



Institutional Fragmentation and Collaborative Governance in Urban Governance: A Delphi-Informed Case Study from Kendari, Indonesia

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A B S T R A C T

Growing secondary cities often face fragmented authority, dispersed policy information and weak cross-sector follow-up, which constrain integrated urban governance. This study examines how institutional fragmentation shapes urban governance in Kendari City, Indonesia; and identifies feasible strategies for institutional integration through collaborative governance. A two-stage qualitative case study was employed. The first stage combined document review, field observation and interviews with 45 informants from government, legislative bodies, implementers, academics, civil society, business actors and community leaders to map the forms and consequences of fragmentation. The second stage used a two-round Delphi exercise with 10 experts to validate qualitative themes and prioritize integration strategies. The findings show that fragmentation operates through four interrelated layers: structural, procedural, informational and relational fragmentation. Expert consensus indicates that integration should prioritize clearer cross-sector coordinating authority, collaborative forums with binding follow-up, integrated data and shared indicators and facilitative leadership. The study contributes to urban governance scholarship by treating fragmentation as a multi-layer institutional condition rather than an administrative weakness. It further advances collaborative governance scholarship by conceptualizing institutionalized collaboration as a mechanism linking role clarity, shared information, binding follow-up and joint accountability. These findings imply that growing cities require collaboration embedded in institutional design, not limited to routine coordination.

INTRODUCTION

Institutional fragmentation is a fundamental of contemporary governance and is inextricably linked to the handling of public affairs by multiple actors, regulations and organizations operating under overlapping jurisdictions (Doremus, 2009; Zelli & van Asselt, 2013). According to Dickey et al (2022) and Scott & Greer (2019) fragmentation is characterized by weak coordination, blurred authority, fragmented knowledge and a lack of synchronization among collective action mechanisms across institutions. This condition results in program duplication, inter-institutional competition, wasted resources and reduced government capacity to respond to cross-sectoral and cross-regional issues (Ahrend, 2014; Emerson et al., 2012). As governance problems become more interconnected, fragmented institutional arrangements increasingly constrain the ability of the public sector to produce coherent and effective policy responses.

In this study, institutional fragmentation is understood as a multi-dimensional governance condition. It is not limited to the existence of many institutions, but refers to weak institutional connectivity across authority, procedures, information, and actor relations. Structurally, fragmentation appears through overlapping mandates and blurred role boundaries. Procedurally, it is reflected in coordination mechanisms that remain administrative rather than operational. Informationally, it occurs when data, indicators, and policy knowledge are dispersed across institutions. Relationally, it emerges when trust, commitment, and multi-actor engagement are weakly institutionalized. This

understanding is important because fragmented governance weakens the capacity of urban institutions to define problems collectively, coordinate implementation, and sustain accountability across sectors.

These challenges become more acute in urban governance because cities concentrate dense populations, overlapping interests, infrastructure demands, environmental pressures and unequal access to services within a single territorial arena (Zelli & van Asselt, 2013). Urban governance therefore cannot be understood solely as an administrative matter, but as a field of interaction among state institutions, market actors, communities and knowledge actors whose decisions are mutually dependent (Ansell & Gash, 2008, 2018; Offe, 1998).

Recent scholarship also shows that urban capacity is strongly influenced by the extent to which institutions are able to integrate sectors, knowledge, and adaptive practices into a workable governance arrangement (Sulistyaningsih et al., 2021, 2024). When such integration fails, cities tend to experience authority disputes, partial policy responses and institutional dilemmas that weaken collective problem-solving capacity (Putera et al., 2025, 2026). In this regard, collaborative governance becomes relevant not merely as a participatory ideal, but as a mechanism for aligning actors, resources, and decisions across institutional boundaries. At the same time, international studies remind us that collaboration is not automatically effective; it depends on context, institutional design, and the ability to translate dialogue into coordinated action (Bryson et al., 2006; C. Calderon & Westin, 2021; G. Calderon et al., 2020).

Therefore, collaborative governance is a strategic approach to bridging fragmentation through multi-stakeholder engagement, facilitative leadership and motivated action.

However, collaboration should be distinguished from coordination. Coordination refers to the alignment of activities among institutions, often through meetings, communication, or administrative synchronization. Collaboration involves a deeper process in which actors jointly define problems, share information and resources, negotiate responsibilities, and build collective commitment. This distinction is important in fragmented urban governance because the existence of coordination forums does not automatically produce collaborative capacity when such forums lack binding follow-up, shared data, and joint accountability.

The debate over urban governance has become increasingly relevant amid Indonesia's decentralization. Autonomy reforms promise open and expansive space for regions to manage their public affairs, but they have also led to configurations of authority that are not always coherent. Firman (2009, 2010) research on Kartamantul-Yogyakarta shows that the intergovernmental cooperation is effective when supported by horizontal decision-making, transparent negotiations, leadership and a shared vision. However, the experiences of other cities demonstrate that decentralization can also create challenges, such as weak coordination, corruption in governance, institutional capacity gaps and the tendency for each actor to maintain its own area of authority (Rohdewohld et al., 2022; Tarigan et al., 2017). This indicates that decentralization does not automatically produce governance integration; in many cases, it instead reveals unresolved tensions between autonomy, coordination and policy effectiveness.

The urgency of this issue becomes more visible when urban growth outpaces the adaptive capacity of governance institutions (Yi et al., 2018). In Indonesia, rapid urbanization has increased the need for coordination across planning, infrastructure, environment, public services and local economic development, yet governance arrangements often remain sectoral and unevenly connected (Mukhlis & Perdana, 2022; Rustiadi et al., 2021).

