

Utopian (food) waste governance in New York City

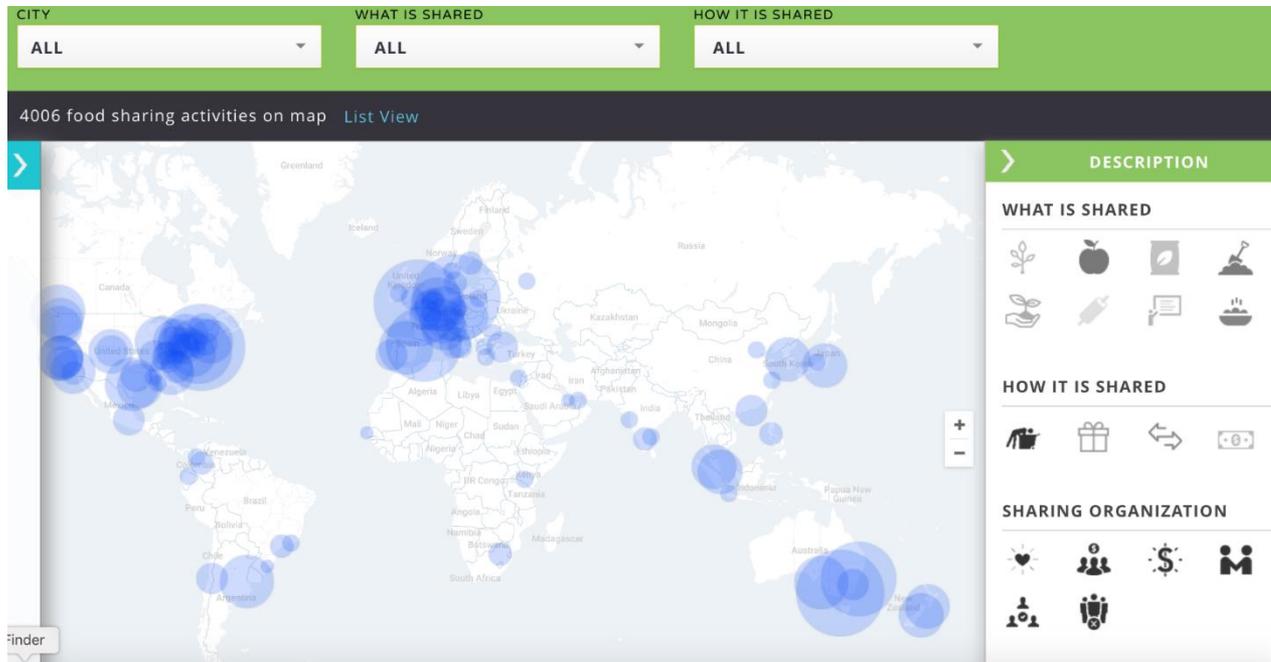
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SHARECITY: Investigating the Sustainability Potential of Urban Food Sharing Economies



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*.

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 – circular food economies
- Public health reforms and urban development 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 by Department of Sanitation
- 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

