A Governance Model for Public Space Management, Times Square, NYC

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ABSTRACT

Unlike other urban public spaces, Times Square is a global symbol of urban vitality that is particularly challenged by dense pedestrian traffic, broad demographics of user groups, and economic importance. In this paper, the current governance framework that is the Business Improvement District (BID) is analyzed, and the development of a new governance structure that addresses the inequity, inclusivity and efficiency issues present in the existing BID framework is proposed. The study relies upon qualitative data garnered through interviews, site observations, and analysis of policy documents to demonstrate the need for a contextually specific, bottom-up, community focused governance model that reconciles competing interests and maintains the viability and safety of the place. Expanding on the role of the Times Square Alliance, and integrating coordinating among public and private entities in managing urban public spaces, this proposed model highlights a sustainable institutional arrangement to manage urban public spaces.

KEYWORDS: Public space management, Times Square, governance model, Business Improvement District, inclusivity, urban policy.

1. Introduction

Urban public spaces facilitate shaping our impression of the city. The places within these spaces are not just physical places, but an also important part of urban culture and daily life. They serve as hubs for social exchange, recreation, and the basis for economic activity, relying or not as they profoundly shape the living dynamic of cities. Francis Tibbalds, a well-known British architect in his major work on urban environments (Public Space Management, 2006, p. 2) laments global reduction of the quality of public space. Broad while specific, this decline represents issues with the commodification and homogenization of space, and with the balance between over management and under management of these shared environments (Sorkin, 1992; Boyer, 1994; Zukin 1995; Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee, 1998). It is these very concerns that have reentered urban discourse, especially in the face of the speed of urbanization around the world. Public spaces in cities are increasingly turned into marketing and consumption vehicles, and commercial interests are rather enjoyed at the expense of the public needs. Sorkin (1992) and Zukin (1995) criticize this commodification, which may occur, as leading to the loss of distinguishing character and local character in the form of homogenized urban environments. Meanwhile, poor public spaces that have been neglected, not maintained and poorly resourced present a harsh image of what happens when cities do not invest in these spaces. The dualism implied by over management and under management in the public space is indicative of the need to have a proper management agenda in handling public space.

Along with such public spaces, even iconic urban areas are arenas for 'complex power dynamics'. The public space management switched gear in the 1980s with the establishment of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in New York City. Such public-private partnerships came out of urban decline as solutions to revitalize neighborhoods and sustain urban life and quality of life. Times Square is a very public place that constitutes a powerful case study on how to better guide the management of public spaces. What was once a symbol of urban blight and crime in the 1980s, in less than 20 years, Times Square transformed into an economic powerhouse that funds $1.1 billion every year in taxes into New York City and $1.3 billion into New York State (Times Square Alliance, 2018). The transformation demonstrates how the use of regulatory tools, governmental intervention and tactical urban planning can redefine built environments for social and economic good. However, this has had its critics. Times Square redevelopment through public-private partnerships and vigorous law enforcement was directed at the commercial interests to the detriment of democratic values. The redevelopment removed economically fragile groups including voice trainers, costume makers and small scale artisans from the very heart of the area's booming cultural fabric. This forces us to ask critical questions about who is served in the governance of public space and whether this really means public space for all. Yet, the very policies put in place to regulate and increase Times Square's vibrancy marginalize the very vendors, street performers, others who actually contribute to its vibrancy. Times Square now is facing new challenges in its current form. Congestion, safety, and accessibility are all problems due to the high density of businesses, tourists and residents in the area. Times Square reveals the tension between public spaces employed as ideographs for a city's image and as sites of self-expression and community interaction. The clashing efforts to regulate behavior and the diverse and dynamic ways that people use public space simultaneously reveal the need for new approaches to the management of public space. To address these challenges, we will need to rethink how governance structures can strike a better balance in the needs of the various stakeholders without compromising on the quality of the built environment. Urban spaces are governed through governance models. For the governance of public spaces such as Times Square, a complex understanding

of the interplay between legal frameworks, management structures and community engagement is necessary. Good governance has to extend beyond the maintenance and regulation, and should aim to include stakeholder inclusivity, equity, and democracy. The Times Square Alliance provides thoughtful examples of how local entities can assume greater responsibility for engaging in the management of urban spaces through public-private partnerships. Unfortunately, such models can never develop further without overcoming their limitations, mainly property owners hold much of the power in decision-making processes that often exclude voices like small business and residents.

In this article, it was argued that Times Square offers a potential path for a new governance model combining expanded BID authority with more inclusive and democratic means of public space management. It draws on case studies and best practices from other urban centers to rethink how public-private-local partnerships can be remade to support local entities and address the complex and often competing demands of urban populations. The goal of this model is to bridge this gap in communication and conflict resolution between different agencies to create a public space functional and aesthetically appealing whilst socially equitable and inclusive.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Public Space Inherent Use and Management Tensions

The urban environment has an integral relationship with public spaces that are important inter-operational platforms for a wide range of social interaction, economic activity, artistic expression, and the like. Considerable range of benefits to the economy, society and the environment, including supporting business growth, encouraging community cohesion and positively influencing the take up of sustainable transport modes (Woolley H. 2003). Though public spaces are inherently multifaceted and inherently tied with conflict in their use, regulation, and management, there are inherent tensions for maintaining the former but upholding the latter at all times. In the past, the regulating of the use of public space was done by formal mechanisms such as bylaws as well as informal social norms. These regulations employ balancing competing interests in order to ensure that public spaces function as intended (Claudio de Magalhaes, Matthew Carmona, 2008). Even so, disintegration of responsibility across many public and private stakeholders frequently leads to mismanagement and waste. One instance is public spaces getting overly controlled to the detriment of inclusivity or going under controlled again, causing neglect and decay.

Therefore, proper public space management needs to retain the area 'fitness-for-purpose', that is, they have to operate within their designated function. It is a physical maintenance of infrastructure, facility and equipment maintain their rates of deterioration consistently. Nevertheless, it requires substantial financial as well as material resources in terms of providing an ongoing revenue stream for the routine management as well as the capital funding for periodic redesigns and redevelopment (Claudio de Magalhaes & Carmona, 2008). Public spaces pose challenges to regulate their use. Diverse groups use public spaces for a variety of purposes, including recreation and commerce, and self-expression. There might be conflicts between these activities which need to be mediator by the adaptable regulatory frameworks. For example, street vendors, performers and pedestrians at high-density points such as Times Square could not survive in a place of clashes unless there are clear polices to solve the problem. Public space management becomes more and more complicated because of the growing fragmentation of governance. The shift from centralized 'command and control' to more 'enabling' urban management causes greater coordination among stakeholders. Moving this shift is because of the rise of neoliberal governance structures that emphasize privatization and public-private partnerships. Such models are efficient and innovative, but they contribute to the risk of uneven resource distribution and exclusionary practices (Leach and Percy-Smith, 2001). Reconciling short-term and long-term perspectives presents a second critical tension in public space management. For example, measures such as surveillance or restricted access may be part of the design out crime process but be counter to desired inclusive, welcoming places. Just as the urban designers' aesthetic and functional priorities do not correspond with the operative concerns of maintenance teams, created strategies.

