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HYPERLOCAL: PLACE GOVERNANCE
IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. VEY: Good morning, everyone, and thanks so much to the studio audience at Brookings for joining us here today, and for all of you who are tuning in online from wherever you may be. I'm Jennifer Vey, a Brookings senior fellow and the director of the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking. Nate Storrington and I, along with all the contributing authors are truly excited to share with you our new book, "Hyperlocal: Place Governance in a Fragmented World."

We're going to have a fabulous discussion today about the opportunities and the tensions associated with how and for whom communities and spaces are governed and managed. But before I pass the mike off to Nate and our panelists, I want to tell you a little about how this book came to be, why we think it matters, and what's actually in it.

In the preface of the book, Nate and I tell an anecdote about our early days working together. About seven or so years ago, and with the generous funding of Bob and Anne Bass, Project for Public Spaces and Brookings joined forces to pilot the Bass Initiative on Innovation and Placemaking. For the better part of two years, our organizations worked together to explore how and why behind the shifting spatial geography of the innovation economy.

We wanted to understand, and through our research and writings, help support innovation hubs or districts, areas where advanced industries, institutions, and workers cluster and connect in dense, largely urban places. Our work centered on the economy of these areas, but also the physical attributes and amenities needed to make them thrive.

As we started to engage with emerging innovation districts though, it became increasingly apparent that how and how well they were organized was going to shape their growth and their success. Was there an organization or ecosystem of organizations that had a clear vision for the district? An agreed upon set of outcomes they hoped to achieve? And to find strategies that district stakeholders would collectively implement to achieve them.

If not, how might such a governance structure be created? Who would be part of it? Whose voices would it represent? And where would the money come from to grow and to sustain it?

To help answer these questions, we let's say, dabbled in some research around the varying kinds of organizational structures that in one way or another exercise governance over places, from downtown business improvement districts to Main Street organizations, to CDCs, and beyond. But we never went very far, nor published any work focused specifically on this topic. But from what we could tell at the time, no one else had either.

So, flash forward a few years and in 2018, the Bass Initiative became the Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking. Building on the place-centered focus of the Bass Initiative, but expanding beyond its emphasis on the innovation economy, Brookings Metro launched the Bass Center to explicitly address the fact that while many downtowns, and waterfronts, and innovation districts have in recent decades seen significant reinvestment, stark inequities by income and wealth, race and ethnicity, and geography are still preventing too many places from meeting the needs of too many people.

These inequities are systemic and interconnected and require systemic interconnected solutions to overcome them. Yet, traditional units of government are less able than ever to understand and ultimately help meet the needs of places within a region and network them efficiently together. Our current systems and approaches in economic development and community development, land use planning, are simply too siloed to meet intersecting challenges. And traditional placemaking is too limited in scope and in scale.

To combat these harmful patterns, these fields must come together to grow more communities of opportunity where everyone could live in places that provide access to employment, housing, green space, services, and multimodal transportation. The Bass Center was established to be that hub. Its work focuses on a new form of integrated, place-led development, what we call transformative placemaking, that aims to generate positive economic, physical, and social outcomes at the hyperlocal scale. Outcomes that both support and are supported by robust civic structures that are locally organized, inclusive, and that support network building. In other words, place governance.

Indeed, at every turn in the Center's early work studying and engaging with communities, it became increasingly clear that place governance, whatever form it might take, is vital for giving

stakeholders a structure through which to share ideas, voice concerns, advocate for coordinated investments, and codesign community improvement strategies. And yet, we were also again reminded that as a field, place governance really isn't even recognized. For all the tens of thousands of place governance organizations operating in communities in this country and around the world, remarkably little has been written about why and how these organizations were created, the kind of structures that have emerged over time, and the varied role that they play, the people and places they do and don't represent, and what their future ought to look like in a changing economic landscape. Hence, this book.

As I first began noodling around the idea of doing something in this space, I started jotting down ideas for a series of briefs that might fill some of the gaps in the existing literature in writing. Then I heard Tracy Hadden Loh, a fellow with the Bass Center and coauthor of two of the book's chapters, who in her first week on the job, told me in no uncertain terms that a series of briefs was just very small thinking. And so began the journey to produce the volume we're here to discuss today.

Knowing Project for Public Spaces' own deep interest in and experience with place management and governance, we engaged them early on in the process and were lucky to secure Nate Storrington, now the co-executive director, as my partner in editing crime. Together we talked and read and outlined to get the basic shape of the book on paper, and to identify experts who would help us write it. Over a period of months, Nate, Tracy, and I managed to talk seven others into joining us in this effort. The book was fully conceived, and a long gestation began.