Previous studies in Indonesian cities consistently show that collaborative governance is frequently invoked as a solution to complex urban problems, including climate adaptation, flooding and metropolitan management. Research in Jakarta demonstrates that institutional fragmentation and inconsistent collaboration have constrained the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation agendas (Dwirahmadi et al., 2023). Likewise, evidence from Bandar Lampung shows that collaborative governance remains vulnerable to cultural, institutional and political obstacles, even when policy problems are widely recognized as cross-sectoral (Mukhlis & Perdana, 2022). In Bandung, collaboration has shown promise, yet still encounters significant challenges in authority, capacity and intergovernmental coordination (Amalputra et al., 2023).

Even in Batam, institutional dualism has demonstrated how overlapping authority can disrupt economic governance and public welfare, thereby requiring stronger institutional integration (Oktavianti et al., 2025; Zaenuddin, 2025) (Zaenuddin, 2025). Collectively, these studies indicate that the core problem of urban governance is not merely the absence of policy, but the limited ability to connect fragmented institutions into an integrated governance regime. Therefore, decentralization does not automatically lead to governance integration; in many

cases, it reveals tensions among autonomy, coordination and policy effectiveness.

Therefore, it is important to examine how institutional fragmentation is bridged in urban governance in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi Province. Kendari is developing as a center of government, services, trade and continues to experience growth pressures. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data for 2024 show a population of approximately 366,454, with an economic growth rate of 4.38% and a density of approximately 1,356 people per km²; these conditions indicate an urban dynamic that cannot be ignored (Kendari, 2025b). Furthermore, the socio-economic and governance of Kendari is also complex, both demographically and economically (Amir et al., 2023; Kendari, 2025a).

Existing research on Kendari has largely focused on public service delivery, good governance practices, technology-based administrative systems, and integrated applications (Kendari, 2025a). While these studies are important, they have not sufficiently examined institutional fragmentation as the central problem of urban governance. More broadly, much of the Indonesian literature discusses collaborative governance in relation to sectoral or programmatic issues, while fragmentation is often treated as a background constraint rather than as the main analytical lens. This constitutes the research gap addressed in this article: how fragmented institutional relations across planning, implementation, information systems, and multi-actor engagement constrain the capacity of a growing city to act in an integrated manner.

Therefore, the deeper governance problem—namely how fragmented institutional relations across planning, implementation and evaluation constrain the capacity of cities to act cohesively—has not been sufficiently theorized or empirically examined in the Kendari context. This gap is important because urban governance failures are not always rooted in weak administrative capacity alone; they may also arise from unresolved inter-institutional relationships, unclear role distribution, disconnected policy knowledge and weakly institutionalized collective commitment.

Therefore, this research begins with the assumption that urban governance issues in Kendari are not solely due to the city government's limited administrative capacity. The more fundamental challenge lies in the extent to which stakeholders can overcome the institutional fragmentation that has hampered the creation of integrated governance. In this context, governance dynamics cannot be understood solely as technocratic or administrative issues, but rather as institutional issues involving inter-institutional relationships, role division and effectiveness of coordination in responding to increasingly complex urban challenges.

Based on this gap, this study addresses three research questions: first, how can collaborative governance support institutional integration in Kendari's fragmented urban governance; second, what forms of institutional fragmentation characterize urban governance in Kendari; and third, what strategic priorities are considered feasible for strengthening institutional integration. The significance of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to urban governance scholarship by positioning institutional fragmentation as the primary analytical lens rather than as a secondary contextual obstacle. It also contributes to collaborative governance scholarship by showing that collaboration in fragmented urban settings must be institutionalized through role clarity, binding follow-up,

integrated data, facilitative leadership, and joint accountability. Practically, the study provides evidence-based insights for strengthening governance reform in a growing secondary city where development effectiveness increasingly depends on inter-institutional integration rather than isolated sectoral performance.

First, it examines institutional fragmentation itself as the central problem of urban governance in a growing secondary city, rather than treating it merely as a background condition within a sector-specific policy issue. Second, it combines a qualitative case study with a limited Delphi exercise to move beyond descriptive diagnosis and toward the identification of feasible strategies for institutional integration. In doing so, this article seeks to provide a more grounded understanding of how collaborative governance can serve as a practical bridge across fragmented institutional arrangements in urban governance.

METHOD

Research Design

The research was conducted in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi Province, as a center of government, services, trade and urban settlements, facing demands for cross-sectoral coordination in managing urban development. As a developing city, institutional fragmentation impacts the integration of planning, policy implementation and urban governance. A case study approach was chosen because this research aims to understand how governance integration is formed, hindered, negotiated and pursued within a specific local context (Le Galès, 2021).

Substantively, the research combines urban governance and collaborative governance perspectives to address institutional issues; urban governance theory to examine the management of urban issues involving multiple actors, sectors and policy arenas; collaborative governance to analyze coordination mechanisms, the formation of shared commitment, facilitative leadership and institutional design for policy integration (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). Thus, the research goes beyond to explore interactions, collaborative capacity and alternative strategies for integrating governance in Kendari.

To enrich the analysis, the research was conducted in two interrelated stages. The first stage involved mapping forms of institutional fragmentation through document review, field observations and interviews. The second stage involved confirming and refining the findings using the Delphi technique with experts to gain consensus on inhibiting factors, integration opportunities and priority strategies for strengthening urban governance. This two-stage model allows for descriptive-analytical findings while also offering a more rigorous policy synthesis (Landeta, 2006; von der Gracht, 2012; Wakefield & Watson, 2014).

