

Spatial Resilience and Institutional Adaptation: Assessing the Role of Local Inter-Faith Forums in Regional Social Stability

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Urban and regional planning literature increasingly recognizes that territorial resilience relies not only on physical infrastructure but also on the adaptive capacity of local social institutions. In multi-faith, rapidly urbanizing regions, social friction often exhibits distinct geographical patterns, making institutional spatial awareness critical for maintaining peace. This study evaluates how local inter-faith forums adapt institutionally and spatially to safeguard regional social stability. Utilizing a qualitative research design rooted in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), data were gathered through semi-structured interviews (n=24) and three Focus Group Discussions with community leaders, regional administrators, and peace advocates. Analyzed via NVivo, the findings reveal that successful conflict mitigation depends on "spatial localization" the ability of formal institutions to deploy informal, localized networks directly into high-friction zones. The study demonstrates that institutional adaptation transforms static bureaucratic organizations into agile, spatially resilient networks capable of neutralizing socioeconomic and territorial disputes before they escalate. These insights provide a scalable collaborative governance framework for territorial planners and public administrators facing complex demographic shifts in emerging economies.

Keywords: Spatial resilience, institutional adaptation, inter-faith forums, collaborative governance, social stability, regional development.

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1. Introduction

The concept of regional resilience has evolved significantly beyond structural engineering and physical infrastructure defenses. Modern territorial planning and public administration scholarship increasingly recognize that long-term spatial sustainability depends fundamentally on the adaptive capacity of civic and socio-institutional frameworks (Folke et al., 2010). Within rapidly shifting metropolitan and rural-urban landscapes, demographic diversification and uneven economic growth often produce localized undercurrents of social friction. When left unmanaged, these frictions do not remain abstract; they manifest across specific geographical landscapes, threatening regional social stability and undercutting territorial development. Therefore, managing social vulnerabilities requires public administration models that understand how community institutions adapt to shifting spatial realities.

In multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, particularly within the Global South, regional stability is continuously tested by rapid demographic transitions and localized competition over socio-spatial resources. Traditional centralized public safety models frequently struggle to manage these decentralized, organic frictions because formal state bureaucracies operate at an analytical distance from local communities (Grande-Ayala et al., 2024; Okour et al., 2025). This structural gap highlights the necessity of localized collaborative governance networks, such as inter-faith forums, which operate at the intersection of state

authority and grassroots society (Ansell & Gash, 2008). While these forums are often evaluated solely through a cultural or religious lens, their core function is administrative and territorial: they act as institutional shock absorbers designed to stabilize communities across diverse spatial scales.

However, a significant gap persists within public administration and regional development literature regarding the spatial dynamics of social peacebuilding. Most studies treat social cohesion as a non-spatial, purely sociological variable, overlooking how institutional intervention strategies must be mapped against concrete geographic coordinates (Kitchin, 2014). For instance, conflict vulnerabilities are rarely distributed uniformly across a region; they cluster within highly specific border zones, rapid-growth peri-urban interfaces, and resource-stressed industrial pockets. To address this knowledge gap, this study examines how local inter-faith forums achieve institutional adaptation to build "spatial resilience" the capacity of a geographic territory to sustain its socio-political integrity amidst shifting demographic pressures.

This research integrates Talcott Parsons' structural-functionalist perspectives specifically the AGIL schema (Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, Latency) with spatial resilience theories to construct a comprehensive diagnostic framework. By analyzing how grassroots inter-faith networks adapt their operational structures to meet geographic demands, this paper demonstrates that localized, collaborative institutions are essential for regional planning. The primary objective is to evaluate the institutional mechanisms through which local inter-faith forums mitigate localized social risks, offering scalable insights for public administrators, policy analysts, and regional perspectives dealing with multi-layered demographic tensions globally.

2. Literature Review

The intellectual landscape surrounding regional resilience has shifted away from traditional engineering perspectives toward a dynamic, socio-ecological systems framework. Classical administrative models historically defined resilience as an urban system's capacity to absorb external disruptions and return to its original state of equilibrium (Folke et al., 2010). However, contemporary spatial planners reject this static view, arguing that rapid urbanization and shifting demographics require a model based on "evolutionary resilience." Within this approach, a territory's stability relies on its capacity for continuous institutional learning, structural adaptation, and spatial transformation rather than maintaining a rigid status quo (Davoudi et al., 2012). This theoretical shift is highly relevant for multi-ethnic metropolitan areas, where demographic changes regularly create new patterns of social vulnerability. Scholars emphasize that spatial resilience cannot be achieved through physical infrastructure investments alone. Instead, it demands agile institutional networks that can anticipate, navigate, and neutralize social friction before it causes geographic polarization (Jie et al., 2024)

