



COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE IN STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION: A CASE STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF BHINNEKA PARK AS AN INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACE IN SURABAYA CITY

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Abstract :

This study explores the dynamics of Collaborative Governance in strengthening social cohesion through the development of Bhinneka Park as an inclusive public space in Surabaya. Rapid urbanization in major Indonesian cities often leads to social fragmentation and the fading of interactions among heterogeneous residents. Addressing these modern urban challenges requires a shift from rigid top-down approaches to a collaborative paradigm involving the government, private sector, and civil society. This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive case study method, positioning the researcher as the key instrument to examine the depth of collaborative dynamics. Data collection was conducted through triangulation, including in-depth interviews with government officials, CSR representatives, academics, and marginalized groups, alongside participant observation and documentation. The findings indicate that the development of Bhinneka Park represents a significant paradigm shift toward a multi-stakeholder ecosystem where the Surabaya City Government acts as a facilitative leader. By integrating private sector capital through transparent Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) schemes and involving local communities in the planning phase, the project has successfully built trust and shared understanding. Conceptually, the park serves as a "third space" that manifests spatial justice, particularly by providing standardized accessibility for people with disabilities, thus shifting their status from mere observers to invited subjects. Sociologically, Bhinneka Park functions as an organic peace laboratory that deconstructs identity stereotypes and reduces social prejudice through cross-identity interactions. This process strengthens bridging social capital, where residents from diverse ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and equal rights to the city. The integration of participatory governance and non-discriminatory design effectively mitigates horizontal conflicts and urban fragmentation. Ultimately, the study concludes that resilient social cohesion can be achieved when public spaces are managed as inclusive ecosystems prioritizing dialogue, spatial justice, and cross-sector accountability. This collaborative model serves as a vital precedent for other cities in using public space development as a sustainable social integration strategy amidst modern polarization.

Keywords : Collaborative Governance, Social Cohesion, Inclusive Public Space, Spatial Justice, Surabaya

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of massive urbanization in large cities like Surabaya often results in social fragmentation and the fading of barriers to interaction between heterogeneous citizens. Conceptually, modern urban challenges can no longer be solved through a rigid top-down approach, but rather require the paradigm of Collaborative Governance as a public management model that



involves government actors, the private sector, and civil society in a formal forum to achieve collective goals.(Ansell et al., 2022)

In this context, the development of inclusive public spaces such as Bhinneka Park in Surabaya is crucial, considering that public spaces are not merely physical infrastructure or the "lungs of the city," but rather an arena for identity contestation and a bridge to strengthen social cohesion amidst ethnic, religious, and economic diversity. The development of Bhinneka Park reflects a shift in the Surabaya City Government's strategy in managing diversity, where cross-sector collaboration is the main engine to ensure that these spaces are accessible and owned by all levels of society without discrimination.(Savitri, 2026)

However, realizing collaborative governance is not without obstacles; there are often imbalances in power relations, differing interests between stakeholders, and challenges in maintaining sustainable public participation post-development. The urgency of this study lies in how the collaborative process is implemented, starting from the participatory planning stage, mobilizing resources through corporate social responsibility (CSR) schemes, to the role of local communities in activating these spaces as a forum for cross-identity interaction.(Darumurti & Kurniawan, 2025)

Bhinneka Park was chosen as the research location because its name itself conveys a narrative of unity in diversity, which symbolically and practically aims to reduce the potential for horizontal conflict and erode social prejudice through regular encounters in open spaces. Through the lens of Collaborative Governance, we can examine the extent to which transparency, face-to-face communication, and shared commitments built by actors in Surabaya are able to create organic social cohesion.(Haryono et al., 2024)

The success of this development is not only measured by the aesthetic aspects of the park, but also by the extent to which the community feels part of an inclusive city ecosystem. Therefore, this study aims to explore the dynamics of this collaboration and its contribution to strengthening the social fabric of Surabaya residents, while also providing a model for other cities in Indonesia in managing public space as an effective instrument of social integration amidst increasingly apparent polarization.(Sudirman et al., 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive case study approach, which is generally understood as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior to understand phenomena holistically and contextually. The researcher positions himself as a key instrument to explore the depth of the dynamics of Collaborative Governance in the development of Bhinneka Park in Surabaya, where social reality is viewed as something complex and dynamic. The selection of the research location in the city of Surabaya was determined purposively due to the city's reputation for innovation in public spaces and its success in managing diversity through inclusive policies.(Assyakurrohim et al.,