The authors researched and drafted. Nate and I commented and edited. And we brought dozens of other scholars and practitioners into the fray through a series of workshops where they chewed over each chapter, sending authors and editors back to the page to add, amend, and to sharpen. Off to the Brookings Press it eventually went, where it was polished up, given a very cool cover, and sent off the print. Together with Metro's communications team, it's now making its way out into the world, and we were able to come here today, thanks to Karen Slachetka, to talk about it.

We're enormously grateful to all who have been involved, but especially to our amazing group of contributing authors. We're grateful to Alexander von Hoffman for delving into the history of

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American place governance over the centuries, as an undertaking of both elites and everyday citizens. Through dozens of stories and examples, he sheds light on the evolution of place governance, which is critical to understanding how it can and it should evolve today.

We're grateful to legal scholar Sheila Foster, who gets at the question of who governs by dissecting four distinct models of place governance with differing mixes of private, public, and community leadership and involvement, and by highlighting how tensions and tradeoffs are negotiated in each.

We're grateful to Juliet Musso, who looks to Los Angeles to examine three kinds of place governance structures, business improvement districts, neighborhood councils, and community land trusts, exploring how each possesses different dimensions of power that influence how, how well, and to whose advance they govern the places in their purview.

We're grateful to Jill Simone Gross, one of today's panelists, who zooms in on one of the more ubiquitous forms of place governance, business improvement districts, to interrogate who benefits from such governance, who is accountable for its oversight, and why some bids become community builders, while others become community breakers or erasers.

We're grateful to coauthors Elena Madison and Joy Moses, one of our other panelists, who look at the very complex issue of homelessness in the public realm. They discuss how conventional place management organizations are often, at best, limited in their success in supporting unsheltered people, or at worst, employ practices that are opening hostile to them. As we'll hear from Joy, the chapter also discusses promising practices from the field to better address the needs of people and places challenged by homelessness.

We're grateful to Nancy Quach, who peers beyond U.S. borders to provide a comparative study of governance efforts in Seoul, Rotterdam, Porto Alegre, Berlin, and other global cities to provide critical insights into how these organizations are uniquely managing equitable and inclusive growth at the place level.

Finally, I'm grateful to Tracy Hadden Loh and to Nate Storrington, who wrap up the book by synthesizing its key themes and spotlighting best practices for bringing place governance to more people

and places through new financing, organizing, and ownership models.

In the end, it was all these people, authors, reviewers, copy editors, promoters and, of course, our funders, Bob and Anne Bass who helped us turn this wee nugget of a vague idea into something rich with fresh arguments and ideas. The book will prod and provoke, and it won't please everyone with every turn of the page. But we hope that it generates a lively discourse among practitioners and scholars, place managers and city planners, historians and nonprofit leaders, data geeks and writers, and that they ultimately find it useful in their classrooms and in their communities.

With that in mind, I want to turn it over to Nate, Jill, Joy, and our third panelist, Dr. Gladys Kamau, to get the conversation started. Thank you.

MR. STORRING: Thank you, Jennifer. Is my mike on? There we go, yes. Can you hear me?

MS. SLACHETKA: Yes.

MR. STORRING: Okay. Excellent. Well, thank you so much, Jennifer, for kicking us off. And welcome, everyone. I'm really excited to have a really -- there we go, that's better. Okay. I was wondering. Really excited to have an awesome panel with us here today, a couple chapter authors and a practitioner in the field to talk a little bit about this issue of place governance.

So, first off, I'd just like to introduce the panel. So, immediately to my left we have Gladys Kamau, who is the Director of Economic Development and Policy at District Bridges, an organization right here locally who's doing great work. Next, we have Jill Gross, who is a professor of Urban Policy and Planning at Hunter College at City University of New York. And then at the end we have Joy Moses, who is the Director of Homelessness Research Institute at the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Sorry, a few mouthfuls there in terms of titles but thank you so much for joining us.

And if you have any questions as we're speaking, you can actually get at us digitally by Tweeting @BrookingsMetro with the #Hyperlocal or #Hyperlocalrelease. Or you can also email events@brookings.edu with your questions. And if you're actually in the room, of course, we'll do a question period at the end so you can just raise your hand.

So, to kick things off, I'd just like to ask each of you to briefly introduce yourself and kind of describe what is your relationship to this topic of place governance. So, we'll start with Gladys.

MS. KAMAU: Good morning. First, let me thank Brookings for inviting me to be here as a panelist. And I also want to extend my congratulations to you both, the coeditors, of this work. And especially for including District Bridges in your publication, thank you so much.

I am Dr. Gladys Kamau, the Director of Economic Development and Policy for District Bridges. District Bridges is a community development nonprofit organization. We have the vision to thrive together in equitable, resilient, connected communities here in D.C. and beyond. Our work falls in three intersecting practices. Namely, community-based economic development, broad based community engagement, and ecosystem development.

As a community development nonprofit organization, all of our work is place based. We manage six Main Street programs which serve as on-the-ground learning labs where we're able to develop innovative strategies for placemaking and economic development.

