

MANIFESTO

The city of Nijmegen is in a process of losing its unique identity and urban fabric, as a result of a continuous commodification by the interests of private investments. The everyday life and the needs of the residents are overlooked in the creation of a commercial city center.

The privatization of public space by commercial activities is being recognized as a common problem for European cities nowadays. The rise of commercialization creates an environment of strangers where the emphasis lays on individual perspectives and activities, accessible only to particular social groups, the privileged ones. This inevitably forms an inequality and alienation in the society, decreasing social capital in cities. Therefore, there is an urgent need to confront the act of privatization and to democratize the urban fabric by constructing collectivity instead of segregation. The attention should shift towards the people and foster their engagement in the local community, where the city is seen as an ultimate common – a collective social, cultural and material place that is constructed for and by the people.

The character of Nijmegen can be preserved when architecture provides a common framework for everyday life to unfold in a collective matter, giving space for existing and new collective forms to take place. The physical environment has the ability to shape the way people interact as well as to strengthen social relationships. When people engage in sustained, recurrent interaction, particularly while doing things they enjoy, relationships inevitably grow. The built environment must evolve in common ground for mutual exchange of experience, knowledge, and thoughts. Building places where all kinds of people can gather is the best way to repair the fractured societies we live in today.

Derived from French, Bricolage refers to construction or creation from a diverse range of materials available 'at hand'. It is a bottom-up approach in the as-found environment allowing for crafting and making processes. Bricolage can be found in the existing built fabric, in the time layering of a site and everyday routines, use, and occupation of the inhabitants. It generates forms, engages with the site, and participates in the everyday life of the city. Working with the existing is a critical approach towards

the creation of generic architecture, well-recognized in recent urban developments in Nijmegen. When designing for the community, architects should create a comfortable and familiar environment in which the community can recognize itself. Preserving part of the ordinary and beauty of the existing block allows for the creation of a unique spatial environment that is continuously re-narrated by the right of the community to access, use and occupy it. Reuse is not only economically and environmentally valuable but it is a chance to create a meaningful place where inhabitants make and re-make themselves and develop a sense of belonging. People from all ages, ethnicities, and groups deserve free, open access to our shared culture and heritage. The act of Bricolage can liberate architecture from its past connotation and create a lively place for the citizens of Nijmegen where casual interaction is a feature of everyday life that can inevitably grow into friendships.





