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## Evolution of place-based governance in the management of development dilemmas: long-term learning from Małopolska, Poland

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In this paper, we reflect on the evolution of place-based governance from a long-term (15 year) study of rural development initiatives undertaken in a region of Poland as part of its accession to the European Union. We decompose the recursive process of institutional learning arising from initiatives for heritage preservation and rural economic development. In our analysis, we elaborate a typology of unavoidable development dilemmas that must be explicitly managed in order to allow place-based governance to effectively harness the cultural value, social context, and developmental needs of certain locales or landscapes. Although creating and sustaining local value remain contingent on broader realities of governance, proactive management of these dilemmas can help prevent many of the usual contestations around goals and identity from becoming intractable in later periods. Our proposed approach to enabling place-based governance emphasizes conflict recognition and engagement as important complements to more common prescriptive models of governance.

**Keywords:** place-based governance; regional development; value creation; Poland; development dilemmas

### 1. Introduction

Cultivating the unique or place-specific value of different locales or landscapes increasingly requires that people explicitly reflect upon and engage in debates about valorizing local landscapes, products, or experiences that may have been taken for granted (Barca, McCann, and Rodriguez-Pose 2012; Horlings and Marsden 2014; Van der Ploeg, Jingzhong, and Schneider 2012). To put it simply, preexisting local characteristics that have potential for new products, tourism, or industry can only be leveraged for development purposes if they are recognized and discretely acted upon (Donner *et al.* 2017). The process through which this takes place has, and will continue to, exhibit enormous variation, which arises from local culture, politics, and capacity (Ryser and Halseth 2010). However, when framed as a product of governance with a place-based orientation, can some consistent and actionable elements be distilled from this immense worldwide variation to help advise local development? In this

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paper, we take a step in this direction by consolidating governance lessons from long-term case studies in Poland that exhibit such generalizable sticking points. From this, we put forward an adjusted approach to place-based governance that is less prescriptive, while embracing and accommodating inevitable forms of conflict.

Where the concept of place-based governance departs from other more singular debates, is in the manner in which a locality is transformed; it should not be bound *a priori* by any mechanisms, but rather emerge from an inclusive and reflexive process of spatially and contextually adapted governance (Marsden 2009; Van Assche and Hornidge 2015). This shifts attention from local government or governance on to broader constellations of stakeholders of certain place-based features (landscapes, products, experiences, etc.) that emerge as potential candidates for planning and intervention (Barca, McCann, and Rodriguez-Pose 2012; Go and Trunfio 2012). Such constellations are invariably more diverse and contingent than political arrangements typical of local governance, such that prescriptive models of planning are only occasionally aligned with local realities (Sinclair 2008). Consequently, it is routinely necessary to foster a planning approach in parallel that is *equipped to deal with the common tensions* that arise when existing place-based features are harnessed for value creation (Van Assche, Beunen, and Oliveira 2020).

In this paper, we therefore explicitly represent place-based governance as an arena: conflict is not only unavoidable, it should be accommodated as an intrinsic element of mobilization (Hernik, Gawroński, and Dixon-Gough 2013). Many actors at different levels may disagree on certain issues or even on the fundamental basis for intervention. However, in showing how and why conflict is unavoidable and even inherent to place-based governance, we uncover common characteristics and a consistent formulation of tensions that potentially can be predicted and managed.

In proposing such an active conflict resolution constituent of place-based governance, we are mindful of studies such as George and Reed (2017) that try to disentangle *post hoc* the characteristics of successful place-based governance, but our findings point toward a more recursive process of encountering and managing structural constraints commonly encountered in governance contexts. According to Sinclair (2008), achieving conciliated governance outcomes invariably introduces certain tensions, some of a more intractable nature (i.e. contradictions) and some of a manageable nature (i.e. dilemmas). In his description of decentralized local planning partnerships in Scotland (Community Planning Partnerships) and England (Local Strategic Partnerships), Sinclair (2008) describes how tensions arise not only between the immediate actors, but are fundamental to certain arrangements due to their conflicting mandate. When contradictory expectations, such as “strong leadership” and “equal partnerships,” are imposed, local authorities face a series of dilemmas in facilitating rural development partnerships. Swiftly enact policy or perpetuate dialogue? View community engagement as a central or additional duty? Openly express autonomy from the central government or conform to national performance goals? Given the fundamental aspect of such dilemmas, it is perhaps not surprising that they arise in a plurality of local governance contexts. Needless to say, the capacity to effectively and proactively respond to such dilemmas, rather than being blindsided by them, would be an important resource. Indeed, the relevance of the term “dilemmas” (as opposed to the more intractable “contradictions”) was put forward by Sinclair (2008) to denote governance problems that *have the potential to be resolved* – a basic requirement if we aim to improve governance outcomes.

It is in this spirit, that we distill in this paper three dilemma ideal-types comprising a wide variety of individual conflicts that have emerged in the evolution of place-based governance in the Małopolska region of Poland over a period of 15 years.