Leak (2008) emphasizes that many local authorities use minimum compliance to achieve minimum standards of public space management without investigating the context specific needs of the public. Often, this approach cannot consider the one of a kind of cultural, historical and social dynamics of each space. The homogenization process erases the individuality of public spaces as vibrant urban assets. Efficient management of public spaces requires a holistic approach balancing regulation, maintenance, and resourcing. The coordination mechanisms should ensure that all the stakeholders (governing agencies, private partners and community organizations) work the same to achieve the common goal. To address management tensions, we advocate for flexible, context sensitive governance models that will respond to the changing requirements of public spaces and its users.

2.2. Importance of Urban Governance to Shape Built Environment

Urban governance comprises the processes by which government, stakeholders, and citizens agree to plan, finance, and manage urban areas. It is key to the inclusion, equity and sustainability of city development. The governance systems shape how economic growth benefits the whole of the citizenry and how communities assert their influence on decision-making systems. Governance as a concept, as defined by Carmona (2009), extends beyond formal governmental structures and encompasses a network of economic and social institutions, relationships, and informal interactions that shape urban development. Carmona (2009) describes principles of good urban governance aligned with sustainable development, including inclusiveness, citizenship, accountability, and effectiveness. These principles are central to balance what people need with what the built environment needs. This approach guarantees that all voices, including marginalized ones, receive consideration during urban planning. Transparency to decision-making processes and the emphasis of public interests is part of accountability. Effective policy design means addressing adopting policies that are not only visionary but also practical, resulting in long-term economic and social benefits.

An instance of London showed that urban governance processes can produce design quality outcome varieties with stakeholders and leadership being the variable. For example, Carmona and Wunderlich (2012) found no singular governance process to apply to all urban developments; Outcomes of urban projects are often determined by the uniqueness of stakeholders, power dynamics, and leadership structure. This reinforces the point that flexible, context aware governance models are required that can respond to local challenges and opportunities. Urban governance affects the quality of the built environment. Fragmented decision making, misaligned priorities and unequal access to resources are common occurrences of poor governance. However, an effective governance system blends the urban planning, policy and management to make sure public spaces are functional, safe and inclusive.

The Royal Town Planning Institute (2014) argued that pragmatism was important in relation to governance. The report suggested that rather than lobbied for generalized models of governance, planners should better address what is right for a particular context. For instance, models of governance in populated and diverse urban areas, such as Times Square, must accommodate the concurrent stakeholder needs and economic realities and engage with the urban spaces involved. For Times Square, that is the case, but multifaceted. Governance systems must harmonize competing interests in the district, including commercial, tourism, local community needs and public safety. In this context, urban governance must include at least the regulation frameworks of public spaces and the operational management of the same. It is also good governance for the urban environment that also has a great impact on social equity. Urban development systems that marginalize and exclude will serve those who shape the system, not the majority or the voiceless. This includes the conceptual notion of governance beyond technical administration to build dialogue, negotiation, as well as collaboration among disparate stakeholders. These include community-based actions in London, for instance, like projects carried out by local councils to develop public space, that show how inclusive governance can produce high-quality outcome alongside a diverse urban population. Governance manages urban conflicts, but brutality is unfortunately unavoidable. For instance, with the increasing numbers of tourists and business in Times Square, the local vendors and locals do not always fit in with the needs of the tourist and commercial activity. These conflicts can be mediated effectively through a governance system that is inclusive, participatory and transparent, where the needs of all the stakeholders can be considered.

Yet urban governance meets problems that can be seen as serious. The findings include inadequate stakeholder involvement, the absence of integration between disparate government agencies, and limited financial resources. Governance frameworks are often inflexible and cannot cope with changing urban dynamics at a fast pace. Sometimes this rigidity means public spaces become rigid, resources are inequitably distributed, and a trend of inferior quality of life for residents occurs. Based on a study by Carmona (2009), it argued that governance models need to change with the changing nature of urban communities. Where do we start? For example, centralized governance may work well with small-scale projects but might not scale to large, dynamic district like Times Square. These complex environments are better suited to decentralized, context sensitive governance systems. Effective city planning and management depend on urban governance. It decides how urban spaces will be formed, managed and experimented. Governance systems that must balance inclusivity, accountability and effectiveness in such locations as Times Square have to cater to the different needs of various stakeholders. Urban planners and policymakers can continue to keep cities vibrant, fair, and sustainable because of adapting flexible, context specific governance models to the fast pace of urbanization and changes in societal needs.

2.3. Importance of Regulatory Tools to Shape the Built Environment

The regulatory tools available frame the built environment, and, thus, shape urban planning and development. Zoning codes, building regulations, land use policies and development standards guide urban evolution by acting as tools, and such tools are especially important. However, many question the efficacy of these regulatory tools, where they cannot account for, or respond to, the unique characteristics and complications that the locations in question present. According to Ben-Joseph (2005), the regulations governing much urban design and land use across many North American cities should be called 'hidden codes.' Yet these codes are drawn up with good intentions, for example, to protect safety or prevent growth, but if applied wrongly, they can produce unintended results which may not suit the specific requirements of a place. People often forget the first intent behind these codes. As these policies and bureaucracies process. The result is that these regulatory tools transform the situation into one in which these regulatory tools impose rigid, one-size fits all standards across an entire diversity of urban environments, being stifling to some creativity, ignoring local context, and distracting from intensions. Talen reinforces Ben-Joseph's critique (2012), who suggests that regulations can be necessary but often take the form of a technical change more than meaningful interaction with the physical and human constellations of the built environment. These are minimum standards type regulations such as parking norms, road widths, and land use categories that do not fit the actual needs of the community. Such an approach may prioritize short-term technical requirements relative to long term, place-based goals aimed at the local identity, culture and context of the urban area.

The biggest problem is that of applying these tools without a place centered design approach. The discipline of urban design places great emphasis on developing much of the location's own unique character, history, and community needs when making rules about how to use the parcel. For example, it may happen that a rigid, context blind application of zoning and land use regulations cannot consider the social and economic functions that a public space or urban area provides to the local population. This is because the regulatory framework is more or less removed from the practical realities regarding how people use and inhabit spaces. In extending this argument, Carmona (2009) adds that applying regulatory standards must be flexible and responsive to cities' dynamic nature. Like other places, cities are not static, but developing response to economic, social, political and environmental factors. This dynamism implies that regulatory tools must be malleable, revisited and revised as urban space needs shift. Consider, for example, that as neighborhoods grow, or demographic patterns change, or technology progresses, the zoning codes that have been on the books for decades may be out of step with the requirements to handle additional problems. To overcome that, Carmona proposes the use of context-based design codes, based on the particular needs and characteristics of the urban area in question. But these codes are not a mere acquisition of minimum technical requirements, they should contain codes that contribute to improvement of the public realm, to encourage community engagement and maintain urban spaces identity. Urban

planners and designers need a context-based approach to regulation to better address the specific challenges and opportunities in different parts of a city, enabling more nuanced and effective urban development strategies.