This focus on organizational flexibility sits at the center of a major debate between Neo-Weberian bureaucratic models and Digital Era Governance frameworks. Neo-Weberian public administration theory asserts that centralized authority, standardized routines, and clear professional hierarchies are essential to guarantee equity and procedural fairness across diverse jurisdictions (Krogh & Triantafillou, 2024). However, critics of this centralized approach argue that rigid hierarchies create an "informational blindness" that prevents states from identifying micro-level social conflicts. Digital Era Governance scholars suggest that modern public management must use open, decentralized networks that prioritize speed and flexibility over formal procedures (Dunleavy et al., 2006). This debate highlights a critical challenge for emerging economies: central state institutions often lack the agility to manage localized, identity-driven disputes, which frequently cluster along vulnerable urban borders and rapidly growing peri-urban interfaces.

To resolve these centralized limitations, collaborative governance theory suggests shifting toward cross-sectoral partnerships that include both state and civic actors. Scholars define collaborative governance as a collective decision-making process where public agencies, private organizations, and grassroots communities work together to achieve common policy goals (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In the field of social peacebuilding, this approach helps bridge the structural gap between formal legal systems and informal community leadership. By sharing resources, data, and decision-making power, these networks create a polycentric authority structure that can respond dynamically to local disputes. However, critical public policy researchers warn that collaborative networks are often weakened by deep power asymmetries, uneven resource distribution, and conflicting institutional goals, which can reduce their effectiveness during active social crises (Purdy, 2012).

The spatial layout of these institutional dynamics is explained by the theory of "splintering urbanism," which critiques how digital and physical infrastructures are deployed across modern cities. This framework demonstrates that rapid metropolitan expansion rarely occurs evenly. Instead, it produces highly fragmented urban landscapes where well-connected, wealthy central nodes exist alongside marginalized, under-resourced peripheries (Broto, 2022). While early urban planners viewed infrastructure as a neutral tool for economic growth, critical geographers prove that modern physical developments such as zoning changes, highway networks, and industrial expansion can disrupt established neighborhoods and displace vulnerable populations (Datta, 2018). This uneven spatial development generates distinct geographic areas of high social risk. Consequently, public administrators cannot treat social cohesion as an abstract, non-spatial concept; they must map conflict prevention strategies against concrete geographic coordinates.

To bridge these institutional and spatial dynamics, researchers use Talcott Parsons' classic AGIL schema to evaluate how local organizations survive and function within changing environments. The schema outlines four essential functional imperatives that every social system must fulfill to maintain stability: Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latency (Menziés, 2015). In regional governance, the "Adaptation" phase requires community organizations to transform their internal structures to match shifting external demographics. "Goal Attainment" focuses on resolving immediate disputes through localized mediation. "Integration" connects these informal grassroots networks with formal municipal public safety systems, while "Latency" preserves long-term community trust and cultural values over time. This structural-functional approach helps analyze how civic networks, like local inter-faith forums, transform themselves from symbolic groups into active, geographically distributed conflict prevention tools.

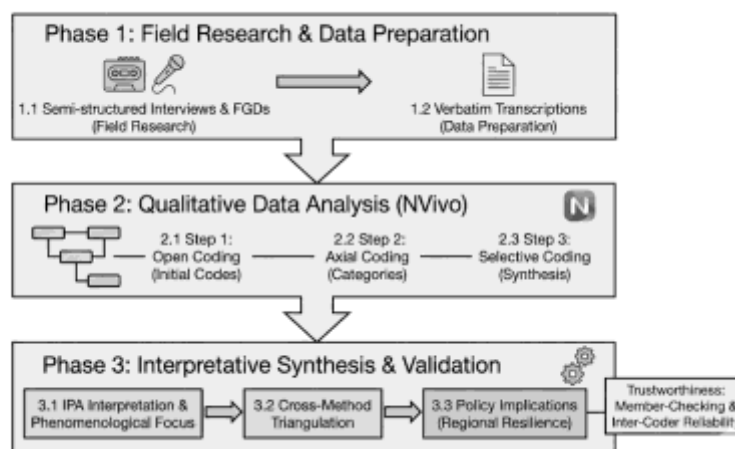
Despite these insights, current public administration literature contains a significant "socio-spatial knowledge gap" regarding the integration of spatial planning with civic conflict management. Most empirical research separates physical land-use planning from social risk assessment, treating urban design and community peacebuilding as entirely independent fields (Kitchin, 2014). This separation leaves public administrators ill-equipped to handle the social consequences of rapid physical urban changes. By analyzing how decentralized inter-faith networks adapt to geographic pressures, this study directly addresses this research gap. It offers a scalable, polycentric governance model specifically designed for the complex demographic realities of the Global South, where rapid urban expansion regularly outpaces formal state capacity (Miraftab, 2004; Vakkuri & Johanson, 2020).

