ESCH KIOSK OF YOUNG VOICES: DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AS COLLECTIVE CARE, CREATIVE PEDAGOGY AND URBAN INTERVENTION

Moritz Ahlert
Gustav Nielsen
Centre Formida

*Esch Kiosk of Young Voice*s acts as a mobile civic platform within the framework of *The Esch Clinics – Cultures of Assembly*. It investigates how children and teenagers can actively participate in shaping urban futures through accessible, non-formal, and collective methods. Developed in an ongoing process over one year in close collaboration between Moritz Ahlert (Kiosk of Solidarity), Gustav Nielsen (Cultures of Assembly) and *Centre Formida*, the project centers on the co-creation and activation of an *Esch Kiosk* built by young participants as both a physical structure and a pedagogical device.

From March 2026 the *Esch Kiosk* will operate as a small-scale, mobile architecture that allows its makers to explore the city of Esch-sur-Alzette while simultaneously creating temporary spaces of encounter. The Kiosk is built from recycled materials, such as discarded school tables, following circular economy principles practiced at *Centre Formida*.

The *Esch Kiosk* will function as a listening device, an exhibition surface, and an informal assembly point. Through two parallel framing programs developed in collaboration with the teaching teams from *Formida Echange*, *Formida Circular*, and *Formida Chance* at *Centre Formida*, one designed for teenagers and one for younger children, the project explores the question of the future of Esch-sur-Alzette from a young perspective.

The programmes for both groups focus on imaginative and sensory explorations of Esch-sur-Alzette. Through playful urban walks, mapping exercises, storytelling, and performative interventions, such as a carnival-inspired procession, children articulate their vision in ways that exceed conventional participation formats.

Although formal mechanisms for civic participation exist, like the forthcoming citizens' assembly in Esch-sur-Alzette, the actual engagement of diverse populations often remains uneven. Legal, cultural and linguistic barriers, socioeconomic conditions, or age hierarchies significantly shape who is heard and who remains invisible. Kids and teenagers, in particular, are frequently excluded from meaningful participation processes. Their involvement is often symbolic rather than structural, despite the fact that they will be the primary inhabitants of the long-term urban transformations currently underway.

MORITZ AHLERT is a research assistant at the Habitat Unit at the Institute of Architecture at Technische Universität Berlin. He studied architecture and received his doctorate from the HFBK Hamburg. His research focuses on actor-based urban development, mapping as a cooperative design and analytical tool, and urban interventions. As a postdoctoral researcher in the Transforming Solidarities project (Berlin University Alliance), he initiated the Kiosk of Solidarity in 2023 and curated the Spaces of Solidarity exhibition at the Deutsches Architektur Zentrum (DAZ).

GUSTAV KJÆR VAD NIELSEN is a doctoral researcher with Cultures of Assembly in the Department of Geography and Spatial Planning at the University of Luxembourg. He makes inquiries on entangled figurations of political subjectivities and spatialities with critical spatial practices, democratic innovations, and spatial planning in the context of socio-ecological transition agendas in Luxembourg. Gustav holds an MPhil in architecture and urban studies from the University of Cambridge, an MArch from Yale University and a BA in architecture from Aarhus School of Architecture.

CENTRE FORMIDA is a youth center based in Luxembourg that supports children and young people, particularly those who experience challenges within the conventional school system, through educational, cultural, and social programs. It offers a safe and inclusive environment where young people can develop practical and social skills, express themselves creatively, and actively participate in community life, including through hands-on workshops in metal and wood.

Team Centre Formida: Sarah Özen, Lynn Schammel, Wolfgang Ost, Christophe Dublin, Danielle Harles, Sebastian Hack, Andreas Berg

CULTURES OF ASSEMBLY
Chair of the City of Esch
Prof. Dr. Markus Miessen
University of Luxembourg
www.culturesofassembly.org

24, Rue du Brill
L–4041 Esch-sur-Alzette

Team:
Markus Miessen, César Reyes,
Gustav Nielsen, Kristina Shatokhina

Associated with the
Master in Architecture Programme
Department of Geography and
Spatial Planning
University of Luxembourg
www.masterarchitecture.lu

Esch Kiosk of Young Voices addresses this imbalance by reframing participation as a lived and situated practice rather than an abstract administrative procedure. By situating dialogue in the streets and neighborhoods of Esch-sur-Alzette, and by employing non-formal methods rooted in play, movement, and collective creation, the project lowers thresholds for engagement. The *Esch Kiosk* aims to become a recognizable and approachable object in public space – an invitation to speak, to gather, and to imagine collectively the city of the future.

As part of *The Esch Clinics*, the project seeks to bring the voices of young people directly into ongoing discussions about urban policies and city planning. Rather than speaking on their behalf, the *Esch Kiosk* together with *Centre Formida* aims to facilitate processes through which young people articulate their own positions. By fostering intergenerational dialogue and experimenting with alternative forms of assembly, the project aims to contribute to a more inclusive co-creation in Esch-sur-Alzette. It affirms that meaningful urban transformation requires an active involvement of those who will inherit the city in the future.



Poster for the Open Call inviting school classes in Esch to participate in the Let's Dream the City of the Future workshop programme for younger children.