

# Reimagining Civic Stewardship Groups as Climate Adaptation Planners

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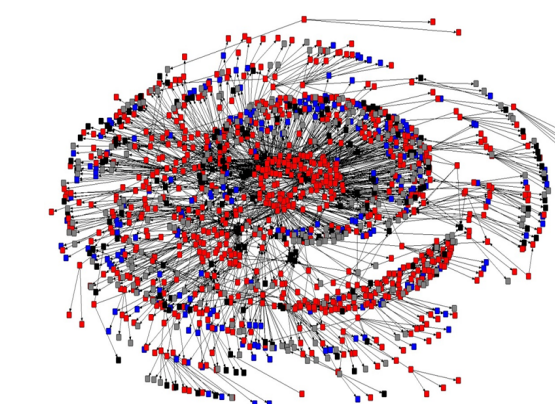
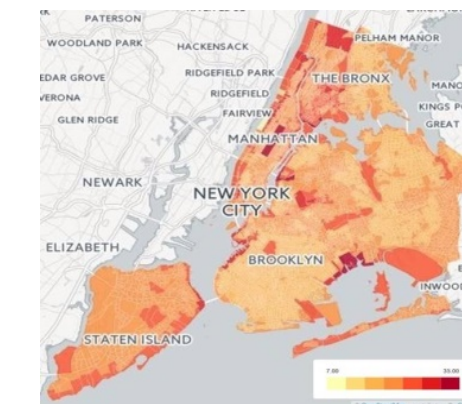
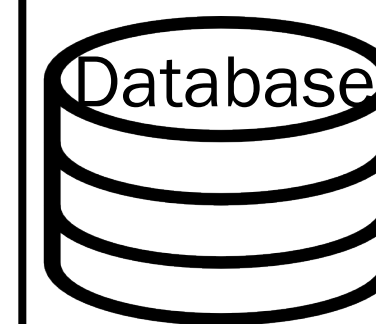
## Abstract

Cities face unique social and ecological challenges compounded by climate change, including recovery after extreme weather events, access to fresh food and clean water, and sustainable energy generation. This work typically falls to traditionally recognized planners, which we define as academics, state actors, and board-certified professionals. Data from the US Forest Service - NYC Urban Field Station's 2017 Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP) show that civic stewardship groups play a vital and growing role in caring for the local environment. Not unlike local governments, civic stewardship groups work to sustain and enhance socio-ecological systems. The shared efforts of stewardship combat a broad scope of urban climate impacts, as STEW-MAP responses show that groups tackle issues from ecosystem degradation to human health and social policy. As local civic stewardship groups engage in acts of caretaking and claims-making on the environment, planners have an opportunity and responsibility to engage with these groups in collaborative processes. We argue that civic stewards act in a planning capacity and should be considered essential actors as we continue to forge best practices in planning urban environments.

## Methods

Data for this project come from the STEW-MAP 2017 NYC Region survey that collects information on stewardship groups' organizational characteristics, geographic turf, and social networks.

- Of the 847 STEW-MAP respondent groups, 26 groups representing a cross-section of geographic turf size and network connectivity were identified for in-depth follow-up interviews.
- Nine of the interviewed groups illustrated distinct links to planning and climate action
- Transcripts for these nine groups were then iteratively coded for:
  - The tactics that each group used in response to a perceived problem
  - The scale at which the group employed these tactics (e.g. neighborhood, city-wide)



## Discussion

- Through these roles, stewards offer unique contributions that can be better acknowledged and leveraged by local government officials and planners to help adapt to growing climate impacts
- When stewards get together to improve or defend the spaces they care about, they build social ties that play a key role in responding to disturbance.

## Next Steps

- State planners and civic stewardship groups are well positioned to combat climate change together by identifying existing stewardship efforts, bolstering civic engagement, and sharing knowledge/data
- Knowledge co-production for urban governance as a strategy for moving forward

## Results

Typology	Tactic	Scale	Planning role	Literature	Example cases
<b>Broker</b>	collaborate, advocate	citywide	planner as mediator	Fogelsong 1986; Connolly et al. 2013	New Yorkers For Parks; NAC
	advise, provide community input	neighborhood or site	planner as information navigator	Forester 1999; Fischer 2000	Fort Greene PUPS; West 80s Nbdh Assn; We Run Brownsville
<b>Influencer</b>	lawsuits, actions	project-based	planner as change agent	Christmann 2019; Thomas 2018	LUNGS; Protectors of Pine Oak Woods
<b>Agitator</b>	vision plans, tools	systems-level	planner as innovator	Jabareen 2015	Newtown Creek Alliance; RIPA

The Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC) plays the role of *broker* because it is highly connected and works closely with government. NAC co-produced the NYC Forest Management Framework with the NYC Parks Dept.

### Forest Management Goals

The Forest Management Framework will result in forests that are healthy, provide recreation and enjoyment for all New Yorkers, and are fully supported financially.

Forests Are Healthy

People Benefit from Forests

Forests Are Supported

The Newtown Creek Alliance created this 150-page vision plan detailing their dreams for the future of their neighborhood. By publishing this document, they are playing the role of *innovator*.

### Future of East Side flood protection plan debated at heated hearing

The plan will protect a 2.4 mile stretch of Manhattan's coast from flooding

By Caroline Spinrad | Aug 1, 2019, 10:30am EDT

LUNGS is playing the role of *agitator* by pushing back against the revised East Side Coastal Resiliency plan that will close East River Park for 31/2 years during construction.

## Literature cited

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Learn more: [nrs.fs.fed.us/STEW-MAP](https://nrs.fs.fed.us/STEW-MAP)



We Run Brownsville (left) and the West 80s Neighborhood Association (right) are examples of *influencers*. They have each served as community representatives to inform plans and policies that have a direct impact on the physical environment. The West 80s Neighborhood Associations helped secure an expansion of the Upper West Side Historic District, and WRB shared their desires for an updated track in the Betsy Head Park redesign as part of the NYC Parks Anchor Parks Initiative.

