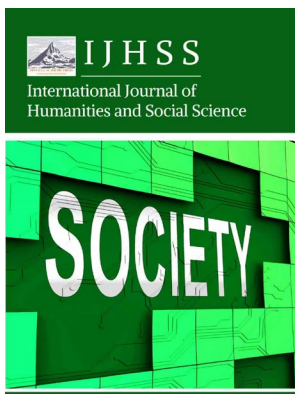




Review

Challenges and Strategies of Social Organizations' Participation in Community Public Affairs Management from the Perspective of Collaborative Governance

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Abstract: The transformation of community governance in contemporary society has brought social organizations to the forefront of public affairs management. Under the framework of collaborative governance, the effective participation of these organizations is essential for achieving multi-actor coordination and improving community service delivery. However, their involvement is often constrained by institutional, resource, and capacity-related barriers. This paper analyzes the challenges faced by social organizations in participating in community public affairs from a collaborative governance perspective. It identifies five key problem areas: insufficient institutional support, fragmented resource allocation, limited organizational capability, weak trust and communication mechanisms, and coordination inefficiency among stakeholders. To address these issues, the paper proposes strategies including institutional synergy, resource integration, capacity enhancement, trust-building mechanisms, and digital empowerment. The study argues that fostering a sustainable collaborative system among government, social organizations, and community actors is vital for advancing participatory and effective community governance.

Keywords: collaborative governance; social organizations; community public affairs; participation mechanism; governance innovation

Received: 18 September 2025
Revised: 21 September 2025
Accepted: 08 November 2025
Published: 11 November 2025



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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In recent years, the governance of community affairs has undergone a significant transformation driven by social diversification, urbanization, and the growing complexity of public demands. Traditional government-centered management models have become insufficient to address the dynamic and diverse needs of modern communities. Consequently, community governance has gradually shifted toward a multi-actor collaborative framework, emphasizing cooperation among government, social organizations, and citizens. Within this evolving landscape, social organizations have emerged as key actors that supplement governmental functions, deliver public services, and promote civic participation [1]. Their involvement enhances the responsiveness, inclusiveness, and efficiency of community governance, marking an important transition from administrative management to participatory collaboration.

1.2. Research Problem and Significance

Despite the increasing number of social organizations participating in community governance, their roles and contributions often remain limited. Many organizations encounter institutional barriers, such as unclear legal status and insufficient policy support, as well as operational constraints, including limited financial resources, inadequate professional capacity, and fragmented coordination mechanisms. These challenges hinder their ability to fully engage in decision-making processes and collaborative initiatives [2]. Examining these issues through the lens of collaborative governance provides a systematic framework to understand the interactions between government, social organizations, and citizens, revealing structural and procedural barriers that impede effective participation. Furthermore, this perspective offers valuable theoretical insights into multi-actor governance, while also informing practical strategies to enhance organizational capacity, improve inter-organizational coordination, and foster more inclusive and effective community governance.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Collaborative Governance Perspective

2.1. Concept and Core Elements

Collaborative governance refers to the structured interactions and coordinated efforts among government agencies, social organizations, and citizens, aimed at jointly making decisions and delivering public services [3]. Unlike traditional top-down governance, collaborative governance emphasizes multi-actor engagement, where each participant contributes to problem-solving, policy implementation, and service provision. It is not simply a partnership, but a systematic framework in which stakeholders share information, negotiate responsibilities, and pursue collective goals [4].

At the core of collaborative governance are several fundamental principles. Mutual trust among actors is essential, as it enables open communication and reduces conflicts, allowing collaboration to function smoothly. Shared responsibility ensures that roles and obligations are clearly defined and fairly distributed, promoting accountability and commitment from all participants. Joint decision-making encourages participatory planning and consensus-based solutions, rather than decisions imposed solely by governmental authorities. Resource integration is critical, as the pooling of financial, human, and informational resources enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of governance outcomes.

Together, these elements provide a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the role of social organizations in community governance. By emphasizing collaboration, coordination, and shared objectives, the collaborative governance perspective helps explain both the potential contributions of social organizations and the structural challenges that may limit their participation.

2.2. Analytical Dimensions

The concept of collaborative governance can be analyzed through several key dimensions that capture the mechanisms enabling effective multi-actor participation. One important dimension is institutional collaboration, which emphasizes the legal and policy frameworks that support cross-sector cooperation [5]. Clear regulations, formal agreements, and procedural guidelines provide the foundation for government agencies, social organizations, and citizens to work together in a structured manner.

