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The Sexual Politics of Nation Branding in Creative Luxembourg. A Queer Perspective

Karine Duplan

University of Geneva, Department of Geography and Environment & University of Neuchâtel, Institute of Geography, Switzerland
karine.duplan@unige.ch

Abstract

This paper offers a queer reading of the sexual politics of nation branding in the context of creative Luxembourg through an intersectional perspective. While creative city discourses and policies have been largely scrutinised by critical scholars who have pointed out their classed, gendered and racialised exclusionary ways of working, nation branding has largely been overlooked in its relationship to the entrepreneurial urban shift. The ways it shapes desirable forms or subjectivities and citizenships while reworking the boundaries of sexual in/ex-clusion needs however further scrutiny. I argue in this paper that nation branding, defined as a communication tool for creative cities to promote their image and remain competitive at a global scale, contributes to the reiteration of social inequalities through the production of neoliberal urban subjectivities that are sexually normative. Nation branding provides hence a heteronormative framing of sexual subjectivities and citizenships, as related to privileges associated with neoliberal politics and practices that are aligned with heterosexuality and class consumption practices.

Keywords

Nation branding, creative city, sexual citizenship, queer theory, heteronormativity, Luxembourg

Introduction

> We did not plan in our lives to come to Luxembourg [laughs]. Nobody does! (…) One day Scott came home and said, "Do you want to move to Luxembourg?" – "Sure, where is it? [laughs] Where is it? What is it?" And then, he got a transfer there through his company (…). I did not even know it existed (…). In 2000, we went to London for three

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> years, and we travelled around Europe, but still, I did not know Luxembourg. – Kate, New Zealander

This excerpt, from an interview during the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted among expatriate[1] women in Luxembourg (Duplan 2014, 2016), illustrates what can be labelled as 'lacunas' of their world atlas. Kate, a mother of two who has followed her husband's professional mobility abroad, had never heard about Luxembourg before the family was transferred through her husband's international technology communication company. Luxembourg is a tiny European country and one can admit that not knowing of it might be caused by the geographical distance that separates New Zealand from Europe. However, Kate explained that she had lived in Europe and had travelled. Moreover, Kate knew of other small countries, such as Singapore, and the city of Geneva, Switzerland, whose population size is similar to Luxembourg's. Finally, her humorous and cynical comments indicating that no one has in mind to go to Luxembourg, no one dreams of Luxembourg, implies that some destinations might be more desirable than others for those who would like to travel around either for work or lifestyle reasons. One can hence question what makes a place more attractive or beneficial than another.

Politics of 'best places' has been finely scrutinised by critical scholars who analyse the transformation of urban governance and policies with regards to issues of liveability in relation to cities ranking in the context of urban entrepreneurial neoliberalisation (Harvey 1989; McCann 2004). Beyond economic factors, relevant commodities and social, cultural and political factors also become assets from which an ideal of liveability is assessed (Jessop and Sum 2000). Urban liveability becomes a desirable criterion for people on the move, and cities become consequently a kind of product through which lifestyles are branded, promoted, marketed (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Findlay et al. 1988). Metropolises have hence conducted various strategies to enhance their reputation and ensure their competitive advantages at the global scale. Through an articulation of both economic and lifestyle factors, the creative city thesis (Florida 2002) remains one of the most salient frameworks acclaimed both by politicians and urban planners for designing strategies aimed at attracting investment and global talents. Parallel to that, national governments have also turned to branding strategies, and nation branding has grown as a "new business of the 21st century" (The Guardian 07.11.2017), staging multicultural places as welcoming places for cosmopolitan people in search of a home.

Contrary to city branding, nation branding strategies have remained largely overlooked in their relationship to the entrepreneurial urban shift. Moreover, few studies have addressed how these discourses, practices and consequent imaginaries contribute to the shaping of desirable urban subjectivities and citizenships. As a set of practices and narratives that aim at promoting an attractive image to help securing one's place in the global competition between world cities, branding strategies are held by discourses that materialise in the everyday through planning and, at a more intimate level, in the shaping of routines, lifestyles and senses of belongings. While questioning the specificities of nation branding in the context of neoliberal entrepreneurial modes of governance, this paper aims at questioning the co-workings of nation branding and creative city practices by scrutinising the kind of subjectivities and senses of belonging this both entails and contribute to produce. In a context of cosmopolitan discourses that mainstream sexual difference, I make the choice to focus more specifically on sexual subjectivities, arguing that the sexual politics of nation branding deserves further scrutiny in the context of interurban competition at the global scale.

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1 The term expatriate refers here to transnational elites as highly skilled migrants who relocate abroad for professional reasons (Willis et al. 2002). While the term is opened to various controversies, it remains used as an identifying category by the research respondents (Duplan 2021).

I propose a feminist and queer critique of nation branding strategies. By critique, I mean an approach that aims at destabilising the normative assumptions embedded in institutional practices. I argue that branding strategies, while claimed to be oriented towards an external audience, play a crucial role in the promotion of sexual normative urban subjectivities. Nation branding policies are tools enmeshed with sexual politics designed for the framing of urban subjectivities, which are indexed on heteronormativity, both as consumption product and as moral categories in the context of neoliberal globalisation (Aronczyk 2009; Kaneva 2011). I consider heteronormativity as a singular position located at the juncture of multiple axes of power that calls to the "the privilege, power and normative status invested in heterosexuality" (Cohen 1997, 445), in relation with familial norms and respectable domesticity. Heteronormativity operates beyond sexuality and leads to the inclusion in privilege of some white middle-class non-heterosexual subjects and the exclusion of other heterosexuals who "stand on the outside of heteronormativity" (Cohen 1997, 447). I argue hence that the sexual politics of nation branding plays as a kind of moral economy that articulates affects, norms and values in the promotion of an ideal model of desirable subject that creative/global cities are meant to capture – a very heteronormative citizen. My research question can be framed as follows: How are assumptions of creative city discourse translated into nation branding policies and what consequences do they have on the production of new urban subjectivities, senses of belonging and citizenships? This way I seek to contribute to current critical scholarship on the neoliberal city, underpinning its heteronormative exclusionary logics, while articulating existing critiques in citizenship studies.

