



Working in the Middle: Museums Spurring Food Governance Sustainable Transition in NYC

Paper first received: 19 December 2024; Accepted: 25 December 2025; Published in final form: 01 May 2026
<https://doi.org/10.48416/ijfaf.v31i1.690>

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Abstract

This article examines food governance from a sociological perspective, focusing on how diverse actors contribute to more inclusive and capacity-building processes. Building on debates on collaborative governance and sustainable food systems, it advances the hypothesis that museums—although not formally embedded in governance structures—can act as meso-level actors by fostering learning, public engagement, and knowledge translation. The study situates museums within their transformation into socially engaged institutions and draws on a qualitative case study of New York City, combining theoretical analysis with empirical research on local actors and practices. Findings show that museums support governance processes by activating learning environments, strengthening stakeholder networks, and enhancing reflexive capacities that bridge policy and practice. The article argues that recognising museums as intermediary actors expands current understandings of food governance and supports more participatory and place-based approaches to sustainability

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Introduction

The main objective of this article is to offer an examination of the role that museums have and could play in food governance processes, with a particular focus on their ability to contribute to bridging the gap between theoretical and practical approaches to sustainability in the food sector of New York City. Our research hypothesis is that museums can act as a mesoscale between formal and informal governance processes, strengthening connections and collaboration between different actors, and facilitating the translation of theoretical knowledge into concrete action addressed to sustainability aims.

The growing importance of the concept of sustainability in food system debates is leading to a greater emphasis on co-governance and collaborative processes. Sustainability goals, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting biodiversity, ensuring equitable access to healthy food, and strengthening resilience, are complex and interconnected. Addressing them requires collaboration across public institutions, private businesses, civil society, and cultural actors. By adopting collaborative approaches, food governance can mobilise diverse forms of knowledge and resources, foster inclusive decision-making, and build the public will and awareness needed to drive systemic change. In this sense, the urgency of meeting sustainability targets becomes a powerful catalyst for collaborative governance, transforming food policy into a shared societal project rather than the responsibility of government alone. These require greater involvement and collaboration of actors at various levels, including vertical and horizontal integration, as well as building capacities to drive their role as key agents for sustainable transition. Museums and cultural institutions, given their work in public engagement and communication, can play a significant role in this context.

A key issue within the discourse on collaborative governance is the matter of which actors should be involved, to enhance the effectiveness and pervasiveness of action strategies set out in planning documents. In other words, which actors can play a role in raising awareness and fostering collaboration with local communities and, in a more general sense, with society at large, to contribute to the achievement of sustainability goals. In this article, our interest is mainly in one category of actors, namely cultural institutions and more specifically museums and the professionals who work within them. The aim is to understand whether and how these institutions can contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the debate on food governance, to move towards sustainability, health, and justice. These objectives mainly concern a greater capacity to act on and address issues concerning the conservation of natural resources, sustainable livelihoods, and a greater effort to include especially vulnerable groups.

Museums have evolved into 'social agents', capable not only of assuming social responsibility but also of catalysing change, building awareness and capacity, and strengthening community engagement and action. This concept is an active expression of the school of thought known as the 'New Museology', which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. These new approaches emphasise the capacity of museums to provide support to disadvantaged communities and to facilitate processes of social, cultural, and environmental change (Borrelli & Davis, 2012).

In recent years, the role of museums and cultural institutions in addressing systemic challenges has gained renewed attention, particularly in the context of food systems (Levent & Mihalache, 2017). While academic and policy discourses increasingly emphasise the need for food systems to be sustainable, healthy and just, current practices continue to fall short of delivering on these ambitions (Schneider et al., 2023; FAO, 2024; IFPRI, 2022)

Despite the growing body of knowledge outlining the principles of sustainability in food system management, implementation remains fragmented and often fails to reach the most vulnerable populations or produce systemic change. In this context, museums and cultural institutions can play a critical role in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Through their ability to engage diverse audiences, foster inclusive dialogue,



and make abstract concepts tangible and actionable, they can support more effective pathways toward food systems transformation. By doing so, they contribute not only to building public awareness, but also to the co-construction of food governance approaches and collaborative platforms that are grounded in cultural relevance, social equity, and long-term sustainability (Johnston & Andrée, 2019).

To better understand the role that museums can play in the transition to more sustainable food systems, the article is divided into four main parts. The first part defines the theoretical framework in which the problem addressed is set. The second part is a presentation of the NYC food governance. The third part describes the methodological approach and research design that were implemented in the NYC case study. The fourth part presents the results in two sections. The first section provides a general mapping of the main museums and their emerging food-related initiatives in NYC. The second section presents the main findings of the qualitative analysis of the interviews with museum professionals and food policy actors, detailing key practices mentioned, along with the main identified opportunities and challenges related to the museums' contributions to food co-governance processes in NYC. The results are then analysed and the final conclusions are drawn.

Why food governance needs to be collaborative

Food governance, as well as governance in a more general sense, is oriented towards the adoption of collaborative governance approaches. The concept of co-governance has been defined as the joint work of multiple actors to achieve common goals (Kooiman, 2003). Johnston and Andrée (2019) identify other useful definitions for this analysis, highlighting the definition promoted by Emerson et al. (2011) as a collaborative, voluntary and public policy process engaging “*people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished.*” In these approaches the construction of relations both between the actors of a given territory and with the territory itself become decisive.

Governance is increasingly conceptualised as a social process involving many different actors (Halliday, 2022). The public sector is only one of the players, while private actors from the economic, social and cultural spheres play an equally important role¹. Unlike a narrow focus on ‘government’, the concept of governance acknowledges the inherent multiplicity of actors and perspectives in public decision-making processes, prompting a critical examination of these structures and their implications. Civil society organisations, akin to governments, actively engage as agents in public policymaking, social provisioning, and discursive interventions. The premise is that through broad-based participation, governance processes can surpass the effectiveness of governments acting in isolation, leading to the attainment of shared, public objectives (Healey, 1999) – as was evident in contemporary rescaling processes (Brenner, 2001), decentralisation and “hollowing out of the nation state” (Jessop, 2013).

The necessity of a collaborative approach is a long-standing topic in the governance debate (Emerson et al., 2011), and it is also gaining ground in the food governance literature (Andrée et al., 2019). Similarly, there is a growing recognition of the importance of place-based approaches to emphasise the polycentric and polyvocal nature of governance processes (Edwards et al., 2024; Coulson & Sonnino, 2019; Sonnino et al., 2016).

Scholars of the institutionalist school² (Healey; Cars; Madanipour, Hiller), in particular, have been attempting to define place governance for over two decades. The term ‘place’ has been employed to good effect by scholars such as Massey (1994), who has defined it as “*the specific articulation of spatial relations*” and as “*a particular*

¹ For further insight, consider the works of Giddens (1984) and Putnam, R. D., Leonardi, R., & Nanetti, R. Y. (1993).

