

International Colloquium-Workshop
New perspectives on the secularization of funerary culture
15th June 2017, Liberaal Archief, Ghent



**The introduction of cremation in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg:
a long struggle in a small state**

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RIP - Material Culture and Spaces of Remembrance.
A Study of Cemeteries in Luxembourg in the Context of the Greater Region

Project 2015-18
funded by the



- A – The historical context of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
- B – The secularization of funeral practices: a low-density “Kulturkampf”
- C – The introduction of cremation to Luxembourg in two steps

A

Continuity and Change of Territories, Rulers, Laws ...

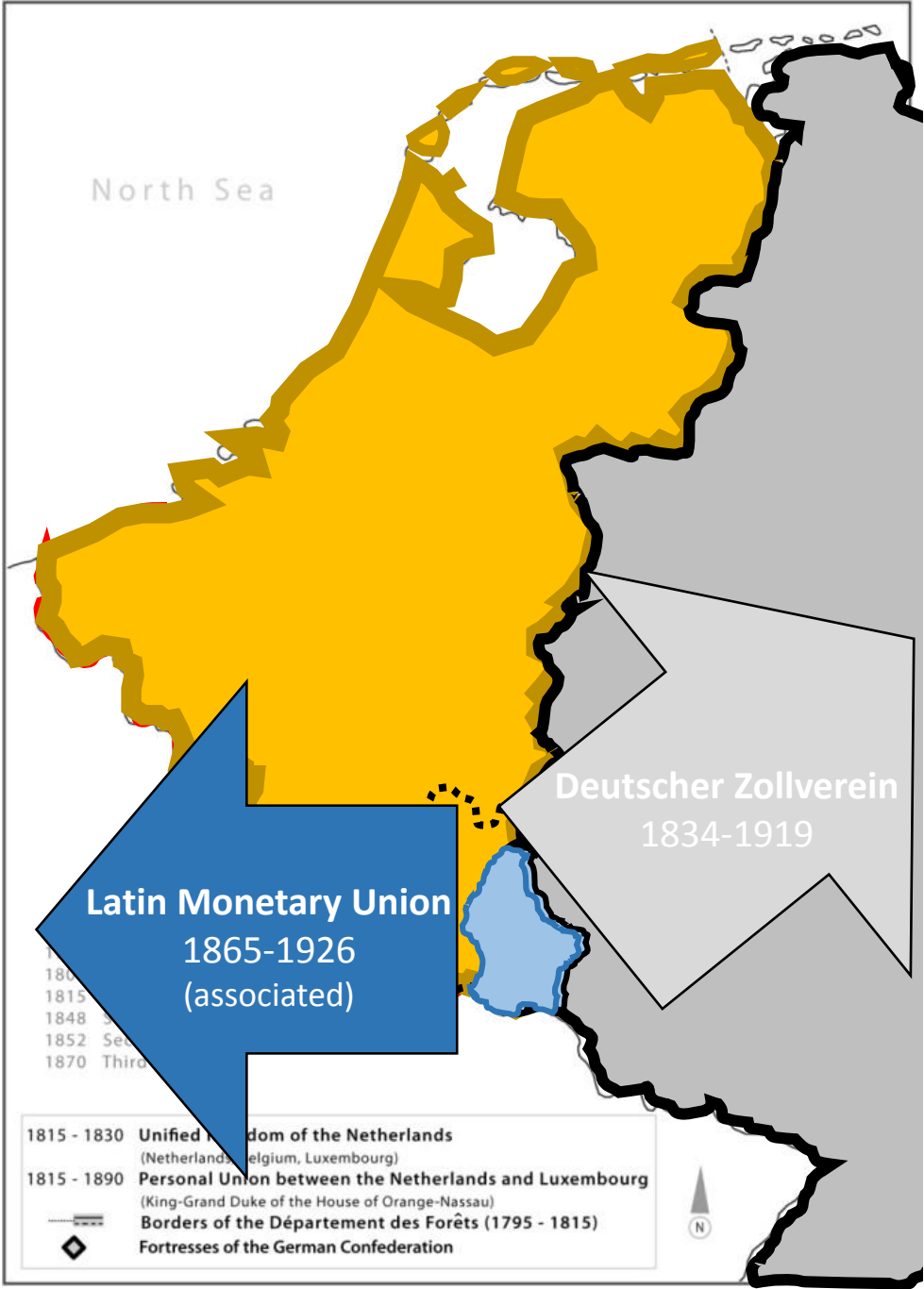
Austrian Netherlands 1714-1797

Département des Forêts 1795-1814/15

United Kingdom of the Netherlands 1815-1830/39

German Confederation 1815-1866/67

Grand Duchy (neutral) 1866/67-present



A

Continuity and Change of Sepulchral Culture

Département des Forêts 1795-1814/15

- civil registration (births, death, marriages) from parishes to commune (officer)
- “Kirchenfabriken” (*Décret du 30 décembre 1809 concernant les fabriques des églises*)
- « 23 prairial, an XII » (*Décret impérial sur les sépultures*, 12 juin 1804)

United Kingdom of the Netherlands 1815-1830/39

German Confederation 1815-1866/67

Grand Duchy (neutral) 1866/67-present

- minor amendments (*Arrêté grand-ducal*, i.e. ministerial/administrative decree, e.g. 1937)
- *Loi du 1er août 1972* (“Cremation Law”)



“Kulturkampf” over dead bodies?

~~*Kulturkampf* (“culture struggle/fight”)~~

~~1830s Switzerland (Ultramontanes vs. Liberals)~~

~~1871-79 under Bismarck in the German Empire~~

~~1879-84 Belgium (“First School War”)~~

~~...~~

Grand Duchy – a Catholic country

Which diocese?