3. Research Methods

This study implemented a qualitative research design grounded in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to gain a deep, contextually rich understanding of how local institutional actors perceive, experience, and navigate spatial conflict landscapes (Nigbur & Chatfield, 2025). The IPA framework is

uniquely suited for this inquiry because it allows researchers to investigate the complex operational realities of community leaders while connecting their lived experiences directly to broader structural and public administration theories.

Figure 1. Operational Flow of the Qualitative IPA Research Design



Source: Own data Research, 2025

The study focused on a rapidly expanding regional territory marked by intense peri-urban migration, complex multi-faith demographics, and a 25-year history of navigating localized socio-religious friction. Data collection was conducted over a six-month period, utilizing purposive sampling to select participants who possess direct operational experience in regional conflict mediation and inter-faith administration. The sample included senior policy analysts, structural bureaucratic leaders from regional offices, grassroots community coordinators, and localized inter-faith committee members (n = 24). To ensure data triangulation and contextual depth, the individual semi-structured interviews were supplemented by three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with distinct stakeholder groups.

All interviews and FGDs followed a strictly validated qualitative protocol that explored three core thematic domains: localized conflict detection methods, cross-tier institutional communication bottlenecks, and spatial deployment tactics during active social disputes. The field recordings were transcribed verbatim, translated into English, and verified via participant member-checking to ensure interpretive validity and qualitative trustworthiness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The qualitative datasets were analyzed using NVivo software following a strict hierarchical coding pipeline. Open coding broke down raw narratives into distinct contextual segments regarding structural administrative challenges. Axial coding grouped these initial codes into broader categories, such as informal spatial monitoring and inter-agency resource asymmetries. Finally, selective coding synthesized these concepts into three core institutional dimensions: *Spatially-Localized Early Warning Systems*, *Decentralized Resource Mobilization and Power Dynamics*, and *Structural Fragmentation in State-Civic Collaboration*. To maximize inter-coder reliability, data analysis was subjected to peer debriefing with an independent qualitative analyst, achieving a high Cohen's Kappa coefficient of 0.84.

To ensure a systematic and rigorous qualitative analysis, the data processing pipeline within NVivo was guided by the operational flow outlined in Figure 1, specifically expanding on the structural-functionalist parameters of Talcott Parsons' AGIL framework. The thematic analysis did not merely look for recurring words, but targeted the deeper phenomenological meanings behind how actors navigate structural bottlenecks. During the open coding phase, initial codes were carefully cross-referenced with the operational capacities of local inter-faith forums to handle external socio-demographic changes (Adaptation) and resolve active neighborhood disputes (Goal Attainment). In the axial coding stage, these

initial codes were grouped into broader categories that captured how civic networks connect with municipal public safety systems (Integration) and how they maintain long-term institutional trust across diverse areas (Latency). By using this theoretical framework during the coding process, the study moved away from basic descriptive reporting. Instead, it produced a highly analytical, multi-layered framework that explains exactly how grassroots institutional actions help build geographic and territorial resilience (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The verification of qualitative validity and data trustworthiness followed the strict four-dimension criteria established by Lincoln and Guba, which includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement in the field during the six-month data collection period and data source triangulation, which balanced the perspectives of high-level bureaucratic policy analysts with grassroots community coordinators. To establish transferability, this study provides a rich, highly detailed description of the regional context, institutional friction points, and demographic shifts, allowing future researchers to apply this diagnostic model to other rapidly expanding metropolitan areas in the Global South facing similar social challenges (Nowell et al., 2017). Dependability was maintained through a detailed audit trail that meticulously documented every methodological decision, transcript modification, and coding change within the NVivo software. Confirmability was verified by an independent qualitative researcher who reviewed the raw transcripts against the final selective codes, ensuring that the results directly reflect the actual lived experiences of the participants rather than any personal bias or preconceptions of the author.