Respondents' Profile

Informants were selected based on their involvement, substantive knowledge, institutional position and relevant capabilities regarding urban governance in Kendari (Lewis, 2015; Takona, 2024). Purposive sampling was used because this study required information-rich participants who could explain the dynamics of authority overlap, coordination, policy implementation and inter-institutional collaboration. Such a strategy is particularly appropriate when participants are chosen for their analytical value rather than statistical representativeness (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The informant group included local government officials, regional apparatus organizations related to urban planning and management, the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), sub-districts/wards representing the implementation level, academics, civil society organizations, business actors and community leaders. 45 informants participated in in-depth interviews, with a composition that maintained representation of policy, implementation and community perspectives. (Table 1)

In addition to the interview informants, the study utilized an expert panel and a limited Delphi method. The 10 panel of experts met the criteria of understanding urban governance and policy, possessing relevant professional, academic and institutional experience, being willing to participate in more than one round of assessment and providing objective and argumentative considerations (Landeta, 2006; von der Gracht, 2012).

This panel serves to validate the themes found in the field and to assess the priorities for the most feasible institutional integration strategies. The expert panel consisted of individuals with backgrounds in urban governance, public policy, regional planning, government coordination, policy implementation, civil society engagement, and local development. The panel was anonymized to protect participants' professional positions, but its composition was designed to include academic, bureaucratic, policy-practitioner, and non-government perspectives. This composition was considered appropriate because the Delphi stage was intended to validate the qualitative themes and assess the feasibility of institutional integration strategies from multiple governance viewpoints.

Table 1. Profile of Research Respondents

Informant Group	Institutional Representation	Analytical Contribution	Total
Local government	Regional Development Planning Agency, Regional Secretariat, technical agencies	Policy design, inter-agency coordination and allocation of authority	12
Legislative and oversight bodies	Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), Inspectorate, oversight forums	Oversight functions, accountability and institutional control	5
Area-level implementers	Subdistrict offices, urban village offices, field units	Implementation practices and operational coordination	6
Academics and civil society	NGOs, researchers, lecturers, community groups	Critical and independent evaluation of urban governance	10
Business actors and community members	Business associations, community leaders, residents	Policy impacts and perceptions of development integration	12

Data Collection

The first stage combined three sources of evidence: document review, field observation and semi-structured interviews. Documents included planning materials, policy-related records, institutional documents and coordination-related information relevant to urban governance in Kendari. These materials were

used to identify formal arrangements of authority, policy direction and official coordination mechanisms. Field observation was employed to capture how those arrangements operated in practice, particularly where formal institutional designs did not fully reflect day-to-day governance interactions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an open-ended interview guide organized around four analytical domains: institutional fragmentation, urban governance patterns, collaborative capacity and integration strategies. This format allowed the researchers to explore participants' experiences and interpretations in depth while maintaining a clear connection to the research questions. Interview questions focused on overlapping authority, role allocation, coordination mechanisms, information sharing, conflict or delay in implementation, trust among actors and perceived pathways toward stronger governance integration. The semi-structured format was chosen because it provides both flexibility and analytical direction in qualitative inquiry.

The second stage was conducted after the preliminary analysis of interviews, observations and documents. Statements for the limited Delphi exercise were derived directly from the main themes that emerged in the first stage. In the first Delphi round, expert panelists were asked to assess the relevance of factors causing fragmentation, barriers to collaboration and alternative strategies for strengthening institutional integration. In the second round, they reconsidered the consolidated results in order to identify stronger convergence and clearer strategic priorities. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and panelists were also given space to provide open-ended comments. This procedure enabled the study to combine structured assessment with qualitative reasoning. (see table 2).

Two Delphi rounds were considered sufficient because the second round showed clearer convergence of expert judgments and did not produce substantially new categories beyond those identified in the first round. Therefore, the Delphi stage was not used as an independent measurement of policy outcomes, but as a validation and prioritization mechanism to strengthen the interpretation of the qualitative findings.

Table 2. Key Indicators Used in Data Collection

Analytical Aspect	Indicators/Substance	Data Sources
Institutional fragmentation	Overlapping authority, program duplication, organizational silos, weak inter-agency synchronization	Documents, interviews
Urban governance patterns	Coordination mechanisms, decision-making arenas, dominant actors, central-local and cross-sector relations	Interviews, observation, documents
Collaborative capacity	Trust, facilitative leadership, information sharing, shared commitment	Interviews, Delphi
Integration strategies	Policy options, institutional design requirements, priority areas for coordination improvement	Delphi, documentation

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted iteratively from the beginning of data collection. Qualitative materials from interviews, observation notes and documents were analyzed through an interactive process of data condensation, data display and

conclusion drawing. The analysis began with repeated reading of the material to identify meaning units related to fragmented authority, coordination practices, information flows, collaborative capacity, and institutional integration. These meaning units were then openly coded and grouped into broader conceptual categories such as authority fragmentation, procedural fragmentation, informational fragmentation, facilitative leadership, and integration strategies. The resulting categories were continuously compared across data sources and interpreted in relation to the urban governance and collaborative governance frameworks guiding the study.

The coding strategy combined inductive theme development with theoretically informed interpretation. This approach was used so that the findings remained grounded in the empirical material while also contributing to broader conceptual debates about fragmentation and collaboration. To improve analytical clarity, the researchers did not treat all interview statements as isolated observations; instead, they examined recurring patterns, points of convergence, and differences across actor groups. This thematic procedure is consistent with qualitative research that seeks to organize complex field data into analytically meaningful patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Delphi data were analyzed descriptively using the mean, median, and standard deviation of panel responses, along with the pattern of written comments provided by panelists. Higher mean and median values, together with lower dispersion, were interpreted as indicating stronger expert convergence, in line with the general logic of Delphi consensus analysis (von der Gracht, 2012). Open-ended comments were analyzed thematically to explain why certain items were prioritized and to enrich the interpretation of the numerical summaries. The final analytical step integrated the first-stage qualitative findings with the second-stage Delphi results in order to construct a coherent explanation of how institutional fragmentation operates in Kendari and which strategies are considered most relevant for strengthening urban governance integration.