Further, the regulations beyond siting and design conditions help define a regional character. Since cities have become so complex, so to need the governance structures around these regulations. However, it does not just happen, regulations interact among themselves with other governance tools, like public policies, laws and enforcement mechanisms, to build a full spectrum of a package to govern the builders. The challenge then is harmonizing all these levels of governance so they work together without creating confusion, or, worse still, conflict, between different regulatory authorities. The real debate should be of needing regulations and prizing keeping order and urban planners and policymakers should get it to balance order and flexibility. Given the rising trend of diversification and inclusion in urban spaces, urban governing instruments that make them up should develop to accommodate diverse uses, interests, and a community's cultural expression to produce dynamic, sustainable, and livable urban spaces. Regulatory tools are essential to assist with the urban development but they must be used with a sensitivity to local context and a readiness to develop in the face of the changes. Traditional rigid regulations can constrain innovation and are often not suited to respond to different urban population needs. The quality of the built environment, and its sustainability in the long term, therefore depend on adopting flexible, context sensitive regulations that respond to the unique characteristics of each area.

Fig. 1 - By the end of the 1800s, Times Square was still an open square with residential buildings around it (top), but billboards and other signs of commerce were beginning to crop up (bottom).

2.4. Importance of Public Space Management to Shape the Built Environment

Shaped as it is by Tibbalds (2001), managing public spaces is a vital part of managing the built environment. Yet neglected public spaces not only cannot fulfil their aim, but they also contribute to urban detriment, he said. An example as interesting as the 1990s in the UK, where the lack of maintenance turned public spaces disgusting and dangerous. This serves as an important reminder to stay prepared and maintain firm control over the situation. Effective public space management relies on consistent, long-term maintenance or ongoing care. It encompasses dealing with visible problems, such as litter, graffiti, traffic congestion and landscape maintenance. Being a well maintained public space makes them seen by their user as more safe and prone to community belonging, says Tibbalds. The decay invites neglect, and neglect deters usability. The role that governance plays cannot neglect public space management. Inclusive, sustainable and fair governance models are more suited to handle the dynamic needs of urban places. Managing public spaces is a hard task, however some weird governance structure like that observed in Times Square, New York City, suggests that there is indeed a possibility and that the public, private partnership can be an effective way of keeping public space. For example, flexible, adaptive governance frameworks are needed to address management challenges as the Times Square Alliance employs data driven approaches to address its management quandaries. Public space management affects on the urban experience. Care and governance are also good for aesthetic appearance but also for allowing spaces to remain accessible and functional to all the populations. To sum up, the design of public spaces is as important as their management as it is a brick and mortar for sustainable urbanism and an element improving the quality of life in cities.

2.5. Comparison of Public Space Management Structures and Governance Models

Urban public space is managed in shaping urban environments in quality and functionality. Public spaces are important for the vibrancy, safety and accessibility of which urban life depends, and yet governing public spaces is an understudied yet relevant urban phenomenon. A lost public space can have near fatal and very negative wide consequences for not only the public that lives just outside of it but for the surrounding community more social cohesion, more crime and more economic stagnation. As highlighted by Tibbalds (2001), neglect of public space can result deteriorate the urban area, leading to deterioration of the urban areas through congestion, litter, unsafe and unattractive. From cities all over the world, where bigoted and poor management has resulted in the demise of valuable public spaces, which later became unlivable districts of dilapidation. Public spaces in these environments become powerless as a device for social interaction, sustaining culture, and community life. Physical care of spaces is just one aspect of prizing good management practices. Public space management involves a variety of activities, including ensuring that spaces are accessible to all in the society, ensuring safety, developing social inclusion, increasing a sense of ownership and pride among residents. Tibbalds (2001) writes that what is crucial as much as the initial design of the space is 'after care.' Among these are ongoing endeavors to ensure clean streets, have security, get adequate lighting levels, have proper traffic controls and monitor the use (and abuse) of public places. However, preserving green spaces, street furniture as well as landscaping is an integral part of public spaces management and has important consequences for both functional and aesthetic characteristics of urban environments.

Tibbalds' critique highlights a recurring issue: often people don't view public spaces as "my problem." This detachment happens not only between the public and the many entities involved in creating and managing public spaces, but within those institutions of space making and public space managing themselves. Improving public spaces can be the point of intersection of the interests of urban designers, public officials, and residents, but many of them have fragmented and coordinated responsibilities. It is therefore possible that public space will be neglected or mismanaged, resulting in urban environments not fit for those who should use. Tibbalds also says this neglect can lead to spaces that are filled with litter, piled with rotting rubbish, covered with graffiti, polluted, congested, and unsafe. When the public realm itself is a dumping ground for social problems such as homelessness, criminal activity etc., these problems are further aggravated. In addition, public space management causes recognize the fact that the problems encountered in those places are complex. In such urban spaces, with high pedestrian traffic such as Times Square, the needs of different groups have to be maintained and regulated in balance with each other. How to create this balance is also affected by the interaction between design, regulations, and management. Good urban management helps maintain the range of demands that the community places on urban spaces, while tackling issues of crowding, safety issues and provision of services.

It is not just relevant to making public spaces interesting, but to making spaces that feel safe, comfortable, and make people welcome. Tibbalds (2001) too listed space and architecture, which encourage social interaction and participation important. So, public space management encompasses engaging with maintenance of physical aspects and social as well as cultural. Space public should introduce perspective diversity of individuals in modern society in terms of race, class, handicap, and age, encouraging them to interact and forming a sense of orientation to other people in community and open to participation. Allowing people in all walks of life to access the space they need is a critical part of public space management: if the space is not cared for and maintained, then not only will those less fortunate not have access to a facility, but everyone in the community will lose some of their space. The difference that inclusive management can make to the quality of life in urban environments is huge. Consider, for example, how keeping public spaces clean, safe, and accessible can lower tensions between people who use public spaces for different reasons, from commuting to socializing. If these spaces are made complete and inclusive, they can stimulate more civic engagement, since people will feel like an owner of a place and have some responsibility for that place. Urban public spaces are important for the health and wellbeing of the city dwellers. And for as long as our urban populations grow, the demand for high quality, well managed public spaces will grow as well. It was found in research that well maintained public spaces promote physical and mental health through the opportunities of outdoor activities, relaxation, and social interaction. More than that, public spaces can also be spaces for cultural expression, further enriching the urban experience and ensuring strong community ties. Shaping the built environment is needed through the effective management of public spaces. Public space management addresses issues of neglect, improves safety, promotes inclusivity and keeps physical and aesthetic quality of public space alive. In Tibbalds (2001) work on public space management, valuable insights into the complex dynamics of design, management and social interaction leverage a framework towards how urban spaces can be better managed according to their different needs within society.

2.6. The Governance Structure of Times Square

With different cities taking different approaches to managing public spaces, most adopting different governance structures to deal with the common tasks in urban landscapes. England's local authorities have adopted a variety of programs aimed at improving public space management through both improving the on-site services and coordinating other sectors' interventions. Perhaps the most important one is creating sectorial thinking, which all too often results in fragmented management processes. The disaggregation of responsibilities to different parts of public space in the parks, streets, and recreational areas generates obstacles to integrative management (Carmona & de Magalhaes, 2005). However, faced by these challenges, some local authorities have instituted area based maintenance initiatives in order to overcome this limited responsiveness of management processes to the shifting local community needs. That approach has done what it set out to do, bringing together a variety of stakeholders to work together maintain public spaces through volunteer programs, business sponsorships, or community engagement projects (Carmona & de Magalhaes, 2005). With these initiatives, more particularly in parks, they show prizing building relationships between the city and public space managers.