I will first discuss the concept of nation branding in the context of the creative city paradigm, highlighting its embeddedness with sexual politics and its consequent contribution to social inequalities in time of neoliberal globalisation. Second, I will present the case of Luxembourg, to understand better the context of the government's launch of a nation branding campaign, along with the methodology. Third, I will analyse the collected data related to the nation branding campaign to underline the implicit bias in such promotional strategy and their consequences in terms of the framing of idealised neoliberal subjectivities, which are (hetero)normative.

Nation branding and sexual citizenship in the context of the creative city discourse

Placing the creative class paradigm within critics of the neoliberal city

In his seminal thesis on the entrepreneurial city, Harvey (1989) analyses how, in the context of circulation of urban models at the global scale, every city feels the pressure to continuously adapt its policies towards what is framed as an ideal of liveability in order to maintain its competitiveness. Cities do so by delegating power to private actors that work together with state agencies. This shift in urban modes of governance from "managerialism to entrepreneurialism" has led to the mainstreaming of creative city policies.

The creative city framework relies on the assumption that a contemporary knowledge-based economy is driven by human creativity that characterises an emerging creative class and privileges flexibility and mobility over traditional ways of working. Creative members are assumed to be passionate about their jobs, thus blurring boundaries between private life, leisure and the professional sphere. Beyond material and economic rewards, creative professionals are assumed to be always in search of a better quality of life, seeking 'diversity landscapes' that are supposed to match their cosmopolitan orientation towards openness and tolerance (Beck 2002). Relying on individuality, meritocracy and openness to difference (Parker 2008, 205), the creative class shares some commonalities with Sklair's (2000) transnational capitalist class. Standing as hero of neoliberal economic success (Duplan 2021), a member of this class is "creative and consumption-oriented. He is fit, finicky and flexible. He is talented,

transcendent, and time-deprived. He can locate himself wherever he pleases and the city (and now country) that fortuitously snags him is guaranteed a prosperous future" (Parker 2008, 207). Following these claims, cities have engaged in various strategies that accessorise "neoliberal urbanism in a manner benefitting prevailing cultural tropes of competitive cosmopolitanism" (Peck 2011, 63). To attract such consumption-oriented creative class members, also coined as 'talents', creative city policies support the implementation of various commercial and cultural amenities that benefit this class as well as the city economy.

The creative city thesis has been criticised for both theoretical and methodological flaws. Using indexes that rely on the presence of foreign-born communities and gay communities, it contributes to reify the most visible forms of difference (Myrdahl 2011). Drawing on neoliberal forms of multiculturalism, cities display a "spectacular commodification of difference" (Goonewardena and Kipfer 2005, 672), including ethnic and sexual difference, to fulfil the desire of the creative class. The narrow economistic framework of the creative cities thesis has been pointed out for its social polarising effects, since the creative city appears to be the politics of an elite class (Leslie and Catungal 2012). Many critics have hence underlined how the application of such a biased framework inevitably leads to the exacerbation of material inequalities (Bell and Binnie 2004; Catungal and Leslie 2009; Evans 2009; Myrdahl 2011; Peck 2005). Critical scholars have also shown how the creative city paradigm works as an exclusionary framework of practices beyond class, notably along axis of gender and race (Catungal and Leslie 2009; Hashimoto 2020; McLean 2014; Parker 2008). Moreover, by drawing on neoliberal forms of multicultural inclusiveness, this "cosmopolitics" (Cheah and Robbins 1998) has been pointed for its re-entrenchment of social inequalities at different scales (Binnie et al. 2006; Conradson and Latham 2005).

While the creative city thesis has been analysed as supported by implicit classed, gendered and racialised assumptions, in which the transnational family is at the core, the normative assumptions about sexuality that draw this traditional understanding of citizenship have been largely left apart (Oswin 2012). However, the question remains of how attracting global talent to support economic growth might result in "significant changes in sexual citizenship" (Oswin 2010, 1625). Bell and Binnie (2004, 1808) argue that, beyond sexual orientation, "the consumer citizen is a figure centre-staged in new debates on world cities and the practices of cosmopolitanism". As such, the intertwining of sexual citizenship with neoliberal capital concerns leads to an integration of (some) LGB[2] people into the democratic realm for those whose lifestyle matches market interests and whose sexuality becomes showcased for global cosmopolitan consumers.

Despite all these criticisms, the creative city thesis, as part of a "serial reproduction" of policies (Harvey 1989, 11), remains a central paradigm in city-planning and urban marketing (McCann and Ward 2011). The normative role of media in the discursive production of cities as the best places to live and its role in the consequent cities ranking remains also of interest (Cox and Mair 1998; McCann 2004; Ward 2000). The workings and consequences of the mainstreaming of the entrepreneurial city and its branding deserves hence specific attention. Notably, there is still a need to further examine how urban sexual politics beyond the homo/hetero binary is placed in discursive institutional practices – including at the national scale – and how creative neoliberal policies contribute, through the depoliticisation and domestication of sexuality, to the framing of intimate subjectivities, senses of belonging and citizenships in relation to consumption and mobility practices, while interrogating its exclusionary dynamics (Duplan forthcoming).

