SHARE CITY
Sustainability of city-based food sharing

Imagining Alternative Waste Futures through Community Composting in New York City

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Urban-Rural Synergies: the best of two worlds

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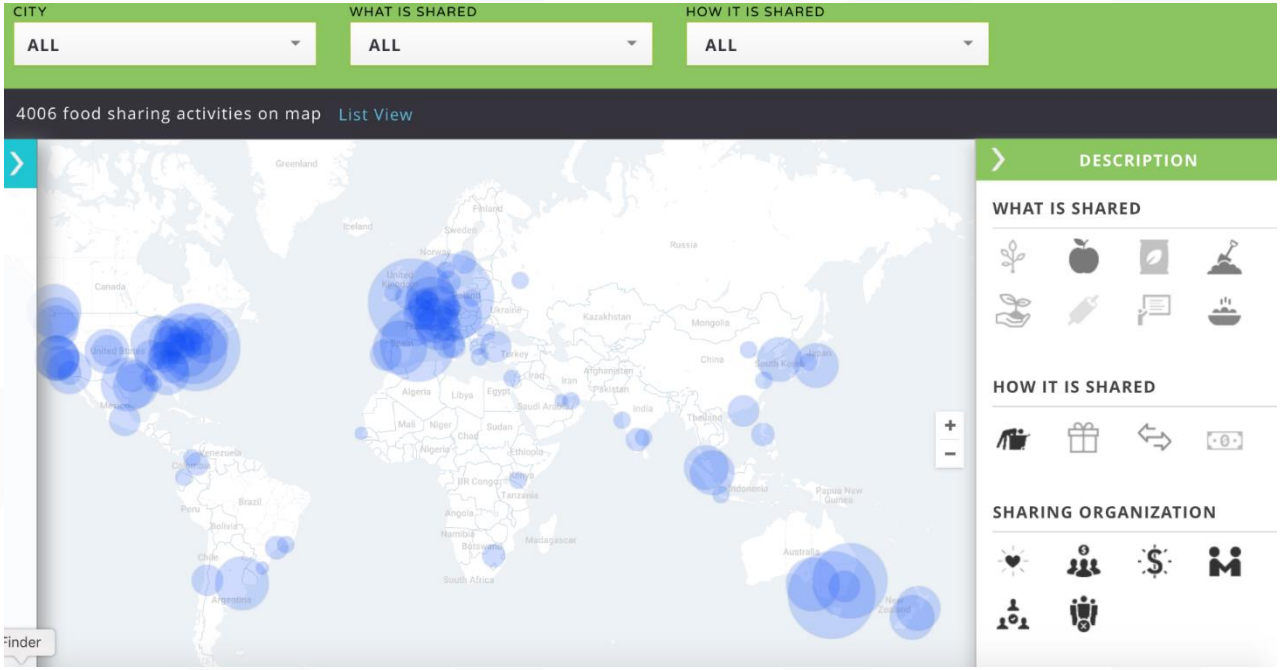
SHARECITY: Investigating the Sustainability Potential of Urban Food Sharing Economies