1801-1823 Diocese of Metz (F)
 1823-1833/40 Diocese of Namur (B)
 1840 Apostolic Vicariate
 1870 Independent Diocese
 1988 Archdiocese

...

Rural population and one ‘big’ city: (garrison town) of Luxembourg

1850: 195.000 (Luxembourg-City 22.000)

1950: 295.000 (Luxembourg-City 63.000)

Village schools and one *Athenée Royal* (only institute for higher education)

Pulpit and **Catholic Press**





- **“Cohabitation”** of commune & parish (“Friedhofszwang”)
- **No real challenge** and alternative to a “Catholic-style funeral”
- *Civil burial*: **imitation** & religious surrogate of Catholic rituals

B

“Kulturkampf” over dead bodies?

... an illustrative example

New Cemetery

-  Section separated by a quickset hedge
-  Grave of the Protestant
-  Graves of unbaptized infants
-  Grave of a suicidal

Forgery / Misrepresentation of the mayor (in red lines)

- no **separation**
- no **separate entrance** for Protestants etc.

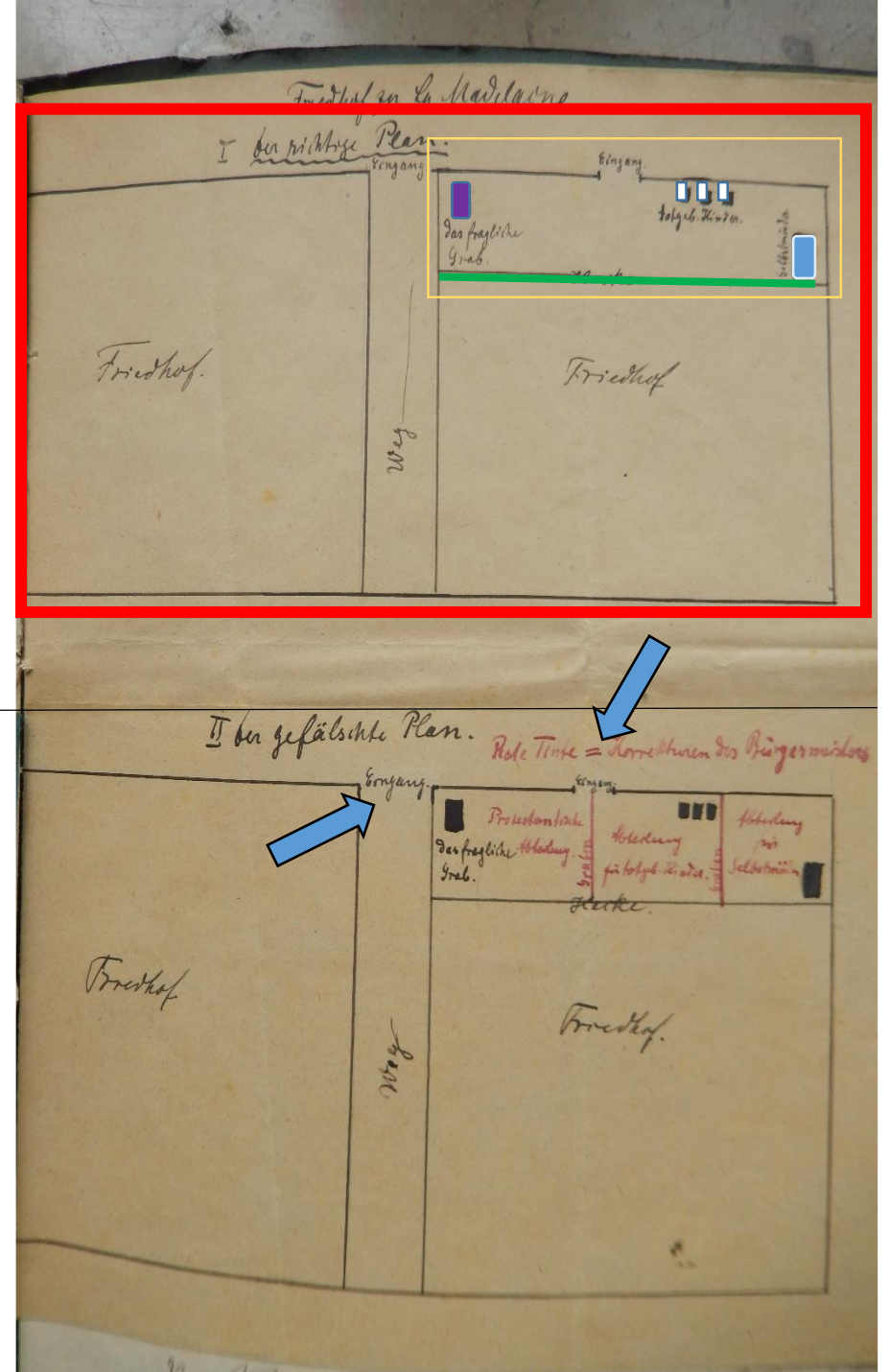
Separation or not?

The case of Lamadelaine (Rollingen)/Commune Pétange

1885-1886

ANLux (Archives Nationales de Luxembourg)

Friedhofsangelegenheiten, H7-2B - Eglise Protestante



C The Introduction of Cremation

“Im ward – gemäß seinem ausdrücklichen Willen – als Mitglied des Hollericher Feuerbestattungs=Vereins – das traurige Privileg, der erste Luxemburger zu sein, dessen Leichnam im Mainzer Crematorium verbrannt wurde. Seine Asche wurde nach deren Zurücksendung ziviler auf dem Kirchhofe von Hollerich beigesetzt.”

