



## UCL: TOWARDS PRODUCTIVITY

The project detailed in the following chapter tries to envision the way the UCL campus could gradually be transformed into a productive system, embedding part of the space needed to sustain its own needs for food. This vision relies both on a detailed study of technical or socio-cultural aspects of urban agriculture and on the careful analysis of a real context, so as to make this project as close to real implementation as possible.

### I. Why UCL?

University College London is a complex network of buildings and people. It includes academic departments, administrative services, cultural, leisure, sports and health facilities, as well as student accommodations, shops and different kinds of food services. UCL is a place where 27,000 students and staff work, live, study, train, have fun and consume. Even more people are involved if we consider UCL hospitals staff, patients and visitors. As such, UCL is like a small city within the city. Yet, it is not a closed microcosm: just like a city interacts with its country, UCL interacts with the rest of London.



For further information  
UCL  
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/>

## II. The 3 scales of the project

Introducing productive activities within cities can be imagined at different scales of time and space, from the small, low-key, “backyard” experiment that can be initiated tomorrow to the hypothetical introduction of farming in all new urban developments in 10 years. Consequently, we imagined a scenario enabling us to explore those different scales of time and space.

Our experiment starts with the “productive lab”, initiated with the help of the University and the Student Union (UCLU). This lab consists in a series of small-scale experiments, aiming to explore different aspects of urban agriculture, some technical, others more social or cultural.

After a few years, as the lab is proved successful, the University decides to initiate a larger-scale project, the productive campus strategic plan. This plan, in addition to providing the UCL with a significant part of its needs for food, aims to improve UCL's reputation as a fully sustainable university. With the help of the students union, urban co-ops are created to deal with the different tasks related to food production (plant care, crop harvesting, food distribution, etc.). The real estate strategy of UCL is amended so as to allow the mobilisation of sufficient surfaces for farming. Last, UCL creates a new academic department dedicated to urban agriculture in order to maintain its technical leadership (inherited from the productive lab) and to train the would-be agronomists or urban farmers.

The last step occurs after 10 years, when the co-op system proves to be efficient, sustainable, as well as economically viable and people get accustomed to the coexistence of farming and other urban activities. Learning from the experience of UCL as well as other local initiatives, the Greater London Authority tries to favour the creation of other urban co-ops. It also passes new urban planning and design regulations which help creating and managing the required farmable surfaces and facilities. In our scenario, all urban policies, including for example transports or hous-

ing, have to take agriculture into account.