As well as these UK models, there are great lessons that we can learn from governance structures in New York City about the use of public-private partnerships to manage urban spaces. For example, the service of the Central Park Conservancy as a key example of a hybrid governance model is where a private organization can be working in concert with public agencies, such as Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), to manage and oversee the park. As a partner of DPR, the Conservancy takes on a large role in the park's operation while maintaining the upkeep. For instance, in 2006, the Conservancy provided 85 percent of the annual budget for Central Park (Citizens Budget Commission, 2007). This partnership model shows the possibilities of combining philanthropy and the private investment in public space management, guarantees a high level of service, and ongoing improvements. Much like the Hudson River Park Trust, established under the Hudson River Park Act of 1998, a public-private partnership manages the park's development and maintenance. All revenues generated from activities in the park are reinvested to support the park, but it is financed by state and city funds. The Trust has struck the delicate balance of allowing public access to the park, while growing retail and recreational space to stimulate economic development. It is noteworthy that the governance structure of the Hudson River Park, while oriented towards economic sustainability, also aligns the interests of public space management with long term financial independence. These New York City models show the power of public-private partnerships, but Times Square is more complicated. The Times Square Alliance (TSA), a Business Improvement District (BID) with an unusual public/private structure, manages public spaces in Times Square. The Department of Transportation (DoT) has been working with the TSA to ensure that Broadway remains pedestrian space and to provide positive special events. But the TSA has a limited authority, and the TSA has its own governance problems confronting it. The BID is successful in making provision for things like cleaning, security and landscaping, but it has no power to change the rules or policies of Times Square. The extent of this gap in authority highlights the tension between local management and higher-level government policies that are not supportive in terms of pursuit of aim for regulating the public space. The challenges faced by the Times Square BID differ from other New York based governance models, the Central Park Conservancy and the Hudson River Park Trust. Coordination between different stakeholders like city agencies, local businesses and community organizations is perhaps one of the most pressing issues. In Times Square, managing public spaces is shared among several entities, including the Department of Transportation (DoT), the Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO), and Small Business Services (SBS). Because of this fragmented management structure, coordination problems arise, because distinct entities have disparate priority and timelines for their initiatives. The uncertainty as to the roles of the various entities makes coherent and effective policies for managing the space difficult.
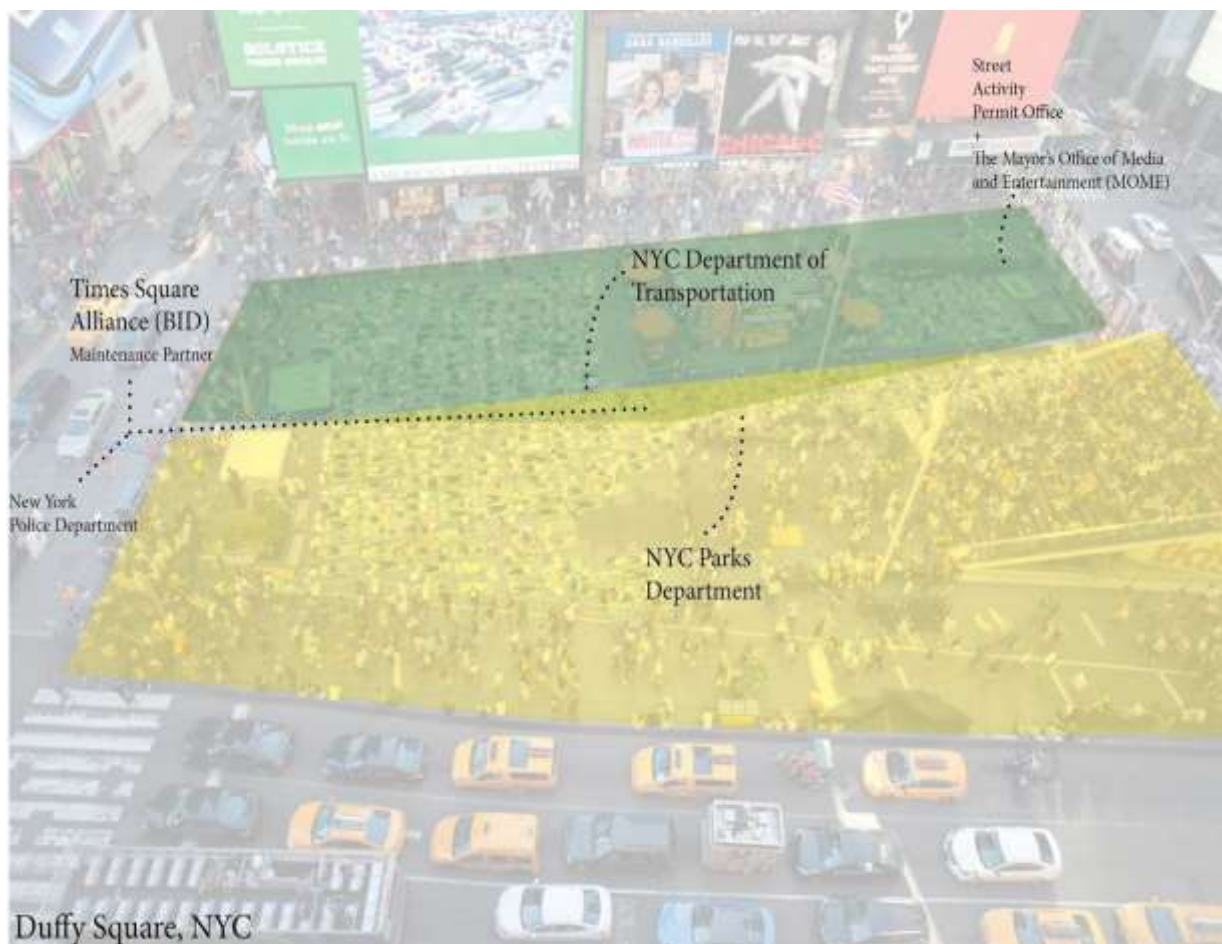

Figure 2: Management responsibilities of different entities that operate public space of Times Square district.

Public-private partnerships in New York City (such as Central Park Conservancy, Hudson River Park Trust) demonstrate that cooperative models can be effective for managing the city's spaces if all cooperating participants are government agencies, private organizations and the public pursuing similar objectives. To work in these models, these models need flexible governance structures in which the range of permitted deviance (or adaptation) to the needs of urban environments can vary as the needs change. To enable Times Square's governance and public space management to improve, it may need

a more coordinated approach integrating the differences between the city stakeholders. It may involve restructuring the TSA's governance so that its authority is wider and that it will act more independently from the city's regulatory bodies. However, zoning regulations and special development projects can be powerful tools for managing public spaces, as is showed by the Hudson River Park Trust. For example, such zoning incentives could be introduced for Times Square to manage both public and private interests more effectively case of. Policies could be constructed to maintain both the economic value of the space as a vibrant commercial district and the public value of a important public space. But these policies would have to be flexible to accommodate the specific special quality of Times Square as a multipurpose complex incorporating tourists, street vendors and residents. Comparison of these public space management structures illustrates that there ought to be a different governance model for each space they are managing. Public-private partnerships, such as Central Park and Hudson River Park, make valuable lessons, but Times Square demands a hybrid mix in which both top-down regulation and bottom up participation are embraced to develop a more democratic and inclusive governance. These examples can be learned from and the gaps addressed in terms of authority and coordination to create a better public space management model in Times Square that supports the area's long-term vitality while enhancing fair public access.