Pfarrer Martin Blum in: Ons Hémecht 1 (1916), S. 25



Krematorium Mainz, establ. 1903

First Cremation of a Luxembourger: 1910
First Cremation in Luxembourg: 1995



Krematorium Luxemburg-Hamm, opened in 1995

The Introduction of Cremation



Crematory Hamm/Luxembourg-City

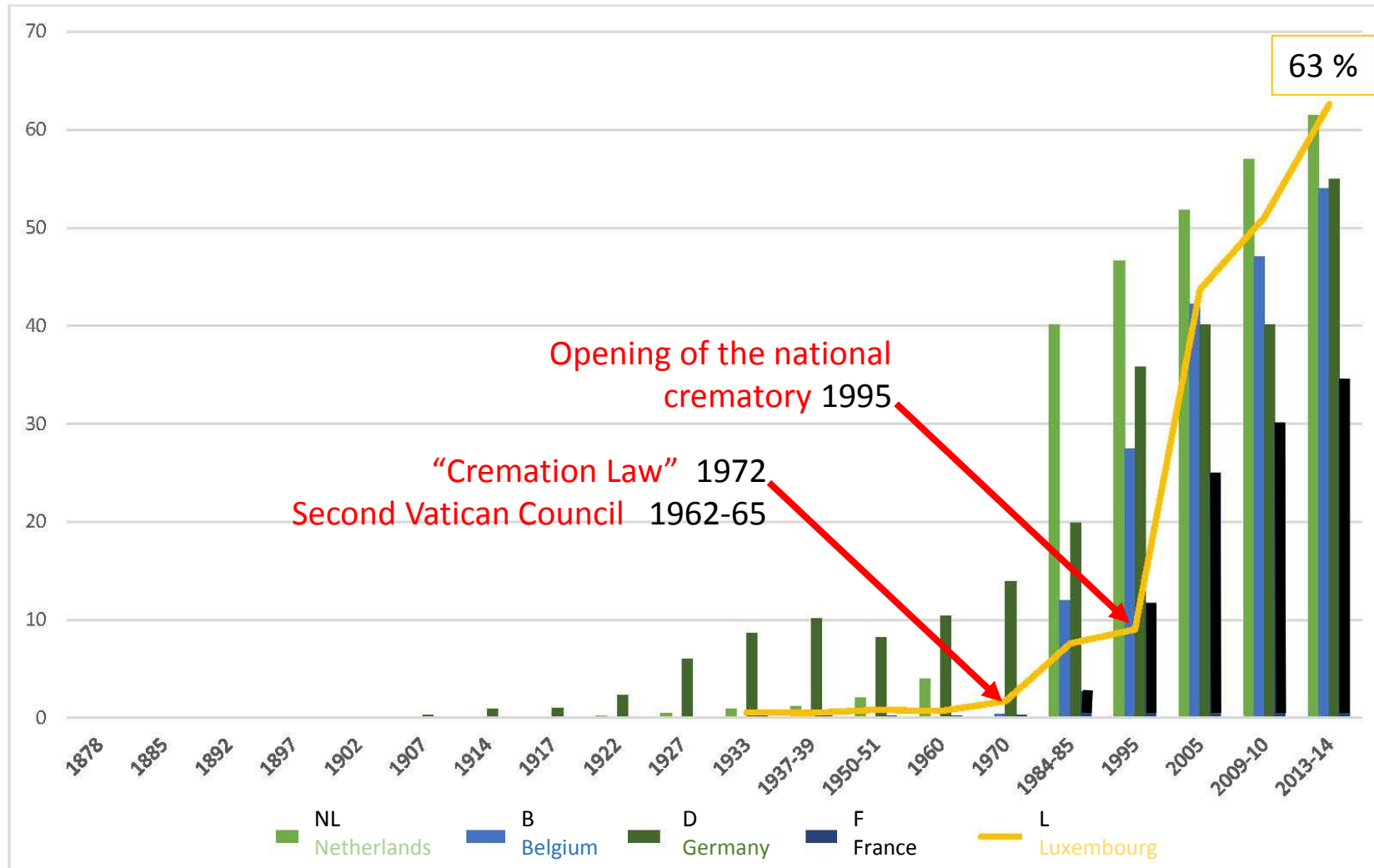


Crematory Hamm/Luxembourg-City ("Streuweise")

- Foundation of *Flamma* (*Société pour la Propagation de l'Incinération*) in 1906
- **Immigration** and **new social group** due to industrialization
- **Provocation** of Christian faith & political “**proxy war**”

Modern cremation has involved the greatest practical and ritual change experienced by Christianity. The debate triggered a low-density “Kulturkampf” between Catholic-conservative protagonists and liberal/socialist/freethinker elites.