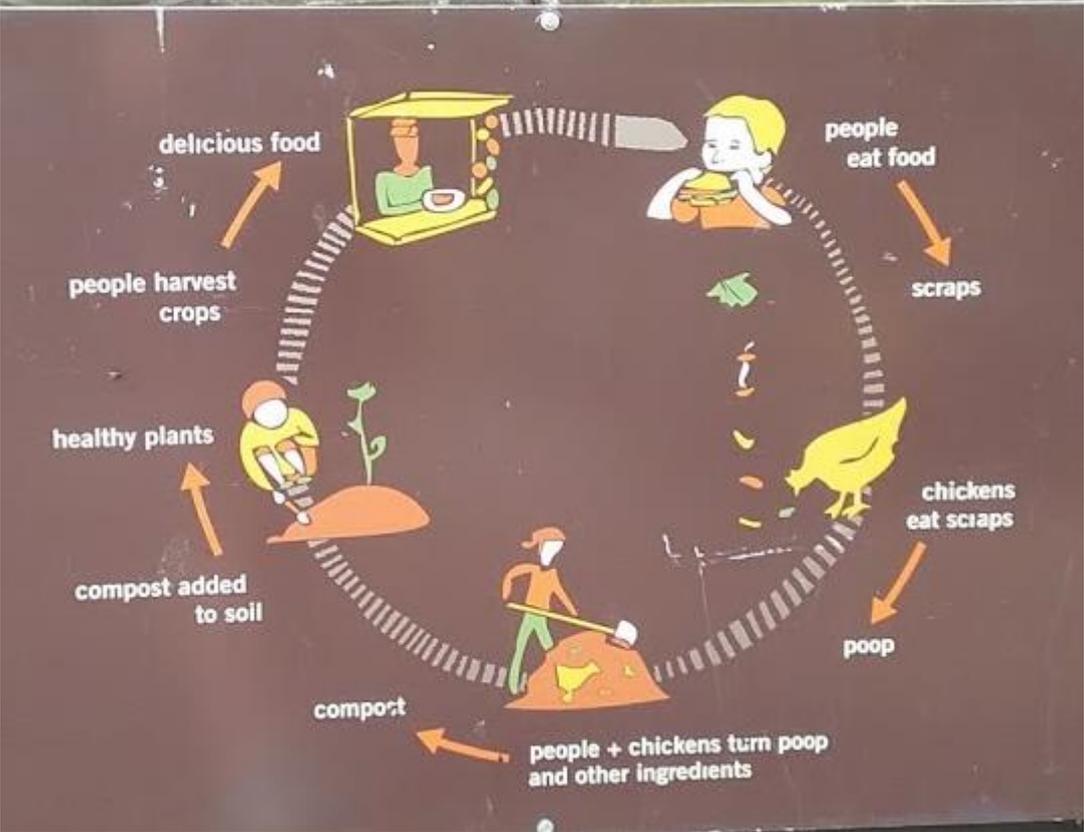
Realizing these goals will require

- Technical and Social innovations
- Novel collaborations between community food system and waste management
- A radically different relationship with both waste and food.

Compost - anytime, any place, any scale



Cultivating niches for experimentation & learning with grassroots and social economy



NYC
zerowaste

0x30

donate**NYC**
give goods. find goods. do good.

NYC
Compost Project
Funded by **NYC**sanitation

Rebuilding our soil,
neighborhood
by neighborhood.

Unique role of grassroots innovation in municipal waste management

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



NYC Compost Project as intermediary actor in grassroots sustainability innovations

- 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



Rebuilding our soil,
neighborhood
by neighborhood.

NYC Compost Project

Name	Techniques	Tools	Capacity
NYC Compost Project 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 the labour of slow, artisanal, local, 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