2.7. Democracy in the Governance Model of Times Square

Because governing Times Square, embodied by the Business Improvement District (BID) has been criticized as lacking democratic representation, it is time for that governance ideology to be questioned. However, by depending almost only on a structure that favors property owners (and by extension, wealthy entities and organizations), BIDs, and the Times Square Alliance, operate with a first-come, first-served system that excludes other stakeholders, including small business owners, vendors, and residents. Commercial property owners are well represented on the Board of directors, who control critical decisions regarding the area, and the selection process is extremely biased towards commercial property owners. This majority of votes on the board contradict the principle of equal representation within the district. Joan Byron (2013) looked at BID structure in New York City, and compared it to BIDs in European cities like Paris, London and Amsterdam where the public has some kind of partnership with the private sector, but it is on a pure public ownership model when the projects are complete. The concern is that BIDs contribute to privatizing public space, in favor of the will of developers and business interests. This situation begs issues of public good accessibility and fairness as the space itself is a public good that is managed in ways to meet the concerns of the private interest over the community's need. The critics say that a top down approach is undemocratic and does not promote inclusive decision making. In order to have a democratic public space model in Times Square, everyone must be heard, or at least all voices, including that of the marginalized groups.

2.8. The Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Approach to Design a Governance Model

More recently, public space planning and management recognizes prizing principles of diversity, inclusion and equity. Public spaces are platforms for diverse forms of social interaction and economic, political and cultural exchange within attractive, dynamic and complex urban environments (Graham & Marvin, 1996). In claiming that public spaces should be places where people from different backgrounds can interact and understand one another and help social cohesion, Calhoun (1986) despite this, public spaces are managing practices that still continue to exclude groups or prevent their participation.

The part to play for inclusive public space governance: taking care not to neglect the beings, the races and the genders, and to not neglect their needs, or the needs of the beings, the races, and the genders beyond their wealth. Goodman (2012) emphasizes that governance inclusion comprises the ones transforming the boundaries in the "us them" to show the rights and voices of the marginalized in decision making. The continuing process must be an active engagement of the community as users in designing the public space and in deliberating and enforcing rules and laws. By doing so, public space governance can be more inclusive and all will have fair access and belong with each other in the community. Katherine Peindhardt and Nate Storring (2019) noted that inclusive public space management is a constantly developing process with the collective community vision that returns to the community to enable communities to shape public spaces that serve the community good.

2.9. Right to the City Approach to Design a Governance Model

In the first of these two meanings, Henri Lefebvre's Right to the City idea, wherein the collective right of all urban residents rests on being able to govern and transform the city, is discussed. As Lefebvre (2003) contended, modern urban citizenship rests upon a 'contract' between the state and citizens, but this contract must be broader, should be more participatory and more inclusive. The current legal framework often limits citizens' influence upon urban space, he suggested, and it should be overhauled so that citizens have a direct role in decision-making processes regarding the spaces in which they live. Lefebvre's vision goes further than securing people's legal rights to the city, however; his philosophy includes considerations of the need for a collective, active role in designing and managing urban environments.

David Harvey (2008), who argued that collective urban power, further expanded Lefebvre's ideas of urban transformation and citizenship is the determinant power through which citizens' influence and transform urbanization processes. Harvey reiterated that to achieving collective decision making and social justice, social relationships and technologies and aesthetic values should be incorporated into urban governance. Based on this 'Right to the City," this approach chimes in against the process of privatizing public space, with flexible and adaptive laws according to changing urban circumstances and they advocate for the governance systems in the city to remain responsive to the rights of all the city's inhabitants.

2.10. Limitations and Gaps

Managing complex environments in cities can be challenging because urban governance structures often cannot be inclusive or participatory. Many urban systems remain opaque and cannot include participation in governing processes, despite growing recognition that participatory governance is necessary. The Urban Governance report (2016) shows that good governance must be conducted at the local and the regional levels, and should have the voices of marginalized communities. Yet this is a gap for many urban governance frameworks which often exclude local voices, those of people in disadvantaged or low-income communities in critical decisions at the neighborhood level.

In addition, the relationships between the different government authorities that execute coordinated urban policies are defined. Fragmented governance for managing public spaces, urban design and service delivery means administrative responsibilities for managing these falls between parties, creating a challenge to effective management of cities. Often, public space management legal frameworks are also outdated and rigid, changing dynamics in urban.

Lefebvre's critique of urban governance stresses the participatory nature of flexible laws and polices to adapt to ever changing city requirements. Therefore, urban planners need governance structures that are adaptable to changing situations, are context sensitive, and can synthesize many views for public spaces that benefit all residents, for the most adversely affected.

3. Methodology

3.1. Primary Focus

The research uses the mini-plazas in Times Square, an urban area with high density, to explore the interaction between design, behavior and governance in these spaces. The plazas are full of tourists, commuters, street performers, and vendors, and are a complicated wrangle of uses with performers and costume characters creating busy, confused microscopes. Traffic patterns also appeared, which illustrate where design and governance do not correspond with the actual use of people. Pedestrian zones were played off against vehicular access points, and such interplay heightened safety concerns while fostering a disagreeable tightness of the atmosphere. The physical design of the plazas, including how seating and landscaping and public art installations were arranged, was also evaluated. While still effective, their effectiveness varied in that there was not enough seating to accommodate the crowd and landscaping created unintentional barriers. Installing public art and temporary installations added a cultural presence, but often just did not work with functional spaces. Also evaluated was lighting and signage because these elements have substantial effects on accessibility and aesthetic appeal. It laid the foundation for the larger questions of how to govern public spaces such as Times Square by posing the question of what governance structures will learn to manage the intricacies of such a space.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

In trying to understand what was causing the governance and management challenges in Times Square, this research took a multi-pronged approach. Part of our work involved historical research, analysis of surveys and reports, interviews with stakeholders, and detailed observations of the site. Usage patterns, user satisfaction levels and operational challenges were gleaned from reports from the Times Square Alliance, while historical research and quantitative and qualitative surveys contextualized present challenges. To understand how the framework supports or constrains inclusivity and equity, researchers looked at legal documents that make up the framework of public space management. Based on insights from interviews, stakeholder interviews included sanitation teams, public safety officers and management staff, who discussed the practical challenges of maintaining and operating this facility. Observational studies required real time observation of congestion, pedestrian behavior and spatial conflicts. Patterns of congestion, pedestrian behavior, and spatial conflicts were recorded in video, photography, and by traffic counting. However, these data collection methods formed a rich foundation for analyzing the governance challenges in Times Square, and contributing to this work would not be complete without establishing a governance model that is concerned with both systemic and operational challenges.

3.3. Analytical Approach

The critical research design of this work was through a process of documenting and discussing the built form of Times Square from the perspective of governance. The management and usage of Times Square's public spaces needed an in-depth understanding of how the unique physical and social attributes of Times Square shape its governing structure. Under a governance lens, this research cut through the mechanisms of this urban hub to examine how policies, laws and management strategies have been used to configure its physical and social landscape. A commitment to uncover inefficiencies and to discover ways to create a more inclusive and effective governance model guided the analysis.

