CITIES is a network of young, active urban researchers, designers and users.

Rooted in international relationships and a new urban mobility, this community is engaged in observing, exploring and analysing global urban phenomena and local urban practice.

The CITIES Foundation is a knowledge-sharing hub for these urban explorers, providing a platform for discussion and debate using accessible, simple, shared language. CITIES is currently active in Amsterdam, Stockholm, Spain and London.

Currently, CITIES the Magazine is focusing on URBAN AGRICULTURE, The current issue will locate, discuss and document global urban agriculture practice and initiative, helping to create communities of interest in the area.
The current project describes a specific element of this project: creating both active urban agriculture projects in Amsterdam, and developing an urban agriculture resource hub for the city.

Farming the City is based on the belief that urban agriculture is a flexible activity that can be applied as a temporary urban development strategy.

By linking together urban users (citizens, commuters or tourists) and different actors in the urban agriculture field, urban development innovation can flourish. The urban user is not a consumer, but a producer of valuable sustainable commodities.

FARMING THE CITY

AMSTERDAM PILOT CITY

Ⓐ Scarcity of land and abundance of unoccupied buildings
At the moment, due to the crisis, urban renewal or upgrade projects are on hold, moreover, there are urban structures not used or in a state of decay. This situation generates a decrease of the real estate value of the occupied buildings and a decrease in social cohesion of the neighbourhood.

Ⓑ Elevated community involvement levels
If we look at the level of community activism and the development of the public policy, with regard to the implementation of urban farming activities, Amsterdam is one of the most forward-looking cities in the world. In general, those activities are organized as follows:
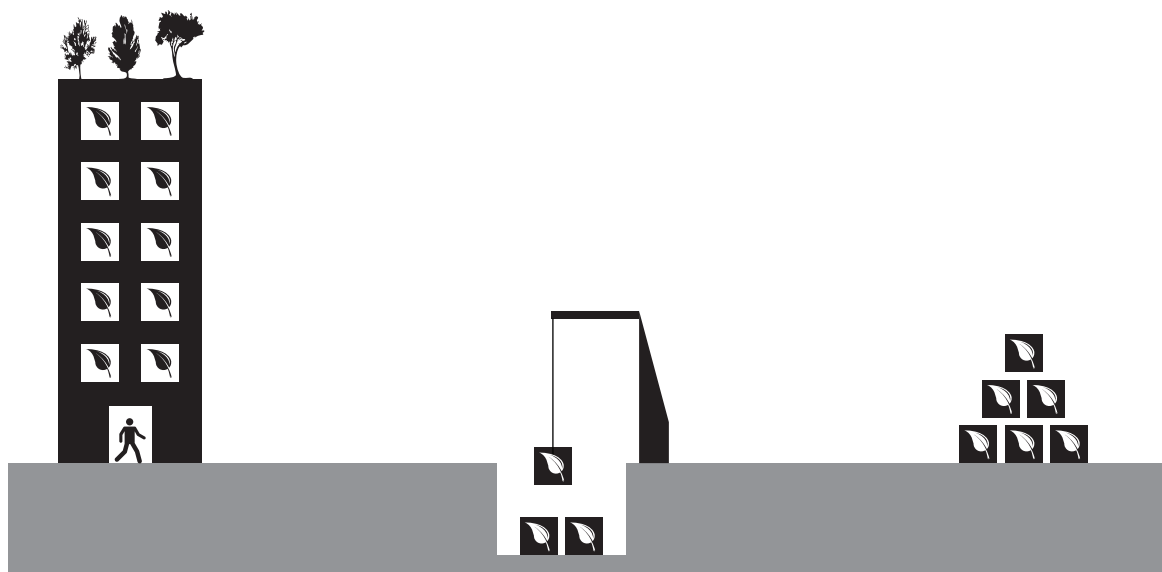
– TRADITIONAL URBAN FARMING ACTIVITIES
  Urban gardens, adopt a cow, community initiatives
– WORKSHOPS AND DEBATE CYCLES
– AMSTERDAM FOOD STRATEGY
  Agriculture education, local food production and consumption

Ⓒ Room for innovation
Examples of urban agriculture activities that are applied in a context that is different than classic farmland are few and their potential is not totally exploited. URBAN AGRICULTURE is not seen as a tool for temporary urban development.