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2 While LGBTIQ+ people would be a much more inclusive acronym, I choose to talk about LGB people since TIQ+ people often still remain outside those privileges.

Nation branding as a neoliberal tool for promoting creative identities

Working towards an articulation of national cohesion through the promotion of a unique image of the community has always been at the core of national politics. National narratives frame "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983) in the sense of shared systems of cultural representations and experiences of identification with an extended community (McClintock 1993). Those idealised communities are often presented as united family in which support and solidarity count as core values, leading the nuclear family, as a state-sanctioned structure, to become the definitive metaphor for many nationalisms (McClintock et al. 1997, 90). Family values seem central to national well-being (Collins 1998) and "nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space" (McClintock 1993, 63). As such, nation states are conceptualised as families so that national identities and senses of belonging are closely tied to traditional gender roles (Volpp 2006). The heterosexual order stands hence as the basis of the reproduction of both family and nation, leading citizenship to be closely tied to heterosexuality (Alexander 1994). However, by enhancing community cohesion, national formation re-establishes and stabilises the distinction between the inside and the outside. National citizenship relies hence on the figure of an Other which is set outside the community borders (McClintock 1993). From the figure of the perverse homosexual within the puritan Western nation state to the one of the deviant racialised Other of the 'war on terror' (Puar 2007), this figure has changed over times, enabling the integration of certain sexual minorities to the national community. This testifies to how nation states bear with the pressure of neoliberalism through "affective investments in discourses of freedom, liberation and rights" (Puar 2007, 334) that help position themselves as models of tolerance and openness through narratives of progress and modernity. This relation between national formation and sexual politics in the context of entrepreneurialism deserves further scrutiny in conjunction with nation branding.

The practice of brand management refers to corporate strategies developed by companies to promote targeted products to emphasise their advantages and singularities in a context of increasing competition (Viktorin et al. 2018). However, brands are much more than a simple communication tool. They serve as differentiating social markers for people to express their own individual and collective sense of belonging. They work both as support and medium of social identities and contribute to anchoring people in specific social contexts in an increasing complex, changing and mobile world (Varga 2013). Along with corporate strategies, other industries, such as tourism, use brands to promote distinctive features of chosen places to attract visitors in a growing market for tourism. This extension is also marked by a switch in tourism industry strategies: branding is not vested to private tourism bodies only; it encompasses national bodies such as national tourism boards and offices. Puar (2002) comments on this by analysing how national strategies adapt to the change of tourists' profiles and market their country as open and tolerant to attract the growing segment of cosmopolitan queer tourists and other pink travellers (Oswin 2007). As such, homonationalism becomes an analytical category deployed to understand and historicise how and why a nation's status as 'gay-friendly' has become desirable in the first place. It can be read as a "historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states" (Puar 2013, 337). As such, the workings of nation branding deserve a specific attention.

Initially developed by an independent advisory consultant (Anholt 2007), nation branding has become highly popular in a context of dissemination of public policies models at the global scale. Nation branding premises rely on the idea of a shared identity produced collectively. While drawing upon a common cultural heritage supposed to represent the essence of the nation, it seeks to work as an integrative process by promoting "some kind of continuity with particularly selected past events towards a shared destiny" (Varga 2013, 7). Moreover, beyond the sole objective of better communicating a country's image, nation branding might also be used in managing negative stereotypes (Dinnie 2008).

As such, it is raised as a "new and improved national identity" that is supposed to be the best solution to face the context of global competition (Aronczyk 2009, 292). A collaborative nation branding process follows different stages, orchestrated by external consultants who pride themselves as facilitators of a collective rather than claiming authorship or the responsibility of the nation brand. While this working process follows the recommendations of a global model of nation branding, it also contributes to transform national modes of governance towards a more entrepreneurial one that could turn to a "state brokerage" (Rodriguez 2008). Several collective gatherings of representative groups of the given society, including civil society actors and citizens of multiple levels of society, are organised to collect grounded ideas and representations of the national identity. The outcome is a set of narratives that reframe the national identity in what is presented to be more authentic and attractive. Indeed, "the premise is that, in order to be effective, the brand must be the conceptual product of all its 'owners' or stakeholders" (Aronczyk 2009, 293).

Overlapping with feminist approaches of the nation and citizenship (see for instance Oza 2001), critical scholars question the "implications of nation branding for the politics of identity" (Kaneva 2011, 127). One of the main critiques underlines the way nation branding contributes to eluding power relations at stake in the production of national identities by claiming political neutrality. Nation branding is deciphered as "an essentially *inner-oriented cultural-political measure*", a form of "renationalisation" in which economisation and depoliticization contribute to the shifting of national identities towards a neoliberal framework (Varga 2013, 17, emphasis in original). As such, the ideological basis of the nation branding project has been pointed to as "reinterpret[ing] nationhood in relation to neoliberalism" (Kaneva 2011, 131). It is "within this framework (that) national identities – as well as other forms of identification, including gender, race, class and so on – can be understood as discursively constructed and maintained" (Kaneva 2012, 12, in Rankin 2012, 258). Nation branding deserves hence a specific attention to better understand how sexual citizenship is reworked in terms of racialised, classed and gendered terms in the context of creative planning.

Luxembourg's race for global talents

Luxembourg is the capital of the eponym Grand Duchy, often misunderstood as a city-state because of the weight of this tiny country's economy. Although only 2500 km^2, it is a central economic node of the region, located at the crossroads of Germany, France, and Belgium. The Grand Duchy is a constitutional monarchy, which Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, as leader of an ecological, democratic and socialist coalition, has led to great transformations since 2013. For example, he has overseen development of the university, support of the cultural industry, the introduction of same-sex marriage (from which he has benefited himself), an ending of state funding for worship services, an articulation of the *Multikulti* (multicultural) feature of the Luxembourgish identity during National Day discourse, and the welcoming refugees in a context of migratory crisis.