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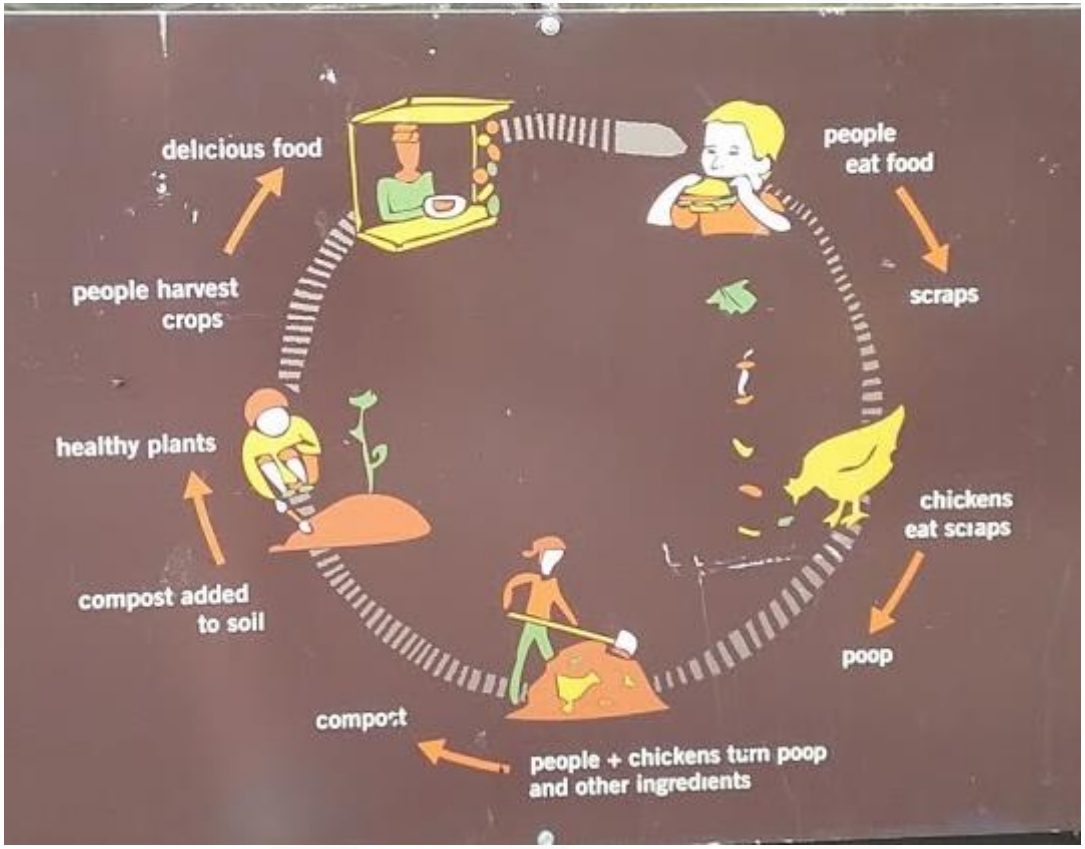
Davies, A.R., Edwards, M., Marovelli, B., Morrow, O., Rut, M., Weymes, M. (2018). Making visible: Interrogating the performance of food sharing across 100 urban areas. *Geoforum*

Davies, A.R., Edwards, M., Marovelli, B., Morrow, O., Rut, M., Weymes, M. (2017) Creative construction: Crafting, negotiating and performing urban food sharing landscapes. *Area.*

Experimentation & Learning



NYC Compost Project
Funded by NYC sanitation

Rebuilding our soil, neighborhood by neighborhood.

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Community Composting

At its core, community-scale composting is the notion that organics are processed as close to the sources where they are generated to capture the benefits of both the process and the finished product for the community (Clark 2015, 32).

Brief history of composting in NYC

- 19th Century, peri-urban farmers collected urban horse manure and foods scraps.
- Public health reforms pushed many of these activities further out of the city.
- 1990 - community composting for soil remediation in gardens of LES
- 1993 - NYC Compost project founded
- 1994 - first food scrap collection program at Union square farmers market (since expanded city wide)
- 2001 - Closure of Fresh Kills Landfill

Zero Waste by 2030

NYC zerowaste

0x30

Municipal Solid Waste Policy

- Local Law 42 (2012): *to assess compost opportunities in NYC*
- Local Law 77 (2013): *to pilot and evaluate curbside organic waste collection*
- Local Law 146 (2013): *to require food generating business to separate their organic waste and ensure its diversion*
- BIC Community Composter Pilot (2016): *to permit non-profit community compost organizations to access BIC carting license*

Policy Goals

- By the end of 2018, every household will have access to composting and most food businesses will be to required to compost

- Increase regional composting capacity (create the market, wait for infrastructure)
- Increase urban composting capacity (A.D. facilities, support for a range of local compost operations)
- Make existing waste infrastructure more environmentally just (marine transfer station, waste equity bill)
- Continued support for community composting and composting education.

Realizing these goals will require

- technical and social innovations
- novel collaborations between community food system and waste management
- a radically different relationship with both waste and food.

The role of the grassroots in municipal waste management

Grassroots organizations can experiment, innovate, and connect with the public in the way that the Department of Sanitation cannot.