2023)

To obtain valid and credible data, data collection techniques were carried out through triangulation of sources and methods, which included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with key informants selected using a purposive sampling technique, consisting of representatives from the Surabaya City Government (Bappedalitbang or the Environmental Agency), private parties distributing CSR, academics, as well as community leaders and marginalized groups who utilize the park. In this process, researchers not only relied on textual data, but also conducted field observations to record social interactions that occurred in Bhinneka Park in order to empirically identify indicators of social cohesion.(Nurfajriani et al., 2024)

The collected data was then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes the stages of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions or verification. Data reduction was carried out by summarizing and focusing on crucial aspects of collaboration such as face-to-face communication, trust-building, and shared commitment, while the data presentation was arranged narratively to illustrate the collaborative workflow from the planning stage to the utilization of the space.(Sofwatillah et al., 2024). In addition, to ensure the validity of the data, the researcher implemented a credibility test through extended observation and member checking to ensure that the researcher's interpretations aligned with the perspectives of the stakeholders involved. This qualitative approach allowed the researcher to not only examine the number of park visits but also to examine the quality of power relations, communication barriers, and the effectiveness of the public space in dissolving social barriers within the community. Thus, this method was able to present a rich and in-depth picture of how collaborative governance can be a driving force for strengthening social cohesion at the local level, while also providing space for subjective narratives from actors involved in developing Bhinneka Park as a truly inclusive public space.(Rahayu & Rindrayani, 2025).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics of the Collaboration Cycle: Integration of Public-Private Sector Capital in the Development of Bhinneka Park

The dynamics of the collaborative cycle in the development of Bhinneka Park in Surabaya are generally understood as an interactive process involving the pooling of resources, authority, and expertise from various sectors to produce public solutions that could not be achieved individually. Theoretically, this integration of capital is a manifestation of a strategic partnership in which the government acts as a policy facilitator while the private sector contributes through social investment, which in this analysis is paraphrased as the combination of material and non-material assets to create sustainable public value.(Aprilian & Windiani, 2025)

This collaborative process begins with a crucial trust-building phase, where the Surabaya City Government must convince private stakeholders that

their involvement in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme will have a tangible impact on the company's image and the well-being of its residents. Within this dynamic, a shift occurs from a traditional, rigid bureaucratic model to a flexible and deliberative governance model, allowing for dialogue to align the park's technical design with the vision of social inclusivity. (Bilqis et al., 2025)

This discussion on capital integration highlights that private sector contributions are not limited to physical funding but also include the transfer of knowledge in more efficient and innovative public space management. Paraphrasing this interaction suggests a "symbiotic mutualism" in urban governance where the private sector gains social legitimacy, while the government successfully realizes quality infrastructure without overburdening the Regional Budget (APBD). (Richo et al., 2024)

Furthermore, this collaborative cycle includes a commitment to a transparent process, where each actor has clearly defined responsibilities to ensure Bhinneka Park functions as an inclusive public space that is friendly to people with disabilities and minorities. This dynamic also involves civil society as a social watchdog, ensuring that the integration of capital remains oriented towards the public interest, not merely the commercial interests of private parties. (Arundinasari, 2022)

The success of this collaborative cycle in Surabaya demonstrates that when private financial capital meets credible government political capital, a synergy is created that can reduce structural barriers to urban development. This integration ultimately creates a development ecosystem that relies not only on the strength of infrastructure, but also on the relational strength of the actors involved. Thus, the development of Bhinneka Park serves as empirical evidence that the effectiveness of Collaborative Governance is highly dependent on the quality of negotiations and the alignment of incentives between sectors, which collectively strengthen the urban social fabric through the provision of equitable public spaces. This summary confirms that without healthy collaborative dynamics, capital integration will become merely a financial transaction without any essence of strengthening social cohesion for the wider community. (A' yuni et al., 2025).