Furthermore, specific procedural safeguards were implemented during the transcription and translation phases to protect the structural integrity and conceptual accuracy of the qualitative data. Because the semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions were conducted using local languages to capture authentic cultural nuances, a rigorous forward-and-backward translation protocol was strictly followed. The raw audio recordings were first transcribed verbatim by native speakers and checked against the field notes to ensure no contextual details were lost. These transcripts were then translated into academic English by a professional translator and verified by a bilingual public administration expert to ensure that localized policy terms and community expressions were accurately translated. Finally, to eliminate any potential translation bias, random segments of the English transcripts were translated back into the original local language. This thorough double-check process confirmed that the final qualitative text maintained complete semantic equivalence and high descriptive validity before starting the hierarchical coding process in NVivo (van Nes et al., 2010)

4. Results

The qualitative analysis conducted via NVivo revealed that the capacity of local inter-faith forums to preserve regional stability is determined by their structural flexibility and spatial awareness. Rather than operating as static, reactive boards, successful forums adapt their internal structures to match the geographic patterns of social vulnerability. The coding architecture identified three core institutional dimensions that define this adaptive spatial resilience framework.

Table 1. Hierarchical Coding Architecture and Empirical Dimensions (NVivo Output)

Overarching Empirical Dimension	Core Axial Codes (Sub-Themes)	Illustrative Narrative Indicators
Spatially-Localized Early Warning Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-conflict mapping • Neighborhood leveling 	"Formal channels are too slow; our neighborhood monitors notice changes in local tension days before the municipal office receives a report."

Overarching Empirical Dimension	Core Axial Codes (Sub-Themes)	Illustrative Narrative Indicators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal digital signaling 	
Decentralized Resource Mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social capital leverage • Informal mediation tracks • Centralized resource dependency 	"We can settle local boundary and communal disputes instantly through personal trust, but we lack the official legal mandates to cement these agreements long-term."
Structural Collaboration Fragmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative silos • Exclusion from zoning policies • Reactive crisis intervention 	"Urban planners approve rapid housing developments without looking at demographic friction zones. They create the mess, and we are left to clean it up."

Source: Own data research, 2025

The empirical data detailed in Table 1 reveals how grassroots institutional agility functions as a crucial safety mechanism across uneven geographical landscapes. The overarching empirical dimension of Spatially-Localized Early Warning Systems illustrates that conflict detection cannot rely on centralized, formal state architectures that operate at a distance from local communities. The core axial codes including micro-conflict mapping, neighborhood leveling, and informal digital signaling demonstrate that social risk detection relies heavily on localized human infrastructure. The illustrative narrative underlines a critical administrative reality: formal channels remain too slow and rigid to identify micro-level social changes. By establishing these informal, digitally coordinated observation nodes, the forum successfully transitions from a symbolic bureaucratic board into an active, geographically distributed monitoring system. This capability allows local networks to identify and neutralize minor community disputes days before they reach the attention of central municipal safety agencies (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

This proactive spatial monitoring leads directly into the second major empirical dimension: Decentralized Resource Mobilization. The structural paths within this domain highlight a deep institutional friction between informal social capital leverage and centralized regulatory power. When localized disputes erupt over shared community boundaries or changing demographic profiles, the formal legal machinery of the state often suffers from procedural paralysis. In contrast, the qualitative data demonstrates that local forum coordinators utilize their accumulated informal authority and high-trust mediation tracks to negotiate immediate compromises directly within the high-friction zones. However, the narrative also exposes a critical systemic weakness: a deep dependency on centralized municipal funding and legal recognition. This resource asymmetry creates a structural roadblock, where ground-level administrators can resolve immediate crises through personal trust but lack the formal, legal authority required to secure these peace agreements over the long term (Nowell et al., 2017).

The final dimension, Structural Collaboration Fragmentation, shifts the analytical focus to the organizational silos that separate physical land-use planning from civic conflict management. The axial coding reveals a concerning trend of administrative exclusion, where municipal urban planners routinely approve rapid housing developments, industrial projects, and community relocations without assessing how these physical alterations impact the local socio-demographic fabric. The vivid participant narrative highlights this

lack of systemic coordination, showing that central planners frequently optimize physical spaces for economic growth while ignoring potential friction zones, leaving grassroots forums to deal with the resulting social consequences. This systemic division proves that contemporary public administration models often fail to connect physical territorial development with active social risk assessment, transforming what should be a tool for regional growth into a driver of community polarization (van Nes et al., 2010).