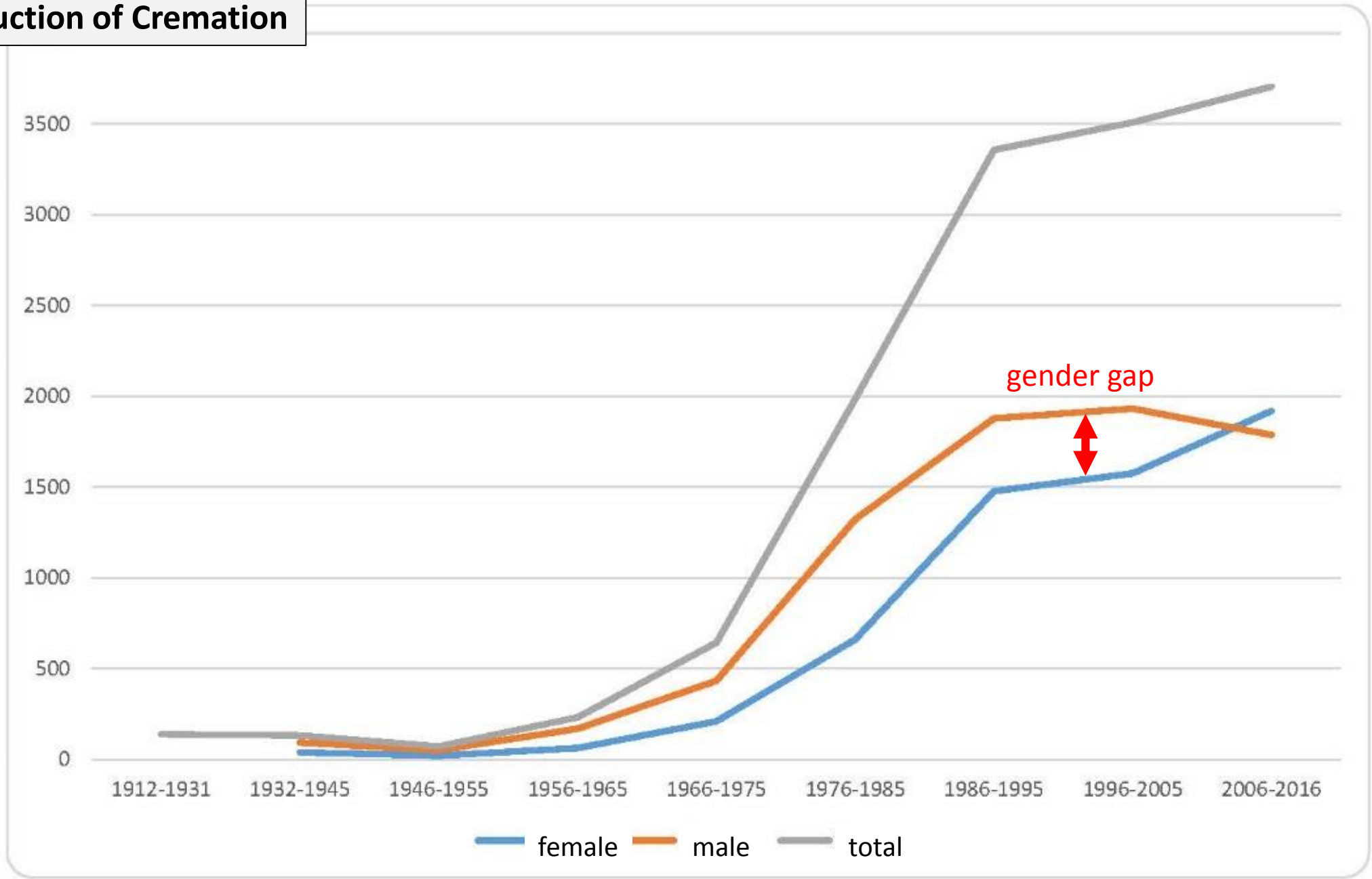
The Introduction of Cremation



Cremation: Percentage proportion/burials in selected countries

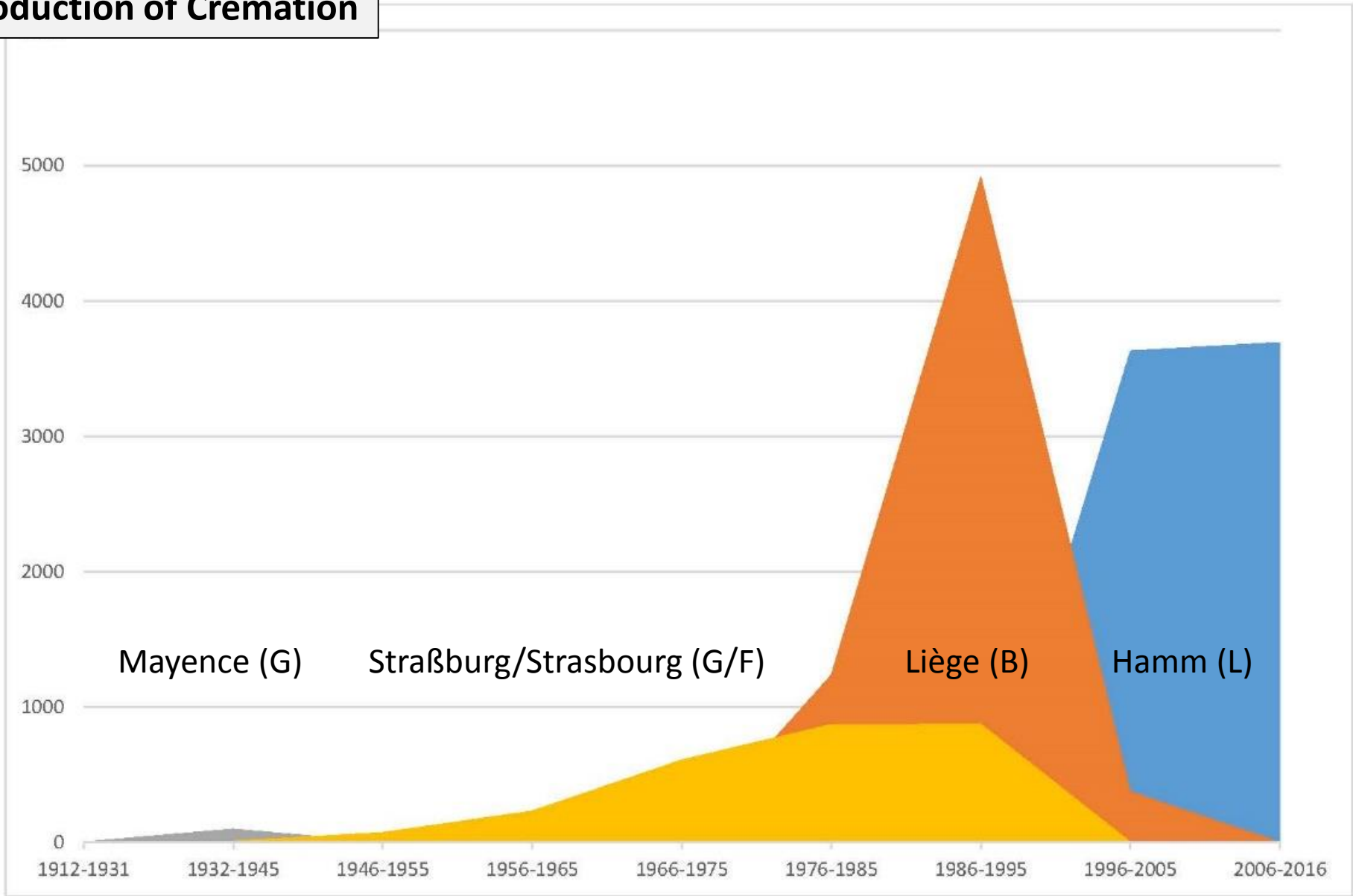
C