This approach built upon the leverage of qualitative insights gained from interviews of stakeholder in managing and using Times Square. The interviews provided first-hand accounts of competing interests and overlapping authorities. Sanitation teams spoke about the constraints of scarce resources to stay clean in areas with a heavy flow of foot traffic, public safety officers spoke about behavior problems and the challenge of enforcing regulations. The current governance framework and legislation were limiting on which the Times Square Alliance's management staff shared their experience to deal with the leadership, there were about which to expose. It has also been cross-referenced with observational data to enrich this critical analysis. The research observed the built environment to correlate governance decisions with more tangible outcomes: pedestrian congestion, the accessibility of public amenities and the fair allocation of space. Combining qualitative and observational data expanded the analytical approach beyond recognizing existing shortcomings

to developing actionable recommendations. By using this method, we tackled a gap between theoretical frameworks and practical solutions for public space management for Times Square, and we could have a complete understanding of Times Square's governance dynamics.

3.4. Stakeholder Involvement

Representatives from city authorities, partner organizations, operational teams and everyday users were involved as a focus of this research on the management of Times Square's public spaces. Intending the study was to provide the big picture view of the challenges and opportunities within Times Square's governance framework. Partner organizations like Business Improvement Districts explained the intricacies of public-private partnerships; departments of Transportation and Small Business Services discussed regulatory mechanics. Ground level views, from operational teams like sanitation workers and public safety officers, of day-to-day challenges, including resource limitations and enforcement difficulties, were offered. Equity and inclusivity in governance was an issue of importance for public space users, such as street vendors and community groups, who addressed the needs of marginalized groups. The research engaged a wide variety of stakeholders, resulting in the capture of the many aspects of public space governance in Times Square, and add validity to the recommendations.

3.5. Additional Tools and Resources:

By observing and interviewing, this research examined the governance framework at Times Square. Legal frameworks, policy documents and regulations around public spaces were sourced from NYC governmental websites that provided access to the data. It could identify systemic gaps and inconsistencies that create problems in managing such a lively urban space. Quantitative and qualitative insights were provided into performing public spaces with surveys and reports produced by the Times Square Alliance to examine levels of congestion and user satisfaction, and the effectiveness of management initiatives. The study validated these findings and matched it with existing metrics of public space performance. Pedestrian and vehicular traffic, user behaviors and spatial distribution of activities were tracked during a three-month performance analysis. This laid out foundation for recommendations was based on a comprehensive view of the operational challenges faced by governance entities. Using multiple data sources across diverse sources not only enriched the study but also put a solid empirical foundation behind the recommendations by being based on the realities of managing a complex urban space.

4. Data Analysis

Table 1 - Times Square Daily Visitors, 2016-2019, Times Square Alliance, 2019.

| Month	2016	2017	2018	2019
January	300,000	310,000	320,000	330,000
February	310,000	320,000	330,000	340,000
March	320,000	330,000	340,000	350,000
April	330,000	350,000	360,000	370,000
May	340,000	360,000	360,000	370,000
June	350,000	370,000	390,000	370,000
July	360,000	380,000	400,000	420,000
August	370,000	390,000	410,000	430,000
September	360,000	380,000	400,000	420,000
October	350,000	370,000	390,000	400,000
November	340,000	360,000	380,000	390,000
December	330,000	350,000	370,000	380,000
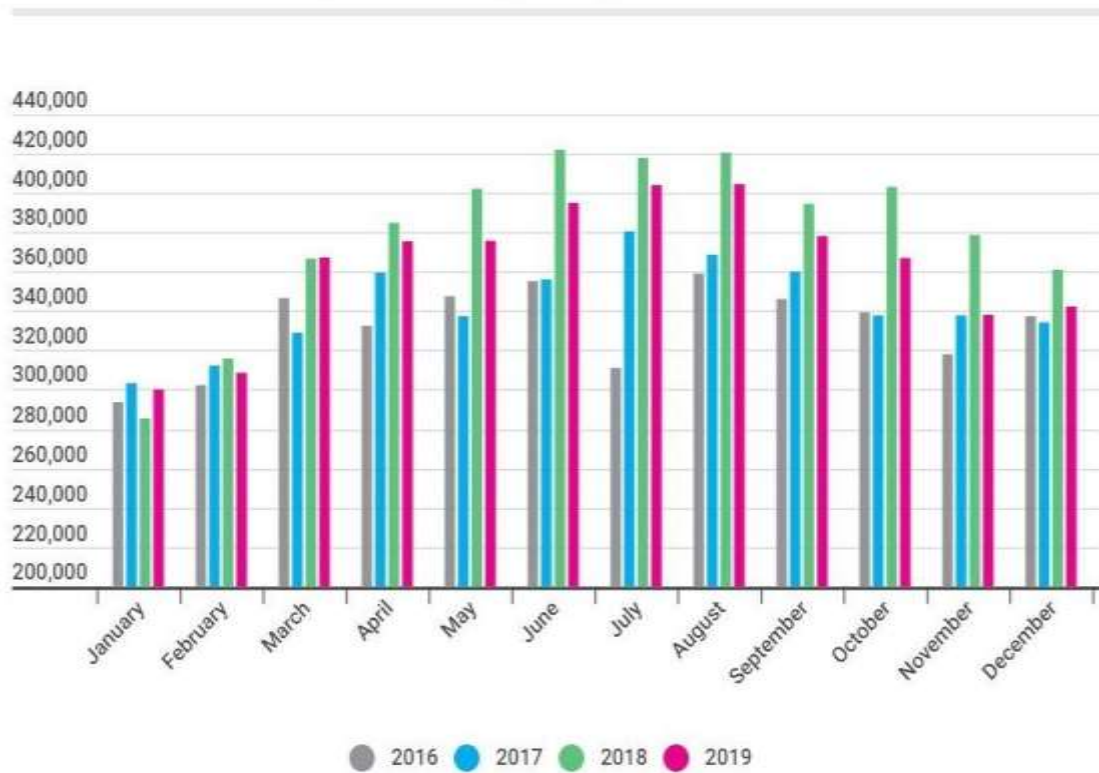
Fig 3 - Times Square Daily Visitors, 2016-2019, Times Square Alliance, 2019.

Table 2 - Times Square District Average Daily Ridership, Times Square Alliance, 2019.