In this study, an item was interpreted as showing expert convergence when it obtained a mean score of 4.00 or higher, a median score of 4.00 or higher, and relatively low dispersion as indicated by the standard deviation. Items with lower rankings were not treated as insignificant, but were interpreted as having lower priority or as depending on more foundational institutional conditions.

Methodological credibility was reinforced through source triangulation and iterative validation. Findings from interviews were cross-checked with documentary evidence and field observations, while the limited Delphi stage served as an additional layer of expert confirmation and prioritization. This strategy was used to reduce dependence on a single source of evidence and to strengthen the internal coherence of the study. Accordingly, this research does not aim at statistical generalization; rather, it seeks to produce analytically robust and contextually grounded insights into how collaborative governance may function as a bridge to institutional fragmentation in a developing urban context. (see table 3.).

Documents were used to identify formal institutional arrangements, planning directions, and official coordination mechanisms. Observations were used to examine how these formal arrangements operated in practice, while interviews were used to capture actors' experiences, perceptions, and explanations of fragmentation. The Delphi results were then used

to confirm the main qualitative themes and prioritize feasible strategies for institutional integration.

Table 3. Data Analysis Stages

Stage	Analytical Activities	Outputs
Stage I	Collecting and reviewing findings from observation and interviews	Preliminary mapping of fragmentation patterns and key actors
Stage I	Coding, categorizing and formulating the main emerging themes	Analytical themes and inter-category relationships
Stage I	Developing Delphi items based on field findings	List of inhibiting factors and integration strategy options
Stage II	Analyzing Delphi round I and round II results	Prioritized issues based on expert consensus
Stage II	Integrating all findings to draw conclusions	Analytical interpretation and policy implications

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collaborative Governance as an Institutional Mechanism for Bridging Fragmentation

The findings indicate that collaborative governance in Kendari is valued not merely as a coordination forum, but as an institutional mechanism for connecting fragmented authority, information, and action across urban governance domains. Interview data consistently showed that the main problem does not lie in the absence of institutions, but in the weak integration among them during planning, implementation, and evaluation. This diagnosis is reinforced by the Delphi results in Table 4, where the highest-ranked items concern the need for a shared coordination architecture, binding cross-sector follow-up, integrated data and indicators, and facilitative leadership. These findings suggest that actors in Kendari do not perceive collaboration as a symbolic consultative exercise; rather, they view it as a governance device that must organize roles, align decisions, and sustain implementation.

In this study, institutionalized collaboration refers to a form of collaboration that is embedded in formal and operational governance arrangements rather than limited to temporary meetings or informal communication. It differs from conventional collaborative governance in the sense that it requires clear role allocation, recognized coordinating authority, shared data and indicators, binding follow-up mechanisms, facilitative leadership, and joint accountability. This concept is important in the Kendari case because fragmentation does not only occur at the level of actor interaction, but also within the institutional rules, procedures, information systems, and accountability mechanisms that shape urban governance.

This pattern is analytically important because it shifts the meaning of collaboration from participation alone to institutional integration. In fragmented urban settings, the critical question is not simply whether actors meet, but whether their interaction changes how authority is exercised, how information is shared, and how commitments are followed through. The Kendari case shows that collaborative governance becomes relevant when it reduces ambiguity about institutional roles and creates operational links across agencies that otherwise work in parallel. This confirms that fragmented governance cannot be overcome by intensifying communication alone, because routine meetings without follow-up tend to reproduce administrative formalism rather than collective action.

Theoretically, this finding is consistent with collaborative governance scholarship emphasizing that effective collaboration depends on institutional design, facilitative leadership, shared motivation, and joint capacity for action (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). It also aligns with recent work arguing that accountability in collaboration must be process-based and not merely procedural, because collaborative arrangements become meaningful only when they shape actual implementation and responsibility allocation (Lee & Ospina, 2022). In the Kendari context, this theoretical insight is especially relevant because the empirical problem is not a lack of actors, but the absence of a governance architecture capable of transforming multiple actors into an integrated policy system.

In the first Delphi round, most of the expert panel agreed that a fundamental step to bridge institutional fragmentation is to establish a coordination architecture with clarity on the roles and authorities of each actor. The panel assessed that coordination will be ineffective if institutions continue to operate with overlapping perceptions of authority or if they fail to recognize the boundaries of their respective roles. Therefore, collaborative governance must begin with structuring the basic actors, defining their duties and establishing working mechanisms with strong institutional legitimacy (Saputra, 2020). The expert panel also emphasized that without a clear institutional foundation, collaborative forums will yield only routine meetings lacking binding force, thereby perpetuating conflicts of authority at the implementation level.

Furthermore, the first round demonstrated the importance of facilitative leadership as a bridge between organizations. Collaboration cannot be left solely to spontaneous horizontal mechanisms. It requires a trusted driving force capable of mediating interests and consolidating a shared agenda. Many open-ended comments suggest that this is most likely to be implemented by regional planning institutions or leaders through more operational coordination tools. This means that collaborative governance is not envisioned as a centralized relationship, but rather as a multi-stakeholder collaboration that still requires a leadership node for direction, rhythm and consistency of collaboration (Datta & Mete, 2024; Follador et al., 2021).

