019 The Esch Clinics

# ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, GENDER, AND SPACE

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Emmanuel Cornelius
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Marina Weisband invites us to explore innovative pathways for revitalizing democracy in the modern era. Focusing on direct democracy, she highlights the untapped potential of youth participation in shaping political futures.

By examining contemporary democratic models and the empowering role of citizen assemblies, Weisband sheds light on how inclusive governance can bridge generational divides. Her vision of just urban planning ties these themes together, showcasing how participatory decision-making can create fairer and more sustainable communities.

For the Social Services of the City of Esch, it is essential to work towards and provide for an equal and just use of public space. To achieve this, there needs to be a focus on planning space in a way that both allows and encourages everyone to use it openly and without any reservations. How to shape such equal and just public spaces will be one of the questions to be discussed during this session of The Esch Clinics.

Is an all-inclusive and participatory way of shaping such spaces always the only and the right way to achieve this? And what kind of participation are we talking about? Can we imagine different models and modalities of designing equal and just public spaces? And is "shaping" and designing public spaces the only way to reach this goal?

Factors such as neighbourhood knowledge, solidarity, or the feeling of safety can play a determinant role in this context. Another key question for Esch will be: When and how to learn to share public space equally? This question prompts considerations regarding the design of schoolyards as an essential learning element.

MARINA WEISBAND, born in 1987 in Ukraine, is a psychologist and an expert in digital participation and education. From 2011 to 2012, she served as the Political Director of the Pirate Party Germany. She remains politically active today, advocating for digitalization and education within the Green Party and championing children's rights. Since 2014, she has been leading the development of the project "aula" – now aula gGmbH – a concept for political education and liquid-democratic participation of young people in shaping the rules and matters of their schools and extracurricular organizations (www.aula.de).

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.

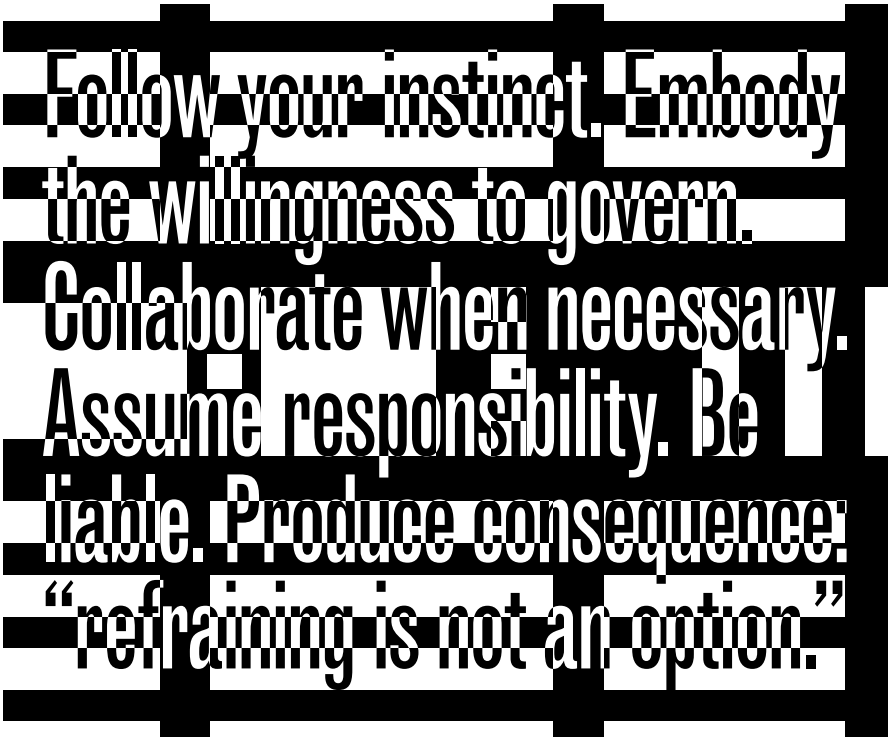
RAHEL SÜß is a political scientist and philosopher exploring desirable democratic and digital futures. Her work engages with key questions, including what a more empowered democracy might look like, the role of everyday democratic experiences, and the link between anxiety and democracy. Combining insights from political philosophy, social theory, and social psychology, she investigates how transformative change can be envisioned and realized. Rahel contributed to the award-winning ARD documentary Der Autokraten-Code (2024), exploring AI and autocracy.

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