



A Place-Based Approach to Urban Policy: Reflections from the Prodamas Program in Kediri, Indonesia

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Abstract

In the context of rising urban inequality, this article explores the potential of place-based approaches to urban development, using the Prodamas program in Kediri, Indonesia, as a case study. Prodamas is a city-funded initiative that allocates direct funding to neighborhood units (RT) to enable communities to plan and implement development projects tailored to their specific socio-spatial contexts. This study analyzes policy documents and empirical research on Prodamas, illustrating how it applies place-based principles within a decentralized governance framework in the Global South. It offers insights into how this hyperlocal policy mechanism operates effectively, emphasizing the roles of participatory mechanisms, administrative coordination, and institutional adaptation. Prodamas helps people get involved in their community, encourages cooperation between different sectors, and supports local ideas for urban development. This empowers the community in shaping their urban environment. However, it faces governance challenges like limited community capacity, regulatory rigidity, and political vulnerability.. This paper argues that long-term and scalable place-based initiatives require financial commitment and an institutional ecosystem that fosters adaptive learning and power sharing. It deepens the theoretical and practical discourse on how place-based strategies can advance effective and equitable urban governance in complex and decentralized situations.

Keywords: *place-based approach, urban policy, prodamas, governance*

Paper type: *Research paper*

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Received: 6 August 2024; Received in Revised from 13 August 2024; Accepted 24 April 2025; Available online: 26 April 2025

Cite this document: Tauran, T. (2025). A Place-Based Approach to Urban Policy: Reflections from the Prodamas Program in Kediri, Indonesia. *The Journal of Society and Media*, 9(1), 320-341. DOI: 10.26740/jsm.v9n1.p320-341.



INTRODUCTION

The need for more responsive and context-aware policy interventions has become critical in an increasingly unequal urban world. The traditional "one-size-fits-all" policy paradigm, spatially blind, has often failed to address disparities. These uniform approaches ignore the diversity of local needs, conditions, and capabilities, resulting in ineffective or even counterproductive outcomes. As a response, a growing body of literature and practice has emerged around the concept of the place-based approach. This paradigm prioritizes specific geographic locations' unique characteristics, assets, and policy design and implementation challenges (McCann 2023; Taylor et al. 2017). Place-based approaches are a potentially invaluable tool for governments to address intractable problems in specific locations (Beer 2023; Fritsch et al. 2023).

Place-based approaches to urban policy rest on the fundamental idea that effective development strategies must be grounded in the realities of place. Rather than imposing top-down solutions, place-based policies emphasize localized, participatory, and integrated interventions tailored to each community's social, economic, and environmental contexts (Rodríguez-Pose and Wilkie 2017). Place-based policies aim to deliberate endogenous resources, promote social innovation, and enhance local governance by engaging a broad set of actors, including government, civil society, businesses, and residents, in collaborative development processes. These approaches have shown potential in addressing entrenched inequalities, fostering inclusive growth, and improving the overall resilience of communities.

A key feature of the place-based approach is its emphasis on calling on local capacity to manage local resources (Sotarauta 2020). When communities actively identify their needs, set priorities, and manage development resources, the resulting interventions are more likely to align with local realities and be sustained over time (Oyewo 2024). It creates space for a wider range of voices (Beer 2023), enhances the legitimacy of decision-making, and builds social capital by fostering networks of trust and cooperation among local actors (Rong et al. 2023).

The rise of place-based thinking also reflects a broader evolution in development theory, from focusing on exogenous growth models toward a more

nuanced understanding of the importance of local institutions, capabilities, and innovation systems (McCann, 2023). Place-based development is not merely about decentralization but about recognizing the spatial dynamics of power, opportunity, and knowledge (Borén and Schmitt 2022a). This means designing flexible policies adapted to diverse contexts and supporting local experimentation, learning, and capacity building.

In the context of urban policy, this shift is particularly significant. Cities are complex systems characterized by heterogeneity in resources, needs, and vulnerabilities. Uniform policies often fail to respond to these differences, leaving disadvantaged neighborhoods behind. In contrast, place-based urban policy enables city governments to develop targeted responses, whether in housing, infrastructure, education, or economic development, based on the specific conditions of urban sub-regions. Moreover, place-based strategies promote equity (Eckenwiler 2016; Reno et al. 2021). Intentionally directing resources to areas with the greatest need contributes to territorial justice.

