

this volume is recommended to readers in Hungary not so much for the results contained in it but rather for its special viewpoint, theoretical framework and methodological approach. The reader may stop for a moment to think about how and to what extent he/she is able to accept or adopt, as a citizen of an EU member country, the (West) European viewpoints on a (not only economically) unified Europe or to make those living in the West understand our own viewpoints or perhaps bring the two concepts nearer to one another.

ZSOLT BOTTLIK

**CHRISTIAN WILLE (2012):**  
*Grenzgänger und Räume der Grenze: Raumkonstruktionen in der Großregion SaarLorLux.*  
**Luxemburg-Studien, Bd. 1, Peter Lang GmbH, Frankfurt am Main, 393 pp.**



The book series Luxembourg Studies (Luxemburg-Studien, Etudes luxembourgeoises) specialises in publishing the results of those researches and projects in the field of social sciences whose topics are related to the culture and society of Luxembourg. These topics range widely, from the history of Luxembourg through language, literature, politics and geography to territorial development and research into sociological problems.

A total of five books have been published in the framework of this series since 2012. Below we will get acquainted more in detail with the opening publication of this series, the work of Christian Wille with the title „Grenzgänger und Räume der Grenze” (Cross-border commuters and Border Spaces).

Christian Wille is a social and cultural scientist at the University of Luxembourg where he has been leading an inter-disciplinary project since 2007. Besides this he is also guest lecturer at various universities in Lothringen, Saarland and Luxembourg. He defended his doctoral thesis simultaneously at the Universities of Saarland and Luxembourg. The present publication is an adaptation of the author's doctoral dissertation originally written in German.

The investigations contained in the book focus on the trilateral border region of Saarland (Germany) – Lorraine (France) and Luxembourg called ‚Grand Region SaarLorLux’. There are more than 200 thousand daily commuters here who cross the borders and work in one of the neighbouring countries. The author tried to find answers primarily to the question of what social, regional and cultural impacts daily, regular commuting has and how it influences the everyday life of people living there. As a result of daily commuting a practically new way of life comes about which raises a number of questions regarding the interpretation of space and living in border areas. Exploring cross-border commuting is especially

interesting because it is a phenomenon not thoroughly researched as yet and our level of information is rather limited as far as the living conditions and attitudes of cross-border commuters is concerned. In Wille's interpretation cross-border commuting is the possible prototype of a diverse, post-modern way of life since commuters are less attached to locality (they are „multi-local“) but they are extremely mobile.

After the first, introductory chapter the theoretical background of the topic is presented in the second one by the author. He demonstrates, among others, relevant models of spatial theory (like, for example, the absolutely substantialist, the relational-constructivist, the socially based ones) and the related intention-oriented and intellect-oriented types of actions and their constructions of spatial relevance too. The third chapter deals with the methodological background of the research. It turns out from the detailed description that his analyses are based on qualitative empirical examinations: in the first round the analysis of literature, professional interviews and explorative interviews with commuters were made by the author. Then he sent out standardised questionnaires by post and electronically to the commuters in the area. Based on the latter he was able to set up a data-base listing the details of 458 persons. In the third round he completed and refined his scientific results with further in-depth interviews. In Chapter 4 Wille goes into the details of the history of cross-border movements in the SaarLorLux

region. His investigations start with the beginning of the twentieth century and then the history of the border areas between France, Germany and Belgium, then, subsequently the history of borders around Luxembourg, cross-border movements and migratory processes are presented on almost 100 pages. His message is illustrated by plenty of maps and diagrams. The decisive, most important part of the book is Chapter 5 exploring the socio-cultural dimensions of cross-border commuting. Wille approaches his theme from the point of view of the social researcher focusing on working conditions and job satisfaction, employment careers, workplace socialisation and responses related to language and communication difficulties, territorial identity and stereotypes. The closing chapter of the book summarises the results of research by critically evaluating cross-border spatial constructions and labour mobility closely related with them.

Wille declares that the main motivating factors of cross-border commuting are, not surprisingly, better jobs and higher wages. Daily commuters are willing to accept travelling several hours day after day, sitting in traffic jams and often spending limited hours with their families in the hope of these two factors mentioned above. On the upside, namely, one may find more favourable jobs and working conditions, higher living standards and sometimes even a more exciting life. Commuters of the younger generation particularly claim that their decisions are often influenced

by hoping to get more life experience in a foreign country. A typical commuter is not so easily described by levels of qualification or social status here; in the Luxembourg region commuting is more a kind of lifestyle.

