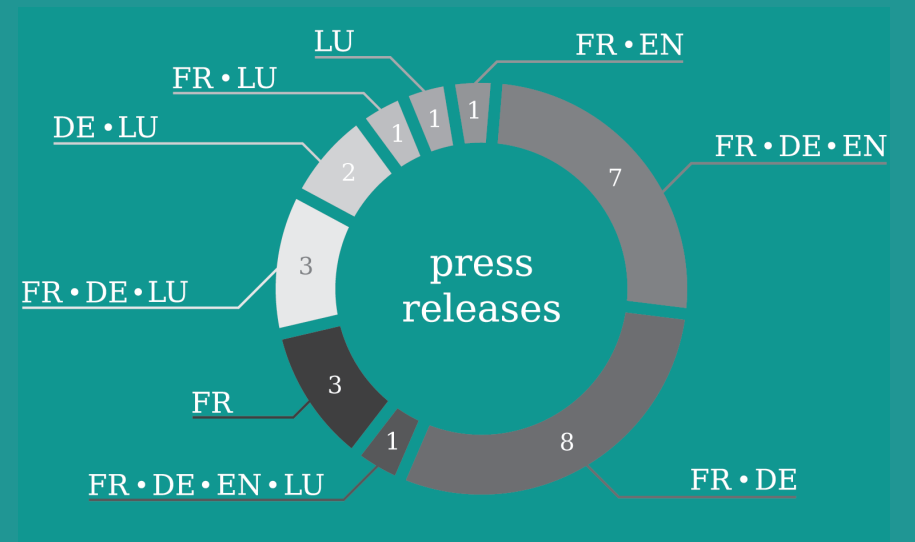
Q6: Which languages are used for press releases?

total respondents: 28

Languages used for press releases: total occurrences



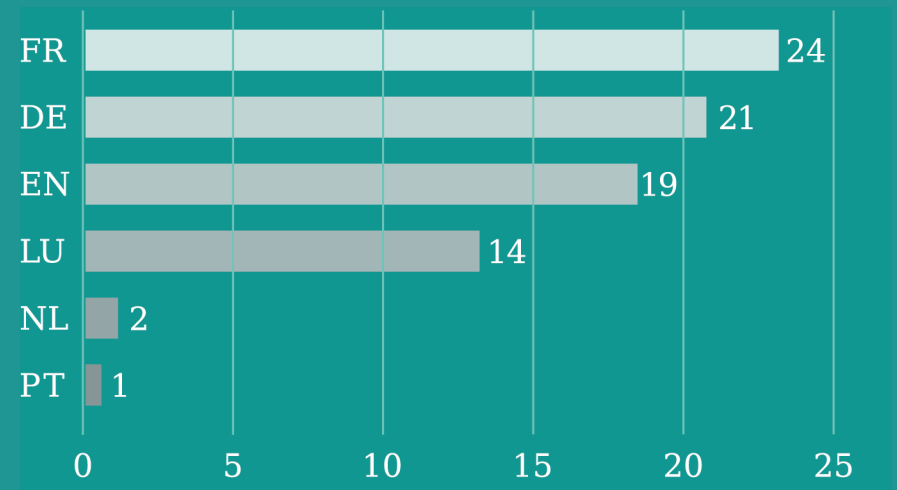
Languages used for press releases: combinations



Q7: Which languages are used for advertising and event marketing purposes? (posters, digital marketing ...)

total respondents: 28

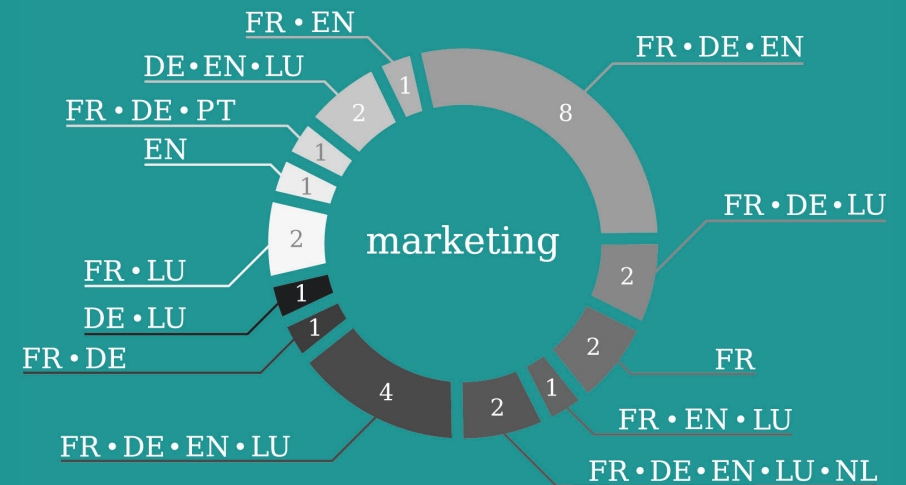
Languages used for marketing: total occurrences



Note:

One institution claims to be trying to avoid using any language at all for their posters.