Through our Main Street programs and the implementation of the Main Street four-point approach, we focus on the holistic economic development strategies which serve 10 D.C. neighborhoods in Wards 1, 2, 3, and 4. Our ecosystem development work allows us to strengthen hyperlocal governance through more integrated community development ecosystems that work toward system change that have a greater impact on our communities.

MR. STORRING: Great, thank you. And I think that's a really important theme that we'll probably come back to is just the need to actually start networking some of these hyperlocal organizations to expand their impact. So, thanks for being here.

Jill, would you like to introduce yourself, what you do, and, you know, also maybe a little bit about your chapter.

MS. GROSS: Thank you so much. And thank you also to the Brookings Institute, to the Bass Center, and to this incredible group of scholars, and editors, and leaders who have made this process just a really enriching experience.

So, I'm Professor of Urban Policy at Hunter College, City University of New York. I'm the Director of the Graduate Program in Urban Policy and Leadership, and I teach in a program that was started by advocacy planners interested in ensuring that communities and community professionals understood how to empower and to ensure voice amongst community residents in policy making and planning processes.

My research and my role in the department, I am a political scientist, so I've always been interested in questions of power. And my work explores the challenges that place governance poses for collaboration. How cities and regions adapt or don't adapt and incorporate or don't incorporate the changing stakeholders in decision making processes.

I've been studying business improvement districts in New York for a very long time. When I began, there were 25 of them. Now there are 76 of them. And that's just in New York City alone. And my interest in studying business improvement districts was in really focusing not on the largest business improvement districts that we tend to hear about in the media, but rather on the much smaller business improvement districts and the different types of roles that they play in communities of varying economic statuses. And looking at the question of what happens when neighborhoods change and the degree to which these kinds of institutions are able to incorporate those marginalized voices. More recently, I've also started looking at this at a regional level, but maybe that'll be the next project that we do at Brookings.

MR. STORRING: Excellent, thank you, Jill. And, Joy, could you introduce yourself?

MS. MOSES: Yes. I am Joy Moses. I am a researcher with the National Alliance to End Homelessness. We foster a network of the various types of agencies and individuals who are focused on ending homelessness. So, that would be government agencies, nonprofits. I spend a lot of time working with researchers and advocates.

Through our work, we try to elevate the voices of people experiencing homelessness and their experiences, which of course, encompasses a lot of time in public spaces. And the people that we serve are frequently interacting with business improvement districts and the decisions they make, people

who manage parks, et cetera.

I coauthored a chapter with Elena Madison, who works with the Project for Public Spaces. It was an interesting opportunity for us to try to bridge two worlds, which is something we would like to see more of in the field. We very much were coming from very different perspectives and trying to find some common ground, trying to meld the objectives and the concerns, two very different concerns of two different communities, and trying to figure out where the common ground could be found that both benefited people experiencing homelessness, but addressed the needs of place managers.

MR. STORRING: Great. Thank you, Joy. So, just to kick things off, kick off the discussion, from your vantage point, why does place governance exist? Why do we have this sort of, you know, messy ecosystem of different organizations that are managing our shared places? And what value is that bringing to cities? What problem is it solving? So, let's start with Jill.

MS. GROSS: So, you've just asked a question that I could spend about an entire semester on with my students.

MR. STORRING: Right, it's a big one.

MS. GROSS: There has certainly been huge changes in the structure of cities over the last 30 years. Increasing responsibilities have been shifted downward to communities. And communities have increasingly been asked to partner with a much wider range of actors, public, private, nonprofit. And in that process, we create a much more diverse terrain of decision making, but also a much more difficult terrain to navigate given that complexity.

Placemaking, in my view, emerged really around the question of how we turn space management into place management. And do to that, we have to really think through how we humanize spaces and how we bring voices into that process.

MR. STORRING: Great, thank you. Great, thank you. This is, yeah, it's not on anymore. I'll just say, Gladys, could you respond? What do you think the value is that these organizations bring to cities?

MS. KAMAU: I would say that there are lots of different values that the organizations

bring to the cities. The unfortunate thing, though, is that we work in siloes, and which is something that this book addresses. And having that fractured approach, we see that it hampers neighborhood progress and can result in unintended consequences with cascading impacts on neighborhoods and, of course, small businesses.

MR. STORRING: Excellent. Thank you. And, Joy, is there anything you'd like to add about, you know, what the value is?

MS. MOSES: Well, definitely there are things that are happening at the hyperlocal level that is not reached by higher levels of government. Obviously, we're here in Washington, D.C. A lot of us have spent a lot of time focused on federal policy. It's just not going to reach some of the day-to-day issues that people are facing on the ground. And they need to have answers. And it also fosters communication amongst all of those different players. So, I think that's the importance of it.

