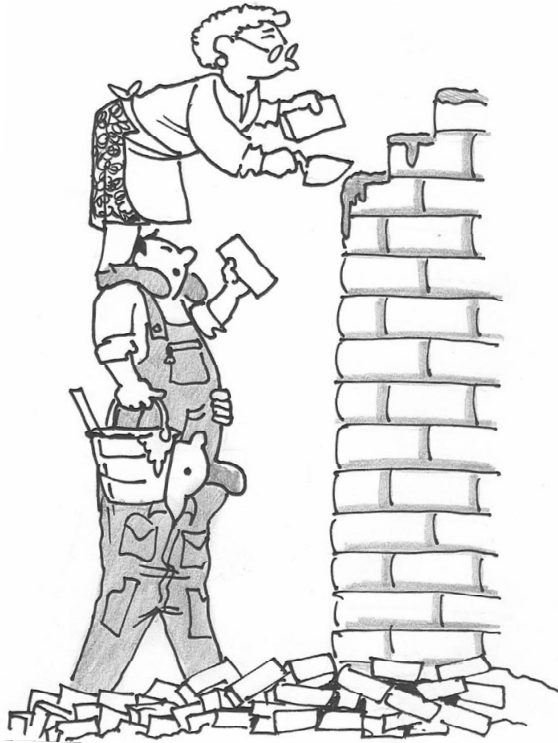


Nesting Communities

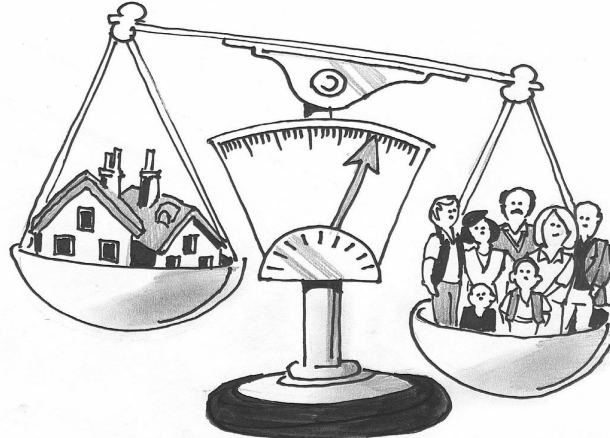


A New Approach to Urban Development

The book "*Nesting Communities - Temporality and Community Building as Integral Part of Urban Development*" presents a completely new concept of urban development. It is based on a study that was commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Housing Planning and Environment that regularly provides subsidies for innovative projects in urban renewal. The title of this study *Not the Chicken, not the Egg, but the Nest!* implies that seemingly complicated matters, can look quite different when viewed from a different angle, or when not the issue at hand, but the picture at large is regarded. In *Nesting Communities* the chicken-egg question reads as follows: When developing neighborhoods, where do you start, with the producers, with the products, or with the community?

Nesting Communities presents an innovative and entrepreneurial approach to urban development, in which community building and participation are key. It suggests a concrete methodology and strategy of how to readjust the social/physical balance in urban development more in favor of the social and shows the benefits involved for municipalities, inhabitants, investors and constructors.

The instrument suggested is the integration of temporary settlements as integral part of development projects in the existing time gaps when the old use has discontinued, but the new building has not started yet.



Temporary and permanent products

On the one hand the temporary settlement is a concrete product with affordable housing, good services and favorable conditions for the development of social cohesion. This benefits not only the inhabitants of the settlement, but also the surrounding neighborhoods and jump-starts community building in the new development.

On the other hand the settlement is designed as a learning organisation. The resulting process defines municipalities as learning cities, where grassroots knowledge enhances institutional decision-making and formal and informal processes exchange freely.

This benefits the town as a whole. It creates participatory governance procedures, in which unused skills and neglected potential of civil society is entered into the development process, thus creating a permanent result of the project.

Temporary settlements: the best neighborhoods are not designed, they grow.

A common criticism of newly built settlements is that they are beautiful, but dead. In order for neighborhoods to be safe and lively, they depend on people who are able and willing to invest time, energy, creativity and their social networks locally.