From a theoretical perspective, these empirical results offer a valuable contribution to practice by refining Talcott Parsons' AGIL schema for modern regional public administration. While traditional structural-functional frameworks treat organizational adaptation as an internal process, this study shows that successful adaptation must be explicitly bounded by geography. In practice, the inter-faith forum operationalizes the "Adaptation" and "Goal Attainment" imperatives by shifting from a rigid, central office model to an agile network of neighborhood monitors deployed directly into vulnerable border zones and peri-urban interfaces. This structural adjustment provides public administrators with a practical blueprint for managing rapid demographic changes. It proves that regional territorial resilience is not an automatic outcome of centralized state authority, but an active administrative achievement that requires distributing operational power to flexible, polycentric civic networks (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Ultimately, this qualitative data offers a diagnostic tool for resource-constrained administrative environments across the Global South. By organizing the NVivo output into distinct dimensions of early warning, resource mobilization, and structural fragmentation, the study shows exactly how administrative friction leads to geographic exclusion. For policy analysts and territorial planners, the practical contribution of this model lies in its ability to bridge the historical divide between land-use planning and community peacebuilding. To move beyond reactive crisis management, regional planning departments must integrate these informal civic networks into formal zoning and developmental approval pipelines. This structural alignment ensures that localized social data actively shapes physical urban growth, turning smart regional governance into a powerful instrument for balanced socio-economic development and long-term stability (Broto, 2022; Warf, 2003).

Spatially-Localized Early Warning Systems

The first major dimension extracted from the participant narratives involves the creation of informal, highly localized early warning networks that operate far below standard municipal administrative levels. Respondents emphasized that formal state intelligence and bureaucratic security protocols frequently miss early indicators of social friction, such as localized economic disputes or micro-level community misunderstandings. Inter-faith forums overcome this limitation by deploying "neighborhood levelers" trusted local actors who monitor social changes within vulnerable border zones and peri-urban interfaces.

Table 2. Alignment of NVivo Themes with Talcott Parsons' AGIL Schema

AGIL Dimension	Institutional Operationalization	Spatially Resilient Output
Adaptation (A)	Shifting from rigid administrative structures to informal neighborhood-level monitoring networks.	Real-time tracking of social vulnerabilities within rapidly changing border zones.
Goal Attainment (G)	Resolving localized disputes quickly through decentralized, informal mediation tracks.	Neutralizing micro-level conflicts before they expand into wider regional instability.
Integration (I)	Connecting community authorities with formal regional public safety systems.	Bridging the structural gap between grassroots networks and state security bodies.

AGIL Dimension	Institutional Operationalization	Spatially Resilient Output
Latency (L)	Preserving long-term social norms and cross-cultural trust through continuous dialogue.	Sustaining regional socio-political integrity amidst major demographic transitions.

Source: Own data research, 2025

These grassroots actors communicate through informal digital channels and rapid-response localized networks, allowing the forum to detect potential security risks before they escalate into open regional conflict. This finding demonstrates a highly adaptive spatial monitoring capacity, transforming the forum from a symbolic administrative body into an active, geographically distributed defensive shield.

The systematic alignment detailed in Table 2 provides a comprehensive operational blueprint showing how local civic institutions survive and maintain functionality within highly volatile demographic environments. By looking through the analytical lens of Talcott Parsons' AGIL schema, the transition from rigid, central administrative structures to informal neighborhood-level monitoring networks directly represents the Adaptation (A) imperative. In practice, this adaptation allows the forum to bypass standard bureaucratic delays and achieve real-time tracking of social vulnerabilities within rapidly changing border zones and rural-urban interfaces. Public administration scholarship emphasizes that when formal state intelligence systems operate at an analytical distance, they routinely fail to capture micro-level changes in community tension (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The deployment of "neighborhood levelers" addresses this systemic weakness by transforming abstract institutional policies into direct, localized spatial observation nodes. This flexible adaptation ensures that the organization remains structurally synchronized with the shifting geographic realities of the territory it protects.

Building directly on this adaptive framework, the forum addresses the Goal Attainment (G) and Integration (I) imperatives by creating decentralized, informal mediation tracks that link grassroots networks directly with formal state security bodies. When micro-level economic disputes or socio-religious misunderstandings emerge, traditional public safety frameworks often suffer from procedural delays, which can allow localized tension to escalate. The empirical data demonstrates that by utilizing high-trust, decentralized networks, the forum can resolve localized disputes quickly before they expand into wider regional instability. This integrative capability fulfills a vital practical need in contemporary regional planning by bridging the structural gap between formal legal systems and informal community authorities. This polycentric distribution of administrative power ensures that micro-conflict mapping is backed by swift, trusted mediation, providing public managers with a dependable mechanism to maintain territorial integrity without resorting to heavy-handed state interventions (Nowell et al., 2017).