Another crucial dimension is resource coordination. Effective collaboration requires mechanisms for sharing financial, human, and informational resources. By pooling resources and leveraging complementary capabilities, participating actors can overcome individual limitations and enhance the overall effectiveness of governance efforts.

Trust and communication constitute a third dimension. Transparent information sharing and open dialogue among stakeholders help build mutual understanding and

reduce conflicts. These processes foster a participatory environment in which actors feel confident contributing their perspectives and expertise.

Finally, capacity building is an essential dimension for sustaining collaborative governance. Strengthening the organizational competence of social organizations through training, knowledge sharing, and professional development ensures that they are able to engage effectively in community governance processes. Together, these dimensions provide a structured approach to analyze how collaborative governance operates in practice and highlight the factors that can either facilitate or hinder social organizations' participation in community public affairs.

2.3. *Relevance to Community Governance*

The collaborative governance perspective offers a valuable lens for analyzing the interactions among community-level actors and their joint contributions to governance outcomes [6]. By focusing on the roles of government, social organizations, and citizens, this perspective helps to understand how different stakeholders coordinate their actions, share responsibilities, and collectively address public issues. It highlights the dynamic processes through which community actors co-produce services, implement policies, and respond to the evolving needs of residents.

To provide a clearer overview, Table 1 summarizes the key analytical dimensions of collaborative governance and their applications in community governance.

Table 1. Analytical Dimensions of Collaborative Governance and Their Applications in Community Governance.

Analytical Dimension	Application in Community Governance
Institutional collaboration	Provides legal and policy support for multi-actor cooperation in community decision-making
Resource coordination	Enables pooling of financial, human, and informational resources to improve service delivery
Trust and communication	Promotes transparency, mutual understanding, and participatory relationships among stakeholders
Capacity building	Enhances the organizational competence of social organizations for effective participation

This perspective also underscores the broader shift from traditional government-centered control toward multi-stakeholder cooperation. Governance is no longer solely the responsibility of public authorities but emerges from the active engagement and collaboration of diverse actors. The table illustrates how each dimension contributes to more inclusive, responsive, and effective community governance, providing a theoretical foundation for examining the challenges and strategies associated with social organizations' participation in public affairs management.

3. **Current Situation of Social Organizations' Participation**

3.1. *Institutional Environment*

The institutional environment in which social organizations operate significantly shapes their ability to participate effectively in community governance. In many cases, the legal status and operational autonomy of social organizations remain limited, restricting their capacity to engage in decision-making and policy implementation. Ambiguities in legislation, unclear registration procedures, and insufficient formal recognition often prevent these organizations from exercising full governance functions.

Moreover, the relationships between government agencies and social organizations are frequently characterized by administrative or contractual arrangements rather than genuine collaborative partnerships. While governments may engage social organizations

through service contracts or project-based agreements, these interactions often emphasize compliance and output rather than shared responsibility and mutual trust [7]. As a result, social organizations may be confined to the role of service providers, with limited influence on community-level policy decisions and planning processes. This institutional context creates structural barriers that hinder the development of effective multi-actor governance within communities.

3.2. Governance Roles and Participation Forms

In the context of community governance, social organizations often function primarily as service providers rather than as active participants in decision-making processes. Their contributions are typically focused on implementing community programs, delivering public services, or addressing specific social needs, rather than shaping policies or strategic plans. This limited role reflects the broader institutional and operational constraints that affect their involvement in governance activities [8].

Consequently, social organizations have relatively restricted participation in agenda setting, policy consultation, and evaluation processes. While they may occasionally provide feedback or advice, their influence on determining priorities, shaping policy instruments, or assessing outcomes remains minimal. This limited engagement not only reduces the potential for multi-actor collaboration but also constrains the diversity of perspectives and expertise that could enhance community decision-making. As a result, the governance landscape tends to remain government-centered, with social organizations playing a supplementary rather than a co-governing role.

3.3. Interaction with Government and Community

Coordination between government agencies, social organizations, and community residents is essential for effective community governance. While various channels for interaction exist, they are often fragmented and lack formalized procedures, which limits the ability of stakeholders to collaborate efficiently. Inconsistent communication and irregular consultation processes reduce mutual understanding, hinder trust-building, and make joint decision-making challenging. These gaps in coordination restrict the potential of social organizations to participate fully in governance and limit the effectiveness of multi-actor collaboration.

To provide a clearer overview, Table 2 summarizes the main interaction channels between government, social organizations, and community residents, along with the associated challenges.

Table 2. Interaction Channels and Challenges in Community Governance.