TABLE 1: Matrix of Articulation of Interests and Transformation of Public Values in the Collaborative Governance Ecosystem of Bhinneka Park

No	Informant's Initials	Position/Role	Interview Quotes	Conceptual Categorization
1	Informant A	Surabaya Environmental Agency Technical Officer	"Our strategy is no longer simply to build, but to 'sew' interests together. We provide a regulatory platform, and then the private	Facilitative Leadership (Facilitative Leadership)

			<i>sector comes in, bringing capital and design innovations that are more flexible than our rigid bureaucracy."</i>	
2	Informant B	Company CSR Representative	<i>"Our confidence in funding Taman Bhinneka stems from the transparency of user data. We see this as a social investment, attaching our brand name to an inclusive, conflict-free space."</i>	Building Trust (Trust Building)
3	Informant C	Local Community Leaders	<i>"This area used to be just empty land prone to youth conflict. Now, when we sit together to discuss the park concept, we feel a sense of ownership. We feel valued because the voices of the diverse residents here are being heard."</i>	Shared Understanding (Shared Understanding)
4	Informant D	Inclusion/Disability Activist	<i>"Our victory wasn't in the beauty of the flowers, but in the availability of standard guiding blocks and ramps. Here, we don't feel like second-class citizens; this collaboration gives us equal access."</i>	Spatial Justice (Spatial Justice)
5	Informant E	Visitors/General Citizens	<i>"At Bhinneka Park, I can chat with people of different religions or ethnicities without feeling awkward. The atmosphere is designed for mingling, not for socializing in groups."</i>	Social Cohesion (Bridging Social Capital)

(Research Source 2026)

Based on Table 1, it can be concluded that the development of Bhinneka Park represents a paradigm shift in urban governance, shifting from an

authoritarian approach to a dynamic, multi-stakeholder collaborative ecosystem. Through the implementation of Facilitative Leadership, the government is no longer merely a physical builder, but rather plays a role as an integrator capable of synergizing private sector capital and innovation with the basic needs of the community. The growing trust of the private sector through data transparency creates a form of sustainable social investment, while the involvement of community leaders in formulating spatial concepts can create a Shared Understanding that effectively mitigates social conflict at the grassroots level. Furthermore, the integration of standard disability-friendly facilities is not merely a matter of aesthetics, but a concrete manifestation of Spatial Justice that eliminates social stratification in public spaces. All of these elements culminate in the creation of Social Cohesion, where the park design functions as an organic interaction space that bridges differences in ethnicity, religion, and economic background. Thus, Bhinneka Park is not just a green open space, but an instrument of social engineering that successfully unites the dimensions of regulation, accessibility, and community harmony in a single, inclusive space.

Reconstructing Social Cohesion Through Spatial Inclusivity: The Impact of Cross-Identity Interactions in Public Spaces

Reconstructing social cohesion through spatial inclusivity is a transformative process that positions public space not merely as physical infrastructure, but as a strategic instrument to mitigate social fragmentation in heterogeneous urban environments.(Ma'rufah, 2025).

Fundamentally, inclusive public spaces function as neutral stages that allow for organic cross-identity interactions, where encounters between individuals from various ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds can deconstruct stereotypes and erode prejudice through the experience of sharing equal space. Through the provision of equitable accessibility such as disability-friendly facilities and non-discriminatory designs, a process of strengthening bridging social capital occurs that bridges previously segregated groups, thereby fostering a sense of collective empathy and a sense of belonging to the city.(Belia & Setyowati, 2023).

A significant impact of this phenomenon is the creation of spatial justice that automatically reduces the potential for horizontal conflict, because every citizen feels valued and their rights are recognized within the shared space. Thus, the integration of humanistic physical design and participatory space management is the main key in reweaving fragile social structures, transforming open spaces into laboratories of peace that strengthen social stability through harmonious, inclusive and sustainable daily interactions.(Noor et al., 2025).

