# ON SECURITY AND CONVIVIALITY

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When talking about urban social order, the question of safety becomes important as it constitutes an essential element of convivial urban space. On the one hand, security means the constant effort to protect from harm, and on the other hand, safety is the subjective perception of being out of the reach of harm. Contemporary debates on urban security move between preventive exclusion measures and reassurance policies, drawn from criminology, which have become dominant in most institutional frameworks, to claims for the right to the city and its critique to the exclusion of under-represented groups.[1] If security can be guaranteed by official departments such as the police and sometimes by private companies, safety, as an individual appreciation, needs interventions of different kinds. Here social policies and social work, urban planning, and architecture can significantly contribute to the construction of a more convivial city.

In this session, we are going to raise questions about security, criminality (or lawless behaviour), and conviviality in the City of Esch-sur-Alzette. Therefore, we will critically define the notion of urban security by asking what the sources of *insecurity* are. The Grand Ducal Police of the City of Esch-sur-Alzette will provide us with a live insight concerning the criminal statistics of the year 2021. We will look at the offenses on properties as well as offenses against persons. Furthermore, statistics from road safety will be provided.

To improve the situation, the city has elaborated a local security plan (2023–2027) in collaboration with different partners, most notably the Police.[2] This plan was publicly revealed in March 2023 and will be shortly presented in this session. The goal of this plan is to improve the feeling of safety in the city. Following this presentation, different topics will be discussed.

Since the 1990s, the public perception of endangerment boomed while, simultaneously, western cities have become safer—at least when considering the decline of violent crime. What are the reasons behind the increasing public demand for security and which role play social media, the openness of a society, the uncertainties induced by modern societies, and the role of political discourses?

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M. EMMANUEL CORNÉLIUS is the head of the social coordination department of the City of Esch-sur-Alzette since nearly 20 years. With his team he coordinates the actions of the social actors, public as well as private, and initiates on political demand social action plans (youth action plan, Senior Action plan, local security plan) and accompanies this during their first steps.

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Can coercive measures contribute to security and safety and what are the limits of such measures as well for the police forces as for the general public? In this part of the session, we will, amongst other aspects, discuss the potential installation of cameras in the city, its benefits, its challenges, and its limits. Additionally, we will foster an exchange as to how social work with different measures and actions can contribute for promoting the inclusion of citizens and create safer and more just urban spaces. In this part we will talk about the implementation of a street work department, social community work, social help, and overall neighbourhood development.

We will discuss the extent to which urban planning has the potential to prevent crime and improve urban security by fostering social and spatial justice. To which extend can planning, managing, and animating public space improve the actual versus perceived security and the citizens feeling of being 'safe'. Controversial discussion must be led on the balancing act of 'crime prevention through environmental design (CPTE)' between making public space safe and excluding certain members of the local community, as well exclusionary practices in the public space, such as hostile architecture, that deprive certain groups of their 'right to the city' as formulated by Henri Lefebvre.[3]

Finally, we will discuss if all these measures – police, social and urbanistic – are effectively reducing crime and increasing conviviality and safety perceptions, understanding that security is a social value that needs to be constantly balanced and negotiated.

Moderated by

MARKUS MIESSEN architect, researcher, and Professor of Urban Regeneration at the University of Luxembourg, where he holds the chair of the City of Esch.

References

1 Barker, Anna. *Mediated Conviviality And The Urban Social Order: Reframing The Regulation Of Public Space.* British journal of criminology, 2017, Vol.57 (4), p.848–866
2 Plan local de sécurité de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette pour la période de 2023 à 2027
3 *Lefebvre, Henri. Le droit à la ville.* Éditions Anthropos. Paris, 1968.