The Introduction of Cremation



Gender aspect of cremation

The Introduction of Cremation



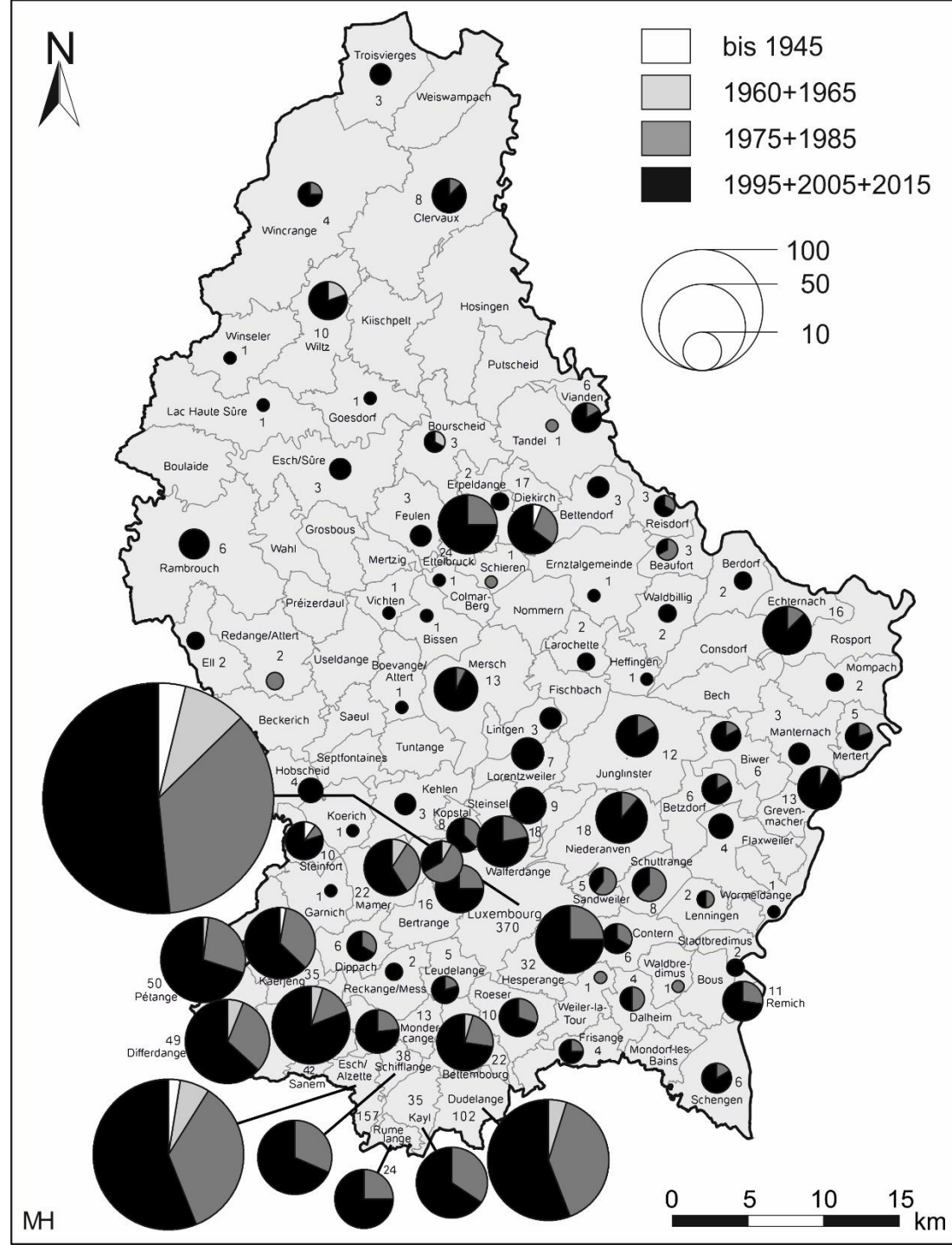
The most important crematories for Luxembourgers