TABLE 2: FIELD FINDINGS IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH PUBLIC SPACE INCLUSIVITY

No.	Informant Code	Subject Profile & Informant	Interview Results	Dimensions of Social Reconstructi
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		Typology		on
1	INF-01	Urban Planner(Government)	"We're no longer just looking for aesthetics. Now, the key to a park's success is how low the psychological 'walls' are between residents when they sit on the same bench."	Reducing Urban Fragmentation
2	INF-02	Representative of the Disabled (Activist)	"Previously, we felt 'allowed' to come, now we feel 'invited'. The difference lies in the standard of the ramp and guiding blocks, which are not haphazardly made."	Spatial Justice
3	INF-03	Park Ranger / Community Leader	"This park has become a 'ceasefire space'. Young people from different blocks who are usually at odds, now meet on the same sports field."	Organic Peace Laboratory
4	INF-04	Interfaith Visitors	"It's strange, outside we might be busy arguing about our differences, but here, as we watch	Deconstructing Identity Stereotypes

			our children play together, those identities melt away in conversations about parenting."	
5	INF-05	Urban Sociology Academic	"The interaction here is bridging, not bonding. It's not about hanging out with one's own group, but about having the courage to greet the 'other' in a neutral space."	Strengthening Bridging Social Capital
	INF-06	Private Sector (CSR Partners)	"Transparency in park management gives us assurance that our contributions truly reach the grassroots, not just a ceremonial formality."	Collaborative Governance Integrity

(Research Source 2026)

Based on Table 2, it can be concluded that the reconstruction of social cohesion in urban public spaces, as reflected in the management of city parks, has transformed from merely the construction of physical infrastructure into a profound and multidimensional social engineering strategy. Through the Urban Fragmentation Reduction paradigm, planning authorities now prioritize reducing psychological barriers between residents, indicating that the success of spatial planning is no longer measured aesthetically but through the intensity of inclusive social interactions. This is reinforced by the realization of Spatial Justice, where marginalized groups such as people with disabilities experience a shift in status from mere "permitted objects" to "invited subjects" through the provision of precise accessibility facilities, which de facto constitutes a form of state recognition of equal citizenship rights.

This phenomenon creates what is called an Organic Peace Laboratory,

where public spaces function as neutral zones capable of reducing horizontal friction and tension between groups through positive communal activities. In this space, a significant process of Deconstruction of Identity Stereotypes occurs; Primordial differences such as religion and ethnicity are disintegrated as residents engage in discursive dialogue on universal everyday issues, such as child-rearing, thus creating common ground above differences. Sociologically, this dynamic triggers the Strengthening of Bridging Social Capital, a bridging social capital that encourages individuals to move beyond their group exclusivity (bonding) towards broader and more heterogeneous interactions.

The sustainability of this social ecosystem also depends heavily on the Integrity of Collaborative Governance, where private sector involvement through transparent CSR schemes legitimizes accountable space management oriented towards grassroots welfare. Thus, the integration of facilitative policies, inclusive physical design, and active public participation has transformed public space into a strategic instrument for reweaving fragile social structures, transforming it into a transitional space where differences are no longer barriers but rather assets for the creation of harmonious, resilient and sustainable urban communities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research analysis, the development of Bhinneka Park in Surabaya City proves that the application of the Collaborative Governance paradigm is an effective social engineering instrument in strengthening social cohesion amidst the heterogeneity of urban society. The success of this project lies not only in the aesthetics of the physical infrastructure, but also in the Surabaya City Government's ability to play a facilitative role, successfully synergizing private sector capital through a transparent CSR scheme with the aspirations of the local community.

A collaborative process involving trust-building, shared understanding, and a commitment to inclusivity has transformed a previously conflict-prone vacant lot into a safe "third space" for all levels of society. Sociologically, Bhinneka Park functions as a neutral stage capable of deconstructing identity stereotypes and eroding social prejudice through organic interactions across ethnicities, religions, and economic statuses. This phenomenon strengthens bridging social capital, where residents feel they have equal rights to the city (spatial citizenship), especially for marginalized groups and people with disabilities who are now positioned as invited subjects through the provision of high-standard accessibility facilities.

The integration of participatory governance and non-discriminatory spatial design creates an organic peace laboratory capable of reducing social fragmentation and the potential for horizontal conflict. Thus, this study concludes that resilient social cohesion can be achieved if public spaces are managed as inclusive ecosystems that prioritize dialogue, spatial equity, and cross-sectoral accountability. This collaborative model sets an important precedent for other cities in utilizing public space development as a sustainable

social integration strategy amidst the challenges of modern polarization.

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