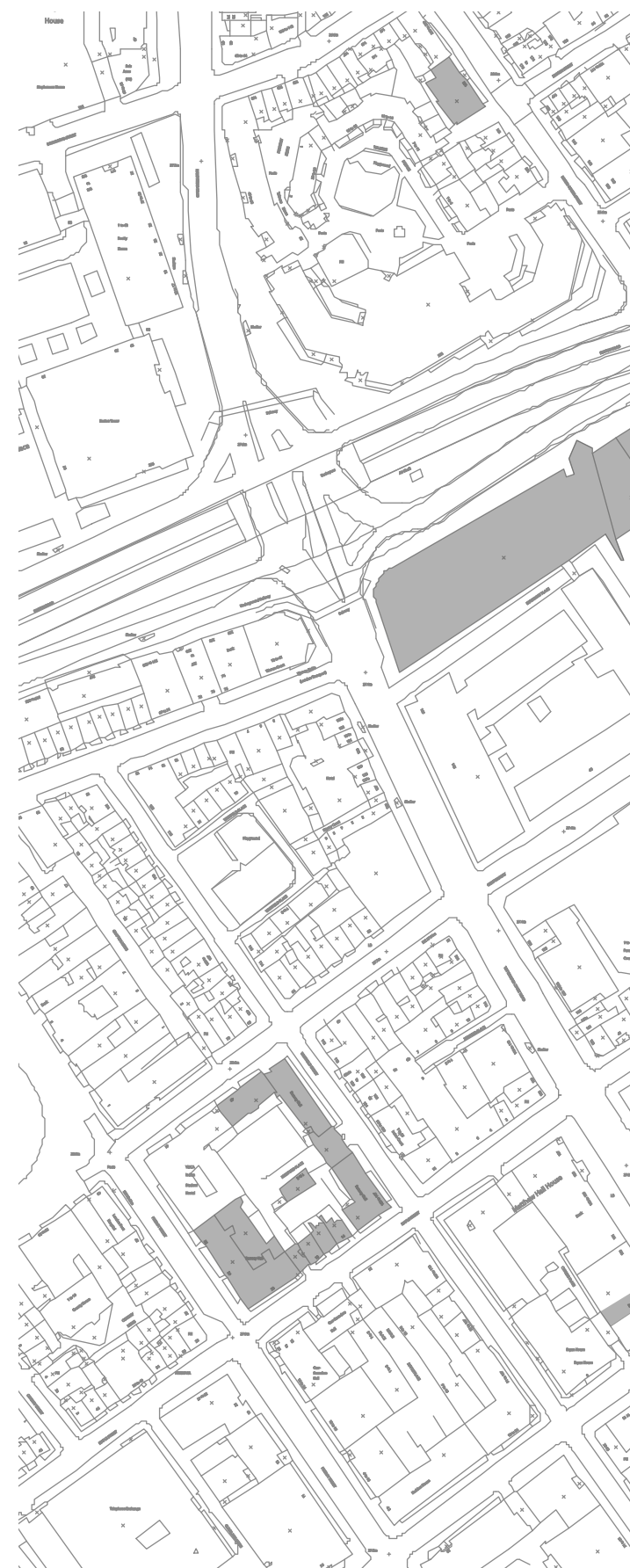
The aim of this three steps timescale is to illustrate that, in order to successfully implement urban agriculture, no top-down policy should be enacted without learning first from the trial-and-error process enabled by multiple bottom-up initiatives.