Given its highly decentralized governance system and wide regional disparities, Indonesia provides a fertile ground for applying place-based approaches. Since the enactment of regional autonomy laws in the late 1990s, local governments in Indonesia have been granted considerable discretion in designing and implementing development programs. However, the effectiveness of these decentralized initiatives has varied significantly (Negara and Hutchinson 2021; Talitha et al. 2020), depending on local leadership, institutional capacity, and community engagement.

One of the current prominent examples of a place-based approach in urban Indonesia is the Community Empowerment Program (Program Pemberdayaan Masyarakat or Prodamas) in Kediri City, East Java. Initiated in 2014 by the city government. Prodamas represents a bold attempt to embed development at the neighborhood (Rukun Tetangga or RT) level. By allocating direct funding to each RT, amounting to IDR 50 million per year, the program empowers communities to identify priorities, plan projects, and manage implementation processes. Activities funded under Prodamas span a range of sectors, including infrastructure, health, education, economic empowerment, and environmental management. Importantly, the program is designed around participatory planning, accountability, and adaptability principles.

Prodamas has gained national attention as a replicable model of grassroots-driven development. It is widely studied by Indonesian scholars of public administration and urban governance for its innovative mechanisms of budget allocation, citizen participation, and local oversight. However, as with many place-based initiatives, it faces implementation challenges, including administrative burdens, uneven neighborhood capacity, and questions about long-term sustainability.

This article examines how the Prodamas program embodies the principles of a place-based approach to urban policy. It explores the conceptual foundations of the place-based approach, analyzes the design and implementation of Prodamas, and examines the challenges and lessons derived from Prodamas for governing place-based initiatives in Indonesia and beyond. By reflecting on the experience of Kediri, the article seeks to contribute to ongoing debates about how cities can pursue development strategies that are efficient, effective, equitable, and context-sensitive.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach (Creswell and Creswell 2018). To investigate how the Prodamas program in Kediri City adopts the principles of a place-based approach to urban development. Referring to the typology described by Browne et al. (2019). This study fits the mainstream orientation method for policy analysis, emphasizing the role of policy actors, institutional arrangements, and governance dynamics. This orientation is well suited to examining the multi-actor and multi-level governance structures that characterize place-based interventions such as Prodamas. This study is best categorized as qualitative descriptive, where the study does not simply attempt to prescribe optimal policy solutions (as in traditional rationalist models), it explores how and why Prodamas has been conceptualized and implemented, and by whom. The aim is to understand the real-world dynamics of place-based governance through empirical observation and policy interpretation.

Data were collected using a combination of policy document analysis, research reports, and academic literature. Thematic analysis was conducted based

on the core principles of place-based governance identified in the literature. Data were coded and categorized to assess how these principles were reflected in Prodamas' design and practice. Furthermore, drawing on insights from Browne et al. (2019), this study critically reflects on how power, values, and institutional norms shape the outcomes of place-based initiatives and formulates key lessons for improving the governance of place-based initiatives going forward. This study moves beyond surface-level evaluations to consider the political and social processes underlying Prodamas. This methodology provides a powerful lens through which to examine Prodamas not only as a policy instrument but also as a reflection of urban governance and evolving citizen-state relations in decentralized Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Foundation of the Place-Based Approach