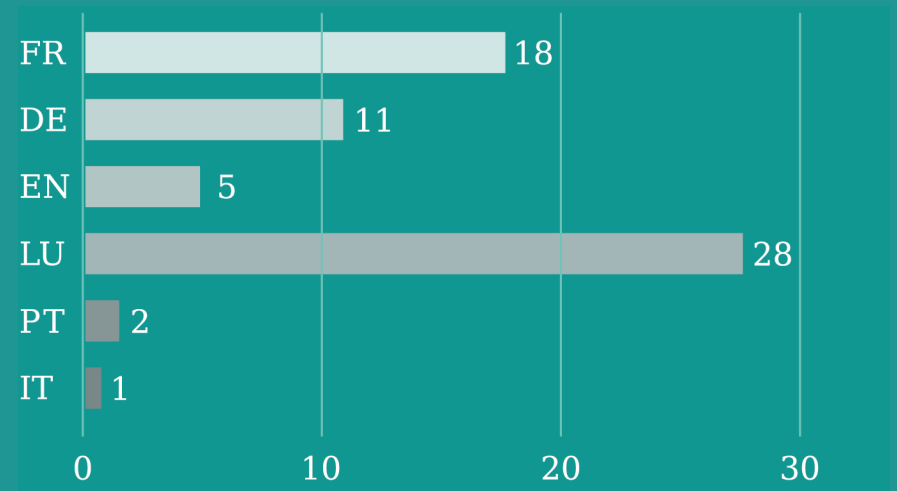
Languages used for marketing: combinations



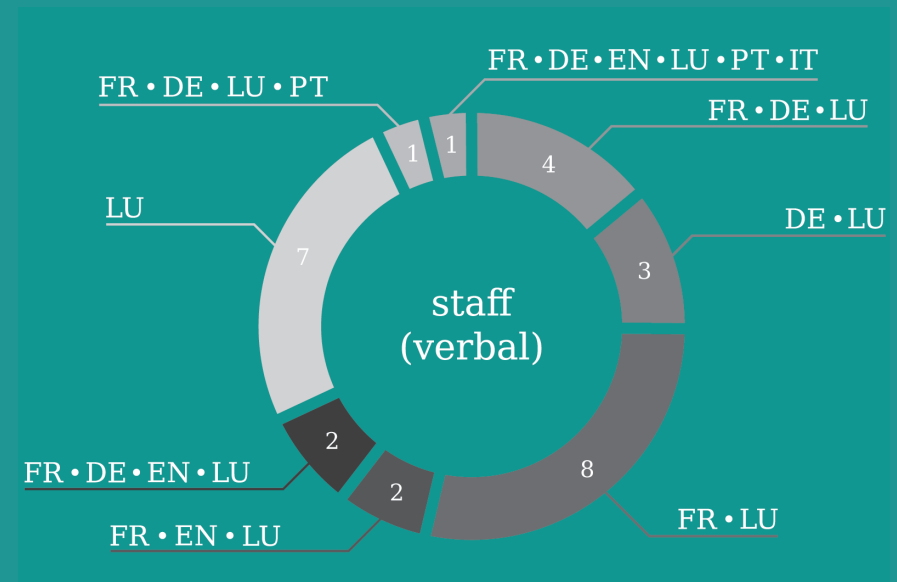
Q8: Which languages are used for verbal communication within the team?