1. The stakeholder dilemma: reconciling the needs and preferences of nominated local stakeholders with the unarticulated needs and preferences of disempowered stakeholders, including extra-local and extra-temporal actors.
2. The growth dilemma: reconciling heritage or “conservation”-focused development with the expectation of sustained economic growth.
3. The framing dilemma: reconciling proposals that lead to more universal and recognizable outcomes with proposals that are more complex, indirect or long-term.

Notably, these three dilemmas are not unfamiliar features of the rural development literature, with similar issues featured at various moments in Marsden *et al.*'s (1993) seminal book, *Constructing the Countryside*. One might also observe that, more generally, these dilemmas reference the school of new regional geography, as well as separate strands of scholarship on elite capture, multi-stakeholder partnerships, collaborative governance, endogenous development, territorial capital (Horlings and Marsden 2014). These dilemmas are not unique to the cases we evaluate (Furmankiewicz, Thompson, and Zielinska 2010; Furmankiewicz and Macken-Walsh 2016), nor is Poland unique in its expression of these dilemmas, as they also appear in numerous evaluations of rural development projects supported by the same EU program (Wellbrock *et al.* 2013). In this paper, we demonstrate how this typology emerged from empirical observations in Poland over a period of 15 years and how it can be applied to proactively diagnose dilemmas and pre-empt the unfolding challenges of place-based governance.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we situate the concept of place-based governance within the broader landscape of theoretical and practical approaches to local development, including heritage, cultural landscapes and spatial planning. Second, we describe the case studies in Poland, how their governance evolution has been documented over the years, including the encounter and attempted resolution of development dilemmas in each case. Finally, we close by discussing the wider application of this conflict-resolution model for facilitating place-based governance worldwide.

## 2. Place-based governance worldwide

Rural development and redevelopment have remained vexing issues in much of the world, including rich European countries with committed public resources. A profusion of policy forms has been used for rural development, including but not limited to military investment, prisons, health care policy, education policy, farm subsidies, housing policy, and fiscal policy, encouraging companies to settle in rural areas (Van Assche and Hornidge 2015). Within this large variation, a recurring theme used in numerous policy formulations has been the combination of spatial planning, often some form of landscape and heritage preservation, and different forms of linkage between place and product (Barca, McCann, and Rodriguez-Pose 2012; Van Assche and Lo 2011).

In this paper, we focus on the subset of policy approaches that try to link place and product (or experience) in such a way that the development strategy contributes to the preservation of the place with its mix of cultural and natural elements (Marsden

2009). As this link cannot be stable for a long time (Guttman 2007; Van Assche, Beunen, and Oliveira 2020), keeping the discussion open about what to preserve and what to develop becomes essential, ideally in a participatory arena where reflection on local value and internal mobilization can take place.

In contrast, many out-of-the-box models in discussions of local rural development are skewed or weighted in a certain direction, often privileging conservation or development (George and Reed 2017). The various models for parks and local product certification systems often imply certain trajectories or frameworks of development that can hinder dynamism, create path dependencies, or are themselves a source of contestation (Bonanno, Sekine, and Feuer 2020; MacKinnon *et al.* 2019). Instead, we place emphasis on illuminating more open governance forms that could work across a wide range of cases. We do not identify *a priori* an "optimal" form of local rural governance, nor a particular relation between preservation and development, or between product and place. Our aim is to investigate the possibilities of place-based value creation that pre-empt or minimize tensions and conflicts that undermine development. From the literature and experience, it is clear that this will likely require careful attention to the three dilemmas identified, and that it will entail a multi-level structure. With regional governance structures stabilized through proactive identification and intervention of development dilemmas, policy "packages" can be enabled to enhance place-based value creation, which can in turn engender more local governance or governance around products or landscapes (e.g. Sonnino 2007; Van Assche, Beunen, and Lo 2016). Regional parks in France are an early pioneer of such an endeavor (FingerStich and Ghimire 1997). And in general, France, Spain and Italy provide examples of early attempts to simultaneously strengthen regional images, attract tourism and certify local-regional products (Donner *et al.* 2017). The UN Food and Agricultural Organization's landscape heritage classification, or Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Sites (GIAHS) tries to encourage governance structures that explicitly package together ecological and social development with value creation.

### 3. Research area and methodology

This paper derives from a research area in southern Poland (Małopolska) that has been continuously studied and re-analyzed since the initial data were gathered in the period after Poland's accession to the EU (2003–2005), with each stage of analysis focusing on different priorities suited to the timeframe of the data. The initiatives in Poland were partially funded through broader schemes in the EU focusing on rural revitalization and cooperation, particularly Interreg and LEADER.<sup>1</sup> Our initial research was part of a project focusing on the potential for the concept of cultural landscapes to be used in the protection and preservation of both prominent and less-prominent municipalities, with early findings published in previous stages (Hernik 2008, 2009, 2012). The eventual goal of studying this research area was to analyze the long-term (nearly 20 years in some case) evolution of place-based governance. The stages of this research can be summarized as following:

- A. conceptualization of the protection and preservation of cultural landscapes and historically important rural features (2003–2008)
- B. analysis of short-term value creation of project interventions (2009–2012)
- C. analysis of long-term (place-based) governance (2013–2019)

Table 1. Research activities in Stage A of the project (2003–2008).