I present here some key features of the country and its capital in conjunction with policies in place to better understand the context wherein the Luxembourgish government has turned to nation branding. This goes alongside the continuity offered by the monarchy that contributes to secure the image of Luxembourg as a united family under the protection of the Grand Duke (for instance illustrated by celebrations and signs of devotion of the Luxembourgish people to the grand ducal family during the

wedding of the prince crown heir).[3] Parallel to this, Xavier Bettel as country's ruler and public married gay man deserves specific attention in the context of sexual politics of nation branding and will be further discussed later in the paper.

Mostly known in terms of global finance, Luxembourg has derived a bad reputation from its niche tax politics. Its financial sector was built in the 1970s as part of the transition from steel industries to a tertiary economy (Sohn and Walter 2008). Despite its small size, Luxembourg has since specialised in background services for the needs of global firms and other business milieus, while hosting numerous European headquarters of leading multinationals that control the Internet/tech industry market due to its advantageous corporate tax policies. Parallel to this economic specialisation, Luxembourg has benefited from its key position in the building of the European Union (EU) after WWII and hosts numerous major European institutions. Both features – financialization and Europeanisation – contribute to characterise Luxembourg's ongoing globalising approach through metropolisation (Decoville 2008; Hesse 2010; Schulz 2008; Sohn 2012). Metropolitisation processes do not rely on size only, but more specifically on the "ambitiousness, namely the ability of public bodies to insert the urban area into a network of cities in the world system in order to bring significant profit" (Moullé and Reitel 2014, 197).

Local and national authorities have thus produced successful efforts to inscribe the Grand Duchy and its capital as part of the global system, notably by fostering research and innovation and the education and cultural sectors. This focus on intellectual and creative sectors relates to a creative turn for Luxembourg also reflected in urban planning strategies and its tourism industry. Public officials have built large-scale urban projects to accommodate rapid change, drawing on a paradigmatic model of exceptional urbanism (Hesse 2016) that continues to spread into the city in different places, as illustrated for instance by the new capital city centre mall. While planning the future of Luxembourg, such urban policies attract specific kinds of people by creating particular ways of living within the city in line with the creative city discourse.

Luxembourg's population is very international. With seventy per cent of foreign residents coming from 167 different countries, it hosts as many different nationalities than New York or London for a population size of less than 120,000 inhabitants.[4] Luxembourg is characterised by a double immigration phenomenon that makes the Luxembourgish society a "sandwich society" (Felhen 2009) wherein the native Luxemburgish class is held between two layers of migrants. The 'bottom layer' is composed of low-qualified workers marked by their ethnicity, most of them from Eastern and Southern European countries like Portugal or from other Portuguese-speaking and Latin-American countries. The 'top layer' is represented by white collar workers labelled as expatriate, 'golden' immigrants: skilled, mostly European[5] workers in multinational corporations and European institutions (Felhen 2009). With a population growth about three per cent each year, the democratic system remains fragile, however, and naturalisation is strongly encouraged and widely supported and advertised by various programs. Moreover, foreigners of all kinds are encouraged to take part in political life, as illustrated by the leaflets distributed to every home in each of the country's official languages (Luxemburgish, French and German) as well as in English and Portuguese. Due to its singular location, Luxembourg also hosts almost 200,000[6] cross-border workers commuting every day for professional purposes, mostly to the capital city

3 The wedding of Prince Felix in 2013 prompted various expressions of sympathy towards the monarchy through, for instance, the weekslong display of the photo of the grand ducal couple in almost all private shops, cafes and restaurants in the capital city.

4 Source: Ville de Luxembourg 2017.

5 87 per cent of foreign residents hold an EU passport. The most common nationalities represented in Luxembourg are French, British, Spanish and Italian.

6 183,548. Source: STATEC 2018.

whose population doubles on workdays. Luxembourg reveals hence a unique dynamic as a European country.

Luxembourg's current transformations, mostly state-driven and relying on a neoliberal ideology of consumption, are aligned with creative discourses of multiculturalism. However, Luxembourg remains largely not only unknown, or negatively perceived and to some extent undesired, as Kate, the New Zealander expatriate in the introduction, recalls for us, thus leading the government to turn to nation branding strategies. Initiated in early 2013, Bettel's government set the nation branding project as a priority as of its election. The nation's brand was then officially launched in October 2016, a launch supported by a strong marketing campaign and various tools including a dedicated website.

While researching the production of transnational eliteness among expatriate women in Luxembourg and the consequent production of heteronormative subjectivities (Duplan 2014, 2016) in the context of my doctoral research from 2012 to 2015, the first public communications of the ongoing working processes for nation branding attracted my attention since the research participants shared ambivalent feelings towards Luxembourg in the context of their transnational sojourn, in line with the critical analysis of neoliberal globalisation present in my research. I gathered hence all documents I found throughout these years. The data analysed encompass oral, textual and visual communications, considered as discursive practices and mostly disseminated through media and the Internet. I have more specifically scrutinised (i) the official website (www.nationbranding.lu[7]) and brochures explaining the aims and workings of nation branding (Guide de reference du Nation Branding), prior and paralleling its launch, since it has been replaced by the campaign website; (ii) press articles echoing the campaign from its proceedings to its implementation during the year 2016, including the national press conference for the official launch of the nation branding programme; and (iii) a selection of documents and resources to refer to the Luxembourgish identity from the dedicated campaign website (www.inspiringluxembourg.lu) created to communicate this programme from its launch onwards. Although the official website has continued to grow and be fed by new resources, data was collected only until 2017, allowing me to cover the reception of the nation's brand launch at its beginnings. I focus more particularly in this paper on the tryptic of values chosen to define Luxembourg's identity in relation to what is presented as the multicultural foundation of the nation.