LES Ecology Center

BIG REUSE

NYC Compost Project

EARTH MATTER

GARDEN · TEACH · RECYCLE · GREENMARKET · grow NYC

NYC Compost Project

- Founded in 1993
- Non-Profits with Municipal backing
- Community composting capacity building via Master Composter Program
- Stewarding food scraps, plants, and urban soil
- Prototyping neighbourhood scale circular food economies

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NYC Compost Project

Name	Techniques	Tools	Capacity
NYC Compost Projected Hosted by Brooklyn Botanical Gardens (Brooklyn)	Windrows, Aerated Static Pile	Food Scrap Containers, Shovels, Brooms, Wheel Barrows, Screen, Solar and Wind Powered Air Blower, Solar Panels, Wind Turbine.	225+ Tons
NYC Compost Project Hosted by BIG Reuse (Queens)	Aerated Static Pile, Windrows	Food Scrap Containers, Gore cover, Temperature and Oxygen Probes, Blower, Skidsteer, Jay-Lor Mixer, Toter-Tipper, Screen, Thermometers	650+ Tons
NYC Compost Project hosted by Earth Matter Compost Learning Center (Governors Island)	Aerated Static Pile, Windrows, Tumblers, In-Vessel systems, 3 bin systems, Bokashi Composting, Chicken assisted Deep Litter, worm bins, and and much more.	Food Scrap Containers, Skidsteer, Jay-Lor Mixer, Blowers, Thermometers, Shovels, numerous compost devices	480+ Tons
NYC Compost Project hosted by the Lower East Side Ecology Center (Manhattan)	In-Vessel system, Windrows	Food Scrap Containers, Compost Containers, Skidsteer, truck, Thermometer	250+ Tons

Cultivating a different waste ethics

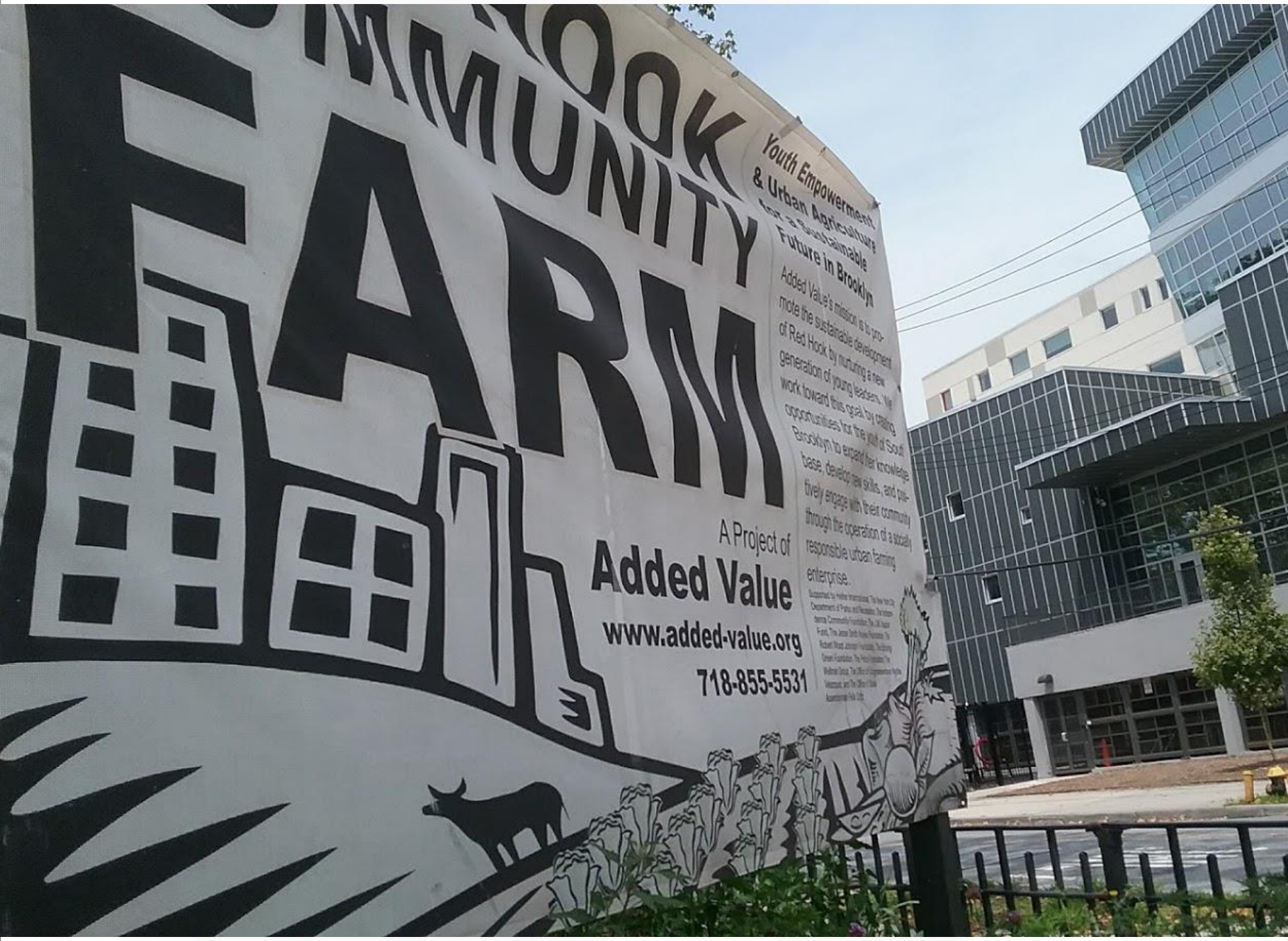
“the care and attention involved in managing a compost pile turned disgust at decay into pleasure in renewal