MR. STORRING: Right. So, the interesting thing about all of your responses is it's like there's this sort of tension, right, where on the one hand, we have some abdication of responsibilities that's being downloaded to nonprofit organizations that are often trying to figure out how to fund raise and all of that. But on the other hand, there is some value in having a person or an organization that's really close to the ground working across some of these siloes and trying to coordinate in this very place-based sort of way. So, I think that's one of the key tensions when we were looking at place governance as a sort of regime that's emerging or has emerged over the last 30 years, let's say.

So, let's see, Gladys, in your work, what have you found to be some of the greatest challenges or weaknesses of place governance as an approach to managing urban space?

MS. KAMAU: It's exactly what you just said. We had a pilot project that we conducted as part of District Bridges. And the challenges was basically working with all of the different actors. And we found as to what you were saying right now to your point, is as we served as the people on the ground coordinating with all the different actors, we were able to move along the projects.

It's not easy because we understand that there are many things that sometimes are not actionable and measurable. We struggle with funding, for instance, where sometimes the funding

absolutely stops. So, when the funding stops, the work stops, but we cannot stop doing the work.

MR. STORRING: Yeah, great point. Jill, you know, from your perspective, right, your chapter focuses a lot on bids and the sort of the, you know, tensions within them, right, both the values and the challenges of bids. So, as one type of this place governance arrangement. Could you talk a little bit more about sort of how bids structured generally, and how they can act as these builders, breakers, or erasers, as Jennifer was saying.

MS. GROSS: So, business improvement districts, in a nutshell, are self-taxing, self-help groups. But the vast majority of bids are legally structured by municipalities to weight power towards property owners. And when we look at bids in smaller communities especially, we often find that property owners are absentee. And so, they may lack some of the ties and connections to the population to the neighborhood.

Bids also go through cycles. They are a part of growth processes. And that's both what they're trying to achieve, but it may also be the greatest challenge for them to respond to. Because with growth comes change. With change comes new voices. And that really pushes a great deal of weight onto these hyperlocal institutions to figure out new ways to bring these voices together. And those voices aren't just the owners of property, but the users of those spaces as well.

So, when we think about these hyperlocal places, we can be talking about property owners, but we can also be talking about the homeless population, right? There are many, many different entities within. So, the contradiction, they're empowered to promote growth, but that very same growth is constantly changing their stakeholder base. And the skills to do those kinds of participatory processes are time consuming and generally not valued in most economic development processes. So, it creates quite a challenge for neighborhoods in transition.

MR. STORRING: Yeah, you use this great phrase in the chapter, which is that I believe you say that business improvement districts are sort of built on shifting sands, right? And like you say, their mission is to create a certain kind of change, but then that change can also make governance more difficult and sometimes not quite aligned with the reality on the ground.

Gladys, I'd like to ask, do you feel like this pattern of sort of the difficulty of change, is that something that you've experienced in your work?

MS. KAMAU: Yes. There's definitely the difficulty of change. As neighborhoods, as you said, as neighborhoods are shifting, neighborhoods are changing, demographics are changing. But we also do have people who have been there, and we want to maintain the look and the fabric of what we have, as we have been doing in Columbia Heights, for instance. There are countless community-based organizations out there that do a lot of great things in the city. We just need to talk to each other and work together.

MR. STORRING: Yeah, that's a great point. I mean, again, there is some sort of structural aspects of say business improvement districts or any of these types of organizations that are there. But there are also things that we can do in practice, right, through the management side of an organization to change who we're engaging and who we're serving.

All right. I'd like to turn to Joy. So, your chapter focuses on the tensions and opportunities between place governance and efforts to end the homelessness crisis. Could you speak a little bit about why is it that unsheltered people often are, you know, congregating in public space using public space? And what role could these organizations that are responsible for managing those spaces play in ending homelessness?

MS. MOSES: Sure. I guess I'll start by saying there are certainly unsheltered people in public spaces, but there also are sheltered people. So, I'll talk about the issues that touch both groups.

Essentially, we have a huge unsheltered population in America because as might be implied, we don't have enough shelter. The investments that we currently have in homeless services leave about over 200,000 people without a shelter bed each night in America. So, due to that, we have a lot of people who are just they don't -- unlike other people in public spaces, they don't have any other choices. They have nowhere else to go.

We also have people who are in shelters and there are various shelter rules that limit the time that they could spend in those spaces. Essentially, demands related to staff time, and maintenance

of facilities, cleaning, et cetera, leaves a lot of organizations asking people or forcing people to leave during daytime hours and to fill their time elsewhere, which is going to typically be in public spaces.

So, I guess in answer to your question, Nate, there are two major reasons we're going to see people experiencing homelessness in public spaces. The first being we don't have enough shelter. And the second that we don't have the resources to make -- we don't have enough resources to make spaces available to them in the daytime even if they have a bed at night.