The modern concept of the place-based approach gained theoretical traction in the 1990s and 2000s through scholars like Bolton, Fabrizio Barca, Philip McCann, and Andrés Rodríguez-Pose. Bolton (1992) revived the longstanding debate of 'place prosperity vs. people prosperity', a term coined by Louis Winnick to describe the debate over designing policies to help people and places in economic depression. Bolton suggests 'that 'sense of place' is relevant to the policy debate, as sense of place is a factor in regional and local identity and is an important form of intangible capital that has positive externalities' (1992). Two decades later, Fabrizio Barca, Philip McCann, and Andrés Rodríguez-Pose (2012) flourished the discussion and challenged the dichotomy between "people-based" and "place-based" policies, arguing for "people in places" as a more realistic framing. Based on experiences of developing countries and the European Union, they argued that development interventions should increasingly prioritize efficiency and social inclusion over territorial convergence. Effective strategies should account for economic, social, political, and institutional diversity to unlock local and overall development potential fully. While there is no single definition of a place-based approach, discussions consistently highlight the following features (Klepac et al. 2023): collaboration between multiple stakeholders; including the community in decision making; responsiveness to community priorities/needs/issues;

understanding the place and valuing local knowledge addressing complex issues in a specific geographic location; and alignment across existing programs and alignment between those involved in a place-based approach in the form of a shared vision.

The place-based approach has evolved in response to shifting understandings of spatial inequality, poverty, and governance. Its early practices lie in the settlement house movement of the late 19th century, such as Hull House in Chicago, where services were embedded within marginalized neighborhoods to address local needs. In the United States and the UK, it was not until the post-World War II period that national governments began experimenting with urban renewal and community development as formal policy frameworks, often top-down and criticized for displacing vulnerable populations. The 1960s marked a turning point with the U.S. Community Action Program and Model Cities, and later the rise of community development corporations (CDCs), which emphasized grassroots empowerment. This period also introduced the idea of maximum feasible participation and shifting some control to local actors. However, these efforts were often underfunded and failed to address systemic issues (Taylor et al. 2017; Turner 2017).

In Indonesia, the urban development trajectory has embraced place-based principles that prioritize community involvement, localized planning, and contextual sensitivity. One of the earliest and most influential examples is the Kampung Improvement Program (KIP). This program began in Jakarta in the late 1960s and expanded nationally in the 1970s and 1980s. Unlike conventional slum clearance models, KIP focused on upgrading in situ infrastructure, such as roads, drainage, and sanitation, within existing urban neighborhoods without displacing residents. This in-situ upgrading approach respected the kampungs' social and spatial fabric. It was also making KIP a pioneering place-based urban policy in the Global South (The-World-Bank 1995).

Following the decentralization reforms of the early 2000s, the Indonesian government introduced the PNPM Urban Community-Driven Development Program, which adopted place-based principles. PNPM Urban allowed neighborhood-level planning and community groups' direct control of development

funds. Each urban neighborhood (kelurahan) could propose and implement projects based on local needs and conditions, supported by trained facilitators. This participatory and flexible model emphasizes community empowerment and capacity building, which are adopted from principles of place-based development (The World Bank 2013).

In 2015, the Indonesian government initiated the Cities Without Slums Program (KOTAKU), building upon PNPM's foundations. KOTAKU adopts a neighborhood-based approach to improve housing and infrastructure conditions in urban slums and integrates social, economic, and environmental components into the development project. Notably, KOTAKU requires each neighborhood to develop a detailed Local Settlement Development Plan (RPLP) that reflects the area's unique challenges and opportunities. Though it is a nationally standardized program, its implementation relies heavily on local governments' responsiveness and residents' participation. Its design and implementation make KOTAKU a strong example of scaled place-based practice (Valentina et al. 2022).

In parallel, the revitalization of kampung areas in Jakarta has signaled a more progressive interpretation of the place-based approach (Winarsih 2021). Projects such as Kampung Aquarium, once evicted and later rebuilt with full community participation, illustrate a shift toward inclusive planning and social justice. Residents collaborated with architects, NGOs, and local government to co-design their housing and public spaces, ensuring the redevelopment preserved cultural identity and met actual community needs. This participatory co-production departs from technocratic, top-down approaches and underscores the relevance of place-based governance.

Analysis of Prodamas through the Place-Based Framework

The Prodamas program in Kediri City represents an embedded example of place-based policy. Since 2014, Prodamas has allocated annual development funds directly to neighborhood units (Rukun Tetangga or RT), consisting of 30 to 50 households, to enable the community to identify priorities and manage projects ranging from infrastructure to economic empowerment. The program's design gives trust in local knowledge and collective action in the development of their area. It illustrates how the city government empowers communities to co-create development outcomes tailored to their socio-spatial realities (Perwali Kediri No.