### III. Analysis: UCL today

### III.1 UCL food chain

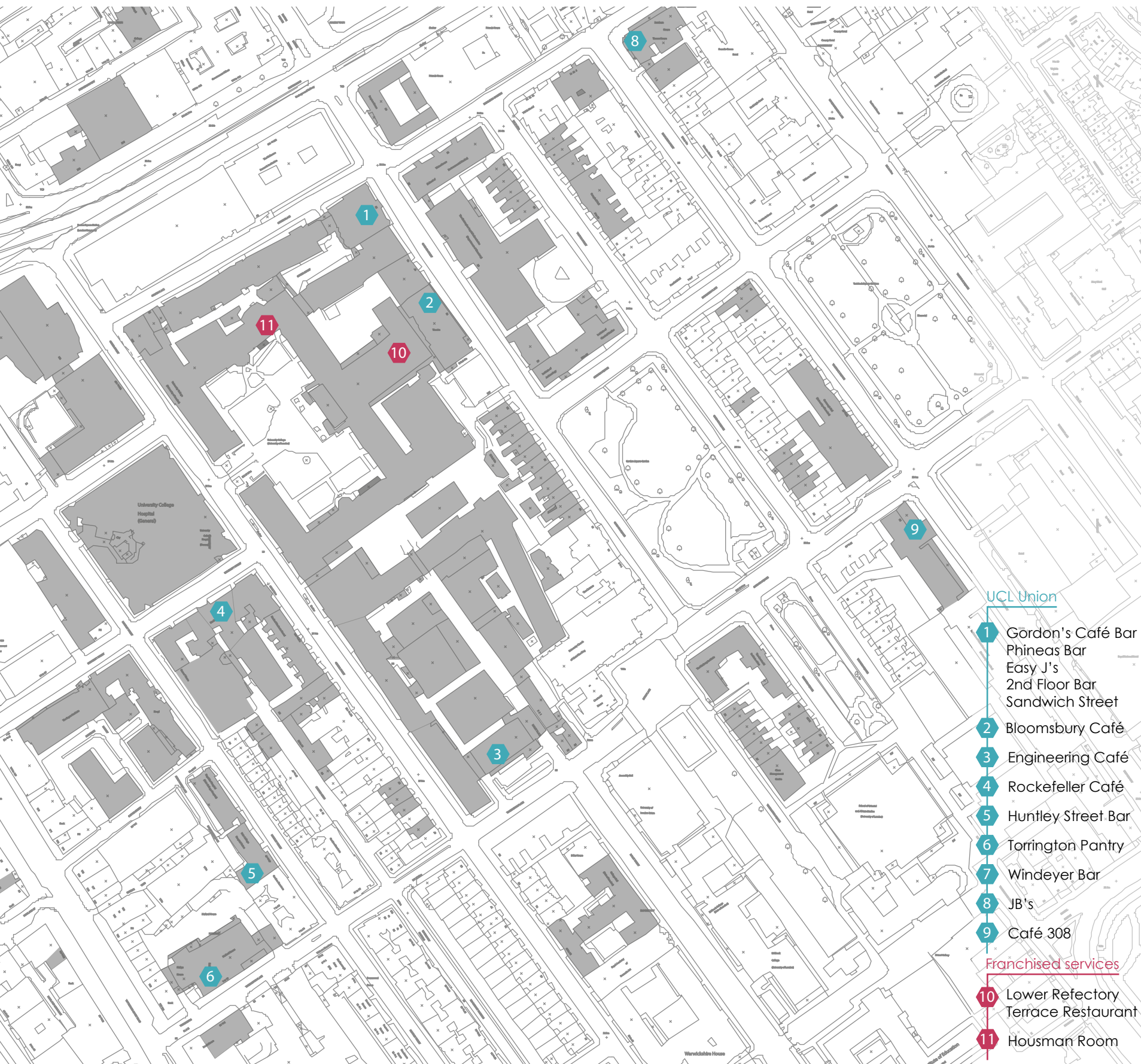
As mentioned above, the Productive Campus project aims to transform UCL in a productive system. Therefore the current food chain of UCL needs to be analysed in the first place: what are the restaurants, cafeterias, shops and other food services, what are their providers, where does the food come from, etc.

There are thirteen food services managed by UCL Students Union as well as five other major eating places on the campus and the site of the UCL Institute of Child Health (ICH).