total respondents: 28

Languages used for verbal communication: total occurrences



Languages used for verbal communication: combinations



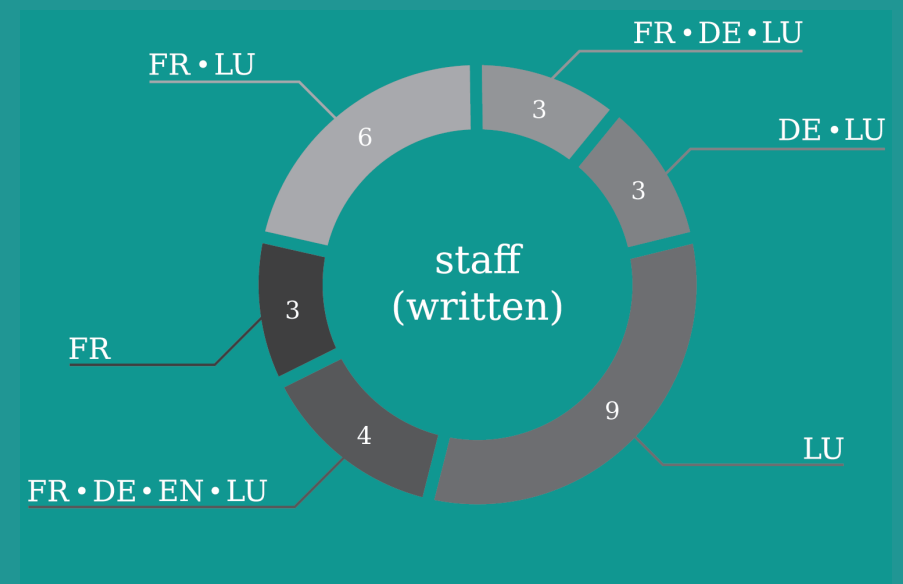
Q9: Which languages are used for written communication within the team?

total respondents: 28

Languages used for written communication: total occurrences



Languages used for written communication: combinations



5.2. Interview transcripts

[Translated from Luxembourgish into English by the author]
 Interview ICOM LUXEMBOURG
 With Laura Zaccaria (ICOM LUXEMBOURG coordinator)
 - remotely via video-conference on 17.01.2024

FF: *Outlines the topic*

LZ: It is indeed a very interesting topic, but not necessarily a very easy one, because it is something that is continuously changing. Many museums change their communication strategy every now and then and along with it also the languages that they use. They might also start working with new languages, on a project basis, or they end up having a new charter (internal regulations) - and this changes from museum to museum. You have probably noticed with the answers you received from your survey that a lot of different languages are used in everyday life.

FF: Indeed the survey has shown many varieties of language uses in a great range of combinations. The geographical setting also seemed to play a role here.

LZ: There are indeed many regional differences, for example in the south more French, along the river Moselle more German, in the north there is also Dutch, alongside German and French and generally less English in these parts. Then in the centre, in the capital, the leading museums, which are the biggest in the country also have more professional teams because they have more staff on any given project - so when you have more manpower you can do more and translate more. Thus in the capital you can usually find everything to be at least trilingual, meaning FR, DE, EN.

FF: It is both a political but also an infrastructural question. How is it within ICOM Luxembourg, which languages are used in the communication with the

members? And which languages are used when working with the Board?

LZ: I will divide my answer into two parts, with communication on the one hand and working with the museums on the other hand. In terms of communication, ICOM Luxembourg works on a trilingual basis. As you may have seen our website is also set up in three languages (FR, DE, EN) - then we have our social media, there we have a slightly different strategy, there we mostly use English - sometimes a combination between English and French. In our social media, we do not use German - we have seen that on social media you have less space available, texts have to be short and we have found that we can still reach a lot of people using English or French. So there we have a slightly different language policy. It also depends through which media you are communicating - digital communication is different from print. We have certain materials which work trilingually such as this one (*shows flyer to the camera*) the “city museums flyer”.

Then we have others such as this one for the “Night of the Museums”, which is not available all year, this one is only bilingual, French and English - there we have left out German altogether. And then we have printed materials which are monolingual such as our postcard, which you can find in museums, that one is only in English because there the information is really short and to the point - and there people can scan the QR-code to get to our website, where they still have the possibility to choose the language that they want. But mostly when we have to decide on one single language then we choose English because usually everyone understands that. When something is bilingual we usually choose the combination of English and French - and in trilingual settings we add German. It always depends on the project. I do not believe that there is a wrong or a right way, we try out different things - I think that is just how it is here in Luxembourg, we do it like this, then like that, and we see what works best.

Then, in terms of the collaboration with the museums, in my daily job a lot of things happen in Luxembourgish, because we have a lot of people working in the museums who speak Luxembourgish. We have many meetings throughout the year that even take place completely in Luxembourgish - also when regional

museums are present we see that the majority likes to speak Luxembourgish. Of course as soon as there is an attendee who speaks French then we all switch to French. I write all the official documents, contracts and meeting minutes in French. Mails are either in Luxembourgish or in French - French is still the first language when it comes to written things. When we sometimes have artists we work with who do not understand French, then we translate the contracts to English, but the daily business is really in French.