32/2021). These initiatives demonstrate Indonesia's gradual but substantive shift toward place-based urban policy. They reveal a growing recognition that sustainable and equitable urban development must be grounded in place-specificities, engaging residents not merely as beneficiaries but as co-producers of their urban futures.

Local Context.

Prodamas is deeply rooted in the local context of Kediri, which is evident in its design and implementation mechanism. The program recognizes the significance of spatial and social variation within urban settlements by targeting the neighborhood unit (RT). Each RT is granted the autonomy to identify, deliberate, and propose its development priorities. The deliberation begins with structured community meetings where residents express their concerns and aspirations. These discussions are facilitated by RT and community association (Rukun Warga or RW) leaders and supported by local government facilitators. The participatory planning process results in proposals submitted to the municipal government for verification and funding, as regulated in Kediri Mayor Regulation No. 32/2021. The regulation states that one of the objectives of Prodamas is to help the community identify problems and articulate their needs. It is crucial to review the aims of the program in its written policy document to start clarifying the policy's intentions, providing a foundation for evaluating its design and implementation. These formal aims outline the fundamental goals and purposes the policy seeks to achieve.

The absence of a uniform project template ensures that each neighborhood can prioritize issues most relevant to their environment, whether related to basic infrastructure, public health, education, environmental sustainability, or socio-economic development. As mentioned in the Prodamas policy document, Prodamas activities include a) procurement, construction, development, and maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure within the RT/ RW area and b) community empowerment within the RT/ RW. The planning is carried out in stages to formulate this activity, starting from the RT level. At the RT level, activities are carried out through 1) The RT Head carries out Prodamas dissemination to the community; 2) The RT Head holds a community discussion to determine the proposed annual

activities that are aligned with the proposed five-year activities that have been planned; 3) The RT Head inventories/records the proposed activities based on the priority scale of needs resulting from the community discussion; 4) The RT Head submits activity proposals or procurement of goods resulting from community discussions based on priority order containing the type of activity/ work and volume of activity/work accompanied by minutes of community discussions addressed to the Mayor c.q. The *Lurah* (Urban Village Head).

At the community level (RW), the RW Head coordinates and combines planning proposals from each RT in its area. Meanwhile, at the sub-district level, the sub-district Head coordinates and combines activity proposals that span RWs in one Sub-district and sends a recapitulation list of activities to the Sub-district Prodamas Plus Coordination Team. In its implementation, the data that we found showed that the Prodamas programs were specific according to the local context, so the Prodamas programs implemented in each RT varied greatly. The variation in project types across neighborhoods reflects how Prodamas allows for policy flexibility based on spatial differentiation, one of the core ideals of local context sensitivity in place-based policy frameworks.

Integrated and Multi-Sectoral

Prodamas represents a shift from fragmented sectoral programming toward integrated development. The program's scope extends across multiple domains, including physical infrastructure, education, health, economy, social welfare, environmental sustainability, and youth development, creating opportunities for holistic interventions. Instead of requiring separate proposals to different government offices, Prodamas consolidates planning and budgeting under one program, streamlining service delivery while addressing interconnected issues.

This integration is particularly evident in how RTs combine several initiatives within a single annual development plan. The integrated and multi-sectoral approach is explicitly stated in the Prodamas policy document (Kediri Mayor Regulation Number 32 of 2021). The regulation states that one of the objectives of Prodamas is to facilitate the development of environmental facilities and infrastructure and improve community welfare through economic, social, educational, health, and youth activities. The regulation also stated that Prodamas activities in each RT include a) procurement, construction, development, and

maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure within the RT/ RW/ sub-district and b) community empowerment within the RT/ RW.

For example, in the infrastructure sector, an RT can propose the construction of water infiltration wells, clean water networks, neighbourhood roads, bridges/duikers, parks, sanitation, provision of neighbourhood street lighting, places of worship, RT/RW Halls, neighbourhood alley portals, and retaining walls.