² The Newcastle Institutional School developed from the 1990s around the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, particularly through the work of Patsy Healey, Goran Cars, Ali Madanipour, Claudio De Magalhães, Jean Hillier, and others. It interprets planning as a communicative and reflexive process, grounded in new institutionalism and in the discursive practices that structure collective action. In this perspective, governance is understood as a relational and network-based system of coordination among public, private, and civic actors, where governing capacity derives from the building of trust, social capital, and institutional learning rather than from formal hierarchies.

moment within a network of social relations and understandings". This latter definition is noteworthy in that it extends the concept of place beyond the physical (whether built or natural) to encompass the socio-cultural environment. For these scholars, the socio-cultural dimension is fundamental, as it is the cultural values expressed in discourses, narratives and ways of thinking that provide the seeds for the new actions, practices and initiatives that can accompany transition processes towards sustainability and/or resilience. In the article "My Voice: My Place" (Coaffee & Healey, 2003) and in the book *Habitus: A sense of place* (Hiller, 2005), Coaffee, Healey and Hiller emphasise the central role of cultural values in the valorisation of local resources. Cultural values (contained in habitus and expressed in discourses and narratives) hold the seeds of the connections (both positive and negative) that people make with the places they live in, as well as their daily social practices.

In the context of the Newcastle Institutional School, the governance of places is seen as a learning process involving the development of new capacities for action and the construction of new networks (Coaffee & Healey, 2003; Hiller, 2005; Cars et. al., 2003). The issues of place and collaboration have become increasingly important in the food governance debate. The two topics are increasingly intertwined and, as Sonnino and Melbourne (2022) point out, the latter is in a sense enmeshed in the former. The concept of place, according to these authors, becomes an "active mediator at the meso level" by allowing us to focus on the most relevant aspects of the discourses on the transformation of food systems. These aspects are: the need to keep the social and natural dimensions together; the fluidity and relationality that make the boundaries of places malleable and constantly evolving (as is the food system); and the role of social relations and practices that contribute on a daily basis to giving places a specific character and function (both when they are open, active and inclusive, and when they are passive, negative and exclusionary). What is emphasised in this discourse on relationships is the need to create co-benefits for nature and society, that is, an inclusive pact of mutual respect, through collaborative processes to achieve common sustainability goals.

The question of inclusivity and respect for nature and biodiversity is also present in the work of other authors. In this regard, Stoker notes that

in a growing number of cities around the world, local government officials and non-state actors are designing and actively implementing policies, plans and strategies for more equitable and sustainable urban food systems. The involvement of non-state actors (such as farmers, private businesses, civil society and community groups, academics, the media, etc.) in food policy is a hallmark of the shift from top-down government to governance in public management that has taken place in many parts of the world (Stoker, 2000 in Halliday, 2022).

Halliday (2022) outlines six key conceptualisations of food governance, grouped into three categories (interactions, forms and practices)³ all centred on the necessity to include different types of actors.

The recent surge of interest in local food governance and co-governance processes can be attributed to several factors. These include a widespread dissatisfaction with the current organisation of food systems and its adverse ecological, social, health, and economic impacts. Food systems contribute to approximately a third of global greenhouse gas emissions and are associated with rising levels of malnutrition (FAO et al., 2023; Ana Morague-Faus, 2022; Edwards et al., 2024). This discontent has led to the involvement of new actors who are able to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge and the raising of awareness about the importance of a sustainable food system. However, although high levels of scientific certainty on food production methods are supposed to move us towards a sustainable food system, unsustainable practices continue to prevail (Béné et al., 2019; Schneider et al., 2023). It could be argued that society is not yet prepared to embrace new behavioural patterns that would facilitate a sustainable transition.

A sustainable food system, as defined by the FAO (2018), ensures food security and nutrition for all without compromising economic, social, and environmental bases for future generations. This comprehensive approach

³ The first involves actor interactions, such as *networked governance* (focused on resource leverage) and *collaborative governance* (centred on consensus-building), which converge at the meso-level to enhance impact. The second category refers to governance forms across structures, such as *multilevel governance* (vertical coordination across levels) and *polycentric governance* (horizontal relations among organizations). The third involves governance practices such as *reflexive governance* (deliberative, ongoing or retrospective) and *adaptive governance* (rapid, responsive adjustments to disruptions).



considers interconnections and trade-offs among different elements, diverse actors, activities, drivers, and outcomes, aiming to maximise societal outcomes across environmental, social, and economic dimensions. Such convergence is operationalised through the implementation intersectoral collaboration, inter-institutional collaboration, multilevel governance, territorial integration, and city-to-city collaboration (Forster et al. 2022).

An especially relevant aspect that has been only partially investigated concerns the identification of those actors who already do, or potentially could, contribute to the construction of a more widespread 'culture' of sustainability within the food system. That is, actors who can stimulate the construction of new narratives, practices and capacities in civil society. In this article, particular attention is given to the role of specific actors engaged in education and research, in particular museum professionals and food policy actors, and to the examination of whether and how in the context of their exhibitions, initiatives, and promotion of partnerships they can positively stimulate new behaviours and cultural values.

How Museums can support the sustainable transition in food governance

Museums, as a significant source of knowledge, can adopt an active role in contemporary society and be social agents of change (Sandell 1998; Balle 2002; De Varine 2008; Anderson 2011).

Bennet (2005) underlined how museums have played a pivotal role in shaping social spaces and organising temporal structures. Their influence is not limited to the confines of the museum itself; rather, museums have been instrumental in providing the spatial and temporal frameworks that underpin programmes of social administration conducted beyond their walls. Drawing a parallel with Latour's assertion in the article titled 'Give me a laboratory and I will raise the world' (Latour, 1983), Bennet wrote: "Give me a museum, and I will change society". This perspective acknowledges the museum's unique capacity to engineer new entities by manipulating the relationships between people and objects within purposefully designed environments, narratives and practices. These entities can then be mobilised, both within and outside the museum, to contribute to diverse social and civic programs.

In order to offer a service to society, they must become a vital part of the social system, moving beyond curatorship, education, and entertainment to actively embrace socially relevant missions. Attempts by museums to be socially responsible and point the way towards a sustainable future have been described by Janes and Conaty (2005) and Janes (2009).

Museums – traditionally overlooked in food governance debates – have begun to emerge as civic actors operating in the 'middle ground' of policy, practice, and public culture. Positioned at the intersection of state institutions, civil society, and cultural production, museums are increasingly recognised as agents that can contribute to capacity building for more democratic, sustainable, and place-based food governance systems (Macdonald, 2023; Gurian, 2010).

Capacity building in this context should not be understood narrowly as technical training or institutional reform. Rather, it refers to a broader process of empowerment, involving reflexive learning, social repair, and the development of capabilities for transformative food action. Museums play a unique role here due to their symbolic authority, accessibility, and trust within communities. They can serve as platforms where food knowledge, memories, practices, and politics are curated, contested, and reimaged (Morse, 2021; Gurian, 2010). Capacity building, on the one hand, aims to create an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks and, on the other, to promote institutional development – including community participation, human resources development, and the strengthening of managerial systems by partnership (Cuthill 2005). In other words, capacity building is the process whereby individuals, groups, organisations, institutions, and societies increase their abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives, as well as understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner. This evolving role marks a shift from what Gurian provocatively called the "museum as soup kitchen" (2010):

a metaphor for rethinking museums as spaces that deliver not only cultural nourishment but direct, tangible social services in times of crisis. Rather than questioning whether such activities are “museum work”, Gurian challenges institutions to embrace more expansive, care-driven missions. She emphasises that museums, particularly those rooted in and accountable to local communities, can and should function as “*civic clubhouses*” providing job retraining, educational enrichment, and food justice programming, especially in moments of urban stress and inequality (Gurian, 2010).