MR. STORRING: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And so, for the organizations that are responsible for sort of maintaining, and programing, and designing these spaces, what role could they play in supporting the people that are already using their public space?

MS. MOSES: Sure. So, Elena and I went through a process of having roundtable discussions in different communities in different parts of the country, San Francisco, Atlanta, and New York City, and we talked to them about this about these issues. Certainly, there's a lot of work to be done everywhere. No place is perfect but it's good to start the discussions.

Things that we identified as being helpful are first, building the bridges that I mentioned earlier. Oftentimes, there are people who work with homeless individuals and there are people who work in place governance organizations, they speak a different language. They have different acronyms. They don't understand the objectives, each other's objectives, and the pressures on each. So, a big recommendation is just to start to form alliances and start to have the conversations.

A second thing that we identified is, I guess, based on, I guess, stopping some negative action, to be honest, from happening. As you can imagine, with people experiencing homelessness in public spaces, there's often concerns about how is this impacting people coming to our business or coming to our park? Does this group of people make these spaces less attractive? And that often leads to strict enforcement efforts that could involve the police or security. Those things have tended not to work for either side of the issue. For the place managers, it doesn't end the homeless problem. It doesn't keep homeless people out of your space. They still exist and they still don't have a place to go.

And, of course, for the people who are working with those experiencing homelessness,

it's not effective because now you have some of your population in jail when they shouldn't be. Jail and criminal records mean that it's harder for them to get out of homelessness. Those things make it harder for them to rent units, to get jobs, et cetera. So, no one is benefiting. So, we first of all, want to stop that type of harsh action and enforcement actions.

We talked with communities about other more proactive things, or prosocial things, I should say, which could include creating places for people to be. Not saying you cannot be in a public space because that's public spaces are everyone. But sometimes people don't want to be in public spaces. They want to have other places to go. Other places to go can also be valuable connection points for services.

So, we talked about drop-in centers. There are various drop-in center models across the country. The three cities that we spoke to were considering them in different forms. And that's like for the folks in New York City in Times Square, they had an idea for having like some of their unused storefront space to be hubs for social services providers to connect with people experiencing homelessness. Places for people to be able to use the bathroom, those types of things. Or just to rest, to sit down and watch television, for instance, because everybody else has the option of doing that at some point during the day, why shouldn't people experiencing homelessness. So, we talked about creating drop-in centers and how people could work together to do that, finding the spaces, setting up the spaces, facilitating that.

And then I'll just mention one other thing. There's a number of emerging models for actually involving people in space management. Various types of models and organizations have, for instance, hired people experiencing homelessness to help with maintenance of spaces. Cleaning spaces, helping to manage spaces, working with people who are experiencing homelessness in those spaces. That allows people to become invested in the neighborhoods in which they're in, in your place management goals, and of course, provides employment and other types of opportunities to connect and find some purpose for people who are experiencing homelessness.

MR. STORRING: Thanks for sharing that, Joy. And, you know, I think homelessness is such an important example as well of how place management touches all of these different issues, right?

All these different stakeholders, right, as Jill was saying. As soon as you start, even if the goal primarily, let's say, is economic development, as soon as you start interacting with public space because it's so complex, right, you start interacting with all of these other issues that play out there. Whether it's homelessness or sustainability and resilience, right? Or, you know, just the sort of liveliness of public space. And so, I think, you know, your chapter was such an amazing way to dive deep into one of those issues and all of the different stakeholders that are needed to really start addressing how it plays out in those spaces.

Before we open it up to questions, I'm going to ask one final question to all of our panelists, which is what is one way that policy makers could strengthen the way that place governance is supported or regulated in our cities today? So, let's start with Joy. I'll throw it back to you again.

MS. MOSES: I really do think that they should be a part of conversations about making those spaces accessible without penalizing people experiencing homelessness. Policing, obviously, has been a big issue. And part of big social justice conversations in recent years, I think that place organizations can be a part of that. I think if they support those efforts, if they support efforts to connect people to mental health and other services, as opposed to having them picked up by the police, that goes a long way.

MR. STORRING: Thank you. Gladys?

MS. KAMAU: I think policy makers definitely need to invent and scale new forms of shared ownership and resources.

MR. STORRING: That is short and sweet and to the point. And I think that's absolutely right. They can play that kind of role of looking across all of the hyperlocal geographies. Jill?

MS. GROSS: And a nice softball over to me. Again, because my lens is bids, I think that governments need to mandate wider representation on the governing boards of business improvement districts, as well as mandating more regular engagement with the larger communities surrounding them in constructing identities and ideas of the changing place.

MR. STORRING: Right. So, I think that's the sort of double-edged sword of it is that on

the one hand, we need more resources, right? And we need to actually account for how much it costs to do this work well, right, and support it. And then on the other hand, we also need to demand some accountability, a little bit more accountability than what's there right now with a broader sort of group of stakeholders representing, right? Excellent.