FF: This makes sense since the laws are also in French. You have mentioned that the choice of languages is on a case by case basis. What are the criteria that come into play when making this decision?

LZ: The criteria are always who our target audience is, who we are doing this project for. And then we take into consideration regional aspects such as the fact that along the river Moselle (the German border), there might be more German-speaking visitors, so German might then be the first language one sees on the wall, and maybe French underneath - in the south it would then be the opposite, you would have the French text first and the German second. Statistics are still to be made. Oftentimes museums go with their gut feeling in terms of what they think their audience is. But there are also museums who do surveys asking visitors where they come from to help inform their decision-making.

FF: Yes I have heard of an example of this at the National Museum of History and Art, where, in their exhibition on the colonial past of Luxembourg, they had set up a room at the end to ask for visitor feedback, and one of the learnings was that the audience would have wished for an English version of the content as well - so the visitors turned out to be more diverse than what the curators had expected.

LZ: Yes we have seen a general increase in the importance of English over the last few years - not only in the museum or cultural field but generally here in Luxembourg. We have an expats community that keeps increasing and from our experience they are the type of people who are very interested culturally. They come here and they do not know the cultural field yet and so if we do not

communicate in English too they cannot get to know it. So there is a trend where English is more and more important.

FF: Do museums have to fulfil any linguistic requirements to be a member of ICOM Luxembourg?

LZ: No. Membership is not linked to languages in any way. ICOM is an international organisation with a museum definition, that was revised last year, and that definition is really the main criterion. It does not matter which language they use to communicate with their audience, it is more about whether the museum has a collection, whether it is accessible and open for the public.

FF: Does ICOM Luxembourg have tools, infrastructure or guidelines in place to help museums deal with the challenge of multilingualism? (for example help with translation).

LZ: As far as I know there are no guidelines from ICOM International, each country division, and in fact each museum is free to work as they like. ICOM does not involve itself in this matter and does not dictate anything in that regard. Of course, from experience, we know that it is always good, when possible, to communicate trilingually here in Luxembourg. However we have to keep in mind that many museums here in Luxembourg are run on a volunteer basis - this means we have large differences in terms of team sizes - we have museums with 50-100 staff and then we have museums that are run by one single volunteer. For time reasons, logically, this person does what's possible and would already be happy to have texts in even just one language. As far as I know, ICOM Switzerland offers training courses on multilingualism for museum staff. Otherwise, I believe that everyone working here is aware of the situation and thus each museum takes their own decision on the matter. In my opinion here there is no wrong or right way of doing it, it also depends on the target audience, the results and the development of society - as mentioned, there are more and more English speakers in the country, so the museums are adapting to these changes. That does not mean that a fourth language could gain in importance here too - I remember talking to a museum thinking about offering text content

in Portuguese because they have many Portuguese-speaking visitors.

FF: It seems to be a very disputed topic among museum teams as they re-discuss their language strategy time and time again, for every new project.

LZ: Definitely, it is a big topic in our daily practice.

FF: Going back to the topic of cooperation with other ICOM divisions from other multilingual countries. Is there an exchange going on between ICOM Luxembourg and for example ICOM Belgium or Canada?

LZ: No there is not. When I do work with another ICOM committee, it tends to be with ICOM Switzerland, because there we have the most synergies. Otherwise, not really. Each national committee is set up differently. You have to bear in mind that ICOM Luxembourg is a very small national committee in comparison with Germany and France, who have bigger teams and who can thus make bigger projects too.

FF: In terms of training courses or conferences: Does ICOM Luxembourg plan to work on the topic of multilingualism in the museum?

LZ: Currently we do not have any training course planned on the topic of languages. We had other topics that felt like more of a priority for our museum field, such as visitor welcoming, conservations - so more museological topics - we did have one on the topic of social media, where the choice of languages was also discussed.

FF: The matter of languages seems to be an overarching topic that is a part of every other museological aspect and it does not seem to be clear who is in charge when it comes to choosing languages.

LZ: It is so complex - that is why I say there is no right or wrong in this question, because it is really complex. I have shown you three print materials here but for each and every material we print, we ask ourselves the question of the

languages, and it makes sense to do so because each material has a different purpose. And this is the case for the entire cultural sector, not just museums and even beyond that, it is also a challenge for the communication of every other field, such as the financial sector. So in fact, the whole of Luxembourg asks itself the question daily as to which language it should use to communicate.

FF: It really is such a broad and fascinating question.