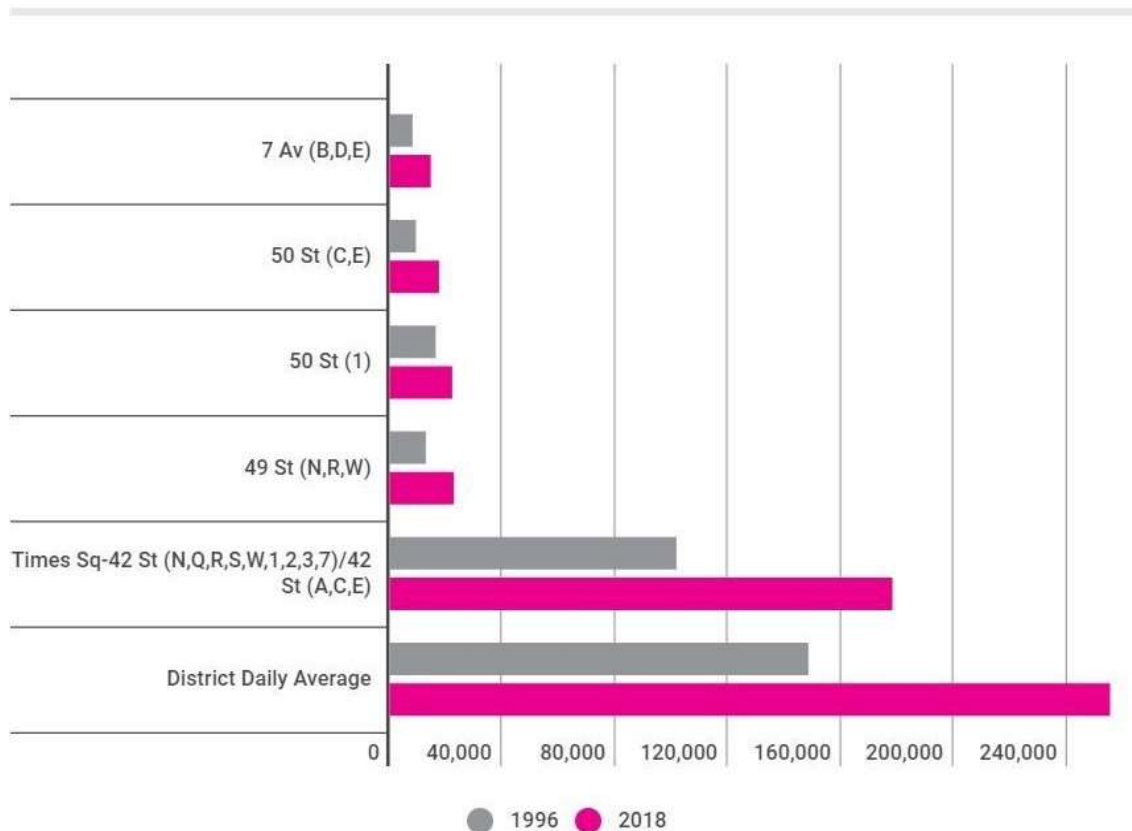| Station Name	Daily Average (1996)	Daily Average (2018)
7 Av (B, D, E)	40,000	80,000
50 St (C, E)	40,000	80,000
50 St (1)	40,000	80,000
49 St (N, R, W)	40,000	80,000
Times Sq-42 St (N, Q, R, S, W, 1, 2, 3, 7) / 42 St (A, C, E)	120,000	240,000
District Daily Average	80,000	160,000

Fig 4 - Times Square District Average Daily Ridership, Times Square Alliance, 2019.

5. Results

The results analysis in the document is to examine the challenges, conflicts and governance gaps in managing Times Square's public space. Below is the detailed narrative based on the observations and findings:

The most notable conflict was at intersections like 47th Street and 7th Avenue, where pedestrian and bicycle conflict was prominent. Because these spaces are prone to pedestrian congestion, with lots of people crossing at once, they are a safety hazard. Pedestrians forcing cyclists to make unexpected maneuvers to avoid them obstructed the bicycle lanes. The absence of clear space allocation increases the risks. It is a very busy area used for vending, seating, and photography, and contributes to the already bad congestion.

Examined usage dynamics showed competition between different users: pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles for shared space. It also showed where the planning and space management were lacking.

5.1. Key Findings from Interviews

Listening to stakeholders included representatives of the Department of Transportation (DoT), Times Square Alliance, public safety officers, and vendors, all of whom offered great insights. There were issues of poor communication and the lack of a common vision among the several agencies involved, the DoT said. Their struggles with operational limitations were public safety officers' struggles, they mentioned, including the difficulties they had addressing conflicts because they are without authority to do so. Vendors said the strict licensing rules and frequent misunderstanding between themselves and law enforcement are a big problem. These challenges illustrate the fragmented approach to governance in the district.

5.2. Governance and Structural Challenges

Times DoT, as well as the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and the NYPD manages Square. However, these groups are disjointed and ineffectual. There is also the problem of the lack of cohesive policies alongside a unifying governance structure, which aggravates the already more complex problem of managing the space. The document condemned the bureaucratic, time-draining nature of the current governance framework, which leaves little room for decisions and prevents their adaptation to changing conditions.

5.3. Learning from International Practices

Comparisons with other cities, such as England, in which governance operates on a local level and community participation is important in their management of public spaces are drawn. Missing, though, is including similar inclusive, community focused structures in Times Square, which represent an opportunity missed to engage local voices in the governance process.

5.4. Major Takeaways

The findings underscore the need for policy and structural change to meet the growing complexity of public space usage. The current policies do not capture the diverse needs of users, nor deal with conflicts. It also stressed paying community's participation in processes of taking decisions regarding public space management for greater democracy and equity in public space management. Also, Times Square is a high priority location included in the Vision Zero initiative, which raises prizing innovative design and strategy work aimed at improving safety and decreasing congestion.

This analysis proposes taking a more integrated and adaptive approach to governance in the Times Square, urging for a governance that is inclusive and coordinated, and resonant with the strengthening dynamism of the usage of the public space.

Pedestrian Observation Field Sheet		

Surveyor	Aarti Mehta	Date	11/06/2019
Location	Description: 47th Street and 7th Ave, Times Square, Manhattan, NYC		
Weather	Fair / Slightly cold and windy		
Start Time	11.45 AM	End Time	12.00 PM

This space for counting pedestrians		
CHILD <18	**ADULT <18**	**ELDERLY <18**
FEMALE	27	64	48
MALE	23	78	58
OTHER	-	28	-

P = TOTAL PEDESTRIANS (15 minute period):	326
W = EFFECTIVE WIDTH OF COUNTED AREA (feet): Width of the sidewalk minus any obstruction and minus a 1 feet buffer for shy distance	12
H = PEDESTRIANS PER HOUR (= P X 4):	1304
R = PEDESTRIANS/MINUTE/FOOT (= P / 15/ W):	1304 / 15 / 12
L = PEDESTRIAN LEVEL OF SERVICE (See below):	7.24

A: R < 5	B: 5 < R < 7	C: 7 < R < 10	D: 10 < R < 15	E: 15 < R < 23	F: R > 23

Bicycle Observation Field Sheet							

Surveyor	**Aarti Mehta**			Date	11/06/2019		
Location	Description: 47th Street and 7th Ave, Times Square, Manhattan, NYC						
Weather	Fair / Slightly cold and windy						
Start Time	11.00 AM			End Time	11.30 AM		

This space for counting bicyclists							
Using Lane				**Not Using Lane**			
With Traffic		Against Traffic		With Traffic		Against Traffic	
F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
<18	<18	<18	<18	<18	<18	<18	<18
1	2				1		
18-50	18-50	18-50	18-50	18-50	18-50	18-50	18-50
13	66		5	8	50	3	13
>50	>50	>50	>50	>50	>50	>50	>50
1	5			5	5		4

RESULT	Total Bicyclists	30 minute period:	190
	Bicyclists per Hour	above figure x 2:	380