Well so, now, I'm going to open it up to questions from the audience. Again, the folks in the room, you're welcome to ask a question. You can just raise your hand and Karen will come around with a mike. And we'll also be taking questions online. So, again, if you want to ask a question, you can either Tweet @BrookingsMetro with the #hyperlocal or #hyperlocalrelease. Or you can email events@brookings.edu. All right. Any questions?

MS. SLACHETKA: So, the first question was submitted from one of our audience members viewing on the Webcast. So, I'm going to read it on behalf of that person. So, that question is, could you please speak to the role of anchor institutions in local planning and investing in human capital in infrastructure to further revitalization.

MR. STORRING: Great. Would anyone like to speak to that in particular? I have some thoughts, but. Okay. I'll jump in. So, you know, in our work with the Brookings Institution, we've actually looked a little bit at anchor districts in particular. And I think that anchor institutions provide, they're just a different kind of governance stakeholder. They have slightly different point of view than say like commercial property owners or business owners.

They're still self-interested. Every stakeholder has a self-interested side, but they tend to be a little bit more long-term in their horizon of self-interests. They are often there for 100 years, right? And so, maintaining a positive relationship with the community is very, very valuable to them. That's one thing.

They also have unique resources too, right? So, for example, they can provide -- in University City district in Philadelphia, for example, they have a really strong focus on procurement policies, right? Anchor institutions are big buyers. So, who are they buying from? They could be buying local. They could be focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion in their procurement. And same goes for

hiring, right? So, how do you bridge the gap between local capacity to fulfill those needs of hiring and procurement? And then also the policies that are keeping people out right now. So, there's a lot of different ways that anchor institutions can play a role but they're unique partners when you're taking about district management.

SPEAKER: Thank you. Great panel. I have two questions. One for you, Nate, and one for the panelists. You know, you can argue that much of the civil rights legislation of the '60s was an argument that local governance structures and hyperlocal governance structures did not serve Black communities. How did you treat that sort of nefarious view of hyperlocal organizations, particularly as it pertains to the hoarding of resources or not distributing them equitably?

And then for the panelists, I just want you to take a more optimistic view in terms of that. How can hyperlocal organizations disrupt the persistent patterns of particularly hoarding of resources? And if you could use a particular context, say water boards in Jackson, or something like that. You know, how can hyperlocal institutions improve the state of democracy?

MR. STORRING: That's a great question and a really tough one. But I think that in the book, a lot of what we were trying to do is catalog exactly the way that that's happened, right? That is the context that we're looking in right now is that it is incredibly unequal, and along lines of race, along lines of class. And so, the first job is to kind of really categorize all of these different organizations how they're distributed unequally and why that is.

And so, I think, you know, we don't necessarily have any magical answers to that. But I think that there are a lot of really good case studies that you can look to that we talk about in the final chapter that really start to think about how to, you know, bridge resources across organizations and geographies, for example, right? We talked about 3CDC, you know, bridging across the downtown area to over the Rein, using like TIF districts to help redistribute some of that value.

But also, I think there's a strong role for government to play, you know. Again, I don't think that this is something that can happen just by nonprofits working at this hyperlocal level. I think that we need to recognize the actual, again, the value that needs to go into these organizations in order for

them to reach broader geographies. And then making sure that the governance is actually accountable when they are in those geographies.

So, again, I wish I had a better, a sort of like more visionary answer, I guess, to that question, but I'll pass it off.

MS. GROSS: So, there are good news stories, as well. This is suddenly starting to power down. Yeah, I think that was -- there are good news --

MR. STORRING: We're good. I think you're good.

MS. GROSS: There are good news stories. And that was actually what brought me into the field and study of business improvement districts. There are some very small bids, certainly a New York case, that have been very instrumental in bringing not just new business to the area, but really recognizing the value of trust and of social capital and of these other resources in communities.

And I think it's even more evident in the aftermath of COVID. You're really starting to see organizations recognize at the most local scale, the critical importance of empowering building capacity, about really unifying and bridging communities, not only bonding them amongst themselves, but bridging them also to higher levels of government. And you definitely see that in some bids, not all.

MS. MOSES: I'll just say I suppose on some level, there's a recognition amongst people working with people experiencing homelessness or just thinking about racial justice that these entities exist. And so, therefore, we have to find ways to work with them. They're not all doing good things. I think that's what we came into the effort in the project knowing and trying to address. But it's like the fact that that is true does not mean that you can't engage with them. You kind of have to because they are there, and they exist.

And I definitely think there is temptation from the perspective of my group to just think in terms of the people experiencing homelessness and like the business improvement districts. And there's so many other people who are part of the hyperlocal community who can be there to -- just people who are invested in their own community can be there to help, hopefully, reduce some of the -- or help to address racial injustice and economic injustice issues. I think we just have no choice but to keep working

on it, yeah.