UCL: towards productivity

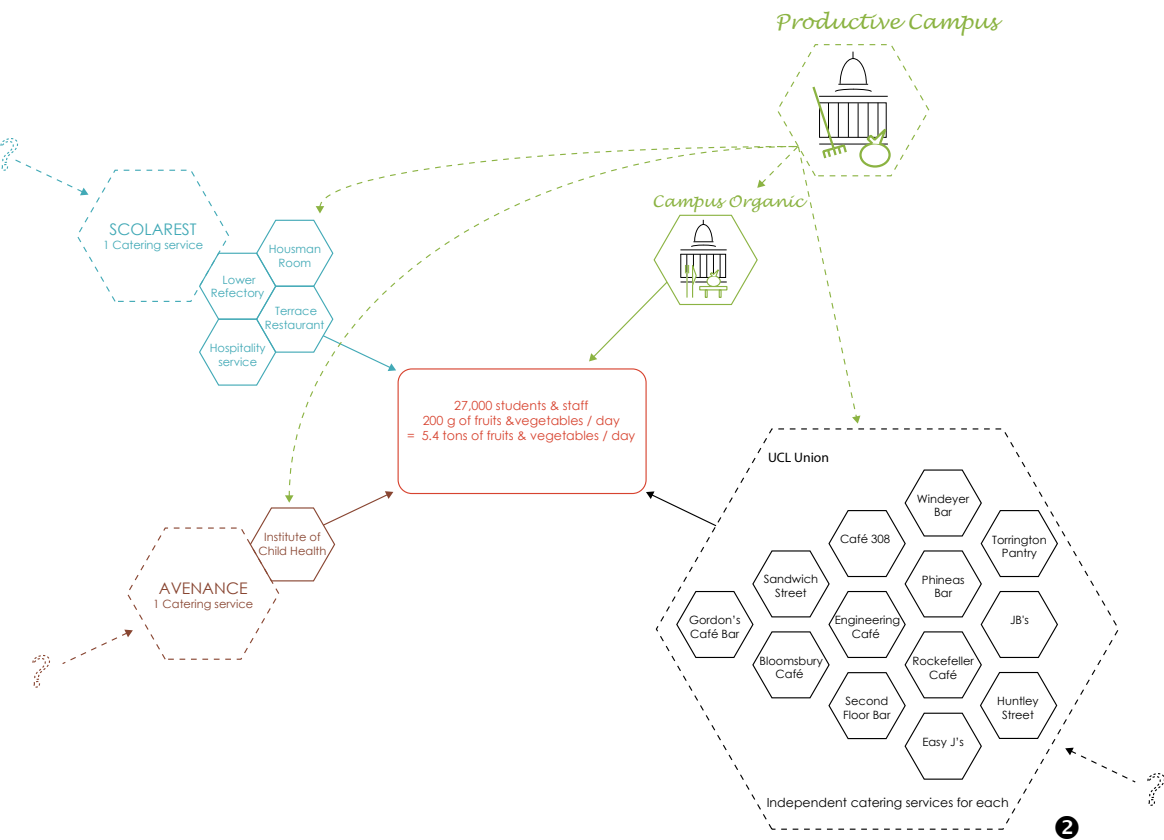
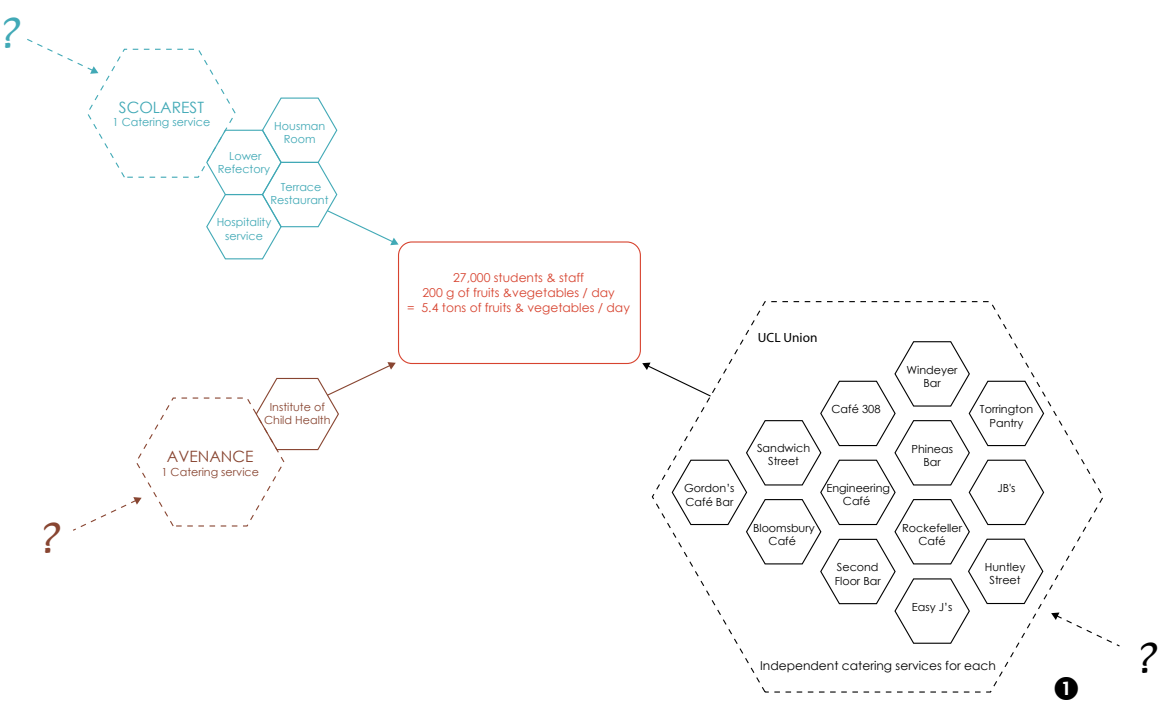




As far as the Union is concerned, each food service is supplied by different and multiple suppliers and is responsible for its own orders. The first criterion of choice is of course the price, even if other considerations are sometimes taken into account, according to policies defined by the sabbatical team managing the Union. Fair Trade products are thus preferred whenever possible.