The findings point to the integration of data and policy information. The expert panel assessed that the source of institutional fragmentation is the separation of information between agencies. Each agency has its own data, indicators and information base, but these are not yet connected within a common reference system. As a result, cross-sectoral decisions are often built on heterogeneous knowledge. From a collaborative governance perspective, this is a barrier because collaboration requires shared knowledge as a basis for negotiation, prioritization and evaluation (Ilić et al., 2022; Stephens et al., 2024). Therefore, the development of collaborative forums must be accompanied by strengthening data-sharing mechanisms, synchronizing information and establishing shared indicators to assess city governance achievements.

In the second round, the panelists' consensus strengthened around the idea that effective collaborative governance must be supported by four main pillars: clarity of authority; a coordinating forum with binding follow-up; integration of data and performance indicators across sectors; and facilitative leadership that maintains commitment. The second round showed a narrowing of the distribution of answers, indicating that the expert panel agreed that bridges to institutional fragmentation

should not be built solely through informal communication but rather through a more robust institutional design.

However, the study found that not all experts view collaborative governance as a successful solution. Several panelists warned that collaborative forums could fail if they add new procedural layers without improving power relations, access to information and accountability for implementation. There are concerns that collaboration could become symbolic if not accompanied by clear rules of the game, a commitment to resource sharing and a final evaluation mechanism that assesses each stage of collaborative governance (Fathani et al., 2024). In other words, collaborative governance will be effective if it is designed not merely as a discussion forum, but as an instrument of institutional integration that encompasses structural, procedural and relational dimensions.

Therefore, collaborative governance bridges institutional fragmentation in urban governance when it is positioned as a structured integration mechanism rather than merely a normative coordination forum. Collaborative governance becomes effective when it determines who plays what role, how

data and resources are shared, who facilitates the process and how cross-sector agreements are jointly monitored (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). The findings show that the core solution is not simply increasing coordination, but designing institutional relationships so that fragmentation no longer becomes a permanent pattern in urban governance. The panel consensus on the main questions is shown in Table 4.

The implications are substantial. Table 4 shows that the strongest consensus lies in establishing a shared coordination architecture and ensuring binding follow-up, indicating that actors regard institutional clarity as the first condition for effective collaboration. This means that urban governance reform in Kendari should not begin with adding more forums, but with clarifying who coordinates whom, through what authority, and with what implementation consequences. In practical terms, collaborative governance will only function as a bridge to fragmentation when it is institutionalized through clearer role arrangements, shared indicators, and leadership capable of maintaining collective direction across sectors.

Table 4. Delphi Consensus on Mechanisms for Bridging Institutional Fragmentation

Q1. How can collaborative governance bridge institutional fragmentation in urban governance in Kendari?	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Rank
Establishing a shared coordination architecture is the primary prerequisite for reducing institutional fragmentation.	4.82	5.00	0.42	1
Cross-sector collaborative forums must generate binding follow-up actions rather than merely serve as consultative spaces.	4.70	5.00	0.48	2
Integration of data, information and shared performance indicators is necessary to ensure alignment between planning and policy implementation.	4.60	5.00	0.52	3
Facilitative leadership from key local actors is needed to sustain commitment, mediate conflict and ensure continuity of collaboration across institutions.	4.50	4.50	0.53	4
The involvement of academics, civil society, business actors and community groups strengthens the legitimacy and quality of collaborative decision-making.	4.30	4.00	0.67	5
Joint monitoring and evaluation are required to ensure that collaborative agreements are effectively implemented by each participating actor.	4.20	4.00	0.63	6

Based on Table 4, the statements with the highest level of agreement concern affirming the roles and authority of each institution, followed by the need for a collaborative forum to foster data integration and shared indicators. The findings indicate that experts do not view collaboration solely as a matter of participation, but rather as an institutional arrangement. In other words, collaboration can only be effective when there is clarity regarding who has authority, how decisions are made and how shared commitments are implemented. Conversely, statements with relatively lower average scores do not necessarily imply rejection; rather, they indicate that multi-stakeholder involvement and joint evaluation are considered important, but success still depends on a foundation of institutional coordination established first.

The relatively lower ranking of multi-stakeholder involvement and joint monitoring does not indicate that these elements are unimportant. Rather, it suggests that experts viewed them as dependent on more foundational institutional conditions. In the Kendari context, broader actor involvement and joint evaluation are difficult to sustain when role boundaries, coordinating authority, and follow-up mechanisms remain unclear. Thus, the Delphi results reveal a sequencing logic: institutional clarity and binding coordination are perceived as prerequisites before broader participation and joint monitoring can function effectively.

Substantively, the results confirm that institutional fragmentation in Kendari cannot be resolved through a siloed sectoral approach. Collaborative governance is relevant precisely because it provides an arena for aligning diverse interests, clarifying the distribution of authority, exchanging information and building shared commitment in city management. Therefore, the answer to this research's main question lies not in a single policy but rather in developing a collaborative design that connects actors, knowledge and actions within a more integrated city governance framework.

Forms of Institutional Fragmentation in Kendari's Urban Governance

Research findings indicate that institutional fragmentation in urban governance is not simply a matter of the large number of institutions involved, but also of weak interconnectedness in carrying out city governance functions. Informants emphasized that the primary problem lies not in the plurality of actors, but in the separation of sectors, which are not yet fully bound by common goals and coordination to integrate actions. Therefore, fragmentation is understood as an institutional failure to build integrated working relationships.