Research activity	Municipality of Miechów	Municipality of Wiśniowa
Interviews with municipality executive	25	32
Interviews with councilors	12	19
Interviews with residents	8	11
Interviews with decision-makers	2	7
<u>Documents reviewed</u>		
local zoning plans	20	7
spatial development strategy document	1	1
municipal development strategy	1	1
cartographical materials	93	28
historical materials	12	36
land and property register	35	7
tourist maps and guidebooks	32	47

Table 2. Research activities in Stages B and C of the project (2009–2019).

Research activity	Municipality of Miechów	Municipality of Wiśniowa
Interviews with decision-makers	5	4
Field visits and direct observation	2	2
Review of media coverage	10	10
<u>Documents reviewed</u>		
local zoning plans	1	7
spatial development strategy document	2	3
municipal development strategy	1	2

The comprehensive initial data gathering for Stage A set a baseline for subsequent follow-ups in later years. These early data were gathered and analyzed using a mixed method approach that included interviews across a wide range of stakeholders, a review of media and cartographic material, and direct observation (see [Table 1](#) for a summary). In subsequent data gathering periods, including 2009–2010 and 2017–2019, more targeted data were gathered primarily from preexisting key informants (interview, telephone updates), direct observation (follow-up visits), and review of media and policy documents (see [Table 2](#) for a summary). As this paper builds upon the previous cycles of analysis, only a summary of past methods is provided here.

In particular, the analysis for Stage A is based on empirical studies carried out from 2003 to 2005 in the municipalities of Miechów (Miechowski District) and Wiśniowa (Myślenicki District). [Figure 1](#) displays a map of the research sites in Poland. The empirical value of the selected cases was evaluated on the basis of their diversity (in terms of local resources and territorial capital) as well as the characteristics of the intervention (funding line, type of project, theme). As can be seen in [Table 1](#), we strove to cast a wide net of perspectives that would allow us both a policy perspective of the intervention and a local perspective of residents, media and nearby stakeholders. Research for Stage B (2009–2010) as well as Stage C (2014 and 2019) have followed this lead, albeit in a more focused manner, by following up not only with local authorities and project implementers, but also with local residents and interested outsiders, in addition to completing renewed reviews of media and planning documents (see [Table 2](#)).



Figure 1. Research sites in Poland (open source from the Polish Department of Geodesy and Cartography, adapted by authors).

This paper, therefore, should be seen as the final reflection on more than 15 years of governance shifts, as they evolved and re-oriented in response to various development interventions sponsored by local, state, and European initiatives. With major project funding and “project durability periods” for EU co-funded projects long elapsed, this paper is now evaluating areas that have come to something of an equilibrium, such that the long-term governance dynamics come into sharper relief. Indeed, as the related development projects have already been evaluated more generally in reports by the EU (most notably, Panteia 2010; European Commission 2017), our contribution in this paper is less of a reflection on the perceived success or failure of these projects but rather a deeper consideration of the lessons for place-based governance.

#### 4. Governance pilot projects in Malopolska, Poland

Responding to claims that many rural Polish communities have under-utilized the unique space-based value inherent to their landscapes (Palang *et al.* (2006) speak of *forgotten* rural landscapes in Eastern Europe), an EU-funded pilot project to promote “cultural landscapes” in specific regions of Poland was completed (Hernik 2009). In early conceptions, cultural landscapes have been regarded mainly in terms of the passive protection and preservation of historic structures and landscapes (Dixon-Gough, Hernik, & Dixon-Gough 2011). Over time, it became more common to engender more active forms of protection that contribute to gradual, forward-looking local and regional development (Gunder and Hillier 2016). As a basic premise, the appraisals of the EU-funded program emphasize that the landscape can not only serve as a protected good of historical and environmental significance, but should also offer the potential for local and regional development (Hernik

2012). What follows below is a characterization of the individual projects' context, goals, and results. The different tensions that arose are, in each case, mapped out in tables across the three development dilemmas, with each dilemma broken down into its practical and conceptual form.

#### **4.1. *Miechów: renewable energy center***

The urban-rural transition municipality of Miechów (Miechowski District, see [Figure 1](#)) is heavily dependent on the cultivation of cereals such as wheat, barley, oats, and rye, but this has been increasingly viewed locally as a poor long-term economic basis (Hernik 2008). While new entrepreneurial sources of income have slowly arisen, arable land accounts for approximately 96% of land use, which suggests that placebased value creation must invariably engage with agriculture in some way. The Interreg project in Miechow attempted to address this condition by exploiting the fact that grain farmers produce an excess of straw, which they can re-use or recycle. Processing the straw into pellets transforms this excess product into a renewable energy source. Prior to the project, oat (straw) furnaces drew the interest of the farming community after the mayor of Miechow visited Sweden in 2004 to consider a promising model for import to the area. Because the alternative is for farmers to burn large quantities of excess straw in the fields every year, converting the straw into more user-friendly pellets appeared to be a logical direction for the project. In the meantime, a successful Ecological Fair and growing interest in energy innovations suggested that the community could also use an energy education center. The concept was to have a central location, operating like a rural mill, that processed raw materials for private needs and provided information on energy issues. Importantly, and in contrast to locally contentious wind turbine initiatives, this intervention was intended not to disrupt the scenic landscape of grain cultivation, thereby maintaining the landscape and farm heritage.