Nuala Morse (2021) deepens this understanding by framing museum outreach through the lens of care ethics. Drawing from feminist theories of care (Tronto, 1993), she describes how museum professionals enact “affective labor” and “care thinking”, particularly in their community engagement with vulnerable publics. In the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, museums in the UK reoriented their programming to deliver art and food kits, offer wellness activities, and maintain social contact with isolated groups, often in collaboration with health and food organisations (Morse, 2021). These practices are not ancillary, they form the basis for an expanded conception of museums as infrastructures of public care, resilience, and mutual support, in particular when dealing with food.

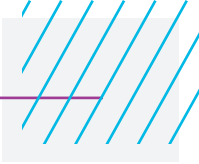
These shifts are also part of a broader epistemic transformation in museology. As Sharon Macdonald (2023) and others in critical museum studies (Karp & Levine, 1992; Watson, 2007; González, 2018) argue, contemporary museums are increasingly embracing their roles as spaces of negotiation, activism, and relational governance. This reconceptualisation aligns with Monica Sassatelli’s notion of an “*aesthetic cosmopolitanism*” (2022), which foregrounds museums as mediators between local identities and global citizenship, fostering ethical-political subjectivities through curatorial practices. In food governance, this could mean enabling the articulation of diverse food cultures, intergenerational knowledge, indigenous sovereignty, and migrant culinary practices within urban contexts.

From a governance perspective, this role situates museums as ‘meso-level’ institutions. They mediate between formal (e.g., municipal food plans) and informal (e.g., community kitchens, mutual aid networks) governance structures, and convene cross-sectoral actors (Macdonald, 2023; Morgan & Macdonald, 2020), building trust and re-establishing *connections* within food systems to improve their functioning (Edwards et al., 2024). Their contribution is especially salient in contexts where urban food governance involves an entangled ecology of actors, including city departments, non-profits, activist coalitions, and cultural institutions.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that museums have long had educational and socially engaged mandates. For instance, as we can see later, many museums in New York City, particularly those with activist, ethnic, and community-rooted missions, have been addressing social justice, food systems, and environmental racism. To represent museums as only now ‘becoming’ relevant to these debates would overlook the rich legacies of community-based curatorship, feminist museology, and activist stewardship (Watson, 2007; Rice, 2016).

The role of museums in food governance must therefore be analysed through a historically grounded, critical and institutionally specific lens. Museums are not neutral actors but operate within power-laden infrastructures. Their contributions to food governance are shaped by their governance models (public, private, hybrid), collection histories, funding landscapes, and their varying relationships with communities – some of which are fraught, extractive, or contested (Macdonald, 2023; González, 2018). A careful engagement with the literature of museum studies helps avoid romanticising or instrumentalising their roles, working across tensions and contradictions.

In summary, museums are not peripheral to the governance of food systems. They are civic institutions engaged in practices of care, narration, convening, and mobilisation. By embracing socially embedded forms of curatorship and coalition-building, museums can contribute significantly to capacity building for food justice and sustainability. Their challenge lies in aligning their symbolic and material power with the transformative



demands of just food futures.

New York City Food Governance

The previous sections describe museums' past role in advancing sustainable food system governance and how their role can and should be increased in the future due to their ability to interact with and reach the public and many food system actors. We will now detail the current positive food governance climate in New York City, to serve as context for the case studies analysed in this article.

New York City has played an important role in leading and advancing food governance policies, programmes, and initiatives (Freudenberg et al., 2018). The 2021 release of its 10-year food policy plan, Food Forward NYC, demonstrates the city's commitment to harnessing the multidimensional potential of food to address its socio-economic and environmental challenges, with a significant increase in the capacity of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (Ilieva et al., 2023). The 10-year food policy plan aims to: 1) improve nutrition and access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food; 2) increase economic opportunities and jobs; 3) strengthen the city's food infrastructure, including regional connections, food distribution and agriculture; 4) promote more sustainable food production, distribution and consumption practices; and 5) expand knowledge and systems support through community engagement and cross-sector coordination (NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy, 2022). Similarly, the Mayor's Office recently underscored its commitment to combating climate change by calling for a 33% reduction in food-related emissions from its agencies by 2030 (City of New York, 2023), and by endorsing its citywide Climate Adaptation Plans in 2021 (City of New York, 2022a). These calls are in line with the recently released New York State Climate Action Scoping Plan to meet greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions targets⁴ established under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act). The scoping plan seeks to address the structural disadvantages and disproportionate impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable communities through three strategic pillars: climate justice, just transition, and public health (New York State Climate Action Council, 2022). Additionally, in June 2023 New York City released a plan for increasing food education for all K-12 school students (New York City, 2023) and to support this work, the Department of Education created an Office of Food and Climate Education. This initial plan was followed by two annual progress reports released in July 2024 and August 2025 (Mayor's Office of Food Policy, 2024, 2025). The commitment was moreover accompanied by funding available for school grants: for the 2025-26 academic year, over 400 schools received grants for a total of \$3,000,000, primarily for schools to pay organisations (mostly non-profits) to provide students with educational activities such as gardening, cooking, nutrition and food justice. In this context, cultural institutions in New York City are taking action to promote greater awareness of the importance of adopting healthy and sustainable behaviours in the management of the food system.

The current attention and action on food policy builds on a few decades of groundwork by government officials, advocates, professionals and the public to make the case for sustainable food policy. In February 2009, a New York City politician, Scott Stringer, the then Manhattan Borough President, published a report, "Food in the Public Interest". This report came as a result of a meeting with 500 people at Columbia University and was intended:

to create a paradigm shift that results in empowering the city and state to expand their role in food policy, every relevant government agency's policies must be informed by and strategically focused on a shared goal: to create a sustainable food system which provides economic, social, environmental, and health benefits.
(President of the Borough of Manhattan, 2009)

This led to two more policy reports calling for more sustainable food systems (President of the Borough of Manhattan, 2010, and The New York City Council, 2011). Both provided detailed policy plans for a food system

⁴ New York's Scoping Plan lays out the path to achieving statewide goals of 70% renewable energy by 2030 (70x30), 100% zero emission electricity by 2040 (100x40), 40% GHG emissions reduction from 1990 levels by 2030, 85% GHG emissions reduction from 1990 levels by 2050, and net zero emissions by 2050 (New York State Climate Action Council, 2022).

that promotes sustainability and personal health, and called for more public discourse about food and food system sustainability. Freudenberg, McDonough and Tsui (2011) conducted a case study characterising the food movement at the time of these government reports as an “emerging movement”. The authors made the case that not all groups had a voice in this movement (yet). They noted that low-income residents and people of colour were less present in the movement, but also highlighted the intentional efforts being made to bring all voices into the food governance conversation. The authors compared this to the environmental movement and HIV movements that intentionally brought in missing voices. They argued that for the food movement to make the transformative change, more pressure from the public was needed. This history of government officials championing food policy, despite a need for more public discourse, set New York City’s governance of food system sustainability in motion. The COVID-19 pandemic, of which New York City was an epicentre in spring and summer 2020, fuelled conversations about both food and nutrition security for all New Yorkers, and the importance of sustainability. Underlying these conversations was New York City’s centring of equity in all policies, starting with the administration of Mayor Bill de Blasio in 2013 (Cohen & Ilieva, 2021).