The most prominent form is the fragmentation of authority. Various urban issues, such as spatial planning, infrastructure, housing services, the environment and regional development, involve multiple institutions with overlapping mandates. In

practice, this creates uncertainty about who leads, who makes decisions and who is accountable when policy implementation fails to meet targets. This fragmentation does not always manifest itself in open conflict, but more often manifests through waiting for each other, shifting responsibilities and institutional actions that proceed independently.

The second form is procedural fragmentation. Although various cross-sectoral forums exist, such as coordination meetings, planning consultations, development planning meetings (*musrenbang*), regional apparatus forums and inter-unit technical communication, these mechanisms do not automatically result in integrated action. Coordination tends to be administrative, periodic and responsive to immediate needs and has not yet developed into a stable and binding operational work pattern. As a result, inter-agency cooperation is more situational than institutionalized as a well-established governance.

The third aspect relates to data and information fragmentation. Each agency possesses different technical, administrative and field data, but it is not yet connected within a common framework of reference. This situation weakens the process of collective problem definition and encourages the emergence of sectoral policy priorities. In the context of urban governance, this fragmented information has direct implications for the poor quality of evidence-based decisions across sectors.

This research also found a gap between planning and implementation. At the formal document level, development policy direction is integrative. However, during implementation, programs often revert to the sectoral paths of each agency. Thus, integration is more evident in planning discourse than throughout the entire policy cycle. Differences in work rhythms, performance orientation, budget synchronization and absence of an integrative unit with clear authority strengthen the gap between policy design and implementation in the field.

Furthermore, fragmentation is exacerbated by imbalances in institutional capacity and resources. Some actors hold important mandates but lack adequate coordinating capacity, while others possess greater capabilities but lack the authority to drive collaboration. This imbalance distorts influence and weakens the practical basis for sustainable collective action. At the same time, the involvement of non-governmental actors remains fragmented. Academics, civil society, communities and business actors generally play a consultative role, not yet fully institutionalized as active participants in setting, policy oversight and evaluation.

The relational and participatory fragmentation of non-governmental actors' involvement remains sporadic in the decision-making process. They provide input but are not yet a consistent part of priority setting, implementation monitoring, or policy evaluation. This situation indicates that a consolidated collaborative network does not yet support urban governance.

Empirically, authority fragmentation was visible in urban issues that required simultaneous involvement of planning, public works, housing, environmental, and area-level institutions. For example, infrastructure and settlement-related problems were often connected to spatial planning, drainage, environmental management, and community-level service delivery at the same time. However, informants indicated that these issues were frequently handled through separate sectoral

procedures. As a result, implementation could be delayed because agencies waited for each other's technical confirmation, budget allocation, or formal authority. This condition illustrates how overlapping authority does not always produce open institutional conflict, but often appears through slow follow-up, fragmented responsibility, and uncertainty over the leading sector.

In the second Delphi round, the expert panel's consensus narrowed to four broad categories of institutional fragmentation. First, structural fragmentation, including overlapping authority, blurred role boundaries and weak positional assertion among actors. Second, procedural fragmentation, including weak coordination, poor planning and synchronization and poor follow-up among agencies. Third, informational fragmentation, namely the separation of data, indicators and policy knowledge bases. Fourth, relational fragmentation, reflected in weak trust, limited multi-stakeholder engagement and unconsolidated networks. This synthesis confirms that fragmentation in Kendari is not a single phenomenon, but a multi-layered problem shaped by how institutions work and interact.

Conceptually, the Kendari case confirms that fragmentation should be understood as a relational and informational problem in addition to a structural one. This interpretation resonates with studies describing fragmented governance as a condition marked by weak connectivity, dispersed knowledge, and limited synchronization among organizations operating in shared problem spaces (Dickey et al., 2022; Scott & Greer, 2019). It also supports findings from Indonesian governance research showing that bureaucratic inertia and poor inter-organizational linkage can weaken collective responses to complex public problems (Fathani et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2021). Conceptually, findings emphasize fragmentation cannot be understood solely as an organizational issue, but rather as a matter of inter-institutional relationships that impact the city's ability to act in an integrated manner. See Table 5.

This interpretation also clarifies why fragmentation in Kendari cannot be reduced to the argument that too many actors are involved. These issue is not actor plurality itself, but the absence of institutional mechanisms that connect actors into a coherent decision and implementation framework. In principle, urban governance requires multiple actors because cities are governed through interdependent policy arenas. The problem arises when such plurality is not matched by role clarity, data integration, and stable cross-sector follow-up. Under these conditions, actor diversity becomes a source of disconnection rather than a basis for collaborative capacity.

The implications of this finding are twofold. First, governance reform in Kendari must address fragmentation as a layered problem, not as a single coordination failure. Second, institutional integration should be pursued simultaneously across structural, procedural, informational, and relational dimensions. Table 5 therefore should not be read merely as a classification of problems, but as evidence that fragmentation is reproduced through several mutually reinforcing mechanisms. Without addressing these layers together, attempts at coordination will remain temporary and vulnerable to sectoral relapse.