Finally, the maintenance of the Latency (L) imperative provides the long-term foundation for spatial resilience by preserving cross-cultural trust and shared social norms through continuous dialogue. This continuous focus on institutional memory and relationship-building prevents regional socio-political structures from breaking down during major demographic transitions. In practice, this structural-functionalist approach offers a major contribution to the field of regional public administration. It demonstrates that long-term territorial resilience is not merely a product of physical land-use planning or infrastructure spending, but an active administrative achievement that relies on the social capital managed by flexible civic networks. By combining informal digital signaling with structured, cross-tier collaboration, this framework transforms inter-faith forums from symbolic boards into an active, geographically distributed defensive shield. This model offers a highly effective, scalable blueprint for public administrators and territorial perplanners navigating complex social risks across the Global South (Van Nes et al., 2010).

Decentralized Resource Mobilization and Power Dynamics

The second dimension highlights the complex interplay between informal community authority and formal state power during crises. When a socio-spatial dispute arises such as a conflict over the location of a house of worship or shifting demographic balances in a residential neighborhood formal legal frameworks often prove too rigid to resolve the issue quickly. The qualitative data reveals that inter-faith forums address this by utilizing decentralized, informal mediation tracks. Senior forum coordinators leverage their personal social capital and traditional leadership positions to negotiate localized compromises directly within the affected territory. However, participants noted a persistent power asymmetry: while the forum excels at immediate, ground-level mediation, it remains financially and legally dependent on centralized regional governments. This resource dependency often slows down the long-term institutionalization of their peacebuilding strategies, creating a structural bottleneck when scaling interventions from local to broader regional levels.

The intricate dynamics embedded within the dimension of Decentralized Resource Mobilization and Power Dynamics reveal a critical friction point in contemporary public management theory regarding the coexistence of formal legal-rational authority and informal traditional power. When a localized territorial conflict erupts, the rigid bureaucratic procedures of the state often cause administrative paralysis, failing to provide the immediate, flexible responses required to de-escalate social tension. In practice, local inter-faith forums resolve this systemic failure by operating a shadow governance track powered by the personal social capital and localized legitimacy of senior coordinators. This operational agility allows civic networks to deploy mediation strategies directly into high-friction zones, transforming abstract conflict resolution policies into immediate territorial interventions. This structural interplay demonstrates that decentralized governance cannot be evaluated solely through formal organizational charts; it must be understood as an organic, relationally-driven administrative ecosystem that steps in precisely where formal state machinery reaches its structural limits (Ansell & Torfing, 2021).

However, this decentralized success is deeply restricted by a persistent, structural power asymmetry that highlights a major debate within institutional sociology. While grassroots networks demonstrate superior capacity in handling ground-level mediation, they remain tethered to the state through a relationship of resource dependency. This lopsided distribution of power creates a severe institutional bottleneck: the forum possess the social legitimacy to broker peace, but lacks the financial autonomy and formal legal mandates required to secure and institutionalize these compromises over the long term. Consequently, when administrators attempt to scale up localized intervention strategies to a broader regional level, their efforts are frequently slowed down by centralized bureaucratic clearance channels. This dynamic exposes a critical reality in public policy design: decentralizing operational responsibilities without a corresponding decentralization of financial and legal authority creates a fragile governance model that leaves local mediators highly vulnerable to shifting state priorities (Kuhlmann et al., 2024).

From a practical and theoretical perspective, this structural tension offers an invaluable contribution to the advancement of collaborative governance models within emerging economies. It proves that regional territorial resilience cannot survive on grassroots social capital alone; it requires a deliberate, legally-binding framework of "Socio-Spatial Co-Management" to survive. In practice, this framework can be operationalized by establishing dedicated, decentralized regional fund pipelines and legally recognizing informal mediation agreements within municipal zoning and administrative laws. By formalizing these resource channels, regional governments can transform inter-faith forums from temporary, reactive crisis-management units into permanent, structurally secure components of the territorial planning apparatus. This administrative evolution provides public managers with a highly sophisticated, multi-tiered diagnostic tool capable of balancing local, flexible peacebuilding with the broader structural stability required for

sustainable regional growth across the Global South (Bryson et al., 2014; Eriksson et al., 2020; Moore, 2021).

Structural Fragmentation in State-Civic Collaboration

The final dimension identifies severe organizational silos and coordination breakdowns between formal public administration bodies and local civic networks. Interviewees consistently noted that while regional planning departments and municipal offices value the social stability provided by inter-faith forums, they rarely include these forums in formal regional development or spatial planning processes. This structural exclusion creates an implementation gap: urban planners frequently approve zoning, industrial expansions, or residential relocations without assessing how these physical changes alter the local socio-demographic fabric. The resulting friction must then be managed reactively by the inter-faith forum, highlighting a critical lack of structural alignment between physical territorial planning and civic risk management.