C

The Introduction of Cremation

spatial/regional distribution of cremation

N to S: 100 km – 1h20min/car drive

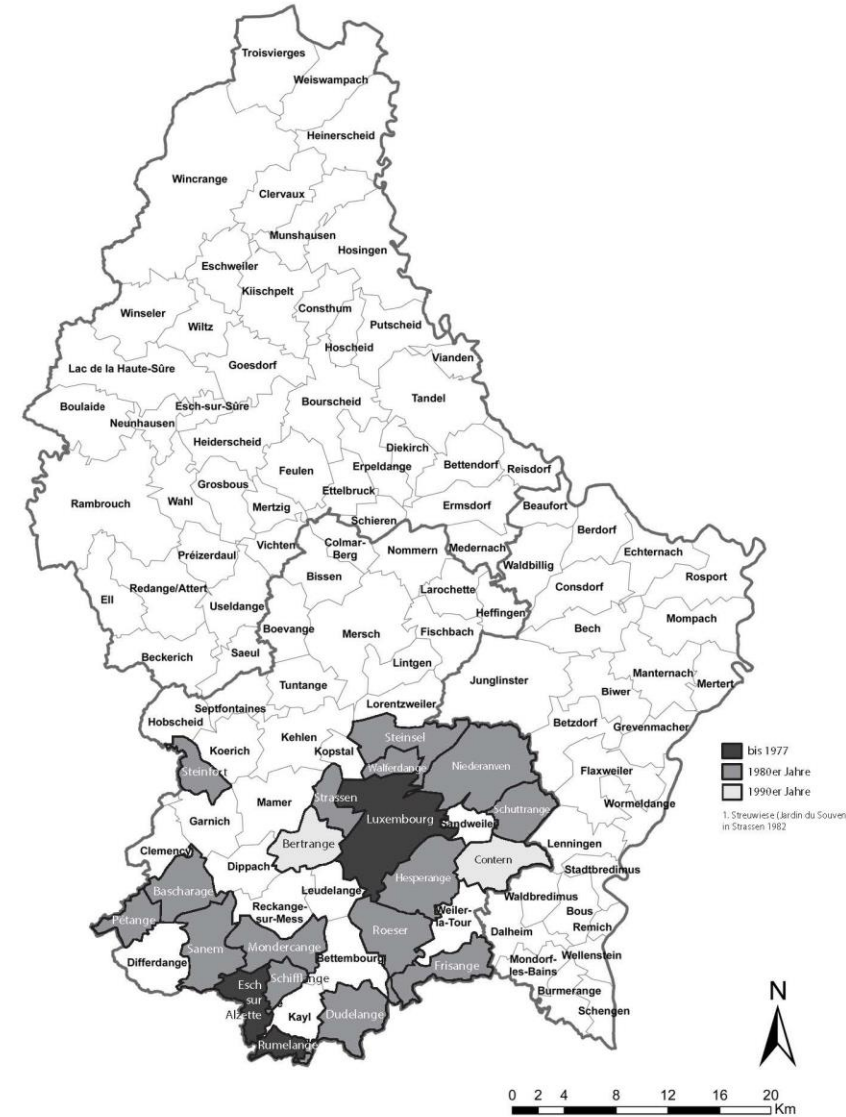
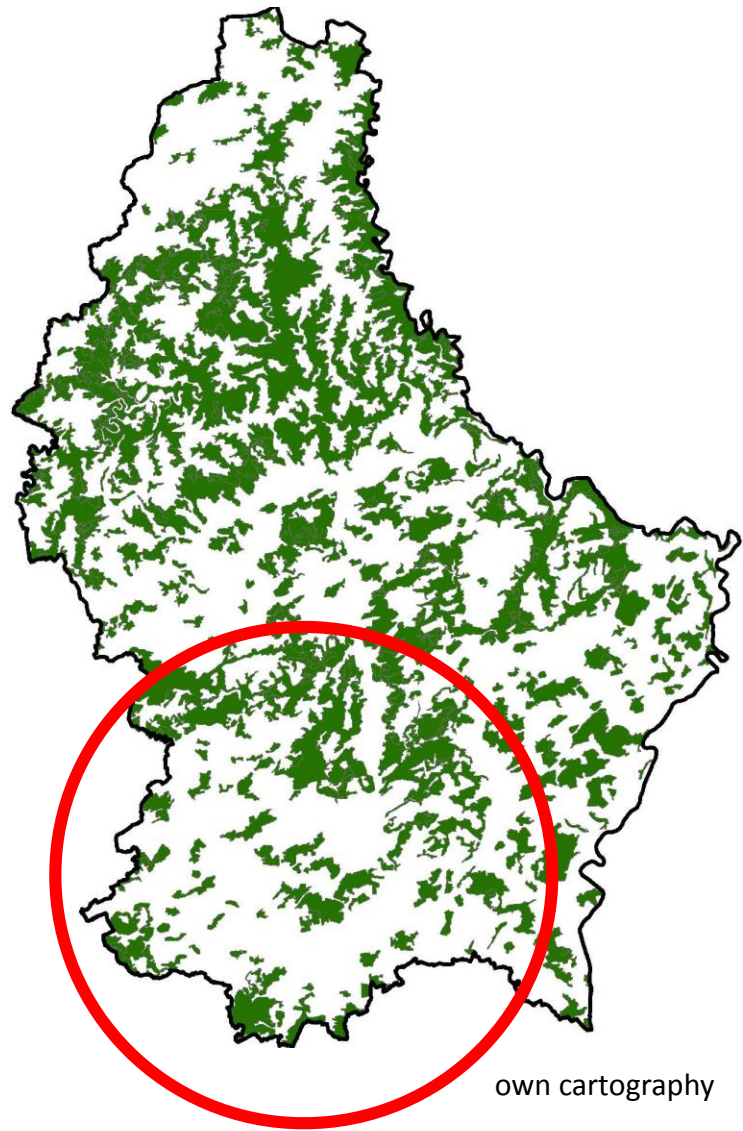
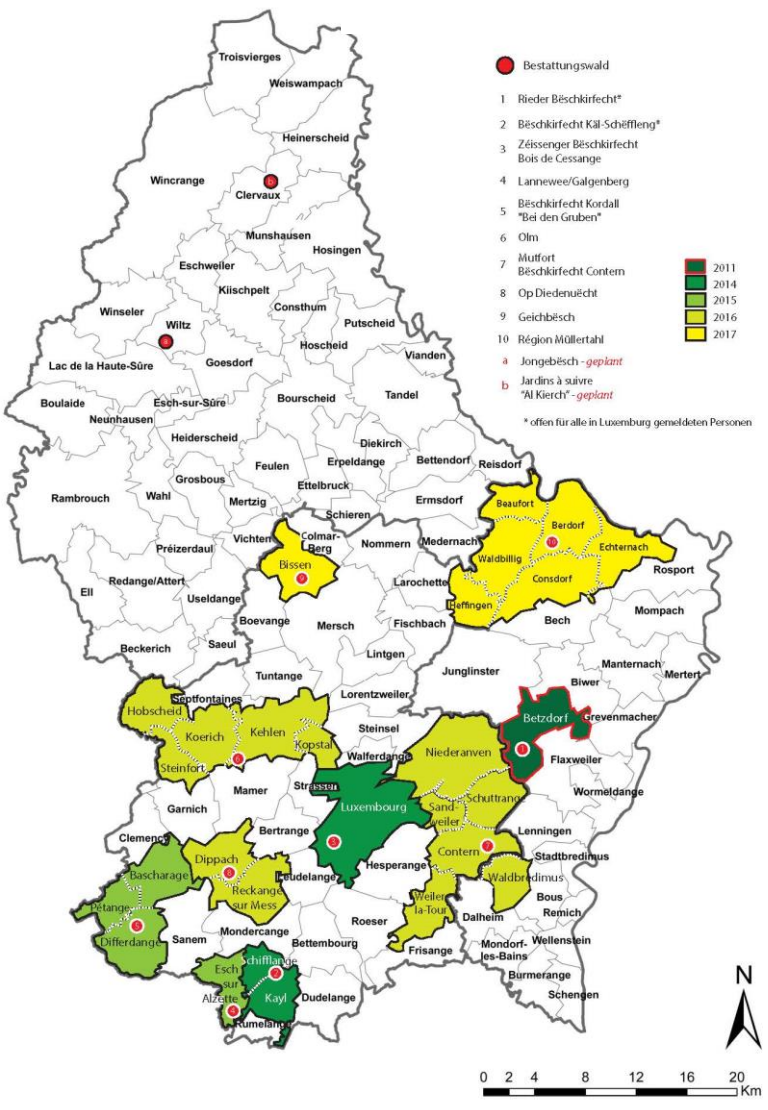