Ultimately, a Renewable Energy Center was constructed and initially processed pellets, but quickly fell into disuse. Although renewable energy, including photovoltaic panels and home oat (straw) furnaces became popular, the Center faced unexpected forms of opposition. As a municipally administered project funded by the EU, the mayor leveraged the project to gain recognition as a leader in renewable energy. The politicization of the Center encouraged local leadership to advance the project quickly, despite lingering technical questions from farmers about its long-term utility, and from a faction of dissenters led by a local pastor, who claimed that it was immoral to convert scarce food into an energy source, even though no edible grains were targeted for conversion (a growth dilemma, see [Table 3](#)). This initial momentum was cut short by the subsequently elected mayor who presided over the final construction of the Center, and who was not interested in burnishing his predecessor's image (a stakeholder dilemma, see [Table 3](#)). By passively working to subvert the project by limiting its financing and discouraging local participation, the facility was completed with inferior pelleting technology and limited capacity, thereby realizing the doubts of local farmers (a framing dilemma, see [Table 3](#)). The possibility of repurposing the Center, such as by allowing a private entrepreneur to take over, was pre-empted by the use-restrictions imposed by the EU subsidy for the first 5 years. The Center was eventually leased only for educational events. Although there was hope to transform the Center when the use-restrictions were lifted, the focus on renewable energy had long been



Table 3. Development dilemmas in Miechów.

Development dilemma	Conceptual dilemma	Practical dilemma
Stakeholder	Renewable energy as a political, rather than technical undertaking	Subsequent political administration unincentivized to maintain predecessor's momentum in a project
Growth	Project momentum contested by lingering doubts about long-term relevance	Core stakeholder (farmer) and peripheral stakeholder (pastor) present technical and moral questions about core activity
Framing	Ownership as local resource undermined by top-down implementation	Farmers not encouraged to demand accountability for the technical and usability aspects of the project

discarded and the Center, in the words of a local dweller, “is working, but only as a building.” The Center was briefly leased to a foreign company but has otherwise remained dormant, with the municipality unsuccessful in selling the facility on multiple occasions.

#### 4.2. *Wiśniowa: the Lubomir Observatory*

The rural municipality of Wiśniowa is in a scenic area of forests and mountains that are favorable for agritourism and outdoor recreation (see [Figure 1](#)), but has struggled to draw tourists without a defining attraction or identity. One feature that held potential for attracting tourists was the historic observatory built in 1922 on Mount Lubomir, which had been in ruins since World War II. Prior to the war, the observatory was important to local identity and to the history of science, as two comets were discovered there. The location was ideal from at least two perspectives: for tourism purposes, it was not far from the metropolis of Krakow; for scientific purposes, the atmosphere on the mountain was still suitable for astronomical research. Furthermore, the observatory had remained in the consciousness of the locals as a positive memory. As a potential for creating place-based value, the mayor of Wiśniowa proposed reconstruction of the observatory in 2003, with regional and national funding coming from 2004 to 2006. The project hoped that the tradition of the observatory would be resurrected in such a way as to create multiplier effects in the local economy, based on the successful model of the Wieliczka Salt Mine, also near Krakow. However, it was not the first time that the idea to revive the observatory had surfaced; plans to reconstruct the observatory in the 1950s were forsaken, among other things, due to a lack of funds and commitment in the Soviet era. As this project has by now generally been considered a success, it is important to consider how the project was conceived, presented, and implemented.

From the outset, the reconstruction efforts for the observatory aimed to mobilize a wide base of actors (a stakeholder dilemma, see [Table 4](#)). From a national perspective, the goal was to valorize the contribution of Polish astronomy and serve as a focal point for school and university activities. And from a local perspective, the observatory was to serve as an anchoring attraction for tourists, a gateway to “astronomical

Table 4. Development dilemmas with the Lubomir Observatory.

Development dilemma	Conceptual dilemma	Practical dilemma
Stakeholder	Drawing in external stakeholders while satisfying primary local stakeholders	Making site accessible to tourists, schools, and researchers while engendering local pride and economic knock-on benefits for locals to compensate for nuisance
Growth	Divergent expectations about value of heritage and tourism vis-à-vis quality of life	Second-home owners and nearby residents use-value of their land is destabilized by tourism side-effects
Framing	Engendering tourism and historical use-value that do not contract pastoral rural value	Balancing values of quiet rurality and financial concerns with intangible patriotic historical values



Figure 2. The Lubomir Observatory (Source: Authors).

tourism,” agri-tourism, and even architectural tourism. Even though the shape of the modern observatory is different than the original (see [Figure 2](#)), its use of local materials and landscape has won a few national and regional architecture awards.