In the health sector, an RT can propose payment of National Health Insurance (JKN) contributions for the community, procurement of furniture and health service equipment for the Health Post Services (Posyandu) both for elderly/ toddlers, procurement of public hand washing facilities; 2) procurement of hand sanitizers; 3) procurement of masks; 4) procurement of tools, materials and equipment for spraying disinfectants; 5) procurement of rubber/ plastic gloves, provision of additional food program (PMT) and vitamins at Posyandu in order to improve the nutritional quality of the elderly and prevent stunting in toddlers.

In the socio-cultural sector, an RT can propose the procurement of supporting facilities and infrastructure for Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) activities and PKK training/ coaching activities at the neighbourhood level, including stunting discussions; procurement of standardized garbage carts and separate trash bins; procurement of digital CCTV; procurement of child-friendly play facilities and infrastructure.

The RT can also propose credit assistance for RW Cooperatives; assistance for facilities and infrastructure for Joint Business Groups (KUBE), Small Industry Business Groups, Micro Business Groups, Small-scale Agricultural Business Groups; business/ work skills training; training and mentoring for small industries; facilitation of business licensing, patent rights and product certification; creation of BUTORANTAS Parks (Fruits, Toga, vegetables and ornamental plants); and training for the development of Sustainable Food Home Areas (KRPL).

In the education sector, an RT can propose the procurement of facilities and infrastructure for TPA/ TPQ, community reading parks; procurement of community preschool (PAUD) facilities and infrastructure, procurement of school supplies for elementary and junior high school students from poor families, procurement of learning equipment for English Massive (EMAS) community program, Qur'an

Massive community program and other study groups. In the youth sector, an RT can propose the procurement of sports equipment for training activities and the procurement of facilities and infrastructure for the development of creative businesses for youth.

Prodamas' cross-sectoral flexibility fosters efficiency and ensures greater alignment with actual community needs. It responds to the empirical reality that urban issues are rarely isolated, and that multi-dimensional responses are required. In this way, Prodamas exemplifies how place-based strategies can foster institutional coherence and avoid the duplication or segmentation of efforts that often undermine development outcomes.

Community empowerment

One of the defining features of Prodamas is its emphasis on community empowerment. From planning to implementation, the program involves community members directly in decision-making processes. Residents initiate project ideas through deliberative forums (*musyawarah*), which form the highest local authority in the program's governance structure. These forums ensure that decisions reflect collective aspirations rather than the preferences of a select few.

Implementation is managed by *Pokmas* (Community Groups), which are formed by and from the residents of each RT. *Pokmas* are responsible for project execution, financial management, and community and local government accountability. Members of *Pokmas* often include informal leaders, youth representatives, and women's group members, although inclusive participation remains a challenge in some neighborhoods.

Local government officials, particularly heads of *kelurahan* (urban villages), act as budget users and facilitators. They support administrative processes and provide oversight while respecting the autonomy of the *Pokmas*. This division of roles reflects a collaborative governance model where state and society co-manage urban development. It moves beyond symbolic participation by institutionalizing shared authority and mutual accountability, which are crucial to the legitimacy and effectiveness of place-based policy. Nevertheless, participation is not uniform across all RTs. Studies have shown that community engagement varies depending on leadership quality, social cohesion, and prior experience with collective action.

To mitigate this, the city of Kediri has invested in continuous facilitation and capacity-building to strengthen inclusive governance practices.

Local Knowledge and Innovation

Prodamas also provides fertile ground for experimentation and local innovation. Since communities are given the authority and resources to design context-specific projects, many have developed novel responses to local challenges. Examples include digital literacy initiatives for school children, vertical farming in limited spaces, integrated waste management systems, and neighborhood beautification projects through local art.

Beyond outputs, the program has contributed to building community capacity. Pokmas members and local leaders receive technical, financial, and administrative training. These training sessions cover budgeting, procurement, proposal writing, monitoring and evaluation, and conflict resolution. Such efforts enhance communities' ability to independently manage development programs and sustain outcomes beyond the project cycle.

Moreover, Prodamas fosters a culture of peer learning and institutional memory. Successful practices in one RT are often replicated or adapted by others, facilitated through inter-RT knowledge exchanges and city-level exhibitions. This iterative learning process strengthens civic engagement and enables communities to adjust their strategies in light of new information or changing circumstances.