The Introduction of Cremation

“Waldfriedhof”

Woodlands

Cremation Infrastructure



... where is the struggle/conflict?

- **Debate in Belgium** about the introduction of cremation (1920s-30s)
- **Disrespect of last wills**
- **Intimidation** by the pulpit (face-to-face-society)
- 1972 – 1994/95: **SICEC** (“intercommunal operating society”)
*Syndicat de communes ayant pour objet la construction,
l'entretien et l'exploitation d'un crématoire sur base intercommunale (S.I.C.E.C.)*

The Introduction of Cremation

... the “Konkordanzdemokratie” of Luxembourg

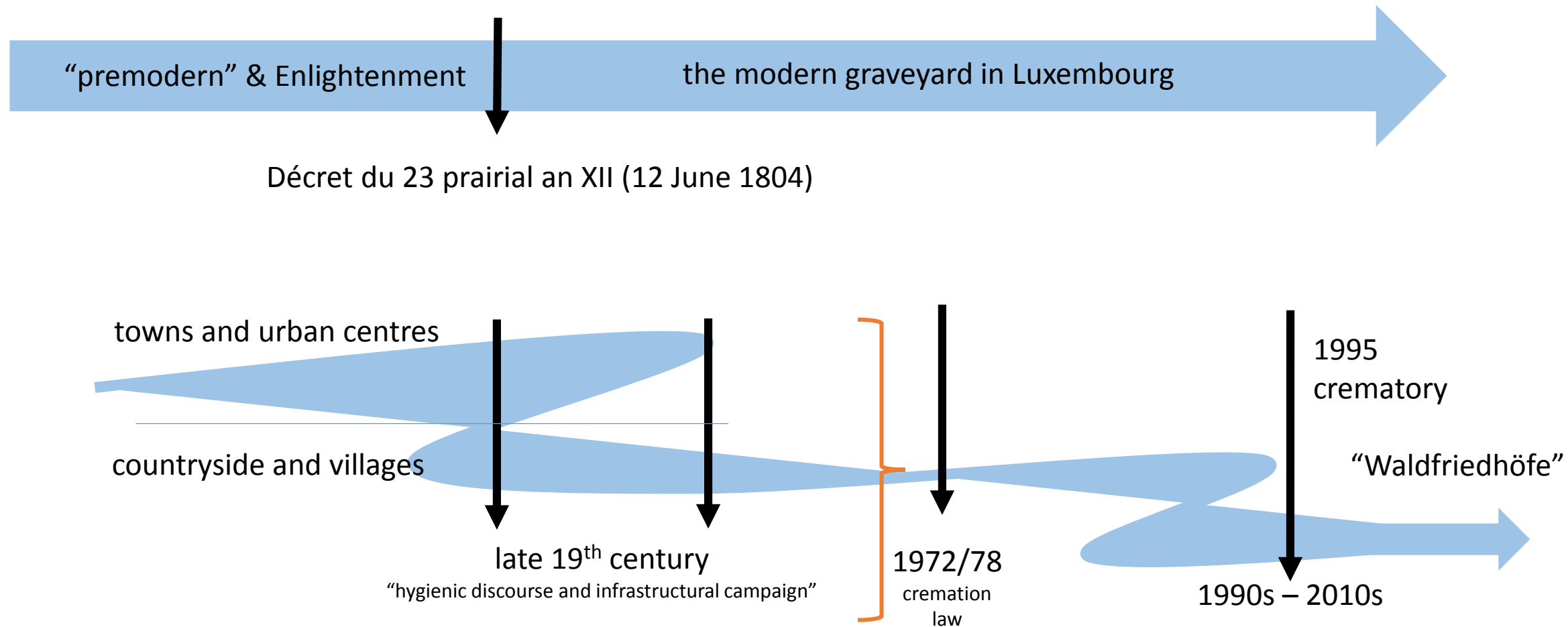
The **golden rule** of a “concordance system” :