LZ: Maybe one could ask oneself the question - it is really interesting because we do have so many Luxembourgish-speaking people working in museums, but still we usually ask ourselves the question whether to use French, German or English and Luxembourgish is most often not even up for debate.

FF: That would have been my next question - is the case of the Luxembourgish language being discussed within ICOM or the museums? Is there an interest in using it more in written form in the museal field?

LZ: It does come up regularly that we realise that Luxembourgish is getting forgotten and that sometimes sparks that something gets done in Luxembourgish but still the general trend is much more oriented towards English. ICOM Luxembourg started its social media using Luxembourgish and English but then we switched to French and English. These are decisions that we sometimes make but it does not mean that we can go back on these decisions and use Luxembourgish again for a certain project. But generally speaking, Luxembourgish is mostly being used verbally.

FF: Any further comments on the topic?

LZ: In conclusion, we can note that our cultural landscape is very dynamic [through the linguistic situation]. On the one hand, you cannot always satisfy everyone - that is something to keep in mind, when you decide on a specific language that automatically means that some people will be excluded, so it is a matter of decisions. On the other hand, that makes everything very dynamic and diverse too.

FF: Do you feel like it is a challenge in your daily life or is it just a natural part of it?

LZ: I think if you have always worked in Luxembourg, then you are used to it. But I know from colleagues, who work in another country, where the matter of languages is not as complex, where there are only two languages being used, for example in Germany, where one uses German and English, that makes it very easy in comparison with our situation here. However, one is not always aware that we have this extra amount of work, because of the recurring language questions. But it really is more work, to have everything translated. It also means more costs. Some museums do not have the budget to always get everything professionally translated, which can be one reason why in certain cases things do not get translated altogether or it can lead to texts being translated in-house or with automatic translation software, where there can be a loss in the quality of the text.

[Translated from Luxembourgish into English by the author]
Interview with a staff member of *Naturmusée*
(Museum of Natural History)
Mariepö Goetzinger - in written form via email 17.01.2024

FF: Why was English chosen as the main language of the temporary exhibition “Asteroid Mission”? Is it an itinerant exhibition from or going abroad?

MG: The exhibition about asteroids is only going to be shown in our museum. It contains many exhibits from other museums (many of which from Vienna) and from private collectors. These pieces need specific and constant conditions (such as a certain humidity level). Therefore this exhibition is not suitable to be itinerant.

FF: Are there specific guidelines or official directives from the Naturmusée or the Ministry of Culture pertaining to the choice and use of languages?

As far as I am aware, there are no guidelines for languages...we always renew our decisions on the matter. It also depends a bit on the volume of the texts for the exhibition. It is often not possible to fit all languages onto one panel in a visually compelling way. Lately, that has led to many heated discussions.

FF: Which language is usually the starting language of an exhibition? Who is in charge of the translation(s)?

MG: The initial language of our content is usually the language that suits the curator or the scientist best. We usually translate the content in-house, although sometimes professional translators are hired too.

FF: Are there plans to introduce more Luxembourgish in the permanent exhibition?

MG: I think at the moment there is not much talk about language in the permanent exhibition until it will be renewed (apart from English). On that

topic, we are not all in agreement. I personally would be in favour of adding more Luxembourgish to it (as a cultural institution), without neglecting the other languages, but others have a very different opinion on this.

Normally, our exhibitions are in German and French (+ English via an App). German because we have many school classes visiting the museum and because most Luxembourgish citizens find it easier to read German. The latter, however, does not really suit visitors with a French-speaking parent or who have studied in a French-speaking country, or who have Portuguese roots. Therefore we always use French as well. Naturally, that is also for visitors from abroad. An English translation is usually accessible through an app. There are individual animal or plant names in Luxembourgish. We also translated a brochure that leads children through the exhibition into Portuguese.

For the current temporary exhibition, things are different. We have more and more people asking for content in English, the topic is more for youngsters and adults, who have some knowledge of the topic. We kept French, and for once a scientific exhibition was also translated into Luxembourgish (to my delight). However, it is not planned to do it this way every time from now on, it is going to be more occasional.

For the permanent exhibition, we are looking for a solution to offer an English version as well (it has been a project that has gone on for a long time, but it has not come to fruition yet, because the company tasked with it has stopped existing). But we are still on it.