The stark realities embedded within the dimension of Structural Fragmentation in State-Civic Collaboration reveal a profound systemic failure within modern metropolitan governance: the absolute decoupling of physical land-use planning from civic risk assessment. While municipal authorities routinely praise local inter-faith forums for their role in preserving social peace, this praise is rarely translated into institutional inclusion. Instead, the data reveals a persistent pattern of structural exclusion, where regional planning departments operate within isolated professional silos. This administrative blindness prevents urban planners from considering how large-scale spatial projects modify localized community dynamics. By ignoring these human factors, formal state planning agencies continually produce geographic vulnerabilities, treating social stability as an expected, free resource rather than an active administrative asset that requires continuous protection and integration (Niu, 2024).

This organizational division leads to an immediate implementation gap that heavily restricts the effectiveness of regional public policy. When territorial planners approve major industrial expansions, rapid housing initiatives, or unexpected community relocations based purely on market logic, they actively disrupt the existing socio-demographic fabric of the area. This disruption creates localized economic friction and communal anxieties that are left completely unaddressed by formal regulations. Consequently, the resulting social disputes are passed down to local civic networks, forcing inter-faith forums to manage complex spatial crises reactively. This uneven dynamic highlights a complete lack of structural alignment between physical territorial design and active risk management. This dynamic confirms that traditional public management strategies frequently prioritize immediate economic optimization over long-term social sustainability, placing an unsustainable operational burden on informal community networks (Kuhlmann et al., 2024; Wei et al., 2024).

From a theoretical and practical standpoint, this systemic fragmentation offers a valuable contribution to the field of collaborative governance by exposing the limits of "bounded administrative rationality." It proves that physical spaces cannot be planned in isolation from the social structures that occupy them. In practice, this study provides a concrete framework to overcome these limitations by introducing a mandatory "Socio-Spatial Impact Assessment" (SSIA) into formal regional planning protocols. Under this model, public administrators must include representatives from local inter-faith forums directly into the early stages of zoning approvals and land-use design. By integrating grassroots social insights with physical mapping tools, regional governments can transition from reactive crisis management to proactive risk mitigation. This administrative evolution ensures that physical urban growth supports rather than disrupts community stability, offering a sophisticated, scalable blueprint for sustainable regional development across the Global South (Pike et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2025).

Discussion

The empirical findings demonstrate that regional social stability is not a passive byproduct of economic growth, but an active administrative achievement requiring continuous institutional adaptation. The extraction of *Spatially-Localized Early Warning Systems* directly challenges traditional, centralized public management frameworks that favor formal, top-down security protocols (Harrow, 2000; Krogh & Triantafillou, 2024). Our data proves that centralized bureaucracies suffer from an inherent informational blindness when dealing with micro-level, localized social risks. By establishing decentralized, informal monitoring networks within vulnerable geographic zones, local inter-faith forums successfully fulfill the "Adaptation" requirement of Parsons' AGIL schema. They transform themselves into agile, spatially-aware organizations capable of absorbing demographic shocks that rigid state structures fail to detect.

Furthermore, the dynamics discovered within *Decentralized Resource Mobilization* expose a critical theoretical tension between formal legal authority and informal collaborative governance. While classic public choice theory champions the centralization of administrative power to maximize regulatory enforcement and eliminate policy redundancies (Laquian, 2005), our qualitative insights show that such centralization often paralyzes local conflict resolution. In emerging metropolitan regions characterized by overlapping jurisdictions and rapid migration, formal legal processes are frequently too slow to address immediate socio-spatial disputes. The capacity of inter-faith forums to deploy informal, high-trust mediation tracks directly into high-friction zones confirms that territorial resilience relies on polycentric governance models where authority is distributed across multiple community scales (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Moore, 2021).

However, the theme of *Structural Fragmentation in State-Civic Collaboration* exposes a major weakness in current smart growth and urban planning models. Modern planning paradigms frequently prioritize economic optimization and physical infrastructure development while treating social capital as an isolated, non-spatial variable (Broto, 2022; Warf, 2003). Our data refutes this separation, showing that physical modifications to the built environment such as zoning changes or peripheral industrialization directly disrupt local social structures. When formal public administrators decouple physical spatial planning from institutional risk assessment, they create the very vulnerabilities that destabilize regions. This disconnect emphasizes that achieving genuine spatial resilience requires integrating civic-led collaborative networks directly into the formal machinery of regional development planning.