Interaction Type	Description	Challenges
Government → Social Organizations	Policy guidance, service contracts	Administrative focus, limited collaborative engagement
Social Organizations → Government	Feedback, reporting on community needs	Infrequent consultation, lack of influence on policy decisions
Government → Community Residents	Public announcements, participation in community meetings	Limited accessibility, one-way communication
Social Organizations → Community Residents	Service delivery, volunteer engagement	Engagement often project-based, inconsistent participation
Community Residents → Government / Organizations	Feedback, participation in local committees	Fragmented channels, low response rates, limited impact

This table illustrates that although multiple channels exist for interaction, the effectiveness of collaboration is hindered by fragmentation, irregular communication, and insufficient institutional support. Strengthening these channels and establishing more structured, consistent communication mechanisms are critical for enabling social organizations to play a more active role in community governance.

4. Challenges in Collaborative Participation

4.1. Institutional Barriers

One of the primary challenges facing social organizations in community governance is the presence of institutional barriers. Ambiguous legal frameworks and unclear regulations often limit the formal recognition and operational autonomy of these organizations. Without clear policies defining their roles, rights, and responsibilities, social organizations struggle to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes and collaborative initiatives [9].

In addition, administrative dominance in governance structures further constrains the autonomy of social organizations. Government agencies frequently retain the authority to dictate procedures, allocate resources, and oversee activities, which can limit opportunities for independent action and creative problem-solving. As a result, social organizations are often confined to implementing tasks assigned by authorities, rather than shaping policies or engaging as equal partners in governance. These institutional constraints create structural obstacles that hinder the development of effective multi-actor collaboration in community public affairs management [10].

4.2. Resource Limitations

Another significant challenge for social organizations in community governance is the limitation of resources. Many organizations face scarce funding, which restricts their ability to implement projects, sustain operations, and expand services. In addition, human resources are often limited, with insufficient staff and volunteers possessing the necessary expertise for governance-related tasks. Unstable financial support further exacerbates the problem, making long-term planning and capacity building difficult. These resource constraints reduce the organizations' ability to participate fully in decision-making and collaborative initiatives, limiting their overall impact on community governance.

To illustrate these challenges more clearly, Table 3 summarizes the key resource limitations and their effects on social organizations' participation.

Table 3. Resource Limitations of Social Organizations and Their Impacts.

Resource Type	Description	Impact on Participation
Funding	Limited budgets, unstable financial support	Restricts project implementation and long-term planning
Human Resources	Insufficient staff and volunteers with relevant skills	Limits capacity to engage in governance and service delivery
Technical / Informational Resources	Lack of access to data, technology, and training	Reduces effectiveness in planning, decision-making, and coordination

This table highlights that resource constraints are multi-dimensional, affecting not only the operational capacity of social organizations but also their ability to engage strategically in community governance. Addressing these resource gaps is essential for enhancing their role in collaborative governance frameworks.

4.3. Capacity Constraints

In addition to institutional and resource-related challenges, social organizations often face significant capacity constraints that limit their participation in community governance. Many organizations suffer from deficiencies in management skills, which affects their ability to plan, coordinate, and execute programs effectively. Governance knowledge is frequently limited, making it difficult for organizations to understand policy frameworks, comply with regulations, or engage meaningfully in decision-making processes.

Professional specialization is another area of concern. A lack of staff with expertise in relevant fields, such as urban planning, social work, or public administration, reduces the organization's ability to contribute substantively to governance discussions and strategic initiatives. Collectively, these capacity limitations hinder social organizations from fulfilling a more proactive role in collaborative governance, confining them to routine service delivery and preventing them from participating as equal partners in shaping community public affairs.

4.4. Trust and Communication Gaps

Trust and effective communication are essential components of successful collaborative governance, yet they remain significant challenges in the interaction between government and social organizations. In many cases, transparency is insufficient, with limited sharing of policy information, decision-making processes, and resource allocation. Social organizations often struggle to access timely and accurate information about community governance priorities or government initiatives, which reduces their ability to participate proactively.

Low levels of mutual trust further hinder collaboration. Governments may be skeptical of the capabilities or motives of social organizations, while organizations may doubt the willingness of authorities to genuinely consider their input. This mutual suspicion can lead to cautious engagement, reluctance to share information, and a reliance on formal, transactional interactions rather than genuine partnership.

The consequences of these trust and communication gaps are significant. They reduce the effectiveness of joint decision-making, limit the potential for innovative solutions, and weaken the sustainability of multi-actor governance initiatives. Over time, the absence of consistent, transparent communication channels can entrench a government-centered model, preventing social organizations from participating as equal partners in shaping community public affairs. Addressing these gaps requires deliberate mechanisms to enhance dialogue, promote transparency, and cultivate long-term mutual trust between all stakeholders.