On the other hand two big catering societies – Scolarest and Avenance – supply the ICH and the main refectionary situated within the main block of the campus. ❶ We contacted Scolarest and did not succeed to get any precise information concerning the origin of the food. The answers to our questions were very evasive and the possibility of us being competitors was even considered to elude answering. Many products are supposedly from Fair Trade origin but yet we were not provided with any more precise information.

One of the aims of our Productive Campus would then clearly be to provide the existing eating places of the campus with a source of food from local origin, so that consumers would be able to be certain about the food origin and be fully aware of the farming methods used. ❷



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UCL Union:  
<http://www.uclunion.org/>

## Urban Chef

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Urban Chef is BBC Two TV program that was broadcasted in June 2006. In the show, we follow for 5 months the young chef Oliver Rowe in his challenge of opening a restaurant that would source all its ingredients within access of the London Tube.



This reality TV program aims to provide the audience with an entertaining show (as the challenge turns out pretty difficult) and a few nice recipes, but also to increase his awareness of food miles and urban agriculture issues. As Oliver progresses in his task, we realise that all sorts of food can actually be grown locally, sometimes in surprising places: milk and eggs in city farms, honey on the rooftops of tower blocks where bees are kept.

Oliver faces many concrete problems in order to find all the necessary suppliers. Some of these problems are particularly interesting for us:

- Oliver discovers that the 1922 Allotments Act prevents allotment growers selling their produce commercially. (The act states that an allotment is "mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetables and fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family.")
- The quantities available are often not sufficient. After fishing a trout in a lake near Hounslow, for example, Oliver must admit that "one trout does not make a restaurant"!
- The price is often higher than expected, as experienced in an organic chicken farm in Hertfordshire.
- The effects of traffic pollution on crops are discussed with a toxicologist.