The stakeholders initially split into a wide range of supporters (e.g. church, teachers, politicians, and municipal authorities) and a narrower (but perhaps no less important) group of dissenters who claimed that the project would not fit the current rural atmosphere of the local area. Included in the latter group were many who lived close to the construction site and would be impacted by dust, noise and the presence of workers, and by subsequent tourist traffic (a stakeholder dilemma, see [Table 4](#)). Promoters did their best to address these issues and, after completion of the project,

it became a destination for hikers along a famous trail (rather than only car traffic), spawned a local restaurant, and became involved in a bilateral project with Slovakia (Carpatian Sky) promoting regional astronomy. More tourists came than were envisioned, which has made the area famous domestically and internationally, but this demanded tolerance by local retirees and second homeowners in the area about some related problems, such as parking, traffic, and litter. Furthermore, the project is not financially self-sustaining and relies on more than 50% of its budget from the district government (a growth dilemma, see [Table 4](#)). When a landslide destroyed the observatory's access road in 2010, only two years after the building was completed, there were resurgent misgivings about urgently rebuilding the road. However, after initial hesitation, local stakeholders agreed to a reconstruction effort. Over time, many of the initial dissenters changed their opinions and, to some extent, realized that the observatory was indeed a source of unrealized local pride, while being less of a nuisance than expected (a framing dilemma, see [Table 4](#)).

#### 4.3. *Wiśniowa: recreational reservoir*

In many parts of Wiśniowa, the sub montane location, mild climate, natural beauty and abundance of wildlife have encouraged municipalities to explore outdoor recreation and sports as a strategy for place-based value creation. One prominent opportunity was the reconstruction of an historic reservoir that was once the center of recreation in the area. Historically, an abundance of local small businesses and scenic natural features attracted school trips and vacationers from the whole region. This reservoir is remembered fondly by many in the local population, despite the fact that poor maintenance during the socialist era ultimately soiled the water. Many local people understood the potential reconstruction of the reservoir not only as an investment in suitable recreational tourism, but also as a reclamation of heritage destroyed during the transformation.

Support from the EU helped to galvanize the project, and local support was generally available, but promoters underestimated the need to explicitly recruit certain stakeholders and address the place-specific issues that led to the historical decline of the original reservoir (a stakeholder dilemma, see [Table 5](#)). Already at the level of planning, the project began to face headwinds. The planned area of the reservoir could not be secured, as the owners of the various plots were not keen to sell them at a reasonable price. Ultimately, the reservoir was built but only on an area of 0.68 hectare (see [Figure 3](#)), which was too small for water sports and vulnerable to ecological deterioration if not managed carefully (a growth dilemma, see [Table 5](#)). Immediately after, other coordination problems emerged. Nearby landowners began over-charging for parking spaces and for water intake from a private aquifer (a stakeholder dilemma, see [Table 5](#)). As the reservoir became increasingly divisive rather than optimistic, a change in the local politics led to an about-face of commitment to develop the reservoir (a framing dilemma, see [Table 5](#)). Politicians opposed to the project hampered efforts to build proper sewage for the nearby area, further limiting its functionality.

Attempts to salvage the project by leasing it to private entrepreneurs was hindered by EU subsidy prohibitions that circumscribe commercial uses for at least 5 years. The first entity who managed the reservoir operated for three years but, lacking basic sewage system and water pipes, found it difficult to even operate public toilets and basic restaurants. To make matters worse, the historical tragedy repeated itself when the lack of sewage system caused the water quality to decline to such a point that swimming

Table 5. Development dilemmas in the Wiśniowa reservoir.

Development dilemma	Conceptual dilemma	Practical dilemma
Stakeholder	Value of recreating an historic space and future economic multipliers were undermined by simplistic economic rationales	The idea of creating a hub for recreation was undermined by local landowners with a view to exploiting the construction of the reservoir
Growth	Threshold ecological requirements for comprehensive human use were not met	Failure to acquire sufficient land and sewage access precluded many recreational activities
Framing	Struggle to enhance recreation that meets historical and symbolic expectations	Nostalgic visions for a recreational wonderland had to be repeatedly revised and downgraded, eroding political support



Figure 3. The reservoir in Wisniowa (Source: Authors).

had to be discontinued (a growth dilemma, see Table 5). After the first contractor resigned from managing the reservoir, the community struggled to find a suitable manager until a local fishermen's group, which understood the site's limitations, took over. By 2019, although not matching the original vision of promoters, the reservoir could provide basic recreational functions like barbecuing, and fishing and, with exception of the usual nuisances of litter and noise, is considered a reasonably positive asset by local residents and stakeholders (a framing dilemma, see Table 5).

## 5. Confronting development dilemmas in place-based governance

The Polish cases show project planning and conceptualization to be highly contingent on local context while implementation dynamics, which invariably include tension and

conflict, share many fundamental commonalities. The idiosyncratic conflicts in each case arise from more universal dilemmas, which we mapped out conceptually and practically in Tables 3–5. In this section, we describe how the dilemmas identified above were originally distilled from the cases in Poland and why this typology of dilemmas is sufficiently comprehensive to evaluate many place-based governance initiatives emerging worldwide.