Intertwining sustainable food system policy with equity, health, and food security is now central to the New York City food policy platform, which is woven throughout the 2023 report on the first two years of implementation of Food Forward NYC (NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy, 2023). There are numerous examples of how this has been carried out. First, support is provided to people who are living in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) housing, to take an accelerator course preparing them to start food businesses that serve New York City residents healthful sustainable food, while supporting minority and women-owned businesses. The idea is thus to expand economic opportunities, food access, and discourse about food. Second, efforts have been made to expand urban agriculture across New York City, which also has multiple benefits, such as increasing green spaces, connecting people to food production and the importance of food policy, and supplementing residents’ diets with food produced within their communities. Third, a programme called Breaking Bread, Building Bonds brings together people from various backgrounds to share a meal and find their common bonds, with the goal of helping to end hate crime. Fourth, a year-long collaboration between the NYC Department of Urban Planning, the Mayor’s Office of Food Policy, and the Urban Design Forum resulted in the creation of an online platform, Neighborhood Fare. The platform was developed by talking to residents from across NYC to find out about their lived food experiences, ranging from participating in community and school gardens, to composting and food business incubators. A tool to foster food equity and local food systems in all New York neighbourhoods was then created from what these discussions had revealed (Urban Design Forum, 2022). While there have been advances in food policy, if this focus is to be sustained into the next decade, the ongoing conversation about food policy issues needs to continue. As Cullerton et al. (2016) point out, political will is not enough for sustained changes in food policy. There needs to be public will and awareness. Public will emerges when the public understands the problems, recognises that change is urgent, knows there are solutions, and demands change. Museums and other cultural institutions have an important role to play in building this public will for food system governance and transformation.

Our research project involved a review of the principal museums and activities in New York City over the past 15 years. This included an examination of the permanent exhibits, special short-term exhibitions, workshops, and one-off events that have contributed to the advancement of food governance issues in the city. The review yielded the identification of 19 museums and other cultural institutions, along with 26 food-related activities. Annex 2 presents a summary of the results, categorising the different types of museum and activities and illustrating their connections with the various themes identified in this research. In particular, these activities are contributing to the development of ‘food education’ through the activation of learning processes and the enhancement of individuals’ capacity to drive change in the food system. These institutions can serve as ‘food linkages’ by creating new communication channels, networking, and sharing information, knowledge and resources. They are also enhancing governance processes, making ‘food sustainability’ a key goal and practice in their internal management, through the food that is served, and the activities discussed and implemented. Additionally, attention has been paid to the cost of entrance to museums and potential discounts as enabling factors for the accessibility of different groups in these processes, especially local actors and vulnerable groups, such as those with low incomes (see Annex 2).



Methodology

This research is based on fieldwork conducted by the authors between July and November 2022⁵, focusing on food policy and food system actors, and professionals working in museums and cultural institutions. The research was structured in an iterative process comprising four phases. The first phase involved a literature review of the state-of-art of governance approaches and the current state of food governance in New York City. The second phase consisted in the mapping and review of the main museums in the case study and their main food-related activities. These activities were subsequently grouped according to the diverse types of contribution identified in the semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders in Phase 4. The contributions included the development of learning tools, capacity building, networking, communication, the fostering of resource sharing (knowledge, information, and funding), and the establishment of sustainability as a core goal and practice within these institutions.

In accordance with these results, Phase 3 proceeded first to identify key stakeholders in the management and strategic decision-making of museums and the food sector in New York City. These individuals were contacted using a snowball methodology, and were interviewed to identify key actors in five different stakeholder groups: academia, local authorities, NGOs, private companies, and museums/cultural institutions (see Annex 1). The objective of the interviews was to examine the potential and existing contributions of these institutions to food governance, encompassing the experiences and perspectives of managerial actors, as well as the challenges and opportunities they had identified. To this end, a semi-structured interview (SSI) method was employed, based on an interview protocol developed from the literature review conducted in the initial phase. The interview protocol facilitated open and flexible dialogue with the actors in order to identify their different perspectives, positions, experiences and knowledge in relation to their local context and realities, with a particular focus on museums and food governance in New York City. The SSI method establishes an effective comparative model for the analysis of multiple interviews under a single frame of analysis that remains relevant to the topic of this research (McIntosh and Morse, 2015).

In the final phase of the study, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted (nine in person and three online). Each interview was recorded and transcribed with the verbal consent of the interviewees for use in this research. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were organised around four main guiding questions: 1) the characteristics and food-related activities of institutions; 2) the type of collaboration, previous work, views, values and/or experience in food system governance processes; 3) the barriers and opportunities for the role museums play or can play in food system governance; and 4) key examples of this role, drawing on collaborative experiences and responses, such as those achieved during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews with these actors were transcribed and analysed using NVivo 14 as a qualitative analysis tool to code and analyse the material collected. The analysis of the interviews yielded 260 emerging codes, which were organised into six main clusters and subdivided into 33 sub-themes pertaining to the co-governance process delineated in the theoretical framework presented above (see Table 1). Furthermore, 54 sub-themes were identified pertaining to the present challenges and prospects for the incorporation of food and museums into co-governance procedures in New York City. The following sections present the results and discussion on the key findings of this research.

⁵ One of the authors spent a period of time as visiting scholar at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York.

Table 1: Key groups of analysis and sub-themes of the contribution of museums to the co-governance process of New York City's Food System identified in the Qualitative Analysis of Interviews.

Group	Main Themes	Sub-themes	References	
'Food Education'	ACTIVATION OF LEARNING PROCESSES	From concepts to actions	42	106
		Building awareness	32	
		Supporting advocacy and promoting change	19	
		Public engagement and discussions	6	
		Building critical perspectives	4	
		Bringing different expertise and experiences	3	
	CAPACITY BUILDING	Food Systems Approach	12	22
		Building Internal Food Capacities	5	
		Sustainable Food Systems	5	
'Food Linkages'	NETWORKING (AND MESO-SCALE)	Horizontal Collaboration	20	66
		Relationship with Public Authorities	10	
		Purchasing from local farmers	9	
		Grounded in local contexts	9	
		Collaborating with external actors	6	
		Museums as platforms connecting actors	5	
		Multistakeholder engagement	4	
		Food as an attractor	3	
	COMMUNICATION	Instrument and space to communicate in an accessible language	11	30
		Amplifying the message	7	
		Importance of how and who communicates	4	
		Food narratives	3	
		Giving voice to local actors	2	
		Communicating complex issues	2	
		Communicating with different levels of the system	1	
SHARING INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES	Building partnerships and supporting fundraising	5	10	
	Improving access to local resources	2		
	Collaborating with local organisations	2		
	Accessing Public Funds	1		
'Food Sustainability'	SUSTAINABILITY AS A GOAL AND PRACTICE	Purchasing from local farmers	9	26
		Food service for a sustainable future	7	
		Food service as part of the formative project	4	
		Internal integration of sustainability	3	
		Sustainable platform	3	
Total				260