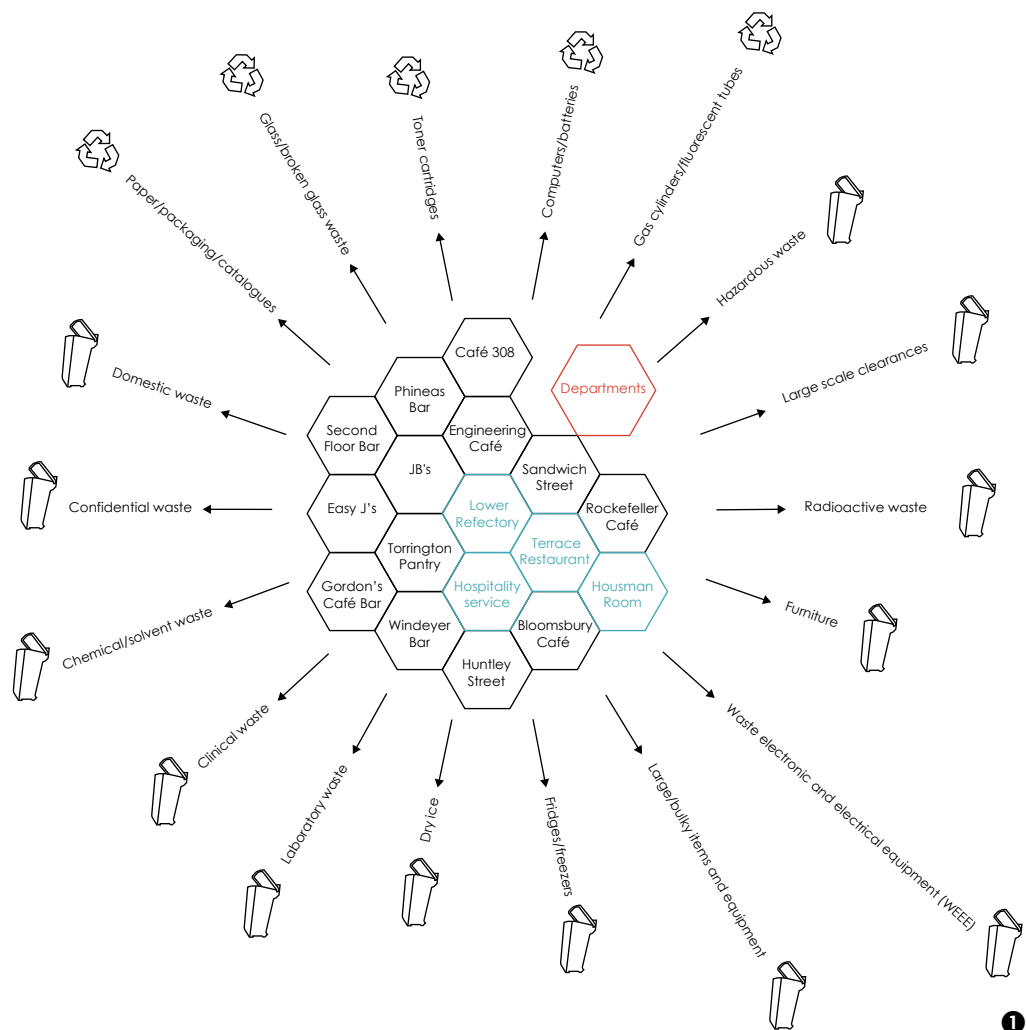
Finally, in the last episode, Oliver has almost fulfilled his initial mission. He is making his own oil from local rapeseed (canola) as an olive oil substitute and has found a local sparkling wine. Flour is ground in Ponders End; mushrooms are farmed in East Ham; fish comes from the Thames. He also found a farm with lamb and pigs at Amersham and an ostrich farm in south-west London. However, he cheats a little bit: coffee, tea and pepper are not produced locally. Salt is from Essex...

Source: BBC Two website, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/tv\\_and\\_radio/urbanchef\\_index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/tv_and_radio/urbanchef_index.shtml) (accessed 08.08.2006)  
Contact: Konstam @ The Prince Albert, 2 Acton Street, LONDON, WC1X 9NA

## III. 2 UCL waste chain

As exposed in our "productive introduction", implementing productive sites in a city is not only about growing food. In a sustainable approach, the entire food cycle must be taken into account, including organic waste management. Consequently the existing UCL waste management needs to be explored.

There is a subdivision of waste collection. ❶ The UCL Estates & Facilities Division's Facilities Services is in charge of collecting waste from all divisions and academic departments as well as all food services. Part of the waste is recycled and removed by specialised companies; the rest is not re-entered into the loop and goes straight to rubbish dumps.



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In order to take the requirements and potentialities of the Productive Campus into account, there is a need for adding a new branch to the existing subdivision of waste collection in order to deal with organic waste. ❶ This will be developed gradually, first in the productive lab, then during the full expansion of the productive campus.

To further develop waste recycling, the non-profit organization CRISP 14 could also be contacted. CRISP already works with different universities in London to collect disused items such as pieces of furniture, electrical or electronic devices, etc. in order to give them to other charities.

CRISP

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"London's University Halls of Residence Recycling Project: Recycling Project was developed to increase recycling, encourage reuse and raise awareness of waste reduction amongst the student population living in halls of residence in London. The project also manages end of term Reuse Schemes. Estimates show each student has 10-12kg of reusable items to dispose of at the end of the summer term. Students donate unwanted items including kitchen equipment, clothes, furniture and electrical. These are collected and donated to local charities."

Source:  
CRISP website, <http://www.crispej.org.uk/>