The Challenge of the Place-Based Approach in Prodamas

Implementation. One of the primary challenges in implementing place-based approaches within development programs lies in the complexity of coordinating multiple stakeholders. These approaches often require collaboration across various levels of government and community actors. However, such multi-layered governance structures can lead to conflicts of interest, miscommunication, and delays. These challenges were evident in the Prodamas program's governance in Kediri.

For instance, Yulistya and Rahaju (2023) found that budget allocations provided for community projects were not optimally absorbed due to limited understanding among residents regarding administrative and bureaucratic planning

procedures. As a result, many proposals submitted by the community could not be processed effectively. Similarly, Ainurroziqin and Susilo (2024) observed that the weak technical capacity of community groups (Pokmas), particularly in preparing budget and cost plans, often left them overwhelmed with implementation tasks. These difficulties were closely tied to their limited understanding of budgetary and administrative regulations.

Ussyifa (2023) Further, it was noted that residents sometimes perceived the Kediri city government's regulatory frameworks as misaligned with their needs. This disconnect frequently triggered confusion and conflict, especially when compounded by mid-cycle rule changes. The broader challenge lies in reconciling diverse priorities and ensuring that all voices, especially grassroots ones, are adequately represented in decision-making processes. Without effective coordination, efforts can become fragmented, strategies incoherent, and overall policy impact significantly diminished.

Yulistya and Rahaju (2023) Emphasized the crucial role of RT heads in facilitating community understanding of Prodamas regulations. As intermediaries, RT heads are instrumental in communicating policy processes and regulatory requirements to residents. They also highlighted the need for stronger communication and coordination between Pokmas, local communities, and other stakeholders to enhance governance effectiveness. In a similar vein, Ainurroziqin and Susilo (2024) Advocated for closer collaboration between RT leaders and Pokmas in establishing development priorities. They argued that Pokmas should be equipped to manage the full implementation cycle—from planning and execution to oversight. To support this, they recommended the development of formal regulatory frameworks that define clear roles and strengthen the capacity of Pokmas personnel. Additionally, they proposed increasing partnerships with the private sector to expand Prodamas' impact and sustainability.

Along these lines, Fachruddin and Kurniawati (2024) underscored the importance of improving the dissemination of Prodamas-related information. They suggested utilizing informal social events, such as weekly religious gatherings (pengajian), health campaigns, RT/RW community meetings, and women's group events (PKK), as platforms to raise awareness and increase community engagement. Lastly, Irameimuna and Tauran (2016) drew attention to the gender dimension of participatory governance in Prodamas. They emphasized the need to

enhance women's participation in deliberative planning forums, particularly encouraging mothers to voice proposals that reflect their experiences, priorities, and aspirations. Ensuring inclusive participation, they argue, is essential to making development planning more representative and responsive.

Financial and Sustainability

Financial issues present another significant challenge for the implementation of place-based initiatives. Securing adequate funding is often difficult, particularly for city governments with limited fiscal capacity. Ensuring long-term financial sustainability can be problematic even when initial investments are made. Inadequate or inconsistent funding can result in unfinished projects and diminished long-term impact. Moreover, reliance on short-term funding cycles risks producing fragmented interventions poorly integrated into broader urban development strategies, undermining their potential for sustainable outcomes.

At present, funding for Prodamas is sourced from the Kediri City Budget. However, anticipating the program's financial sustainability remains essential. Halim (2019) Argues that Prodamas is a politically motivated program initiated by the mayor to garner public support. Although it aligns with existing participatory mechanisms, particularly Musrenbang (Development Planning Deliberation), a routine planning forum across Indonesia, the program's political nature makes it vulnerable to discontinuation or reconfiguration following leadership changes.