The activities in Miechów and Wiśniowa demonstrate how leveraging the place-based value of certain locales or landscapes is fraught with governance challenges comparable to wide range of rural development initiatives. Although the case of the Lubomir Observatory in Wiśniowa concluded positively from the perspective of many stakeholders, we also demonstrated that even it faced numerous internal and external struggles to reach some compromise, such that the development dilemmas were as transparent as in less successful cases. This suggests that development is invariably, or perhaps inherently, a process of conflict resolution, which can be managed more efficiently by proactive engagement with likely development dilemmas, and concomitant attention to interlinked scientific, economic, legal and political contexts.

### 5.1. The stakeholder dilemma

The task of reconciling stakeholders of a territorially-anchored project is chiefly concerned with identifying the (extended) world of relevant actors and bringing their views into the realm of the project. Participation must be molded around existing power structures from both within and outside the area in question (Nelson and Wright 1995). Indeed, some stakeholder groups can only be articulated in the abstract (e.g. tourists, end-users, future politicians, etc.) while other seemingly minor groups may eventually play an outsized role. An important consideration is recognizing that place-based governance dynamics will be incumbent on the long history of the local area, which includes not only the different constellations of power, but the political ideologies and social mobility associated with the area (Barca, McCann, and Rodriguez-Pose 2012; Kavaratzis 2012). This often manifests in the disproportionate influence of some stakeholders – those who, for various historical reasons, hold the cards.

This influence was most visible in the case of the Wiśniowa reservoir, but can also be found to various degrees in the cases of the Miechów renewable energy project and the Lubomir Observatory. In the case of the reservoir, a generalized sense of enthusiasm and support for the project and its goals masked the fact that the relevant landholders and water authorities were the most critical stakeholders for getting the project off the ground. The presumption that these groups would generally be on board was perhaps not a bad one, but this caused planners to underappreciate *the degree* of their willingness to compromise with all demands of the project. Finally, project promoters were able buy some of the proposed land, but not all, and some of the intended water features, such as sewerage, could not be secured from uncooperative authorities. Underappreciating small pockets of opposition also led to the breakdown of the Renewable Energy Center. In that case, overt interest by cereal farmers in oat (straw) furnaces gave the local mayor the impression that the project would be embraced and unfold without controversy. Ultimately, the minimal sense of ownership extended to farmers and the disregard for moral/religious objections, which were eminently resolvable, created ruinous headwinds for the project implementation. What is additionally shared between these two cases is that each group underestimated the strength

of another absentee stakeholder, namely the EU. The rules governing noncommercial project usage (stipulated in the EU funding) ultimately provided major stumbling blocks for salvaging the reservoir and Renewable Energy Center. Overall, poor gauging of opposition, or unwillingness to consider a wide range of stakeholders, created a path-dependent cascade of challenges throughout the project implementation.

The Lubomir Observatory project resolved this dilemma better and for this reason it is useful to analyze how this result was achieved. At face value, the observatory was a riskier investment for the local community compared to recreational reservoir or straw pelleting facility because it had a relatively diffuse stakeholder base; indeed, because it was not a productive (i.e. financially self-sufficient) infrastructure project, it relied on delivering positive renown to the area hosting a famous landmark and a few basic multipliers from tourism and education visitation. Indeed, failed proposals to reconstruct the observatory in the socialist era suggest that the outcome was not obvious – rather, it required the alignment of stakeholders and planners, and adequate conflict resolution mechanisms. Since the observatory had low inherent value for local residents and second-home owners, expanding the stakeholder base was a potential way of demonstrating the broader value of the observatory. This extended stakeholder base included tourists, hikers, student groups, and astronomers from outside the area. Creating an institution that was respected and utilized by these groups, but also delivered benefits to local stakeholders, required project promoters to gain acceptance for a more complex initiative with fewer directly tangible benefits. Furthermore, managing the scale and usage of the observatory to avoid irritation to second-home owners, retirees, and other indirect stakeholders would emerge as a secondary challenge.

A critical aspect of proactively managing the stakeholder dilemma is that, while shaping a landscape and erecting unfamiliar structures can often be controversial, maintaining and nurturing these changes without continuous local support is even more challenging. The EU encourages applicants for project funding to actively consider the “project durability,” which requires enough stakeholder buy-in for projects to persist uncompromised for at least 3–5 years after funding ceases. The case of the landslide impacting the access road for the Lubomir Observatory showed how vulnerable such an investment would be without continued support from the community. Particularly in cases where certain stakeholders hold key points of leverage, it is critical to actively include their participation. The reservoir does not work as expected without land and certain basic infrastructure (sewage, water pipes, electricity). An observatory is just a building unless it is recognized by architects and astronomers. The Renewable Energy Center in Miechów, which could have been part of a broader surge in interest in ecology in the region, must actively cultivate ownership to ensure durable political commitment and subsequent participation.