Table 5. Delphi Consensus on the Forms of Institutional Fragmentation in Kendari's Urban Governance

Q2. What forms of institutional fragmentation characterize urban governance in Kendari?	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Rank
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Overlapping authority and blurred role boundaries across institutions constitute the most fundamental form of fragmentation in urban governance in Kendari City.	4.82	5.00	0.39	1
Cross-sector coordination remains largely administrative and has not yet produced sufficiently integrated operational follow-up.	4.74	5.00	0.44	2
Data, information and performance indicators remain dispersed across institutions, thereby constraining the development of a shared knowledge base.	4.63	5.00	0.51	3
Policy planning has shown an integrative orientation; however, program implementation continues to proceed largely through sectoral pathways.	4.51	4.50	0.56	4
Differences in technical capacity, human resources and institutional support across actors reinforce fragmentation in the implementation of urban policy.	4.38	4.00	0.64	5
The involvement of non-state actors has not yet been sustainably institutionalized within urban governance processes.	4.24	4.00	0.69	6

Governance Consequences and Strategic Priorities for Institutional Integration

The third major finding concerns the consequences of fragmentation and the strategic priorities for addressing it. Table 6 shows that the expert panel strongly agrees that fragmentation weakens cross-sector policy integration, reduces implementation effectiveness, lowers the quality of decision-making, blurs collaborative accountability, and constrains sustained multi-stakeholder participation. At the same time, also identifies the highest-priority response: strengthening cross-sector coordinating authority, followed by building collaborative forums with binding implementation force, integrating shared data and indicators, and reinforcing facilitative leadership.

The fourfold typology of structural, procedural, informational, and relational fragmentation is one of the central analytical findings of this study. It shows that fragmentation in Kendari cannot be reduced to administrative overlap alone. Structural fragmentation concerns the distribution of authority and role boundaries; procedural fragmentation concerns the weakness of operational follow-up; informational fragmentation concerns dispersed data and indicators; while relational fragmentation concerns weakly institutionalized trust and multi-actor engagement. This typology extends the analysis of urban governance fragmentation by showing that institutional disconnection operates simultaneously through formal mandates, working procedures, knowledge systems, and actor relations.

These results show that the impact of fragmentation is not abstract; it directly affects how urban policy is designed, carried out, and evaluated. The qualitative evidence supports this interpretation. Informants explained that interrelated urban issues are often translated into fragmented administrative responses because authority is dispersed, information is disconnected, and implementation proceeds through separate institutional rhythms. As a result, policy integration weakens at the operational level even when documents appear aligned. This helps explain why urban governance in Kendari may appear formally coordinated while still producing discontinuities, duplication, and weak follow-up in practice. In other words, fragmentation undermines not only institutional efficiency, but also the city's capacity to act collectively on shared problems.

This pattern is consistent with earlier studies showing that collaboration in Indonesian urban governance often struggles when authority remains contested, coordination is weakly institutionalized, and implementation lacks binding mechanisms. Research in Jakarta and Bandar Lampung, for example, demonstrates that cross-sector problems become difficult to manage when collaborative arrangements are not supported by coherent institutional design (Dwirahmadi et al., 2023; Mukhlis & Perdana, 2022). Likewise, findings from Bandung and Batam suggest that collaboration is more effective

when inter-organizational roles are clearer and authority conflicts are institutionally managed (Amalputra et al., 2023; Zaenuddin, 2025). The Kendari case extends this literature by showing that fragmentation is not only a background condition that hinders governance, but also the main mechanism through which urban integration is weakened.

From a theoretical standpoint, the prioritization of coordinating authority is especially significant. It indicates that actors in Kendari regard institutional integration as dependent on a recognized node of coordination capable of aligning roles and ensuring follow-up. This does not imply a return to rigid centralization. Rather, it suggests that collaborative governance requires a coordinating anchor so that shared agendas do not dissolve into dispersed institutional discretion. Recent literature on boundary spanning and collaborative governance similarly emphasizes collaboration needs actors or institutions capable of sustaining inter-organizational linkages and preventing coordination from becoming episodic or symbolic (Ansell et al., 2025; Stephens et al., 2024).

In the second Delphi round, the expert panel concluded that the most prioritized strategy to mitigate the impact of fragmentation is the affirmation of cross-sectoral coordination authority. This strategy is seen as a key foundation because without a clear institutional node, coordination will remain dependent on individual initiatives or fleeting momentum. A clear coordination authority is needed to ensure clarity of roles, division of tasks and follow-up between agencies on cross-agency urban issues.

The next priority strategy is strengthening collaborative forums that go beyond consultation and have a binding force for implementation. The expert panel assessed that cross-sectoral forums should function as decision-making mechanisms, not simply administrative meeting spaces. Therefore, collaborative forums need to be equipped with a shared agenda, cross-sector targets and monitorable follow-up mechanisms. This strategy is crucial for transforming reactive coordination into a more stable work pattern.

Furthermore, the expert panel prioritized data integration and shared indicators as additional strategies. A connected database is considered crucial for all actors working with a common problem-based framework. This strategy not only strengthens decision-making quality but also supports more objective cross-sector monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, the research also emphasized the importance of facilitative leadership capable of bridging differing interests, maintaining inter-institutional commitment and encouraging consistent implementation. Without such leadership, collaboration risks stalling at the procedural level.

Thus, institutional fragmentation in Kendari has resulted in weak policy integration, low implementation effectiveness,

declining decision quality, unclear accountability and limited multistakeholder participation. To address these issues, the most prioritized strategies are affirming coordinating authority, strengthening binding collaborative forums, integrating cross-sectoral data and facilitative leadership capable of sustaining the direction of collaboration. The Delphi results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Delphi Consensus on the Impacts of Institutional Fragmentation and Priority Strategies for Institutional Integration

Q3. What are the impacts of institutional fragmentation on urban governance, and which strategy should be prioritized?	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Rank
Institutional fragmentation weakens cross-sector policy integration in urban governance in Kendari.	4.78	5.00	0.41	1
Institutional fragmentation reduces policy implementation effectiveness because inter-agency programs are not synchronized.	4.70	5.00	0.46	2
Differences in data, indicators and inter-agency information systems reduce the quality of urban policy decision-making.	4.61	5.00	0.52	3
Blurred divisions of roles and responsibilities across institutions weaken collaborative accountability.	4.49	4.50	0.58	4
Institutional fragmentation constrains sustained multi-stakeholder participation in urban governance processes.	4.32	4.00	0.67	5
Strengthening cross-sector coordinating authority is the highest-priority strategy for bridging institutional fragmentation.	4.85	5.00	0.36	1