MS. KAMAU: There we go. At District Bridges, what we have found to work for us across the six Main Streets that we work with it's the economies of scale. We understand that we are limited, but we cannot ignore what's happening outside. What's happening outside over business corridors is impacting our businesses, which is what we are asked to do. That's our task. But we simply cannot ignore our neighbors.

You know, people often say their problems, you know, the people -- especially in the Columbia Heights Plaza, it's 100 percent of the residents, the people who are there, the unsheltered population, are all alcoholics. So, when you're doing economic development work, where do you start dealing with that? When a business calls you and says we are not going to sign our lease again because of the issues that we are seeing outside.

It's not the people that are problems, it's people who are having problems. And as a Main Street organization, though that's not our charter, we don't deal with food insecurity, housing insecurity, we acknowledge what's happening outside. And through the pilot programs that we are starting right now, we are trying to address some of those issues.

MR. STORRING: I just had two more thoughts on this. I think one thing we should be looking more at as a lever of change is authorizing legislation, right? That's something that is not -- we don't talk about as much because it's kind of obscure. It's just happening at the state level in this quiet kind of way. But it structures the way these organizations are governed, the way they're funded, and those are really the root of the sort of some of the structural problems we're talking about.

The other thing I would say is that some of the same tools that are used for hoarding can be subverted to be used to redistribute value, right? And so, you know, I've mentioned the 3CDC example, that's one example. But there are others too where, you know, like a TIF district or a bid or any number of these things that we often associate with hoarding is actually something that can be used to redistribute. It just depends on who's involved. You know, what are the incentives? What's the accountability? All of those kinds of the devils in the details, I guess.

All right, another question?

MR. LINEBERGER: Yes. Chris Lineberger, a friend of Brookings, used to hang my hat here. Nate, it's great to see you.

I divide place management into two camps, local serving, serving primarily neighborhoods, and regionally significant. And bids tend to be, though not up in New York, many of those 75 are actually local serving, but most of them are regionally significant. They have pretty substantial tax bases that the property owners voluntarily increase their taxes to pay. And so, their budgets go from a minimum of \$1 million per year to roughly 10 million. There are some that are in the 10 to 20 million. There are some outliers that are 40 to 50 million.

Local serving place management, I don't know how they scrape together the cash at all because their tax base is not great and these are mom and pop shops generally that have to pay, you know, if you have a tax base, you know, a property tax base. So, could you discuss because it's fundamentally -- it's a tale of two place management organization types. And then finally, have you seen any models of regionally significant place management organizations partnering with local serving?

MR. STORRING: Feel free to jump in.

MS. GROSS: So, the terrain of bids is all encompassed certainly in New York. Although, I've looked at this also in other parts of the U.S. So, in New York, the smallest bids have budgets of about \$120,000. And it's the smallest bids that are often having to do the most work. And the incentives, I think you're absolutely right, the incentives especially for those at the most local level, are much more challenging.

Small bids also if you look at the structure, they have to spend a much higher proportion of their budget on administration because their board of directors are also lacking the skills that the larger bids have, right? You go into the big bids, they have lawyers, bankers, government officials. The smaller bids really are lacking in this. So, they are really under much greater pressure.

At a regional scale, that's also difficult, right? I've looked at the efforts to create regional collaboration in the New York Metro region. New York and New Jersey may occasionally collaborate on

things. We do have regional bodies, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, but they behave as competitive entities. The actors within are competing with one another.

Are there examples? There are certainly examples internationally. There are some domestically. Some of it is discussed in that last chapter by Nancy in the book. But I think that you really hit on one of the critical challenges. We are asking those that have the greatest need, the least amount of resources, and we are asking them to do a lot. So, the collaboration beyond collaborations between business and government, but rather business, government, and nonprofits, and social service providers. We need to cast, I think, a bigger net and we need to have the resources allocated, perhaps from government, to enable those at these lower ends of the economic scale to have the capacity to do what we ask them to do.

MR. STORRING: Gladys, this seems right up your alley. Would you like to speak to the question?

MS. KAMAU: Well, we're on the opposite side of the scale where we are scraping to do the work that we need to do. No one asked us to do this work. We just had to do it. We could not ignore what's happening in our corridors.

The other thing is when it comes to funding and asking policy makers, it's we really do need a dedicated stream of funding with continuity for long-term impact so we can have long-term results. In addition to that, we also cannot be fully dependent on the government. As you all know, as place keepers in place management, sometimes not all money is good money. And by that, I mean that there are instances where you do get funded and then, like I mentioned earlier, it stops, and we've seen that happen. Or there are delays with the funding. And then that's when you have the unintended consequences of your funding stream.