The government must reach a compromise, even though it is composed of antagonistic parties



Contemporary funeral culture in Luxembourg:

an atavistic practice of a small state of and
with a progressive narrative of modernization



Thank you!



HÄGAR
DER SCHRECKLICHE



The Horrible



Attack!!
Down with Luxembourg!

Welcome
to
Luxembourg

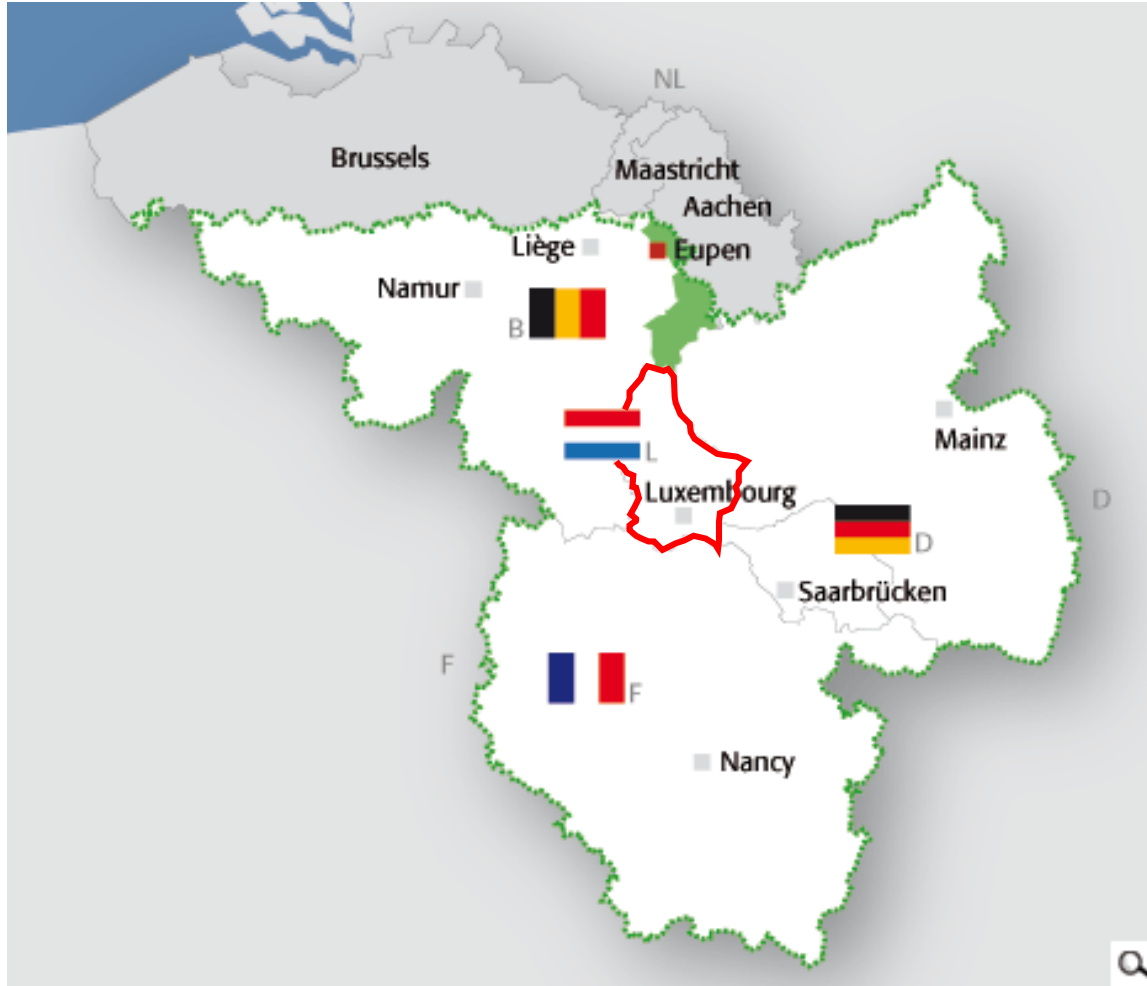


Thank you!
Come back
soon!



Darn!
Now we have run over it again!

A – the Grand Duchy



Area: 2,586.40 km²
Population: 576,000
Languages: Luxembourgish
French
German
Portuguese
English
Foreign population: 46,7 % (2016)



Area of interregional cooperation
between
France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg

Material Culture and Spaces of Remembrance.

A Study of Cemeteries in Luxembourg in the Context of the Greater Region

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Unité de Recherche
Identités, Politiques, Sociétés, Espaces (IPSE)



Fonds National de la
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Quantitative Geography

Cultural Studies and Luxembourg Studies

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Business Administration and Historical Archaeology

Sociology / Ethnography

Sociology of the Cemetery

Histoire du corps vivant et mort à l'époque contemporaine

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History of Luxembourg and Demography

Archaeology

Cemetery Research