I propose hence a queer reading of Luxembourg nation branding that seeks to unpack intertwined normativities used in the communication campaign of the Luxembourgish government that contribute to the re-framing of national identities and sexual citizenship in line with creative/global goals. Drawing on feminist and queer approaches, I use intersectionality as a key framework of analysis to address the interweaving of power relations and the ways they are co-produced in institutional discourses. While the term has initially been created to account for minorities' lived and diverse experiences of oppression (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Davis 1983) whose bodies have been rendered 'out of place', it is important to remember intersectionality's constitutive roots within Black feminist thought and Black and critical race geographies that have highlighted the spatial dimensions of racialised experiences of oppression (Mollett and Faria 2018). Moreover, it is important to point out that intersectional approaches have been mostly set up, even prior to when the term has been conceptualised by Black feminist lesbians (Anzaldua 1987; Combahee River Collective 1983; Davis 1983; hooks 1984), although this sexualised dimension has not been fully addressed by scholars using intersectionality, with exception to queer scholars and notably queer scholars of colour. In this paper, I will more specifically focus on the intertwining of class, race and sexuality power relations in the ways they articulate themselves to produce

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7 This website has been set to communicate around the ongoing project of the nation branding during the preparation stages. It has been then replaced by the dedicated campaign website, www.inspiringluxembourg.lu, which information has eventually been subsumed in the governmental website: www.luxembourg.public.lu

normative frameworks of neoliberal creative urban identities. As such, a queer approach to nation branding offers a reading of the power dynamics that structure sexuality from an intersectional perspective so that queerness beyond sexuality is considered as a shared intersectional experience of marginalised subjects: those who fall outside the realm of normative heterosexuality (Cohen 1997) and experience the costs of the "violence of normative privilege" (Oswin 2019, 20).

Luxembourg's *Multikulti* nation branding and its politics of sexual in/exclusion

Luxembourg's "distinctive profile" (The Official Portal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg), as the outcome of the nation branding project, was publicly disclosed in October 2016 with the launch of a dedicated national campaign. The national website explains that this constitutes "Luxembourg's unique character and define(s) its shared values" that synthetize "the true qualities of the Grand Duchy" (The Official Portal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg). Luxembourg's identity is hence promoted as rooted in a long history of permanence and stability around multicultural features, locally tagged in Luxembourgish as *Multikulti*. In this section I analyse this discourse to better understand the story telling processes disseminated by the national narratives. I give first an overall presentation of the workings of the nation branding project before turning to a content analysis of a selection of documents available on the official websites that focuses on the main values put forward, making finally the connection to the politics of what is framed as a form of exceptionalist multiculturalism in Luxembourg.

Disclosing the "well-kept secret" of Luxembourg

The Luxembourgish government likes to point that the idea of promoting the Grand Duchy abroad goes back to the 1990s. Gradually, the increase of globalisation dynamics has made clear that the country needed "coordinated action in order to nurture its image and structure its promotion" (The Nation Branding Campaign Website). A nation branding committee, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign and Europeans Affairs and the Ministry of the Economy, was then set up in 2013 with the aim to enhance and promote the country's image. While this new direction can be read in a context of popularisation of nation branding strategies as a serial mode of governance at the global scale, it requires also a specific attention in a context where Luxembourg's reputation was badly tainted after the LuxLeaks scandal in 2014[8]. Pictured as the "Death Star of financial secrecy" in the headlines of The New York Times (23.12.2015), Luxembourg may have needed to enhance its attractiveness towards ventures and consequently foreign talents. However, since nation branding initially started before the Luxleaks crisis, one can articulate how this relates to the potential need for the country to move away from an image as a dubious financial centre while creating a positive image in the context of image risk management, notably after the financial crisis of 2008.

From 2013 to 2016 different groups in Luxembourg hence worked to frame the country's identity. A Luxembourgish marketing company was selected from a public tender and first worked jointly with a German company specialised in nation branding along with a survey company. The main outcome of this preliminary phase was the identification of a lack of a core identity that can be pinpointed from the outside. Drawing on this finding, a participatory phase followed that involved different actors from the civil society in various workshops, from national to foreign residents and cross-border workers, in an

8 This refers to the revelation of massive tax avoidance schemes given through audit companies to numerous multinational companies based in Luxembourg at the detriment of UE neighbour countries. For more information, see for instance The Guardian 05.11.2014

attempt to define a consistent identity for Luxembourg, translated in a collaborative workshop entitled "Creathon" into a logo and a motto. The logo, inspired by the symbol of the cross, borrows the national colours and materialises the idea of convergence. The motto, "Let's make it happen", focuses on the idea of the collective building of a shared destiny. The idea of inclusiveness supports each of the three sets of deliverables while promoting the responsibility and possible decision power of each in the becoming of the country.

The official launch of the brand in October 2016 unveiled the chosen visual identity and the tagline. It also displayed an official website entitled "Inspiring Luxembourg" which documents the core identity and values of Luxembourg. It proposes a "tool box" composed of various visual and textual materials, such as facts, reports, photos and videos about the country, available to whomever might want to promote Luxembourg. While the preliminary presentation of the nation branding project emphasised the objective of enhancing "the attractiveness towards tourists, investors, companies and skilled force" (www.nationbranding.lu), the nation branding launch offered turnkey tools for the promotion of Luxembourg, staging forward its main values, to those who recognise themselves as project allies.