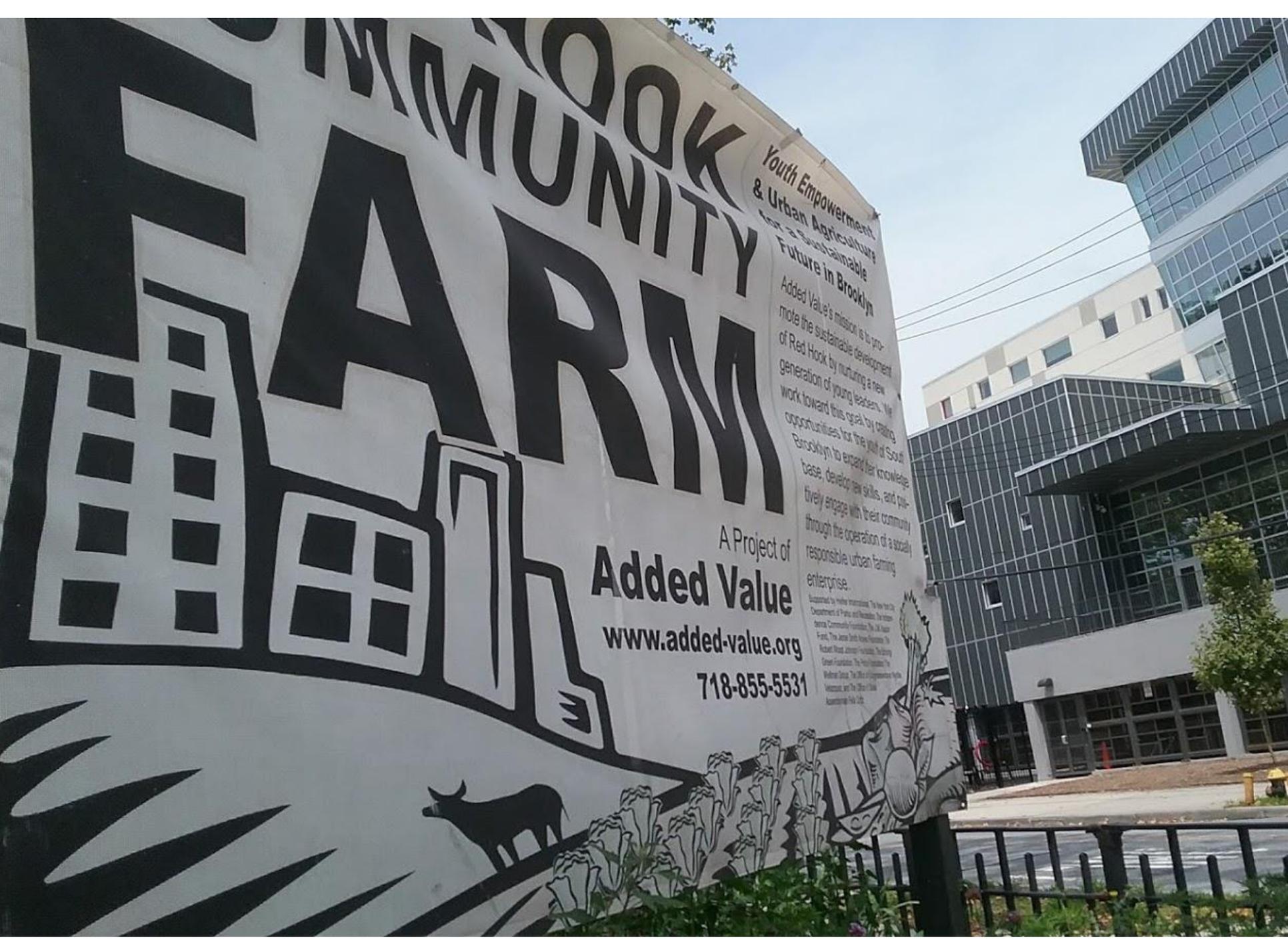
Red Hook Community AARM

Youth Empowerment & Urban Agriculture for a Sustainable Future in Brooklyn

Added Value's mission is to promote the sustainable development of Red Hook by nurturing a new generation of young leaders. We work toward this goal by creating opportunities for the youth of South Brooklyn to expand their knowledge base, develop new skills, and positively engage with their community through the operation of a socially responsible urban farming enterprise.

A Project of
Added Value
www.added-value.org
718-855-5531

Supported by major institutions: The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, The Robert F. Kennedy Community Foundation, The All Star Fund, The James Smith Foundation, The Richard Wood Center, Incubator, The Green Foundation, The Friends of the Waterfront, The Office of Community Health Assessment, and The Office of Urban Agriculture Policy 2012.







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

A diverse composting economy



Gift,
barter,
and sale

**Funding and
policy**



**Appropriate
technology**

For profit,
non profit,
social
enterprise



Volunteer
and paid
labor

**Working across
multiple sectors
and scales**



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