The solution described in the book is to integrate temporary settlements inhabited by people who need cheap accommodation, but can offer time in exchange (students, starter families, artists, refugees) as an integral part of urban development. Temporary settlements that precede and co-exist with the development of new neighborhoods are a way to create diversity and presence in new developments. Temporary settlements attract the pioneer energy of groups whose potential is underused in current society by offering cheap accommodation and experimental and entrepreneurial space. Temporary settlements in new development locations facilitate a matching of demand and supply and create a wide range of exchange opportunities for skills, services and resources between the temporary and the developing settlement, resulting in alive and vibrant neighborhoods.



Revitalising housing production

Just building good houses is not enough for the market of tomorrow. Increasing numbers of especially seniors request a living environment that make life easy, pleasant and luxurious. Developers need to take into account that people not only buy houses, but are looking for homes. Atmosphere, services and image become major points of competition on the housing market. These are factors for which the traditional players in the field are not the best equipped.

Temporary settlements open up new segments for investors and developers, on both ends of the housing market. They provide a new approach to the development of low cost housing as well as to the development of a new concept of housing on the upper end of the market, "luscious living", a perspective that includes quality neighbourhoods and serviced living as part of urban planning.



Reintegrating a culture of care into public life

The Nest! tackles time bottlenecks and support needs, created by the fact that the bulk of economic activity is carried by an increasingly small portion of the population. This is intensified by the fact that family and local networks are no longer readily available to pick up the load. The Nest! offers a modern version of social structures that are disappearing, and brings new solutions to the issues of social cohesion and the provision of care.

Respectful collaboration in urban development

A core element of the Nest! is the Neighborhood Academy that organizes the social process in the settlement as a knowledge building process. By accessing local participation and local expertise, the design of neighborhoods can be more tightly fit to local needs. It also creates unique identities of neighborhoods, an element increasingly recognized as key to development of real estate value.

Attracting the 'creative class'

In post industrial society, the ability to attract talent and know-how, is quickly becoming a crucial element for the prosperity of municipalities.

The Nest! is a hothouse of creativity, providing experimental space and a climate of inspiration, diversity and cultural richness in which creative minds like to dwell. Such environments raise the value of real estate and allow municipalities to develop a competitive edge.

Who benefits?

The idea of temporary settlements fits into existing organizational and legal structures. It is developed not as an alternative, but as an enrichment and additional element to on-going developments. The book *Nesting Communities* lays out how temporary settlements, as an integral part of urban planning can be profitable for the forces that at present steer urban development processes. It explores where the win-win situations are. It describes the social and economical benefits for municipalities as well as inhabitants, for investors as well as constructors. The benefits are defined both during the duration of the temporary settlement as well as in terms of the lasting effects on improving urban livability and urban governance after the temporary settlement has been dismantled.

Transferability

Although the Nest! idea has been developed as a case study targeted towards the municipality of Arnhem, the Netherlands, it can be implemented in any municipality anywhere, that is interested in innovative urban development and in profiling itself internationally.



Four different scenarios illustrate the application scope of the methodology, in which temporality is introduced as a valuable additional instrument for urban development.

The complete text of the feasibility study is available at www.nest.cc.

More information can be obtained at info@nest.cc

Who we are

mine (www.mine.cc) is the international network of Mother Centers. Mother Centers are a grass-roots self help movement originating in Germany that has spread into 15 countries. **mine** is a networking structure consolidating and applying the lessons learned from this world-wide movement.

In 2002 **mine** has been awarded the UN-Habitat/ Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment. This prize was given to mine for strengthening the capacity of civil society to revitalize local neighborhoods.



The study is commissioned by **mine** and contracted by **M & M** – Coaching and Research in Social Innovation, (T/F +31-26-3707961, E:info@nest.cc) It has been sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Planning & Environment VROM Directorat General Wonen Direction IBS, IPC 230, P.O.Box 30943, 2500 GX the Hague, The Netherlands.

In developing the Nest! approach the authors, Monika Jaeckel and Marieke van Geldermalsen have drawn on their extensive experience in the area of self help and civic engagement and have up-scaled the principles of Mother Centers to apply to the level of whole neighborhoods and urban environments.

Lessons learned and solutions practiced in other parts of the world are transferred to the context of Northern countries.