Digging up "Luxembourg's true values"

Through its nation branding campaign, Luxembourg shows that it takes image issues seriously. As such, nation branding has worked to translate what has been defined as Luxembourg's "natural qualities" under the tryptic of values of *reliability*, *openness* and *dynamism* (www.nationbranding.lu) into attractive assets to creative foreigners, drawing on inclusiveness as a core value for its strategy. The idea of openness is of particular interest in relation with the *Multikulti* politics in Luxembourg.

First, Luxembourg is shaped as a country that has always been *reliable*, either in the economic, the political or the social, realm: "Luxembourg is a country that can be counted upon. A stable country with its own identity, a predictable environment, a good place to live in (…) The country's stability is also reflected in the mentality of its citizens" (Luxembourg's Country report). While reliability can be an asset to attract foreign talents, the term citizen requires further attention, since it may carry with it a separation between national and foreign residents, undermining the promises of the "democratic box" of multiculturalism (Kymlicka 2004, 144–146). However, because of its performative dimension, nation branding plays a crucial role in the shaping of normative national identities that are "remastered" through the narratives that are disseminated towards both national and foreign residents. On the one hand, nationals are meant to be(come) reliable and fit into the narrative of such an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). Moreover, since nation branding aims to attract "foreign talents", nationals are implicitly Othered to match with the requirement of diversity of the creative city while being asked to "cosmopolitanise" themselves as an ability to adapt to changes because cosmopolitanism is conceived as an "ethos" that will increase their own quality of life (Yeoh 2004). On the other hand, and in a context of fragile democratic representation, rather than being excluded from the nation's tale, foreign residents can rather be considered as being "invited by the state to be part of his nation-building project" (Dhamoon 2010, 261) by identifying as reliable citizens. Paralleling the nation branding campaign, procedures for naturalisation have been simplified to attract more foreigners, and among them more foreign talents, whose cultural capital facilitates access to such procedures and whose compliance to heteronormative criteria remains unquestioned. Indeed, as shown by queer scholars, migratory regimes tend to "normalize and naturalize heterosexuality and heterosexual practices including marriage, family, and biological reproduction, hence marginalizing persons, institutions or practices that deviate from these norms" (Manalansan 2006, 225). Luxembourg is a country that can be counted upon as far as one complies to implicit requirements.

Along with reliability, the Luxembourgish government focuses, through the keyword of *openness*, on cosmopolitanism as part of the flesh of the society itself: “The country is welcoming towards people from different origins and cultures and displays open-mindedness to new and innovative ideas (…) Luxembourg is a true melting pot of nationalities, cultures and languages. It is a place of international encounter, a mirror of an integration lived on a daily basis” (Luxembourg’s Country report). Using a vocabulary propagated through a multicultural ideology of diversity, and drawing on the use of metaphor, variations in nationalities and languages in the everyday are presented as the outcome of the natural openness of the country. This feature comes up also in the setting of a flagship video entitled “Your values are ours. Welcome to Luxembourg” (The Nation Branding Campaign Website). Staging in mostly well-known places people from all over the world, this three-minute video presents males and females, from diverse generations and family statuses, commenting in good English on the main values chosen to define Luxembourg. While the emphasis is put on cultural diversity, expressed in terms of race, nationality, ethnicity and religion, this eludes other forms of difference and tends to spread a unified vision of what cosmopolitanism means, notably in terms of education, consumption practices and ways of life. Regarding gender and sexuality, there is no explicit expression of non-normative gender or non-heterosexual orientation. By presenting the culture as the new scope of difference, “liberal multiculturalism provides a legitimated discourse to draw and redraw the lines of tolerance and also relationship between unity and diversity” (Dhamoon 2010, 261). Cosmopolitan discourses in Luxembourg promote an idealised version of the neoliberal subject which is coined by hetero-/homonormative standards (Puar 2002) and aligns with the model of the upper middle-class heterosexual urban family (Oswin 2012). Paralleling the expatriate family model, this model conveys imaginaries of neoliberal success through proven openness and tolerance of others through the practice of global mobility. This version of global citizenship is grounded in respectability, domesticity, sexual reproduction and family norms along with class privileges (Oswin 2010).

This class criterion deserves further scrutiny in relation to sexuality. Indeed, while assimilationist queer politics have been widely criticised as being “sold out by consumption practices” (Puar 2002, 111), gays and lesbians might be welcomed in the realm of the national family not only through their consumption practices but also through their mobility practices at the global scale. Meanwhile, their identity remains subsumed in the market and hence invisible. As such, this idea of openness invites wider critiques as it “reconstitutes the pre-Stonewall closet” (Ingebretsen 1999, cited by Puar 2002, 111). While claimed as tolerance, it contributes to exclude further visible forms of sexual difference, dissimulated under consumption and mobility practices. This apology of tolerance might be thereby interpreted as “a form of symbolic violence in which a mode of domination is presented as a form of egalitarianism” (Hage 1998, 87). Newcomers have hence no choice other than to conform to the hegemonic (liberal) societal culture – one that encompasses subjectivities shaped by specific gender expressions along with a specific lifestyle based on capitalist work and consumption as well as a urban and mobile way of life (Parker 2008; Tseng 2005).