MR. STORRING: Can I ask, you know, a little about so, District Bridges, you know, is exactly this kind of collaboration but more focused on smaller Main Streets. Is that correct?

MS. KAMAU: That's correct.

MR. STORRING: Right. And so, what kinds of services do you provide across all of

these Main Streets? Because it seems like it dovetails a little bit with what Jill was saying about the sort of costs of running these organizations.

MS. KAMAU: Absolutely. Thanks for that question. We definitely, like I mentioned earlier, we use the economies of scale. We are in different neighborhoods in four different wards, 10 different commercial corridors. Every corridor has different needs. The needs that we're identifying right now in Columbia Heights are different from what we see in Chevy Chase, for instance. They're different from what we see on the U Street corridor, for instance.

So, what we do is we take the funds that we have and the way we run our operations is we have place keepers who rotate throughout the different corridors addressing specific needs. And definitely working on relationships and partners so we can leverage where we don't have to, you know, really pay people to do extra things and just partnering with folks who are like-minded. I like what -- there's a phrase in the book that said, we all share the same DNA. And though we may say that this is not our mission, it is our mission. We share the same DNA.

MR. STORRING: Love that. All right. I think we maybe have time for maybe one or two more questions, so.

MS. SLACHETKA: I've got two questions from the Webcast audience, and you can pick and choose --

MR. STORRING: All right.

MS. SLACHETKA: -- which one you want to answer. The first is from -- now I lost it in my sheet here. Okay. This first one is from Gabriel Hirschhorn from Emory University. And he asks, how can place based governance systems help mitigate gentrification? And the second one comes from Laura Muldoon from School of Cities at University of Toronto asks, how can place governance organizations work effectively with local governments to better represent residents' needs?

MR. STORRING: All right. Does anyone want to jump in? Joy?

MS. MOSES: Maybe in a little bit.

MR. STORRING: No problem. Anyone? Any takers?

MS. GROSS: I need to be refocused again.

MR. STORRING: Okay. Well, I can speak maybe a little bit to the gentrification side because it's something that comes up a lot in our work. I think when we think about gentrification, I think it's helpful to kind of break it into two chunks, right? There's an economic side to it, which is just about affordability and not just housing, but also, you know, businesses and services, all that kind of stuff. And then there's also a cultural side, right, which is about whether people feel welcome or not. Whether they feel like their environment reflects them personally, reflects their culture, their values, reflects the things that they remember from their neighborhood. And so, I think that when we're talking about these kinds of organizations, they can play roles in both of those sides.

So, you know, from the placemaking side, which is mostly what we focus on, I think it can play a very strong role in the cultural side of kind of ensuring that a neighborhood continues to reflect, you know, the history of that neighborhood, the people who still live there. And sometimes that can happen in the face of economic pressures, right? Where people might be out migrating. You know, when they move, they're not able to stay in that neighborhood. They're moving to another neighborhood. But you can kind of push back against that from a cultural standpoint.

And then I think that there's also some economic tools that we have around ownership models in particular, right? Whether it's shared ownership models that might actually take some things off the market effectively. So, they're not for sale like community land trusts. Or just community-based models of ownership that actually do create value for the people who are, you know, investing in that property. And again, we have a case study about that from Portland, Oregon, I believe, in the last chapter of the book.

So, that's a little bit. But again, it's ultimately this is gentrification's kind of a macro problem, I think, even though it plays out at the micro scale and it's also a collective problem. It's something that actually we need to like organize politically around to have an effect on. Jill?

MS. GROSS: Yeah. I mean, just picking up on that as well. And thinking about business improvement districts, business improvement districts Balkanize communities as well, right? If

you have 75 of these organizations in a city, they're focusing in on their own locality. And what we're talking about especially with displacement, is the idea that maybe there needs to be a bit more collaboration across bids to recognize the shared commons of the city as a whole for all users.

At least from the lens of bids, the system tends to push against bids collaborating unless they're in larger entities. So, there are now certainly in New York, there are some bid management groups that couple together two or three, but they're still competing with the other 70-odd in New York. So, there is also this larger structural problem that's tough to overcome but may require new demands that cross organizational collaboration.

MR. STORRING: Gladys, Joy, anything to add?

MS. KAMAU: No.

MR. STORRING: Okay. All right.

MS. MOSES: I think that --

MR. STORRING: Well, I think we are actually at time just about on the spot, so.

MS. MOSES: Okay.

MR. STORRING: I'd like to thank you all for joining us today. And please do buy the book. You can preorder it online. I believe you can purchase it here today. Is that correct?

MS. SLACHETKA: In our bookstore just down the hall.

MR. STORRING: In the bookstore just down the hall. So, if you're here already, you can get it immediately. So, that's exciting. All right. Well, thank you and thank the panel for -- the mike. Thank you. All right, thank you, and have a great day. Hope to see you soon.

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