**[Translated from Luxembourgish into English by the author]
Interview with ZLS - Zenter fir d'Lëtzebuurger Sprooch (Centre for the Luxembourgish language) on the topic of their quadrilingual exhibition entitled “The language(s) of Luxembourg” with Alex Gillander (staff member of ZLS) - remotely via video-conference on 13.03.2024**

FF: My first question focuses on the overarching infrastructural aspects of the exhibition “The language(s) of Luxembourg”: What were the languages used among the team that was working on the exhibition? Which language was used for the communication with the Germany-based production studio? Was there a main language?

AG: Just a bit of context to start. From the beginning of the project, we have been collaborating with Historical Consulting (HC) because we, as the centre for the Luxembourgish language, do not have the expertise required to produce an exhibition. We are more focussed on the Luxembourgish language, on linguistics etc. Initially, the communication with HC was in Luxembourgish. However, they have a mixed team, so some of the communication was in German as well (one of their team members has German roots). Afterwards, we wrote a call for applications to find a studio for the scenography of the exhibition, and this call was in English, because we contacted different companies from Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg. We then decided on a studio based in Germany, but in the process we received applications from different countries, written in the respective language of the country it originated from: the Belgian studio contacted us in French, the German one in German and the Luxembourgish studio even contacted us using three languages. They said they have a very linguistically diverse team, thus already addressing the topic of the exhibition in their application. The call also contained the mention that in Luxembourg it is not uncommon to have exhibitions in many languages, usually German, French and English. We did want the exhibition to be in Luxembourgish but ideally also in a lot of other languages too. The communication with the German studio was then predominantly in German.

FF: This leads us to my second question. At what point in the process did you decide on having the exhibition in 4 languages (LU, FR, DE, EN)? What were the reasons for this decision?

AG: At the start we wanted to make the exhibition in Luxembourgish because we felt it was logical to do so when talking about the languages of Luxembourg, but then we said we also wanted to have the exhibition in many other languages, we had 6 or 7 languages in mind at the beginning. We also thought we could have 3 or 4 main languages, and have certain texts translated into a 5th, 6th or 7th language.

Then we talked about this with the scenography studio, who were slightly taken aback and said that it was rather unusual for them to have to make an exhibition in 3 or 4 languages, and that it would be a challenge when it comes to the space needed to accommodate so many languages. The studio then suggested to go with Luxembourgish and English, which is normal reflex in Germany, they would often make exhibitions in German and English in order to cover both the language of the country and English for all those who do not speak it. We told them it would be tricky to omit French and German, and just to take English. We would need to justify to the Luxembourgish audience why we would omit two of the official languages and take English - which we also could not really omit nowadays, especially in Luxembourg. The next idea was to leave out German and take Luxembourgish, French and English, but then we would also need to justify this. Plus, sometimes it would be visually more appealing to have four rather than three languages. So choosing to go with four languages was a bit of a compromise. At this point we did not dare to ask the studio to add yet another language. If one knows the LOD, our main product of the centre, there we also have Portuguese in the selection, which would also not have been an illogical language to add to the exhibition.

Then we also had to face some time constraints. The project had to be realised within the year [2023], because we had the parliamentary elections at the end of the year, and it is always logical to finish projects within one legislative term. So we wanted it to be done by the summer of 2023, and the studio told us from the

start that it would be fairly tight. So the more languages, the more translations needed, which need to be done correctly. Additionally, the four languages we chose are the ones we could more easily translate in-house as well. We received the texts from HC in German, so that was the original language. We eventually had to do a lot of the translating ourselves, more than we initially expected, because we were running out of time.

FF: May I ask which other languages were considered as potential languages of the exhibition?

AG: We did not have concrete plans for the other languages, it was more of an initial exchanging of ideas: the 5th language we took into consideration was clearly Portuguese, because so many people in the country have it as their main language. As 6th or 7th language we were considering Italian, or a language more exotic for us such as Arabic or Chinese. But then we did not really go further with these discussions because of the limits set to us by the scenography. However, if we were to make a permanent exhibition, which is still an idea we have for a space in the National Library - that would be a project that could only happen in a few years time - there we would definitely go back and consider more languages, because we might also have a more international audience there. We will see.

FF: In the survey for this thesis 7 different languages came up (LU-FR-DE-EN-IT-PT-NL) and I wanted to see whether this selection correlated with the set of languages ZLS was considering for the exhibition.

AG: Yes I think when one decides on certain languages, one always has to be able to justify it somehow, which is not always that easy. Why this language and not the other one?

FF: Were you involved in the design process? Were there some instructions given to the scenography studio?

AG: One thing we specifically did not want was a “Roud-Wäiss-Blo” exhibition

[“red-white-blue”, meaning the colours of the national flag], we did not want it to be looking like it was for Luxembourgers from Luxembourgers, we preferred more neutral colours. Otherwise we were not involved much in the design process.