Finally, the last core value of *dynamism* emphasises the adaptive and looking forward features of the national identity: “throughout its history, Luxembourg has reinvented itself several times. (…) The ‘Luxembourg way of doing things’ is characterised by pragmatism, an ability to adapt and a commitment to constant improvement” (Luxembourg’s Country report). The nation is presented as a natural entity whose inscription in a long-term history has enhanced its strengths. Luxembourg is described as resilient, which implicitly means that it had to face various challenges of all sorts and had succeeded in staying true to itself and its values throughout the history, according to the historical national motto: “We want to remain who we are.”[9] The constant and unalienable strength, resilience and dynamism are directed

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9 “Mir **wëlle** bleiwe wat mir sin”

towards forging a common destiny through jobs, talent and capital, complying to neoliberal global capitalism. Moreover, nation branding discourses flirt here with common strategies of creative cities that aim at enhancing "the attractiveness towards tourists, investors, companies and skilled workforce" (www.nationbranding.lu). In so doing, they invite those looking for a place to be to identify themselves as part of the happy few who are described as leading our global world (Birtchnell and Caletrìo 2014).

Targeting specific segments of population, Luxembourg defines again, although here more explicitly, those who are allowed to fit in the nation project, regulating the definition of the national culture and reiterating privileges for those who conform to the hegemonic liberal identity. The talent to attract is one "who accepts the benevolence of the state, and who is also well-educated, fluently English-speaking, upwardly mobile, and a contributor to the economy" (Dhamoon 2010, 270) as well as the one who complies to certain gender expressions and organisations based on the model of the traditional nuclear family. This also translates in public policies such as family allowances and maternal leaves that are particularly advantageous. By promoting its resilience and dynamism in such a way, the Luxembourgish government discretely underlines its efforts: through emergent market dynamics in the field of digital and biotechnologies, the country tries to takes up a position as a growing, smart, multilingual, cosmopolitan, hyperconnected, innovating and enterprising nation, for which multiculturalism represents the ideal image of economic dynamism and success.

Queering the "united colours" of Luxembourg

"Our DNA is the one of an open society" (Le Quotidien, 22.06.2017). These words pronounced by Prime Minister Bettel in his discourse on National Day reinforce the naturalness of the *Multikulti* by highlighting the diversity of the society and the ways in which the country has always known how to deal with and adapt to new challenges throughout the times. While this feature appears in many narratives on Luxembourg prior to the nation branding (notably in the brochures dedicated to the touristic promotion of the city), it is presented as the cornerstone of current national narratives while enhancing the cosmopolitan aspiration of the creative/global city. However, a closer analysis might help illuminate who gets included in this narrative. Towards this purpose, the photograph (figure 1) displayed on the home page of the nation branding official website deserves comment. By picturing both males and females of different ages and ethnicities, this photograph easily conflates mainstream illustrations of neoliberal multiculturalism. Two out of ten individuals are non-white: one female pictured is from an Asian background and one from an African background. They are each positioned almost at the edges of the group, just before each of the eldest people. All people are good-looking, wealthy-looking, able-looking. The background is a picturesque view of the capital city, underlining its greenness and its historical heritage. The age range includes six grown-ups, two teens and one child in the centre, conveying the idea of a united family whose happiness is encrypted in their smiles. The balanced division between males and females underlines gender equality in terms of female inclusion, but all characters are cisgender looking and no same-sex couples are on display. Moreover, the position of the arms of the two adults in the centre as well as the matching ages and location on the edges of the eldest ones suggest heterosexual couples. As presented in the first section of this paper, family and nationalism ideals are closely tied together and remain framed by the heterosexual order (Alexander 1994; McClintock 1993; McClintock et al. 1997). As such, the codes of the family photo suggest heterosexual family norms and reinforce heteronormative standards around conjugality, family ties and gender expressions (Oswin 2010) as preservers of the reproduction of the nation. The use of the family-like photograph also conveys feelings raised by the affective unit displayed in a place usually associated to home (Rose 2003). Through the display of a family photo, the nation is hence presented here as a home, place of safety and protection, where each member can be hirself without restriction. Moreover, the performative dimension of the

picture contributes to "cementing family success" (Rose 2003, 6) through the transfer of affective ties from the domestic sphere to the national realm.

Figure 1. Flagship photograph of the Luxembourg promotional website. Source: The Official Portal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: https://luxembourg.public.lu/fr/boite-a-outils/la-marque/les-valeurs-du-luxembourg.html (last access 2.12.2020)

Drawing on the affectivity of the family, this photo is primarily aimed at representing nation/family inclusivity. However, beyond the focus on togetherness, absences deserve a specific attention (Rose 2003). One can hence question why there is no representation of middle-class Luxembourgish people, nor of the Portuguese working class who comprise a key segment of the multicultural Luxembourgish society, nor explicit representation of non-heterosexual people. Where are the poor people, the disabled ones, the single mothers, the queer, the punks, bulldaggers and other welfare queens (Cohen 1997)? Where are those who do not fit in the hegemonic tale of the nation (Bell and Binnie 2000)? This helps underline how certain presences and absences are also forms of queer exclusion (Haritaworn 2010), since the inclusion of certain forms of race into local policies "serves to normalize some performances of identity and community in the public realm, while living little room for other forms" (Catungal and Leslie 2009, 702) that are "further marginalised in their inability or unwillingness to constitute cultural capital" (Myrdahl 2011, 163). However, while Haritaworn (2010) defends a queer politics of the *Multikulti* in a racial analysis of queer, I propose to scrutinise further here the possible infiltration of specific forms of queerness through a homonormative politics of respectability (Duggan 2003).