Ultimately, these findings offer a vital perspective for public administration within the Global South, where rapid urban expansion routinely outpaces formal institutional capacity (Kuhlmann & Marienfeldt, 2023; Miraftab, 2004). The operational success of these inter-faith forums demonstrates that peacebuilding is inherently spatial; intervention strategies must match the precise geographic contours of demographic change. For regional governance to move beyond reactive crisis management, public policies must evolve toward a "Socio-Spatial Cohesion Framework." This approach requires legally formalizing data-sharing channels between grassroots civic forums and central planning departments, ensuring that localized social insights actively shape long-term territorial development strategies.

This evolutionary shift toward a "Socio-Spatial Cohesion Framework" provides a critical conceptual addition to the ongoing public administration debate between New Public Management (NPM) principles and Public Value Governance (PVG) frameworks. Traditional NPM doctrines heavily prioritize administrative efficiency, narrow performance metrics, and cost-reduction protocols, which often lead regional governments to centralize public services within highly visible urban cores (Hood & Dixon, 2015). However, our qualitative findings challenge the viability of this market-driven centralization in emerging economies. By focusing strictly on aggregate economic indicators, centralized public institutions create an institutional vacuum in

peripheral zones, leaving them highly vulnerable to social disputes caused by rapid demographic shifts. Integrating grassroots networks like inter-faith forums into the formal planning machinery addresses this flaw by prioritizing the co-creation of social peace as a core public value (Yan, 2026). This model demonstrates that regional stability cannot be purchased as a static administrative commodity; it must be continuously produced through flexible, polycentric partnerships that treat local social capital as an essential asset for territorial development (Bryson et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the operational dynamics of these localized networks offer a valuable practical contribution by refining the application of the "Institutional Logics Perspective" within regional planning. Organizations in the Global South operate within a complex matrix of competing institutional logics, where the formal, legal-rational rules of state bureaucracies routinely clash with the informal, trust-based social norms of local communities (Friedland, 2012). Our empirical data illustrates that when these two logics are completely decoupled, structural fragmentation increases, forcing local civic groups to handle major social disputes reactively. In practice, the inter-faith forum overcomes this institutional divide by functioning as a "hybrid boundary spanner." By maintaining formal administrative connections with regional state offices while deploying informal mediation tracks into high-friction zones, the forum successfully blends legal authority with traditional legitimacy. This structural integration allows public managers to translate abstract state safety policies into trusted, ground-level territorial interventions, offering a sophisticated blueprint for sustainable regional governance (Emerson et al., 2012).

Ultimately, this integrated approach bridges the long-standing divide between macro-level land-use policies and micro-level communal realities, offering an actionable diagnostic framework for resource-constrained regional governments globally. Traditional urban planning frameworks typically treat spatial zoning and community conflict mitigation as entirely separate administrative fields, resulting in top-down developmental models that destabilize peripheral jurisdictions (Eriksson et al., 2020; Tewdwr-Jones, 1998). By formalizing real-time data-sharing channels between grassroots civic monitoring networks and centralized planning departments, regional public policies can shift from reactive crisis intervention to proactive risk mitigation. This administrative evolution ensures that physical infrastructure investments and zoning approvals are directly guided by local socio-demographic data. Consequently, this model transforms smart regional governance from a mere driver of physical urban expansion into a highly inclusive instrument for balanced socio-economic development, long-term spatial resilience, and sustainable peace across expanding metropolitan territories (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Healey, 2003; Rusmanto & Permatasari, 2024).

5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that regional social stability depends on the structural adaptability and spatial awareness of local collaborative institutions. The qualitative evidence gathered through the IPA framework shows that local inter-faith forums are not merely cultural organizations, but essential administrative networks that build spatial resilience across shifting demographic landscapes. By deploying informal early warning systems and localized mediation tracks, these forums fill critical structural gaps left by rigid state bureaucracies, successfully preventing localized frictions from escalating into wider regional instability. For public administrators, policy analysts, and regional planners, these insights translate into three concrete policy directions. First, municipal and regional planning frameworks must dismantle institutional silos by actively integrating local civic networks into formal spatial planning processes. Second, regional governments should establish institutionalized funding and legal protections for decentralized inter-faith forums, reducing resource dependencies while preserving their operational agility. Finally, public administration models must adopt spatially-disaggregated social risk indicators, allowing planners to

anticipate and mitigate the social consequences of physical urban expansion, particularly within vulnerable peri-urban and border zones.

6. References

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