### **5.2. The growth dilemma**

The essence of the growth dilemma is that interventions, which were initially considered locally respectful, may become malignant if they are forced to grow beyond a scale appropriate to the local context. This might be characterized as an intractable “contradiction” rather than a reconcilable dilemma, as it often appears impossible to align the preservation of place-based value with the expectation of indefinite value creation (Ryser and Halseth 2010; Sinclair 2008). The growth dilemma is also often considered intractable because it compromises long-term viability of projects already at

the planning stage, as certain visions (e.g. tourism vs. production) often preclude other types of development. Landscapes that rely to a large extent on natural capital for their attractiveness and perceived value are particularly vulnerable, including wilderness parks, historic quarters, and archaeological sites. While sustained growth is not necessarily inconsistent with appropriate local development, the dilemma becomes more acute as the governance process begins to lose its place-based orientation. Stakeholders may find themselves asking the following question: Is the underlying goal the preservation of the area (through value-creation) or the creation of value (through preservation)?

The most demonstrative example of the growth dilemma is that of the Wiśniowa reservoir, because its recent struggle mirrors the decline of the historical reservoir. The ecological health of the reservoir in both the historical and contemporary cases served as the barometer for success of the surrounding recreation project. Moving forward on the project without securing a larger reservoir area with higher inherent capacity for pollution remediation nor basic sewage facilities resulted in a sub-optimal path dependency that limited potential for recreational development. Ultimately, an end-user with low ecological impact, namely a fishermen's group, could utilize the reservoir for recreation but hopes were dashed for the wider recreational use nostalgically envisioned by local promoters. Although incidental factors can be put forward as well, such as the socialist context in the decline of the historical reservoir, or the capitalistic context of the contemporary reservoir, the inability to plan in a growth model that allowed for the maintenance of water quality suitable for swimming represents an insufficiently long planning horizon. To effectively leverage the place-based value of the reservoir area, a minimal threshold of growth (allowing water sports, dining, tour-ism) had to be built into the governance process.

The growth dilemma and its rocky path toward resolution are also visible in the case of the Lubomir Observatory. Here, the success of the landmark for attracting outside visitors created the nuisances that dissenters feared. While no major ecological damage can be attributed, an accumulation of complaints about finances, traffic, noise, litter and other tourism-related impacts was articulated by second-home owners and retirees who were largely among the original dissenters of the project. It appeared as if their original claim, that the observatory would negatively impact the quiet rural character of the area, was coming to fruition. The gaps in support became apparent when the community and authorities showed initial hesitation in fixing the Observatory's access road after the landslide. The reconstruction of this road re-opened space for airing opposing views about the suitability of a busy tourist attraction in a small community with many retirees and second-home owners. With dialogue concerning fair use of the area more forcefully opened, previously unheeded warnings about growth of tourism eventually led to agreements for respectful management of the Observatory.

The case of the Miechów Renewable Energy Center is, in turn, a more subtle display of the various ways in which growth limits impinge on the viability of a project. While rising energy prices and ecological considerations meant that biomass was likely to become a popular source of energy for oat farmers, the biomass energy production was to rely on a local resource (excess straw) that was declining along with farming in the local area. If agriculture were to shift structurally (away from straw-producing cereals) or decline (in production volume), the straw pelleting facility would become underutilized. With such a limited mandate, the resilience of the Center was under threat from the outset. A project with a more general mandate could evolve beyond this narrow focus, such as by complementing the self-sufficiency dimension of straw

pelleting with logistical support for other renewable energies (like photovoltaic) that were becoming popular.

### **5.3. The framing dilemma**

Appeals to simplified, usually economic, forms of value are usually the easiest to plan, monitor, and promote. Inherently, however, the incentives and decision-making associated with place-based governance are driven by idiosyncratic social, historical, and political factors (Barca, McCann, and Rodriguez-Pose 2012; Van Assche and Lo 2011). While promoting local solidarity, communal spirit, and “traditional” values cannot be taken for granted, it is important to consider how intangible or complex benefits arising from an initiative are framed and balanced against more direct forms of value. As discussed above concerning the stakeholder dilemma, creating place-based value requires consideration of a wide range of viewpoints and motivations. It is often impossible to reward every project stakeholder with tangible benefits, such that effective place-based governance depends upon presenting and balancing the potential benefits and drawbacks in terms that are valued by the various stakeholders. Often, this means ascribing non-economic forms of value to project outcomes that are acceptable in lieu of economic value, or which are viewed as suitable compensation for disparity in the distribution of rewards. Since value here is created subjectively, effective place-based governance entails framing potential (non-economic) value in socially aware ways.

Raising awareness and educating people on the meaning of local landscape features or characteristics is therefore a common obligation for project development. This was evident most prominently in the case of the Lubomir Observatory, where the local pride, identity, and traditions associated with the historical landmark were sufficiently fostered in the project development and were validated by the popularity (in schools, universities, and research institutes) of the new site. This strategic orientation differed in the case of the Miechów Renewable Energy Center, wherein the prevailing support for ecology in the area was politicized by the local mayor and rendered devoid of place-based meaning. As a top-down project, it failed to use public interest in ecology to cultivate ownership, which could have helped reframe the project to more durable themes that were already receiving interest, such as local sufficiency, innovation, and cost-saving.