Source: Authors' own elaboration

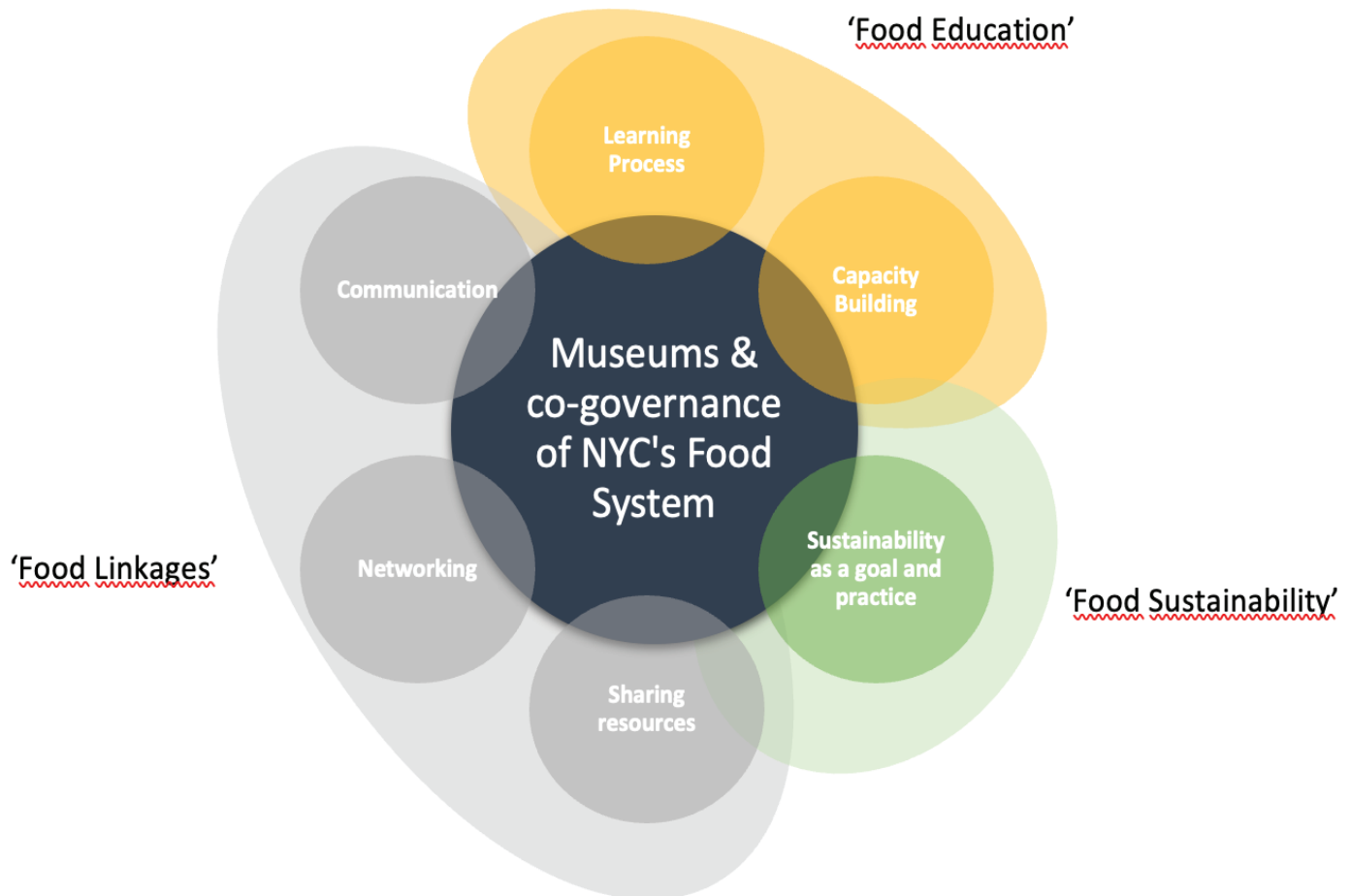
What Museums are doing for the food governance of New York City

This section presents key findings from the qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with 12 food system actors, museums, and cultural institutions in 2022 (see Annex 1). The analysis was structured as a systematic



qualitative review of transcribed interviews, highlighting key emerging aspects of museums' contribution to food systems co-governance processes. The collected findings were grouped into seven thematic cores identified in Section 1 (see Figure 1) and presented below.

Figure 1: Main features of the contributions of Museums to the co-governance processes of New York City's Food System. Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Interviews and Halliday, 2022



The relationship between food and museums has a long and not always obvious history. As the Professor of Museum Studies (3) put it, food initiatives in New York City's museums were initially carried out by voluntary women's organisations as a useful tool to mobilise resources, attract visitors and reach out to local communities, making these spaces more 'welcoming' and accessible, rather than 'academic' and distant to local actors. The relationship between food and museums is now seen as a relevant topic of growing interest and public engagement, embodied in a variety of activities, exhibitions, and programmes (see Annex 2; AAM, 2011), as well as books, events, and research (AAM, 2012; Levant & Mihalache, 2017; Johnson, 2021).

Through the analysis of interviews, three main groups were identified across 260 references to different types of contribution, connected to: the promotion of learning (n=106) and capacity building (n=22), identified here as a 'food education' dimension; networking (n=66), communication (n=30) and sharing of knowledge, information and resources (n=10) between actors in the system, seen here as a 'food linkages' dimension; and setting sustainability goals and practices (n=26) in their food spaces, identified here as the 'food sustainability' dimension (see Figure 1 for a graphical summary of these linkages). These different experiences and dimensions configure the main identified contributions of museums to the co-governance processes in New York City's Food System (see Table 1).

A similar exercise was developed in 2017 by the AAM's Centre for the Future of Museums (CFM) under

their first symposium on the relationship between museums, food, and community, entitled 'Feeding the Spirit' (AAM, 2017). On this occasion, participants had the opportunity to discuss and identify key themes from their experiences on these topics, and to make concrete suggestions and recommendations for strengthening the synergies and strategic integration between food and museums. As stated in the resulting guidebook, these discussions led to the identification of three key elements: 1) 'Promoting food literacy', addressing the promotion of access and healthy eating behaviours; 2) 'Feeding the visitor', through the integration of food criteria based on health, nutrition and sustainability in museum's food services; and 3) 'Food as a connector', which seeks to strengthen relationships and connections between multiple actors in the system. The lessons identified by museum and food actors at this symposium align with the findings in this analysis, demonstrating the sensitivity of involved actors in creating opportunities for greater integration of food in museums and in contributing to co-governance processes with local communities.

Food education: stimulating public engagement

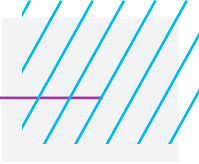
New York City museums are taking a leading role in the development of food-related initiatives and learning processes, highlighting the strategic capacity of food to translate complex concepts, ranging from sustainability, poverty, racism, or public health (I.5; I.4), to social injustices (I.1; I.2) and climate change (I.11). Museums provide opportunities for greater involvement of local communities (Levant & Mihalache, 2017), forging new knowledge (I.9; I.8; I.12; I.10; I.11), awareness (I.5; I.9; I.3; I.12; I.2; I.10), and critical perspectives (I.3; I.2; I.1) regarding the systemic dimension of food (I.11; I.2; I.5, I.4; I.12; I.8; I.10), ecological impacts and nutrient cycles (I.9; I.12; I.10), sustainable food choices and practices (I.9, 7, 3 and 2), and historical and cultural contexts (I.8; I.12). In doing so, interviews show museums as key public engagement and discussion spaces (I.5; I.3; I.8; I.10; I.12) providing real opportunities for putting knowledge into practice and moving from 'concepts to action' (I.9; I.4; I.8; I.10; I.11; I.12): from 'pre-contemplation, to contemplation, to full engagement' (I.4). These spaces were seen by interviewees as beneficial for sharing experiences, knowledge and information on potential opportunities and resources (I.5; I.4), supporting advocacy, and promoting change (I.9; I.11; I.3; I.12; I.2; I.10) by inspiring visitors to commit to better food, and climate and social justice (I.11; I.9; I.3; I.12). Museums were also identified as key spaces for capacity building in different dimensions of the food system, proposing exhibitions, dialogues, and conferences, as well as involving visitors, especially younger generations, in active hands-on learning and participation through practical activities, workshops and demonstrations, such as sowing, planting, harvesting, cooking, eating, discussing, teaching, and doing research (I.9; I.10; I.12). Learning processes take place not only within museums but also outside them, developing greater awareness and knowledge on sustainable food systems (I.10; I.8; I.1), (climate) solutions (I.11) and best practices (I.11), as well as working in partnership with local communities to generate knowledge based on local contexts (I.3), and to promote responsible and informed food choices and actions (I.9).