FF: [Is there an exchange between the ZLS and museums in Luxembourg on the matter of the Luxembourgish language or languages in general?](#)

AG: I would say no, not really. I mean of course through our tools such as the Luxembourgish Online Dictionary (LOD) and the Spellchecker, we make it easier for museum professionals to produce content in Luxembourgish - but we are not as such in direct exchange with them.

We will soon have an exchange with the Luxembourg City Museum, who also will be making an exhibition on multilingualism. We will discuss what we have in our exhibition and see what they want to have in theirs. I think their project has more of an international ambition.

FF: [Are there any resources or training programmes from ZLS for museums?](#)

AG: No. Not really. I also believe it is not really part of our main mission to do that. Of course the Commissaire fir d’Lëtzebuurger Sprooch (the commissioner for the Luxembourgish language) who is meant to have an overview of the projects being run on the topic of the Luxembourgish language. He would be someone who could try to encourage museums to add Luxembourgish in their practice. However, I think the matter of the Luxembourgish language is also always a question of resources and expertise. We can help with our language expertise that we share through our online tools mentioned before. But obviously, the more languages one adds to an exhibition, the higher the costs, and one needs the right people to do it.

FF: [Do you feel that since 2018, with the Action Plan for the Luxembourgish language and the formation of ZLS, there is more of a general interest in Luxembourgish as a written language within the cultural field?](#)

AG: I am not sure I am able to answer this question directly. Maybe I can give an example, drawing from a section in our exhibition that deals with literature and the media: there we show a selection of books, film excerpts, TV programmes, songs, to show the development of the language, the increase of cultural production in Luxembourgish over time. And I think that when you look at how much the Luxembourgish language is being used there, for example in the field of music, our colleague was very surprised to find out that there is even things like rock music in Luxembourgish, or rap music. And in the field of literature, we now have translations of books such as Harry Potter or Albert Camus’s works. The (old) argument saying that Luxembourgish is too limited to be used in every domain is no longer valid in my opinion. This is proven by the fact that books with complex vocabulary were translated into Luxembourgish. And also by the fact that one can now find Luxembourgish in domains, where back in the days one would never expect to find it. As a kid I would probably never have imagined to see written Luxembourgish in a museum. Nowadays with digital solutions, people have more contact with it and that makes it easier to broaden its scope altogether.

FF: [There is an interesting example in the permanent exhibition of the Luxembourg City Museum, where individual Luxembourgish words are being used in the room pertaining to the period of Nazi occupation.](#)

AG: I do believe that these years during the Second World War were very important moments in the development of the Luxembourgish language. Also in our exhibition, we explain how the Luxembourgish language came to be. It was originally a dialect, in a time where nobody was really interested in what exactly they were speaking, they had other, more important problems. It is only later, during the occupation, that Luxembourgish became a language of resistance and a way to differentiate oneself from the occupant, which eventually led to Luxembourgish officially becoming a language.

FF: [The extent to which Luxembourgish is being used seems to be linked to infrastructure and resources.](#)

AG: Using Luxembourgish on a broader scale, such as in European institutions, is always a matter of budget. And it is often difficult to legitimise since we all know German and French relatively well. In order to have Luxembourgish play a role in EU institutions, we would need to provide people with the right expertise and it would cost a lot of money. This often means we are more reserved in that matter. Interestingly however, we are currently facing a shortage of Luxembourgish teachers to hold classes in the National Language Institute because we have so many people interested in learning it. There needs to be a more general, long-term strategy in order to train enough Luxembourgish teachers, which could then also teach in regular schools. In schools however there is one more problem, the existing teachers probably will not want to have hours taken away from them to make space for Luxembourgish. And then there is also the competition of the other subjects such as sciences, that also need to be granted enough time at school. Depending on the language spoken in a pupil's household, it will be easier or more difficult for them to learn it. But these are also political questions: one has to tread carefully when advocating in favour of the Luxembourgish language in order to avoid coming across as being against one of the other languages such as French or German. One has to take a step-by-step approach. In general terms however there is not much opposition against Luxembourgish and there is a general agreement that it should be present in a number of domains.

Another thing I wanted to add about the Luxembourgish language is that in the future digital solutions will probably be very beneficial for it, when we have high-performance translation tools that will make it easier to translate things. AI is also something that we are working on. If we reach a time where speech-to-text or text-to-speech software becomes functional enough also in Luxembourgish (which is not the case currently because it is classified as a “low-resource-language”) - it will become more cost-efficient to use Luxembourgish.