Beyond financial continuity, program sustainability also depends on effective follow-up mechanisms. Ainurroziqin and Susilo (2024) for example, examined a case of entrepreneurship training under Prodamas in Ngronggo Kelurahan. They stressed the importance of post-training support, recommending structured follow-up programs to help participants apply their skills, develop their businesses, and achieve lasting economic outcomes. Without such support, beneficiaries risk abandoning their initiatives midway through the process. In alignment with this, Irameimuna and Tauran (2016) recommended that the city government ensure that community procurement proposals prioritize goods that function as capital or business tools. This approach would enable recipients to build

on initial investments, promote self-sufficiency, and generate sustained economic impact.

Nikmah (2018) Also cautioned against potential community dependence on Prodamas. She emphasized the need to build an understanding that the program serves as an additional stimulus, rather than a long-term guarantee. In her view, fostering community self-reliance is critical to ensuring the sustainability of development efforts beyond the program's life. Echoing this perspective, Ahmad Farhan (2017) Encouraged residents to adopt more creative and context-sensitive strategies for utilizing Prodamas funds. Rather than treating the program as a routine source of assistance, he advocated using the funds to support initiatives that meet specific community needs and generate lasting benefits.

Evaluation and Adaptability

Evaluating the effectiveness of place-based initiatives presents a unique set of challenges, particularly due to the difficulty of attributing specific outcomes to specific interventions. The localized nature of these initiatives means that traditional evaluation metrics, often based on broad national indicators, may fail to capture their nuanced, context-specific impacts. Developing tailored evaluation frameworks that can accurately assess the multifaceted outcomes of place-based initiatives is essential for continuous learning and policy refinement.

Many studies on *Prodamas* in individual cases and areas have reported positive findings. Nikmah (2018) and Ahmad Farhan (2017) found that implementing Prodamas aligned with policy guidelines and community expectations. Asmoro and Setianingsih (2019) conducted a study on the accountability aspects of *Prodamas* fund management. They found a strong positive correlation between accountability mechanisms and the broader principles of good governance. Regarding transparency, Deviana et al. (2020) examined the implementation of *Prodamas* in Ngronggo *kelurahan* and concluded that the program was managed transparently. The budget was publicly announced during community discussions, and residents could access detailed budget information via public bulletin boards. The budget preparation process involved various community actors, including RT and RW heads, PKK members, Karang Taruna (youth groups), PPTK, and the *kelurahan* head, indicating high community engagement. This inclusiveness reportedly contributed to greater social cohesion and strengthened

collective participation. Izzuddin and Rahaju (2022) evaluated the implementation of *Prodamas Plus* in the health sector in Bujel, Mojoroto. Their study concluded that the program met its stated evaluation indicators and successfully delivered facilities, infrastructure, and funding for health-related activities. The community and village authorities reported tangible benefits, especially in addressing public health needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program was therefore widely welcomed and regarded as appropriate and effective in supporting the health sector. Further supporting these findings, Ahmad Farhan (2017) noted that *Prodamas* effectively encouraged active community participation, with the potential to accelerate and equalize development across Kediri City.

Despite these encouraging findings, *Prodamas* has not been without criticism. Halim (2019) For instance, persistent administrative inefficiencies and challenges related to budget absorption were pointed out. He also raised concerns about the disbursement of social assistance funds, suggesting that allocations to certain sub-districts lacked clear and transparent indicators.

Lessons on Governing Place-Based Initiatives: Reflections from the Prodamas Case

The *Program Pemberdayaan Masyarakat* (Prodamas) in Kediri, Indonesia, offers valuable insights into the governance of place-based initiatives. First, Prodamas illustrates the critical importance of local context sensitivity. Each neighborhood in Kediri possesses distinct geographical, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics. Prodamas incorporates this reality by requiring community-level planning at the neighborhood (RT) level, where residents identify and prioritize local needs. This bottom-up mechanism ensures that policy interventions are contextually appropriate and socially legitimate. Therefore, effective governance must accommodate local specificity rather than impose uniform solutions. Responsiveness, flexibility, and attention to the historical trajectories of localities are essential components of a governance model to support meaningful place-based development. Governing a place-based initiative should begin with a meaningful understanding that every locality has distinct characteristics. Effective interventions are shaped by these spatial and social

particularities, ensuring that policy actions align with local communities' lived experiences and historical trajectories (Klepac et al. 2023; Sotarauta 2020; Taylor et al. 2017). Local context is recognized as a key determinant in the success or failure of many approaches.