Food linkages: Museums as meso-scales, building connections and long-term cooperations

From the analysis of the interviews, three key contributions of museums to better collaboration and connection between actors in the system were identified: networking; sharing information, knowledge and resources; and effective communication.

The interviews highlight the importance of networking, creating platforms and stimulating multi-stakeholder engagement (I.11; I.8; I.9) through horizontal relationships, partnerships and peer-to-peer collaborations (I.11; I.5; I.3; I.12; I.10). At the same time, museums are seen as key spaces to strengthen vertical or trans-scalar collaboration, connecting with public actors (I.5; I.4; I.10) such as the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, or the New York Food Education Coalition, as well as with national and international visitors, and other urban and regional organisations (I.3; I.8; I.12).

Vertical collaborations are especially relevant to strengthen links and cooperation with local communities (I.3; I.5; I.4; I.8; I.12; I.10), through community gardens or activities based on local contexts (I.8, I.11, I.3, I.12,



I.10). Effective communication was identified by several interviewees as a crucial factor in facilitating or limiting collaboration between different actors and levels of governance. Museums, as intermediate or meso-scales, are potential tools and spaces for communication, facilitating connections between different groups and networks, and helping to articulate, inform (I.5) and amplify complex messages about food in a language accessible to all (I.12, I.11, I.10, I.9, I.8, I.7, I.5, I.4; I.2). Museum exhibitions and practices are spaces that can give voice to the views and stories of local actors, especially the most vulnerable (I.4; I.12), forging new collective narratives on food and sustainability (I.3), and facilitating the integration and active participation of different actors and levels of the system (I.4; I.5). These elements prove particularly important in times of crisis, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they provide tools and capacities for actors to connect and act collectively, sharing key resources and information on opportunities and potential benefits (I.4). However, as some interviewees point out, it is important to define how and by whom certain messages are communicated (I.4). They thus highlight the strategic role in bringing together different scales, voices, and positions, to create an environment of trust, and open dialogue grounded on the realities and needs of local communities (I.4; I.5). Reducing the cost of, or facilitating access to, museum exhibitions and activities is therefore deemed of great importance in enabling greater inclusion and participation of wider and more vulnerable sections of the population.

As Johnston and Andrée (2019) point out, the collaborative process allows for a voluntary relationship between public, private and civic actors towards a public policy goal, in which different people participate constructively. What emerges from this analysis is a vision of museums as an intermediate or mesoscale level in the construction of food co-governance processes, bringing together different positions, perspectives, cultures, histories, and trajectories in a critical and collective narrative. Working from this level, the museum creates a neutral space for collaboration and learning, both theoretical and practical, forging new collaborations, partnerships, and funding opportunities. Thus, the museum functions not as an official public body or local civic organisation, but as a bridge of connection and communication between different actors, networks, and local communities, while creating dialogue between different levels of governance, both within and outside the food system. The six elements discussed here demonstrate the opportunities and contributions of museums in food system co-governance processes: building reflexive capacity and learning processes, connecting networks, sharing information, and providing voices and opportunities to think and act towards common sustainability goals.

Food sustainability: promoting the integration of SDGs and action

As expressed in the interviews, the contribution of museums to co-governance processes in New York is not only about capacity building, learning, and developing networks and collaborations, but also about the these spaces' integration of sustainability measures into their processes, programmes, and actions. One of the key elements identified by the interviewees is the food services offered in these spaces. While they are often invisible or external to the discourses and concepts dealt with in the exhibitions themselves, these services have great potential to strengthen the cohesion and formative experience of museums. The integration of food services as part of museums' educational project (I.12; I.3) allows food to be seen and used not only as a 'concept' to be discussed and analysed, but also as a concrete element to be consumed, produced, and experienced. This expands the potential of these spaces to build practical hands-on experiences and learning processes, integrating new flavours, cultures, and points of view in a multi-sensory and creative vision, as well as highlighting current challenges and politics related to food security and social injustices, as faced by different communities at local and global levels.

Food services are also seen by interviewees as an opportunity to build concrete relationships for the benefit of local communities, by establishing sustainability criteria and purchasing in favour of local producers (I.7; I.3; I.2). As some interviewees pointed out, this integration requires further internal capacity building and cooperation, strengthening the integration of sustainability elements in the internal management of museums by involving food professionals, creating sustainability platforms with other actors (I.11; I.8; I.10), and developing internal

sustainability committees that allow for a programmatic and coherent management of food throughout the organisation's activities (I.9; I.8). These contributions offer clear opportunities to enhance the role that museums can and do play in strengthening co-governance processes in the food system, building capacity and learning in the food sector, connecting networks, sharing information, communicating and giving voice to different actors and levels of the system, while forging concrete sustainability goals and practices.

Challenges and Opportunities

The main challenge expressed by stakeholders focuses on the shortcomings of current museum funding models, which rely heavily on fundraising through philanthropy and ticket sales. Limited public funding support acts as a barrier to capitalising on opportunities for communication and outreach to more vulnerable social groups (I.8; I.3; I.2). The importance of finding new funding models that allow for strengthening internal management and communication capacities while maintaining an open, autonomous, and critical position within the system is therefore highlighted, especially in smaller museums (I.11; I.2). Beyond funding, interviews also express structural and operational challenges limiting museums' engagement with food governance. Museums continue to have a limited presence in formal food governance spaces, and often lack dedicated staff and capacities focused on food-related issues, as well as linkages with governance structures. Engaging with food in a systemic manner beyond exhibitions, from food sourcing to hands-on activities, remains difficult, and monitoring of actions and their impacts is still limited. More broadly, museum missions are not always oriented toward deep engagement with food issues, which constrains their potential to move beyond current dynamics and status quo.

Despite these challenges, the research focused on highlighting opportunities to identify potential pathways for reinforcing the contribution of museums to food governance. The interviews suggest significant potential, particularly in integrating museums into local food governance systems, networks, and policies (I.12), such as the NYC Food Education Coalition, the Food Councils, and other networks that allow for information sharing and communication of opportunities to a wider range of actors and populations, in a common narrative and with shared goals (I.12). There is also a clear need to continue to learn from experience through monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to capture the social impact and lessons of ongoing food initiatives and actions (I.1; I.3; I.8). The potential for improvement in museums extends to the provision of food services (I.7; I.8), as highlighted in point 3 of this analysis, with a greater role, coherence, and integration of food across the museum management, including 'feeding the visitor' under sustainability and local sourcing criteria (I.8; I.7). The key role of communication emerges as another opportunity to be strengthened in museums, acting as a bridge and voice between different stakeholders, local communities, and public policies (I.8), supporting transformative change (I.2) and translation of public goals and plans into local realities (I.8). This participation requires not limiting the role of food to specific exhibitions and conferences, but considering it as a transversal element in the programming, communication, and internal and external management of the museum, building long-term capacities, partnerships, and collaboration (I.1; I.3).