The framing dilemma was perhaps most underappreciated in the case of the Wiśniowa reservoir, where a clear place-based mandate (the reconstruction of a famous natural feature) was undercut by the rejection of the project frame by two key stakeholders. Here was a chance to articulate place-based value in the creation of a buzzing historical hub of recreation activity, which would have knock-on benefits for the local economy, including nearby landholders, and eventually the local municipal budget. Instead, however, the project was perceived in its most basic sense: a source of tourist revenue contained within the project. From this perspective, nearby landholders wanted to keep potentially valuable land for later sale and local water authorities wanted to wait until new tax revenue from the project justified new infrastructure investments. Ultimately, the short-term optimizing of a few stakeholders arising from doubts about the project frame enfeebled the initial construction and subsequent utility of the reservoir, leaving only petty revenue sources such as parking fees and a project whose scale and end-users (fishermen) generated little tax revenue. As the framing dilemma came into sharper relief for promoters of the reservoir, so did their willingness (and need)



to compromise on their vision, which allowed for incremental governance evolution and a stable (if sub-optimal) end result.

## 6. Conclusion

After more than 15 years of research following the governance evolution of case studies of local development, we conclude that cultivating place-based value requires a discrete engagement with each place *and its invariable tensions*. Our framework for facilitating place-based governance is based on the well-documented phenomenon that conflict or tension are an inevitable part of the process (Sinclair 2008), but we consider that their basic form is common enough to predict and prepare for. As we have highlighted from cases of rural development projects in the Małopolska region of Poland, doing so requires explicitly seeking out the context-specific manifestations of these development dilemmas and managing them proactively. Not only can this preempt or diminish conflicts but can also help to avoid situations in which dilemmas graduate into more intractable contradictions or initiate suboptimal path dependencies (MacKinnon *et al.* 2019; Sinclair 2008). And while we suggest that management of these dilemmas should be proactive, prescriptive models or more generic best practices for place-based governance, such as those described in George and Reed (2017) can play a role. Nevertheless, the invariable emergence of development dilemmas should be addressed using a forward-thinking, sustained and dynamic governance process. This form of place-based governance must focus on framing and anchoring nontraditional forms of value as a way of winning acceptance and interest by a variety of stakeholders, not all of whom will always benefit tangibly or directly. Furthermore, the value-creation that is derived from growth and expansion should have a limited horizon or be amenable to adjustment as certain scales are reached or growth plateaus. More specific suggestions for diagnosing and managing these dilemmas are described below:

1. The stakeholder dilemma: engagement with stakeholders must simultaneously be local, as well as extra-local and even extra-temporal. Stakeholders can be drawn in either as a consequence of their direct relevance (as gatekeepers or beneficiaries) or their complementary contribution (as legitimizers or technical advisers).
2. The growth dilemma: attention must be paid to the scope of economic potential when balanced against the social and ecological identity of each place. Disproportionate expectations for tangible benefit are likely to lead to conflict over reward sharing or the undermining of shared ideals for preservation.
3. The framing dilemma: creative effort must go into cultivating value for both universal/recognizable outcomes and more complex, indirect or long-term outcomes. Here, value creation involves both shedding light on and creating tangible value but also creating subjective value to compensate for disparities in benefit perceived by various stakeholders.

One clear lesson that arises from the analysis of the various conflicts among the case studies in Małopolska is the utility of explicitly making (wide-ranging) value recognition an early priority in the governance process. While some forms of value are fairly easy to recognize (tradition, local history, patriotism), and others are fairly straightforward to hold (jobs, infrastructure, and economic value), more effort must be

expended to valorize alternative forms of place-based value – forms that can be used to balance value deficits in other domains or for other stakeholders. This is the inherent dilemma behind framing: opening space for subjective value creation; but this lesson is also a relevant way to manage the other two dilemmas. If we see the goal of development as value creation, and especially value creation *associated to place*, then we also need to more thoroughly discover the variety of stakeholders and their potential values (Guttman 2007). While policy cannot be fully steered and predicted, the viability of hard-fought and technically-sound policies often rests on their ability to mobilize value appropriate for different stakeholders, and to do so in a sustained manner.

Finally, from the examples in Poland, we see place-based governance as a recursive process involving conflict de-escalation, learning, and adjusting expectations or compromise. Few situations produce objectively win-win outcomes, and questions of sustainability and benefit redistribution remain fraught in even the best of cases. The answer is not, we believe, to exclude politics and try to replace it with seemingly objective or expert science (Van Assche and Hornidge 2015), but rather to keep frames of value creation open for debate, while taking care to diagnose and dynamically insert conflict resolution modalities into long-term governance. In other words, conflict cannot be avoided, but must be managed, and such management can be institutionalized, even made part of governance. Indeed, we found that conflicts can in some cases be made productive. Proactive conflict management, understood as risk management around certain common dilemmas, thus lies at the heart of our proposed approach to place-based value creation.

### Note

1. Interreg: European Territorial Cooperation program, since 1989; LEADER: Links between actions for the development of the rural economy (French acronym), since 1991

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