



Why we need small cows. Ways to Design for Urban Agriculture

A book review by HANS BROESS

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An unusual academic pledge in which 27 authors explore in 16 articles the potential to grow food in the city. The history of the food map is drawn in the first two chapters. New food maps are subsequently developed in six chapters, spread over the book, for Amsterdam and Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Middlesbrough in the UK, Cantagalo in Brazil and Bendigo Creek in Australia. One chapter investigates the suitability of suburbs for the new food map and one chapter takes the systems and typologies as an object of research. One chapter performs architectural research resulting in architectonic designs. In three chapters the search for sustainable upscaling is conducted, such as Pig City. The final two chapters deal with a financial exploration and in a concluding chapter five chances for Urban Agriculture are presented.

While published as a book, the registration of articles in a non-causal manner makes it more like a documentary. A documentary about the transition of the food map of the countryside towards the city, viewed from different disciplines in different countries. Together with an unusual large number of images, drawings and schemes it is quite an experience to wander through this book and seduced by images or words have a detailed look, read and search further.

During my journey of discovery through this documentary I came across interesting inspirational moments as I passed by elementary questions. A crucial question such as 'Can we produce similar amounts of food in the city as we are capable of in the countryside?' – is remarkable in the buoyancy of

the answer. One needs to start small, in empty buildings in the city, on roofs in parks or empty sleeping rooms, where lamps fed by solar power on the roof bring light without costs wherever you want.

But what can be found under this buoyancy? Is there knowledge of large-scale food production, which only becomes bigger without a reverse to get smaller in scale? Is knowledge available about capitalistic amoral food production, becoming even more amoral? Is food being turned by on the auction instead of giving it to the hungry? Or are the excesses of thinking in yields preventing us from discussing alternative food maps? Or is on-going individualism making us afraid?

Whatever it may be, the fact is that the enormous enthusiasm felt in the documentary to search in a very intelligent way for new places and new ways of sale. Small-scale hatcheries give innovation an undercover presence and the absence of answers to old-fashioned questions prevent the proposed transition poses a threat.

It is impressive to see what the results are of the different search paths, whereby the photos and schemes really convince the birth of food production in the city is plausible and in some places already a reality.

The documentary starts with Darwin and his adaptation to changing circumstances, such as the changes in climate, implying changes in the food map of animals. These changes also started small, which places the entire book in another perspective. Every change



starts with a small adjustment. They seem improbable but not impossible. They may achieve an adjustment of the food map. Darwin takes care of the rest.

The contribution of Evert Kolpa really captured my imagination. The urban food map was apparent in the city for centuries, within the fortifications! Kolpa designs this concept all over again. He introduces schemes in which spatial areas are distinguished to which he adds new cultural dimensions. For example, restaurants where one first harvests his green tea, a community centre that combines a greenhouse where new contacts can be made. He introduces supermarket parks where food is produced in old parks. Or the photos from Japan, in the article by Arjanvan Timmeren and Ulf Hackauf in which urban farms look like large blocks of green and harvest rice inside buildings.

I am doing a disservice to many authors by not mentioning them, but I hope I made you curious. Really, you shouldn't miss this book. An academic work that touches you, that makes you think and makes you aware in such an easy way. Well done, Rob Roggema and Greg Keeffe and a big compliment to both Universities in Velp and Belfast.

Author information:

Hans Broess works at the Atelier Inspirator 'Shrinkage'- studio Academy of Architecture. The shrinkage studio is in the most recent three years the core theme of graduation for young architects to receive their final diploma. The design task was to develop new impulses, which could tackle problems such as housing vacancy, poverty and joblessness, in the shrinking region of Delfzijl. The most recognisable results are a concrete design in which empties 30% of the built-up area and 30% within the buildings themselves to create space for climate change and is temporary used as landscape of to grow food. Another recent architectural design includes a vertical mussel nursery in an empty high-rise building in which sea water is pumped up and flows down in a cascade-type of system, feeding the mussels at every floor.