6. Discussion

The study reveals some major shortcomings in the existing Business Improvement District (BID) framework, especially in its capacity to deal with the special issues of Times Square. Though the Times Square Alliance has been key to the revitalization of the area, the Alliance remains restricted to its influence by a lack of authority and the lack of inclusivity within its governance. To enhance its efficacy, the study advocates for a restructured governance model centered on four major components: authority redistribution, integration and coordination, equity and inclusion, and sustain funding. The study argues that the lack of authority in decision-making power is limited, and devolution of rights is necessary to make the BID more representative of diverse stakeholders. Not only would this require empowering the Alliance, but also in its totality it would involve embedding voices from excluded marginalized groups including street vendors and small business owners who are essential to the vibrancy of Times Square but are left out of key decisions. In addition, the research reveals a pressing need for convergence of efforts undertaken by agencies, including the Department of Transportation (DoT), the New York Police Department (NYPD), and community boards. The current fragmented management structure causes current inefficiencies and conflicts. Such an approach would also help in creating optimal resource allocation to meet the district's multiple challenges, by utilizing an effective cooperation. The proposed governance model rises around two key pillars: inclusivity and equity. The limited participation of community voices has drawn criticism of the current structure. The study proposes co-engagement mechanisms to ensure fair representation and participation of stakeholders, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

The study ends with the reminder that sustainable funding is of critical importance. Times Square cannot endure without the continual maintenance and improvement, which requires both now and in the future, a modern revenue portfolio that can sustain the developing needs of the entertainment landscape. A strong economic foundation is recommended based on innovative financial strategies like public-private partnerships and local rain fundraising initiatives. The findings argue for a much more inclusive, collaborative and sustainable governance model for Times Square. The goal of this approach is to integrate the economic imperative of urban development with the social and cultural needs of a diverse community in order to create a sustainable and inclusive district in the future.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Summary

Beginning in the 1970s, Times Square was a crime ridden district fallen on hard times; by tracing evolving Times Square, this article documents transforming the disarray of Times Square into a symbol of global vigour that it is today. It transformed from zoning policies, innovative urban design, and public-private partnerships. These changes, which revived economic life in the county, drove inclusivity out of the way and replaced the local businesses, artists and vulnerable groups that formed such a part of its character. During the past several decades, Times Square's current governance under a Business Improvement District (BID) has been successful at keeping Times Square attractive. Problems of congestion, inefficiencies, and safety concerns arise from fragmented responsibilities for management shared by the Alliance and the Department of Transportation, and others. Its governance model cannot satisfy the varying requirements of a large and diverse user base while maintaining commercial, residential, and cultural ways.

In response, this study calls for increasing the adoption and inclusivity of the Alliance, yet expanding, allowing for the governance model that is being adopted. To enable more decision-making powers to the Alliance, legislative reforms also need to be done to coordinate among stakeholders. In addition, it is also important to enable taking part in voices that have been marginalized, for example, street vendors and small business owners in governance processes so that their input is attuned to and safeguarded. The Central Park Conservancy is a model to draw lessons from, as are participatory frameworks in cities like London, and with that, Times Square can balance regulatory oversight and community engagement. If the district was to take this inclusive approach, they could continue to maintain their cultural vibrancy while answering the current challenges presented.

To the future, governance in Times Square must be dynamic, innovative. It involves developing technologies that manage congestion, improving safety and establishing a funding model that keeps up as needs evolve. By leveraging times squares strengths, while rectifying its weaknesses, times square can not only continue to represent the essence of urban energy but become a paradigm for recognized as well as inclusive and sustainable intensive public space management.

7.2. Recommendations

The governance of public spaces is important for how a city works changes and grows. No exception is Times Square, the global icon of urban life. One of the things that makes the space so vibrant and dynamic is the complex web of stakeholders who manage the space. To say, though, that the current governance model is facing very big challenges that include a lack of, equality and adaptability to an ever changing demand. Addressing these problems will require that Times Square's governance structure be remade positively, identifying and building on the successes of the Business Improvement District (BID) that created the Times Square Alliance, and bringing in broader, more inclusive strategies. One important recommendation is expanding authority and capacity of the Times Square Alliance. The Alliance has been out front for years in keeping and building the district's unique character. However, the current legal and operational architecture that guides it limits its ability to the growing complexities of operating a public space that has millions of visitors, businesses, and residents. The Alliance needs legislative reforms to allow it to be more decisive and acting. For example, transferring governance responsibilities to the Alliance and the city government in order to, for instance, increase the percentage of carried out by the Alliance, would allow for more flexible and regionalised decision making. This would create a stronger, autonomous Alliance capable of tackling issues like pedestrian congestion and safety much better.

The governance structure of the Alliance has also to develop. Today, it is still property owners who lead the way, erasing any stakeholders' voice other than the very least bigger business owners, street vendors, a part of small business owners and local community members. To democratize the decision-making process, and to ensure that all stakeholders' diverse needs and contributions are given an equal consideration, the board would need to expand to encompass a broader range of candidates. One of these could be to set up a contingent of teams, which would be dedicated to the Public space governance, like a community affairs department that would attend to and address the concerns of marginalized groups who are not considered in this public space governance.

The other pressing issues relates to the fragmented nature of public space management in Times Square. There are currently too many responsibilities spread out between the Department of Transportation, Small Business Services, and the Times Square Alliance. This lack of coordination creates inefficiencies and confusion. We need something more integrated governance framework, where everything aligns amongst the entities and their policies, resources and objectives. Other cities, such as Newcastle in the UK, have combined unified budgeting and decision-making processes that could be could respond to Times Square as well.

Any reimagined governance model must also be based on equity and inclusivity. However, the vibrancy of Times Square is owed greatly to those informal actors: street performers, vendors and others who give Times Square its distinct cultural flavor. But existing regulations and enforcement practices sideline

these groups. Thus, the governance structure should create spaces which would dialogue and collaborate with these stakeholders, protect the needs and rights of these stakeholders. For example, the rules that govern how public space is used should be open for revisit to be fair and inclusive and not exclusionary, for example, for vendors' permits.

A data and technology also have a transformative role in improving governance. Some of the overcrowding, safety, and what-not challenges in Times Square are challenging, but can be addressed much better with real-time data. The group could use sensors to track pedestrian traffic and other activities, then use AI to monitor and make improvements. Further, information derived from technologies like these could shape long-term planning so that the Alliance can change its strategic approach as conditions shift and demands change.

Times Square's governance has to emphasize adaptability and flexibility. Public spaces are by nature dynamic and shaped by changing forces of social, economic and cultural conditions. Times Square is no exception. Governing model of blockchain technology must be dynamic and should adapt to the needs of its users. For instance, it may refer to an annual review of management practices based on feedback from residents, businesses and visitors alike. An iterative approach such as this would guarantee continuing relevance and manageability of governing Times Square to future contingencies.

Times Square is thus a microcosm of urban existence: places where a variety of communities meet, interact, and prosper. Its governance needs to represent the complexity and aspirations of its users. When you equip the Times Square Alliance with the ability not just to be innovative, but to embrace diversity, create integrated management frameworks and harness data to drive strategic decisions, Times Square remains a shining example for how to be both a beacon of innovation and a vibrant, bustling place. Intending these recommendations is for this iconic space to continue to be more than a global symbol for urban success: it becomes a model of fair and sustainable governance of public space.

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