Second, the Prodamas experience highlights the necessity of multi-sectoral integration and systemic responses. Prodamas supports various activities under a unified budgetary and planning framework, including infrastructure, education, economic empowerment, and social development, rather than addressing issues in isolation. It reflects the interdependent nature of urban and community challenges. In this context, governing place-based initiatives demands mechanisms for cross-departmental coordination, alignment of objectives across sectors, and a long-term vision that moves beyond short-term program cycles. The traditional siloed structure of government institutions presents a significant challenge to this. It requires deliberate efforts to foster coherence across the policy system. Place-based strategies address the interrelated dimensions of urban development, such as housing, education, employment, health, and the environment, in a coordinated manner. It chooses a holistic manner rather than focusing on a single issue. Literature on place-based development points out that these initiatives often span various sectors, encouraging comprehensive, long-term, and systemic responses to complex challenges faced by communities (Barca et al. 2012; Klepac et al. 2023; Taylor et al. 2017).

Third, community participation and collaborative governance are central to Prodamas. The program empowers residents to provide input and take ownership of the planning, execution, and evaluation of development activities. Participation is not reduced to token consultation; it is supported through capacity-building efforts such as facilitation and technical assistance. This reflects a redefinition of the role of government, from director and funder to enabler and co-learner (Klepac et al. 2023). Governing in this model involves building trust, recognizing and respecting local knowledge, and redistributing power in ways that allow communities to act as co-producers of public goods. It is crucial to be aware that a core principle of place-based policy is redistributing power to communities and cultivating cross-sectoral partnerships. Residents are not passive recipients but active co-producers of solutions, working alongside governments, NGOs, and private actors. Researchers highlight the importance of building the capacity of

communities to lead and sustain their development while underscoring the evolving roles of government as funder, partner, and enabler of a supportive policy environment (Oyewo 2024; Rong et al. 2023).

Fourth, the program fosters local innovation and adaptive learning, albeit in informal and often undocumented ways. Across various neighborhoods, residents have devised creative methods for prioritizing needs, implementing projects, and mobilizing local resources. However, these innovations are rarely systematized or integrated into formal policy feedback loops. This points to a key gap: governance structures must tolerate experimentation and actively promote and institutionalize learning cycles. These include mechanisms for rapid feedback, iterative evaluation, and policy adaptation, which are vital for navigating the complexity and unpredictability inherent in place-based interventions. Place-based initiatives often aim to foster innovation at the local level and build institutional capacity. This includes nurturing local leadership, creating enabling environments for experimentation, and embedding mechanisms for ongoing learning and adaptation. The success of these approaches is closely tied to the presence of learning ecosystems, mutual accountability, and long-term commitment to reflection and change (Borén and Schmitt 2022b; Klepac et al. 2023). This conceptual framework serves as a lens for analyzing the Prodamas program in Kediri, assessing how these four dimensions, contextual responsiveness, cross-sectoral integration, participatory governance, and local innovation, are manifested in practice.

These observations suggest that governing place-based initiatives requires more than administrative coordination or financial allocation. It necessitates the creation of an ecosystem of governance that is participatory, adaptive, inclusive, and grounded in local realities. Prodamas demonstrates that when communities are trusted, supported, and equipped, they can articulate and implement development solutions that resonate with their lived experience. However, this success also reveals a broader implication: for place-based initiatives to be sustainable and scalable, government institutions must shift in structure and mindset.

In short, the Prodamas case affirms that governing place-based approaches requires a transition: from control to *enabling governance*, from centralized bureaucracy to *networked collaboration*, and from linear implementation to *cyclical learning and Reflection*.

This shift not only enhances the effectiveness of policy interventions but also contributes to the legitimacy of government in the eyes of its citizens. In contexts marked by complexity and inequality, such as urban neighborhoods experiencing persistent disadvantage, governance models prioritizing local agency, adaptive systems, and multi-actor cooperation are not just preferable but essential.

Funding Acknowledgement

The author did not receive funding from any institution.

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