Special attention is paid by the author to exploring the social status of commuters in a foreign country. Commuters abroad are rivals to the locals on the labour market while in their mother country they are rivals to their fellow countrymen in the real estate market, as a result of higher wages received in Luxembourg. This inevitably leads to conflicts in sending and receiving countries alike. This question is even more interesting in the light of how these workers are able to integrate into the communities in their workplace or living place. Wille comes to the conclusion that commuters hardly integrate, or do not integrate at all, in the communities at their workplace, for them the communities at their living places bear more significance.

Wille gets rid of clichés like “young people go abroad only to learn foreign languages” or “they return home after work”. Young people without families often go shopping in various stores in Luxembourg, visit local restaurants, go to local cinemas or entertain themselves in local bars. They make full use of the cultural opportunities in Luxembourg and they often make friends with the locals. They sometimes face problems, however, at the workplace: commuters not only come from a different education system (as a result of which their levels of knowledge and

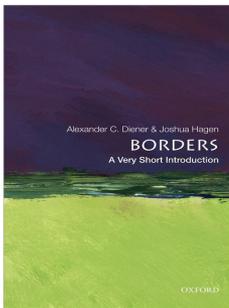
expertise are different) but often they represent a different working culture and they apply different working methods. For this reason certain companies employ only commuters from certain selected countries in order to minimise the differences between their workers. Luxembourg is a multilingual country: besides the official Luxembourg, French and German, English and the various other languages spoken by the many immigrants also add to increasing lingual diversity. As a result, language differences hardly ease the situation of commuters since communicating in a foreign language demands higher concentration and the commonly applied workplace technique “just explain yourself simply” often leads to a loss of information and misunderstanding. Commuters would like to be treated as equals in their workplace but it is obvious that the origin of the applicant is a strong factor even in the process of filling positions in Luxembourg.

This volume of almost 400 pages is not recommended to those who have become accustomed to or require flashy, quick reports or who are used to the copy-paste style of executive summaries spanning two or three pages. Reading this book demands time and energy because the author intends to reach into the real depths of his theme. Perhaps it is better to browse through this book as a handbook trying to avoid the meticulous analysis of the details placed under a microscope. Those, however, who are interested in cross-border economic conditions and social

processes, especially migration, will find it a book of excellent quality. Although the topic is local, the problem and the phenomenon under investigation is global, therefore the scientific statements made by the author are also valid for international comparison. The work of Christian Wille provides sound methodological and objective supplementary reading for those doing research on the social status of cross-border commuters or the space-specific processes of migration. Last but not least this book is recommended to the students of universities in Hungary working on their doctoral theses. Reading this volume they will probably learn a great deal about how one is to prepare scientific studies of the highest quality.

TAMÁS EGEDY

**ALEXANDER C. DIENER & JOSHUA HAGEN (2012): *Borders: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 144 pp.**



The Oxford University Press launched its Very Short Introductions series in 2000. These editions target a general audience and aim to give a brief and widely readable interpretation of the principal research questions, as well as some of the current problems, in a wide range of particular fields of interest.

The title *Borders* was published in September 2012, written by American geographers Alexander C. Diener (University of Kansas) and Joshua Hagen (Marshall University). As of their professional CVs both of them obtained their doctoral degrees at the Geography Graduate Program of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and it is from this background that their predominantly political geographical approach - tangible in the book - comes.

It was a definite challenge for the authors to synthesize the most important thematic fields of an emerging sub-discipline that has undergone a dynamic advancement in the course of recent decades within the scope of a pocket-sized book. However, the outcome is more than remarkable. Even this short extent enabled the drawing up of a largely comprehensive historical introduction, starting from the territorial marking of hunter-gatherer societies, passing through the first states of the Fertile Crescent, the geographical framework of notable city-states, empires and nomadic cultures of ancient history, then taking into account the phases of the emergence of modern states in which the absolutist transition of feudal states was decisive from the aspect of the current role of borders. The authors underline the importance of the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The former one founded the concept of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states while the latter declared the concept of the