Vertical and indoor farming in office buildings or postponed construction sites

Temporary gardening activities in movable containers

① RESEARCH AND CONTEXT SETTING

This phase is the **research** stage of the project. The team of CITIES will locate, research, document and map current and planned urban agriculture/city farm/community gardening/green space projects in Amsterdam. After this first analysis, the project will define a selected number of spaces where temporary urban agriculture activities can take shape.

❶ Launching workshop
Presentation of the project idea to the city districts' councilors. During this workshop, the team of CITIES will inspire the participants and ask them to develop ideas about the development of urban agriculture activities in abandoned or unused lands in their jurisdictions

Outcome/outputs include:
– Report: list of selected areas with synthesis of the visions collected.
– Maps of the selected areas.

❷ Identification of potential project partners
Collaboration with the municipality and stakeholders in order to map the urban agriculture activities of the city.

Outcome/outputs include:
– Real and virtual maps of the current situation.
– Virtual tour of urban agriculture projects. Clickable virtual map: videos of the area and video summary of interviews with local participants. Plus multimedia summaries of interviews with professionals and policy makers.
– General summary document.

❸ Land research
Searching for unused, or under-used green or brownfield spaces that could be used, on a temporary basis, for urban agriculture projects.

Outcome/outputs include:
– Real and virtual map of the city with pilot projects.
– Document that summarises the information collected for each project.
– Video summary of interviews, clickable on the virtual map

② PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

The second phase is meant to **raise awareness** and generate and collate ideas about the temporary redevelopment of unused spaced of the city. During this phase, the core team will invite local illustrators and artists to create mental maps of the areas, which will be put on public display. Moreover, the core team will organize partnership working with city government, city organisations and community groups to generate ideas and plans for potential action. The knowledge gathered during the first phase will be used phase two as inspirational material.

❶ Engagement of local designers and artists
Desingers/artists working with community groups, will be invited to make a mental map of the selected areas. Video material and contextual info will be given to the artist in order to inspire and provide a direction for the realisation of the piece.

Outcome/outputs include:
– Large format mental maps of the area.

❷ Urban agriculture mapping points
Mental maps displayed in selected locations, along with information about the project and multimedia background and contextual information.

Outcome/outputs include:
– Designed 'mapping points' containing multimedia information about the selected location.

❸ Community engagement events
Local stakeholders and inhabitants invited to contribute to a new vision about the use of urban agriculture in the area. During a number of evening, afternoon and daytime sessions, local organisations, schools, farmers, gardeners and interested guests will be invited to propose ideas and ask questions. Artists and community practitioners with a track record of facilitating successful community engagement sessions will be invited to participate and lead sessions.

Outcome/outputs include:
– A selection of the most inspiring visions will be added to the overall project virtual map as 'potential development'.

③ PRACTICAL PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The last phase is meant to promote **dissemination of outcomes and outputs**. This activity will be presented in the form of a package of resources: toolkits, reports, a publication and a range of media including city maps to be uploaded to the online city 'urban agriculture' resource hub. Moreover, an exhibition in which research results, community shared visions and artistic contributions will be presented to the urban population, which will be invited to follow temporary walking tours through green spaces.

❶ Workshop 1
Presentation of the project and the intended outcomes to a selected group of policy makers and planners, academics, practitioners and community members that will be invited to consider ways in which local planning policy and regulation can support urban agriculture.

Outcome/outputs include:
– Briefing document on the arrangement of planning laws for temporary use to be presented to spatial planning officers and local policy makers.

❷ Workshop 2
Collection, presentation of the ideas and possible strategies and discussion with local authority.

Outcome/outputs include:
– Temporary lease agreements for the development of urban agriculture practices for a limited period of time in negotiated areas of the city.

❸ Public debate
Presentation of the results to a public of interested professionals, students and community members.

Outcome/outputs include:
– General briefing document for the city authorities with suggestions for the provision of local planning policy, for example standard temporary leases, so that communities can make use of under-used or neglected areas on a temporary basis.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Providing support structures are in place the outputs of Farming the City will be:

_Exhibition: display of project results and collected information (videos of the interviews, images, visions about the areas and reports).
_Urban agriculture temporary walking tours: temporary signage and navigation system that guides the visitors of the exhibition though current and planned future urban agriculture activities in the city.
_Creation of a large-scale interactive map of the city's urban agriculture-related activities.