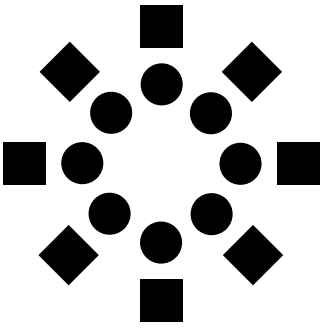
INTRODUCING
Cultures of Assembly

CULTURES OF ASSEMBLY, a project of the Chair of the City of Esch at the University of Luxembourg, is committed to the study and promotion of para-institutional civic assemblies, experiences of decentralised power, and decision-making structures that seek spatial justice in cities. To this end, the project develops a transversal format consisting of a digital platform alongside an open neighbourhood agency in the centre of Esch-sur-Alzette, a city in the south of Luxembourg, at the heart of the former European steel industry. The community space will be our physical and virtual (www.culturesofassembly.org) platform from which we will run our main research project that will inquire realities around civic space and community care.

In the transformation from heavy to service industry, the renewal of many European cities has been accompanied by the rapid growth of the tertiary sector and the knowledge economy. This process – taking place under the premise of a neoliberal economy – has been characterised by an increase in social and spatial inequality, as well as the weakening of a public sphere and the loss of political agency. In this context, it is crucial to deliberately maintain spaces of collective memory and gathering, including the maintenance of seemingly residual places, which may be associated with marginalised groups. In this sense, critical spatial practices should be seen as a method for activating processes of public negotiation and everyday urbanism in conversation with their surroundings, rather than understanding spatial production as an autonomous object with singular authorship. As such, conversation and deliberation constitute an alternative model for the formulation of contemporary critical spatial practices and as distinctive elements of new models of democratic participation.

Our methods include situated-context explorations, on-site evidence immersive research, oral histories to learn from local citizens and their heterogeneous experiences. Our strategy is to investigate at street level in close interdependence with the city's diverse social actors and their spontaneous use of non-regulated spaces. Our space in the centre of Esch will be used as a situated platform for contextual research and active community building, while the digital platform will be a tool for critical deliberation and encounters between internationally renowned experts, researchers, practitioners, activists, and local community actors.

During the opening night on March 15, we will discuss the role and value of low threshold design discourses, the production and use of urban space, para-institutional approaches to (urban)



COA flag based on the elements of the international distress signal

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design, models of embedded and immersive learning, spaces for experimentation in cities that will support the agency of native knowledges, the care of urban commons and citizen advocacy, the necessity of small granularity of democratic units, bringing public discourse to the heart of the city, and how to clear the threshold between university and public. We are aiming to establish seeds towards new community initiatives and innovative governance models.



COA table