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**7.
List
of
illustrations**

figure 1
infographic: multicultural Luxembourg
2023
©Flore Friden



figure 2
photograph: exhibition panel in the
permanent exhibition of the
Luxembourg City Museum
2024
©Flore Friden



figure 3
photograph: exhibition panel close-up in
the permanent exhibition of the
Luxembourg City Museum
2024
©Flore Friden

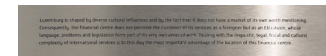


figure 4
photograph: exhibition panel in the
permanent exhibition of the
Naturmusée
2024
©Flore Friden



figure 5
photograph: painting label in the
permanent exhibition of the
Wien Museum
2024
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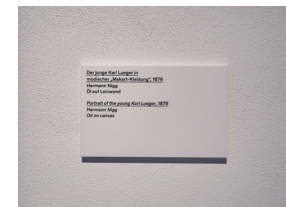


figure 6
photograph: room in the permanent
exhibition of the
Luxembourg City Museum
2024
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figure 7
 photograph: wall text of the exhibition
 “Joyeuse Apocalypse” by Jérôme Zonder
 at the Casino Luxembourg
 2024
 ©Flore Friden



figure 8
 photograph: wall text in the permanent
 exhibition of the
 Luxembourg City Museum
 2024
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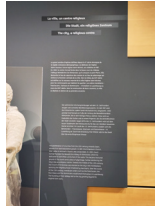


figure 9
 photograph: wall text in the permanent
 exhibition of the
 Naturmusée
 2024
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figure 10
 photograph: wall text of the temporary
 exhibition “Asteroid Mission” at the
 Naturmusée
 2024
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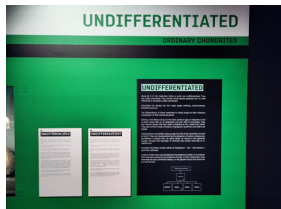


figure 11
 photograph: view of the exhibition “The
 Language(s) of Luxembourg” by ZLS at
 the Abbey Neumünster
 2023
 ©Sara Martin & Caroline Thill (ZLS)



figure 12
 photograph: view of the exhibition “The
 Language(s) of Luxembourg” by ZLS at
 the Abbey Neumünster
 2023
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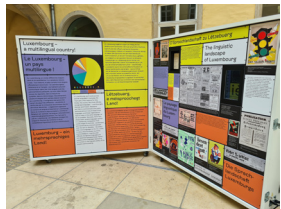


figure 13
 flyer (PDF version) of the itinerant
 exhibition “The Language(s) of
 Luxembourg” by ZLS
 2023
 ©ZLS



figure 14
 scan: flyer of the exhibition “Meet the
 Mansfelds” at the Luxembourg City
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 2024
 ©Luxembourg City Museum



figure 15
 scan: flyer of the exhibition “Ben Greber
 Green Machine” at the Korschthal
 2024
 ©Korschthal



figure 16
 scan: general promotional flyer of the
 contemporary art space
 Casino Luxembourg
 2024
 ©Casino Luxembourg

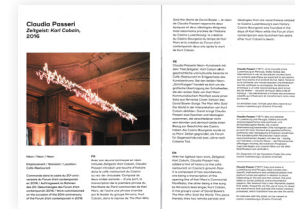


figure 17
 infographic: a basic typology of
 multilingual editorial design
 2024
 ©Flore Friden



figure 18
 photograph: framed exhibit in the
 permanent exhibition of the
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 2024
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figure 19
photograph: framed exhibit in the
permanent exhibition of the
Luxembourg City Museum
2024
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figure 20
photograph: framed exhibit close-up in
the permanent exhibition of the
Luxembourg City Museum
02024
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figure 21
photograph: general promotional flyers
in display stands at the
Secession Vienna
2024
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8. Other

8. Other

Note on translation

All non-English content was translated into English by the author.

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9. CV

Flore Friden (born in 1995 in Luxembourg-City) studied Product Design at the Glasgow School of Art from 2014 to 2018, with a six month study exchange in Cologne, at the Köln International School of Design. She co-founded an Urban Art Space in Esch-sur-Alzette in Luxembourg in 2018, where she worked as a project manager until she moved to Vienna at the end of 2019. After a few years working in an art gallery, she joined the educating/curating/managing master's degree program at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Flore Friden has also been active in the non-profit field as a project manager, art mediator and graphic designer, co-founding and leading the social arts organisation Spray Peace from 2015 onwards.