Table 2 summarises the key challenges and opportunities identified in the interviews, which guide possible recommendations and future work by museums towards a more sustainable food system.

Conclusions

Considering the research reported here, it is possible to assert that museums in New York have the potential to play an active role in the co-governance of the food system. While they may not yet be formally involved in food policy, they are already contributing in several ways. First, they promote food education by improving food access and encouraging healthy eating practices. Second, they advance food sustainability through the integration of sustainability goals and criteria into their management practices. Third, they foster food linkages by strengthening relationships and connections with a wide range of actors across the system.



Table 2: Key challenges and opportunities for museums to contribute to the co-governance process of New York City's Food System, as identified by Interviewees.

Main Theme	Sub-themes	# References
Opportunities	Integrating local food systems and policies	9
	Monitoring and evaluating long-term impact	6
	Communication	5
	Advocacy	4
	Building internal capacities, resources and governance	4
	Strengthening the learning processes	4
	Long-term programming and planning on food	2
	Unlocking transformative potential	2
	Strengthening its comparative advantage	1
	New York City's added value	3
	Food procurement	4
Challenges	Funding	4
	Lack of a political dimension	3
	Socio-Economic limitations	3

54

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Despite this active engagement, their role remains largely overlooked, even in a city as involved in food governance as New York City. As discussed by Edwards et al. (2024) in their analysis of integrated food policies for food systems transformation, museums could function as a meso-scale, re-establishing connections between different actors and facilitating collaborative processes to improve the functioning of the food system. The literature review and interviews indicate that stakeholders recognise this potential, yet museums' contributions are currently not widely acknowledged or structurally integrated as 'natural actors' within governance processes.

The cases and findings discussed point to an ongoing process and a growing interest from both museum professionals and actors in policy and food systems. The interviews conducted in this research (Annex I), as well as the themes identified by the actors (Table 1) and the topics identified at the first symposium of the American Association of Museums on Museums, Food and Community (AAM, 2017), also document and reflect on the different types of practices and initiatives undertaken by these actors. Museums are involved in capacity building, activating learning processes, creating and fostering collaborative networks, communication and information exchange, as well as integrating and implementing sustainability goals and practices, both internally and with other institutions and non-museum organisations.

Museums try to promote food co-governance processes, but as they are not explicitly focused on promoting healthy eating, they use art as a communication tool enabling the creation of new kinds of messages that can be more impactful and capable of reaching a broader and more diverse audience. Thus, the specific food policies that are expanding food system governance in New York City are able to work with and alongside museums to reach a wider range of audiences and bring more voices into food system governance.

Furthermore, given the nature of the activities offered by museums (e.g., educational programmes; art exhibitions), it is evident that within the food system co-governance processes, museums become entities capable of stimulating reflexive capacity and learning processes, connecting networks, sharing information, and providing voices and opportunities to think and act towards common sustainability goals. In doing so, they promote the inclusion of the realities and needs of local communities, both in museum programming and in linkages with local, regional, national, and global food systems, making them more 'welcoming' and accessible spaces to engage with multiple actors.

Building reflexive capacities involves fostering reflection among participant actors, linking concepts to practical experience and skills through activities, workshops and discussions. As seen in the experiences and actions presented by the interviewees, these spaces invite visitors to question their own habitus and to work on the frameworks that increasingly shape and determine their actions. In other words, museums can be social agents that promote cultural change in the sense of Geertz, who defines culture as “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz, 1973). Museums can become generators of new knowledge and new ways of doing and thinking, linking different scales, actors and ideas in a critical, intergenerational, collaborative, and practical dialogue that contributes to the co-governance of more sustainable food systems.

There are however still several barriers and challenges to making these spaces and their efforts more inclusive and sustainable over time. New funding models that would enable the participation of particularly vulnerable groups are an important element, as well as the internal capacity building and the external communication and coordination to harness the current commitment to food in the city and channel it into common action and long-term goals. The broader systemic challenges of the food system often exceed the scope of these institutions. As a result, museums tend to operate in parallel to food actors rather than in a coordinated and strategic way, which reduces their potential contributions and linkages to food governance processes. The challenges identified reveal several barriers that limit this integration. Reinforcing the social role of museums within food governance is therefore a key area for further work, through a critical engagement and examination of power structures, tensions, and negotiations between narratives and discourses that enable or disable required transformations. Such an approach can support the identification of strategies and solutions that strengthen the role of museums in making food governance processes more inclusive and effective. Nevertheless, a more deliberate effort to make this link explicit, conscious, and strategic for both museum actors and those involved in food governance and policy is still missing.

This study aimed to identify key pathways to enable museums to contribute to co-governance processes in the food system, as well as key barriers and opportunities they have encountered in further strengthening this role in NYC. Future research could further broaden and deepen the analysis by expanding both the number and diversity of interviews, thereby engaging a wider range of stakeholders across the food governance system, including non-profit organisations, NGOs, associations, and social enterprises that address food system issues through diverse approaches. It could also extend the mapping of activities carried out by museums and other cultural institutions, providing a more detailed picture of their current and potential contributions. In addition, multi-stakeholder workshops could be developed to participatively identify key pathways for collaboration and joint action between museums and food governance actors in New York City, while critically examining the meso-scale roles, challenges, tensions, and opportunities highlighted in this study.



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Annex

Annex 1: List of interviews by type of actor and role. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

#	Role	Organisation	Type of Actor
1	Professor of Food Studies (New York)	University	Academia
2	Professor of Food Planning (New York)	University	Academia
3	Professor of Museum Studies (Toronto)	University	Academia
4	New York City Food Policy Director	City of New York	Local Authorities
5	CEO and Executive Director	Westside Campaign against Hunger, New York City	Non-Governmental Organisation
6	Director of Communications	Bon Appetit, New York City	Private Company
7	Communications & Content Specialist	Bon Appetit, New York City	Private Company
8	Food & Museum Consultant	Slow Food, Independent Consultant, New York City	Non-Governmental Organisation
9	Culinary Director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art	Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), New York City	Museum/Cultural Institution
10	Director of the Edible Academy at the New York Botanical Garden	Edible Academy, Botanical Garden, New York City	Museum/Cultural Institution
11	Design and Curatorial Associate	Museum for Climate, New York City	Museum/Cultural Institution
12	Food Museum Director	Museum of Food and Drink (MOFAD), New York City	Museum/Cultural Institution

Annex 2: Activities at museums and other cultural institutions in New York City and how these address our six main themes.