Based on Table 6, the expert panel demonstrated strong consensus that institutional fragmentation in Kendari City directly weakens cross-sectoral policy integration, reduces implementation effectiveness, diminishes decision-making quality, blurs collaborative accountability and limits multi-stakeholder participation in city governance. Among these impacts, weakened policy integration and unsynchronized implementation received the highest ratings, confirming that the main problem with urban governance in Kendari lies in the lack of inter-institutional linkages within a single framework of joint action. At the same time, experts panel identified the affirmation of cross-sectoral coordination authority as the most prioritized strategy, followed by strengthening collaborative forums with binding implementation power, integrating shared data and indicators and facilitative leadership. These findings indicate that resolving fragmentation cannot be achieved simply by intensifying formal coordination but requires strengthening institutional designs that can integrate the roles, information and commitments of actors into a more integrated city governance.

The practical implication is that strengthening urban governance in Kendari should begin with institutional design, not with additional procedural activity. The priority is to establish a

coordination authority with enough legitimacy to align agencies, require follow-up, and maintain continuity across policy stages. This must be accompanied by collaborative forums that produce monitorable decisions, integrated data systems that support shared problem definition, and facilitative leadership that can mediate interests and preserve commitment. Therefore, the findings do not support a generic call for more collaboration. Instead, they indicate that Kendari needs more institutionalized collaboration—that is, collaboration embedded in role clarity, shared information, accountability mechanisms, and stable cross-sector coordination.

CONCLUSION

This study answers three research questions. First, collaborative governance supports institutional integration in Kendari when it is institutionalized through role clarity, binding follow-up, integrated data, facilitative leadership, and joint accountability. Second, institutional fragmentation in Kendari appears through structural, procedural, informational, and relational dimensions. Third, the most feasible strategies for strengthening integration are the affirmation of cross-sector coordinating authority, the strengthening of collaborative forums, the integration of shared data and indicators, and the reinforcement of facilitative leadership.

This study demonstrates that the central challenge of urban governance in Kendari does not lie merely in administrative limitations, but in institutional fragmentation that weakens the integration of planning, implementation, and policy evaluation. Through a two-stage qualitative case study combining interviews, observation, document review, and a limited Delphi exercise, the study shows that fragmentation is expressed through overlapping authority, administrative coordination without binding follow-up, disconnected data and indicators, uneven institutional capacity, and weakly institutionalized multi-stakeholder relations. These conditions reduce the capacity of the city government and related actors to respond coherently to interconnected urban issues.

The findings further confirm that collaborative governance is relevant not simply as a participatory norm, but as an institutional mechanism for restructuring fragmented relationships in urban governance. In the Kendari case, collaboration becomes meaningful when it goes beyond routine consultation and is supported by clear role arrangements, recognized coordinating authority, integrated information systems, and facilitative leadership capable of sustaining commitment across sectors. Accordingly, the study argues that improving urban governance requires not more fragmented procedural activity, but more institutionalized collaboration that connects actors, information, and decisions within a shared governance architecture.

Theoretically, this article contributes to the urban governance and collaborative governance literature by repositioning institutional fragmentation as the primary analytical lens rather than as a secondary contextual constraint. It shows that the quality of governance in developing cities depends not only on the formal capacity of individual institutions, but also on the extent to which those institutions are connected through workable arrangements of authority, coordination, and accountability. Practically, the findings imply that governance reform in Kendari should prioritize institutional integration through stronger cross-sector coordination, binding collaborative mechanisms, shared indicators, and more

consistent facilitative leadership. In this sense, the study provides an empirically grounded basis for strengthening urban governance in cities facing similar cross-sector complexity.

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a single-city case, so its findings are intended for analytical generalization rather than direct statistical generalization. Second, the study captures institutional dynamics within a specific period, which means that longer-term changes in governance arrangements could not be fully observed. Third, while the limited Delphi stage strengthened validation and prioritization, it was designed to complement the qualitative findings rather than to replace broader comparative policy assessment.

These limitations open several directions for future research. Comparative studies across secondary cities in Indonesia would be valuable for examining whether the patterns found in Kendari also appear in other decentralized urban contexts. Longitudinal research is also needed to assess how collaborative arrangements evolve over time and whether institutional integration can be sustained beyond short-term coordination efforts. In addition, future work may examine the implementation of specific coordination reforms, shared data systems, or inter-agency accountability mechanisms in order to better understand how collaborative governance is institutionalized in practice.

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

Haeruddin: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Project administration, Supervisor Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Roni Ekha Putera: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – review & editing.

Aqil Teguh Fathani: Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Resources.

Tengku Rika Valentina: Formal analysis, Resources, Software, Writing – review & editing

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. There's no conflict of interest of this manuscript.

Ethical Statement

Ethical approval was waived because the study involved minimal risk. All participants were informed of the study's objectives and procedures, and informed consent was obtained prior to participation.

Data Availability

Data available on request from the authors: The data that support the findings of this research are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Grammarly and Quillbot to improve the clarity and readability of the text. Output was generated by the tool were carefully reviewed and edited by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content of this article. All intellectual contributions, including conceptualization, analysis, data interpretation, and final decisions regarding content, arguments, and conclusions, were carried out solely by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the integrity, originality, and academic quality of this article.

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