A closer look at the family/nation photo questions a possible inclusion of non- heterosexual subjects. The presence of three single characters – one female and two males – who stand alone in the picture and do not appear closely tied to any other member of the scene may offer a broader reading around sexuality. These are possible homosexual subjects who "are white, young, non-disabled, non-trans, male – 'attractive', 'normal', palatable and assimilable" (Haritaworn 2010, 77). Pictured as such, the possible homosexual subject falls into the moral order of the family – here, sexual difference

becoming depoliticised and reduced to the realm of heteronormative performances of love, conjugality and family or its homonormative variation indexed on consumption. Moreover, the existence of positive public policies towards LGBTIQ+ people – such as same-sex marriage in an extended version of reproductive rights – might also influence this reading, along with the presence of Xavier Bettel on the international stage as an openly gay prime minister. His image suggests indeed that certain gays and lesbians can be included in the imagined nation: white, wealthy, upper-middle-class cisgender male able bodies, whose performance of homosexuality is close to corporate forms of gayness (Puar 2002, 128) and whose homosexuality becomes respectable through normative politics. However, adding homosexual people to the picture does not necessarily help in queering the nation/family – it may rather reinforce homonormativity by reflecting race and social class privileges (Warner 1999).

The display of homonormative citizens nevertheless helps Luxembourg to position itself as a gay-friendly country at the global scale (Haritaworn 2012; Puar 2007). This picture illustrates hence a kind of "united colours" of Luxembourg (to borrow from Mitchell 1993) that denies interlocked structural and material power effects, notably of class or sexuality. What is called the "manipulation of diversity" has been pointed as a constant in neoliberal forms of governance that articulate "newer forms of cosmopolitan, creative and transnational citizenship" (Catungal and Leslie 2009, 703). Such politics hence targets, more specifically, members of a transnational creative elite class, drawing on the premises that talent defies gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, eluding the social construction of talent and deservedness along with their association with class privileges and sexual normativities (Parker 2008, 218) beyond sexual orientation.

A final question remains as an extra nuance to this analysis: is nation branding in Luxembourg a discrete form of queer nationalism? Rather than reading this sexual politics solely as a depoliticisation of sexual difference, I would like to consider "instances of gay and lesbian incorporation for the ways in which they can already be read as queer" (Oswin 2007, 96), following the idea that queering does not always comes from the margins, although it might continue to exclude other Others. The queer sexual politics promoted here, notably through the presence of an openly gay prime minister, hence questions whether we should interpret it as a neoliberal incorporation of queers, a "genuine" local expression of homosexuality (Oswin 2007), a queering of the nation and to a certain extent a queering of globalisation. The question remains open.

Conclusion: Towards a queer politics of nation branding

This paper offers a queer reading of the sexual politics of nation branding in the context of creative Luxembourg through the use of an intersectional perspective. While creative city discourses and policies have been largely scrutinised by critical scholars who have pointed out their exclusionary ways of working, notably in terms of class, race and gender, nation branding has been largely overlooked in its relationship to the entrepreneurial urban shift and in the ways it shapes desirable forms or subjectivities and citizenship while reworking the boundaries of sexual in-/exclusion. I argue that nation branding, by drawing on neoliberal forms of multicultural citizenship (Catungal and Leslie 2009), contributes to the reiteration of social inequalities through the production of specific subjectivities that are sexually normative.

Addressing a queer critique "to understand how norms and categories are deployed" (Johnston 2017, 5495), I have highlighted how neoliberal multicultural definition of inclusiveness is implicitly based on normative assumptions of sexuality (Bell and Binnie 2000; Haritaworn 2010; Puar 2002) that subsume the nation into the heterosexual order of the family (McClintock 1993). As such, nation branding provides a heteronormative framing of sexual subjectivities and citizenships, related to

privileges associated with neoliberal politics and practices that are aligned with heterosexuality and class privileges of consumption (Oswin 2008). Moreover, this multicultural form of citizenship is "ambiguous at best, as it is conditioned upon fitting within the narrow parameters of an acceptable if different citizen-consumer" (Myrdahl 2011, 164). A queer reading of nation branding has hence offered a better understanding of how power dynamics structure sexuality from an intersectional perspective. It goes beyond a descriptive version of sexuality by uncovering the power structures that enable some gay subjects to be incorporated into national discourses. It enables thinking about the ways in which different bodies – poor, non-normative, sick, fat or non-valid bodies, beyond sexuality – are marginalised and made to be queer in the eyes of the state as well as in other communities while inclusion is held high through the banner of *Multikulti* politics. As such, it offers a critic of neoliberal multiculturalism in which "tolerance encourages a limited acceptance of difference that neither considers nor displaces relations of power" (Myrdahl 2011, 163).

Nation branding allows creative, urban, homosexual people to identify themselves in such politics, more specifically in a context of openly gay-friendly governmental policies, leading to forms of respectable homonormativities (Duggan 2003). Creative nation branding strategies capitalise hence on sanitised forms of difference that lead to a "domestication" of sexual subjectivities that are and not only "de-eroticised", but also "de-politicised" (Warner 1999). While claiming tolerance, inclusivity and protection for queer people, the neoliberal politics of nation branding reinforces heteronormativity, working as a regulatory regime for sexual citizenship and shaping bodies and intimacies beyond queer lives. Through nation branding, the Luxemburgish government renews hence its role as a moral entrepreneur (Becker 1963) by articulating desire, affects, norms and values in the promotion of an idealised model of citizenship which remains strongly sexually normative. Moreover, homonormative narratives, while putting forward social acceptance towards certain LGB subjects, may run the risk of enhancing race and social class inequalities (Warner 1999). However, the presence of Luxembourg's openly gay prime minister contributes to re-actualise the discussions around the depoliticization of sexuality within the neoliberal politics of difference by questioning how a nation can be queered. Finally, while this paper has shed light on discursive politics of heteronormativity, further work on how it is experienced and embodied in nation branding in everyday lives of global talents is needed, for example in documenting the lives of queer people as well as local citizens to reveal how neoliberal forms of urban governance globally shape bodies, subjectivities and intimacies (Mountz and Hyndman 2006).

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