Disrupting “dominant ethos of disposal, distance, and denial”

Gay Hawkins

BBG @ Red Hook Community Farm

- Inspired by slow food – to celebrating slow, manual, and hand crafted compost.
- Powered by renewable energy (wind and solar) and people.
- Closing the Loop: local collection of greens and browns
- Growing food for community consumption on site.
- Distributing compost to neighbourhood gardens greening projects.
- Engaging thousands of volunteers in the work of sustainability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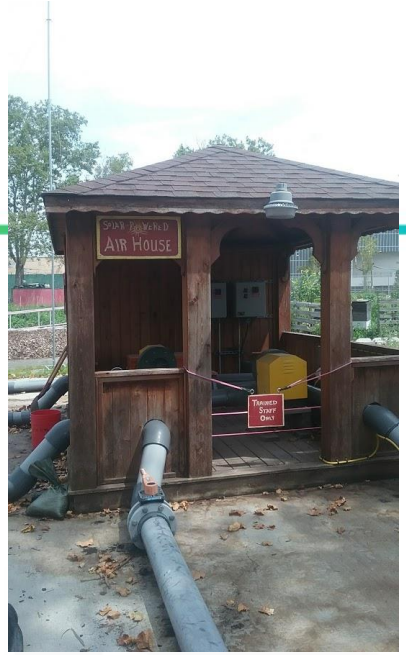
AIR HOUSE
TRAINED STAFF ONLY

A diverse composting economy

Assessing Sustainability Impacts

- What if tonnage of organic waste diverted from landfill was not the sole measure of success or sustainability?
- What if we considered the environmental, social, and economic impacts at every step along the way—from everyday food practices of cooking, eating, and organics separation; to practices of waste carting and transportation; to the more-than-human labours of composting; to compost distribution and use in soil restoration, neighbourhood greening, and food growing; to our visceral and cultural relations towards waste?

Conclusions

- Simply “adding compost” to an unsustainable and environmentally unjust waste management system does not lead to sustainable or just urban transformations
- Opportunity to cultivate a different relationship with waste beyond dominant ethos of disposability, distance and denial
- Embedding community waste in community food systems captures benefits locally with potential to remediate environmental injustices
- What kind of economies do we want in the circular economy ?

Morrow, O. (forthcoming). Imagining alternative waste futures through community composting in New York City. *Home Grown.* Terreform: New York

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Questions?

Thank you

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