Institution Name	Institution Type / Food-Related Activity	Dates (DD/MM/YR)	Description	Main Theme(s) (6)
American Museum of Natural History (1)	Museum / Exhibit	17/11/12 to 11/08/13	Our Global Kitchen: Food Nature and Culture explore the food system, from growing to transporting, cooking, eating, tasting and celebrating, and highlight how food is produced and how it moves around the world.	a, e
Brooklyn Botanical Garden (1)	Public Garden / Child & Youth Programming	Ongoing	Ongoing programmes for children to learn about gardening, as well as tours for school children, and professional development workshops for educators on topics such as: Kitchen Botany; Plants We Eat; Food and Social Justice; and Agriculture and our Food System.	a, b, c, e
Brooklyn Museum (1)	Museum / Food Pantry	06/2020 (end date unknown)	The Brooklyn Museum partnered with The Campaign Against Hunger to offer food. This was not only to provide food security but also to highlight disproportionate economic and social impacts of COVID-19 on New Yorkers who had already been suffering long before the pandemic.	a, b, d, f
Children's Museum of Manhattan (3)	Museum / Exhibit	11/2011 (end date unknown)	EatSleepPlay™ This exhibit highlights the health focus of this museum. This exhibit was permanent in the museum for some time and is now closed. This exhibit also has a related curriculum, EatSleepGrow™ that was developed with the United States National Institutes of Health.	a, c, e
Decker Farm Museum (3)	Museum / Children & Youth Programming	Summers (ongoing)	Apprentice Program This programme is a summer experience for 12–15-year-old youth that have an interest in history of centuries of American ingenuity and hands-on learning. One of the options is open art cooking which uses a Dutch oven and griddle to cook a variety of 18th and 19th century recipes.	a, e
Dyckman Farmhouse Museum Alliance (1)	Museum / Gardening	Started 03/2020 (ongoing)	Growing Uptown. In partnership with Garden Kitchen Lab and New York Common Pantry, the Dyckman Farmhouse Museum is closing the gap on food insecurity by working alongside 120 families to grow food in their apartments. They have regular workshops for families.	a, b, c, d, e, f
Farm to People (3)	Event Venue / Events	Opened 10/06/22	Farm to People is a food distributor and has a large indoor and outdoor venue space with frequent panels, discussion, and events on sustainable food systems.	a, b, c, d, e, f
Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) (1)	Museum / Eateries	Ongoing	Throughout the seven eateries in the MET there is information on food system sustainability and education on how choices were made to source and prepare the food so that it is delicious and sustainable.	a, f
Museum of Food and Drink (MO-FAD) (3)	Museum / Exhibits	2013 to present	Food is Culture™ This museum that is dedicated to food and drink aims “to create cultural change toward a more thoughtful, equitable, and delicious future”, and has had many exhibits in various places.	a, b, c, d, e, f



Institution Name	Institution Type / Food-Related Activity	Dates (DD/MM/YR)	Description	Main Theme(s) (6)
Museum of Reclaimed Urban Spaces (MoRUS) (1)	Museum / Exhibits	17/07/23 to 30/07/23	Fridge Street: Bridging Sites of Mutual Aid. This exhibit showcased the network of community fridges that are across NYC and how these fridges are helping to build food security, community, and sustainability. Community fridges first appeared in NYC during the rapid rise of food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic.	a, b, c, d, e
		Ongoing	Reclaiming Space: Community Gardens. MoRUS plans events that help to improve and highlight the 39 community gardens in the East Village of NYC. This includes workshops on planting, composting, and soil treatment. They also highlight community gardens on their tours offered every weekend.	a, b, c, d, e, f
Museum of the City of New York (1)	Museum Events and Exhibit	18/04/18	Feeding the Apple: New York's Future Food Supply explored the juxtaposition of New York City having an expansive and exciting worldwide culinary creativity, yet a million people with limited access to fresh healthy food.	a, b, c, d, e
		09/08/22	Gastronativism: Food and Politics with Marion Nestle, Fabio Parasecoli, and Krishnendu Ray. This panel discussion explored how food can be exploited in order to ensure that people with limited resources are not continually the losers.	a, b, c, d, e
		15/09/22 to 18/09/23	Food in New York Bigger Than the Plate. This exhibit explores how food binds us as humans through issues of sustainability, labour, and justice. The goal is to create activists through an "invitation to feast for a more equitable and exciting future."	a, b, c, d, e
		13/06/22 to 11/09/22	Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love. This exhibit featured artists from the Bronx, New York, the location of the botanical garden, to tell the stories of how food is at the centre of all of our life's most important events.	a, b, c, d, e
New York Botanical Garden (1)	Public Garden / Exhibit and Children & Youth Programming	More than 60 years (expanded facility opened in 2018)	Edible Academy. This is a large garden space and well-equipped cooking classrooms for hands-on activities for children, from toddlers through high school. The current facility opened in 2018 as an expansion of the Ruth Rea Howell Vegetable Garden which has been operating year-round as an educational programme for over 60 years.	a, b, c, d, e, f
		21/05/2021	'Talking Climate: Food' aims to create ground for community-building, democratic engagement, and civic action on the climate crisis. Panellists were able to discuss food at the intersection of climate and inequality, including food access and sustainability; farmworkers' rights; prospects for agricultural regeneration; and more.	a, c, e
The Climate Museum	Museum	June-October 2019	'Taking Action'. Hands-on learning about solutions for the climate crisis; a space to confront the barriers to their implementation; and an invitation to meaningful group action, inspired by the new youth climate movement.	a, b, e

Institution Name	Institution Type / Food-Related Activity	Dates (DD/MM/YR)	Description	Main Theme(s) (6)
Queen Farm Museum (1)	Museum	Year-round (ongoing)	Insiders Tour: This tour explores how the farm (which is one of the oldest farms to continually be producing food in New York State) uses sustainable practices for their livestock and organic practices to grow crops, including how they compost on their farm to how they produce value-added products such as eggs, yarn, and honey.	a, c, f
Queens Botanical Garden (1)	Public Garden Child & Youth Programming	Ongoing	Programming for children and families to garden, taste foods grown in the garden and learn about environmental stewardship.	a, d, e, f
Queens Museum (1)	Museum / Food Pantry	17/06/2020 (end date unknown)	This food pantry provided food to increase food security and to have events that brought together communities. It highlighted the roots of inequity that made the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impact Black, Brown, and immigrant communities due to systemic unequal access to resources.	a, b, c, d, e, f
Stone Barns Center (4)	Public Garden / Gardening	2022 (ongoing)	Leading an Ecological and Accessible Food System (LEAF) Program In partnership with Bruckner Mott Haven Community Garden this programme is providing resources for families to grow their own leafy greens as well as to provide education on healthy and sustainable eating.	a, b, c, d, e, f
Tenement Museum (5)	Museum / Events	16/01/20	Kitchen Liberation: Immigrant Home Cooking and Women's Rights This event celebrated women's power through keeping cooking lineages alive.	a, f
		29/01/20	League of Kitchens: Tenement Edition This cooking demonstration on making two different types of dumplings invited attendees to discuss women, culture, and how the past can inform a better future.	a, f
		11/08/21	Virtual Tour: Tenement Kitchens This virtual tour explored how immigrant women fed their families during the 19th and 20th centuries, to learn how the many decisions and challenges immigrant women faced can help us to think about our food future.	a, f
Wildlife Conservation Society (2)	Zoos and Aquariums / Eateries	Ongoing	The Eateries in the WCS five New York City locations have extensive information and educational materials in all of their eateries about sustainable food choices.	a, c, e, f

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

- (1) Admission to this venue is pay as you wish, a suggested donation, and/or free through CULTUREPASS (free entry with a New York City Public Library Card).
- (2) Flex pricing and free days for admission fee to make the venue more accessible.
- (3) No known discounts to make this venue more accessible. Note for the Decker Farm Museum admission is \$3 USD which is a modest price.
- (4) Since Stone Barns Center is outside of New York City, the only discount is with public library cards from libraries local to Stone Barns Center. This programme was free to participants and had significant giveaways.
- (5) Only discount for admission is for New York City school teachers on Sundays.
- (6) Main themes:
- Activation of Learning Processes
 - Capacity building
 - Networking (and Meso-Scale)
 - Communication
 - Sharing Information, Knowledge and Resources
 - Sustainability as a Goal and Practice