4.5. Coordination Dilemmas

Coordination among multiple actors is a critical factor for effective community governance, yet social organizations often face significant dilemmas in this regard. One major issue is the overlapping of functions among different governance participants. Government agencies, social organizations, and community groups sometimes pursue similar objectives or implement parallel programs, which can lead to redundancy, inefficiency, and confusion over responsibilities. Without clearly defined roles, resources may be duplicated or misallocated, and opportunities for synergistic collaboration may be missed.

Another related challenge is the lack of clear boundaries in responsibilities and decision-making authority. Ambiguities regarding who is accountable for specific tasks or policy outcomes create uncertainty and can undermine cooperation. Social organizations may hesitate to take initiative for fear of overstepping their authority, while government agencies may struggle to delegate responsibilities effectively.

These coordination dilemmas not only reduce the operational efficiency of community governance but also hinder the development of trust and effective communication among stakeholders. Resolving these issues requires establishing well-defined roles, creating formal coordination mechanisms, and fostering a culture of collaboration where each actor understands their responsibilities and contributions within the broader governance framework.

5. Strategies and Policy Recommendations

5.1. Institutional Synergy

Establishing institutional synergy is a fundamental strategy for enhancing the participation of social organizations in community governance. Clear and well-defined legal frameworks provide social organizations with formal recognition, protect their operational autonomy, and establish stable mechanisms for engagement in decision-making processes. By refining laws, regulations, and policies, governments can create an enabling environment that encourages consistent and meaningful collaboration with social organizations.

In addition to legal support, developing standardized procedures for collaboration and evaluation is crucial. Such procedures can define roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations for all actors involved, ensuring that governance activities are transparent, accountable, and efficiently coordinated. Standardized evaluation mechanisms also allow governments and social organizations to assess the effectiveness of joint initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and make evidence-based adjustments. Institutional synergy, therefore, not only strengthens the legal and procedural foundations for participation but also fosters a culture of structured and sustainable collaboration, enabling social organizations to engage more proactively and effectively in community public affairs.

5.2. Resource Integration and Partnership Development

Effective participation of social organizations in community governance requires not only institutional support but also the integration of diverse resources and the development of partnerships. Promoting public-private partnerships and joint funding models allows social organizations to access financial, human, and technical resources beyond what is provided by government alone. By pooling resources, organizations can implement programs more efficiently, sustain long-term initiatives, and respond flexibly to emerging community needs.

In addition, establishing community-level cooperation networks strengthens coordination among local actors. These networks facilitate information sharing, joint planning, and collaborative problem-solving, enabling social organizations to contribute more strategically to governance processes. Through partnerships and networked collaboration, resources are utilized more effectively, and multi-actor engagement is enhanced, creating a foundation for more inclusive and participatory community governance.

To provide a clearer overview, Table 4 summarizes key strategies for resource integration and partnership development, along with specific measures and expected outcomes.

Table 4. Strategies for Resource Integration and Partnership Development.

Strategy	Specific Measures	Expected Outcomes
Public-private partnerships	Joint funding, shared projects	Expanded financial and technical resources, enhanced service delivery

Joint funding models	Co-financing from government and private sectors	Sustainable financial support, reduced resource constraints
Community-level cooperation networks	Local alliances, regular coordination meetings	Improved communication, coordinated efforts, stronger multi-actor collaboration

5.3. Capacity Enhancement

Enhancing the capacity of social organizations is essential for enabling their active participation in community governance. Systematic training programs can equip staff and volunteers with essential management skills, governance knowledge, and professional expertise, allowing organizations to contribute more effectively to decision-making and service delivery. In addition, implementing performance assessments provides feedback on organizational effectiveness, highlights areas for improvement, and incentivizes continuous development.

Encouraging specialization and professionalization further strengthens the role of social organizations in governance. By fostering expertise in relevant fields such as urban planning, social work, and public administration, organizations can provide high-quality services and engage more substantively in policy discussions and strategic initiatives. Capacity enhancement not only improves operational efficiency but also empowers social organizations to assume a more proactive and influential role within collaborative governance frameworks.

To illustrate these strategies more clearly, Table 5 summarizes key measures for capacity enhancement and their expected outcomes.

Table 5. Strategies for Capacity Enhancement of Social Organizations.

Strategy	Specific Measures	Expected Outcomes
Systematic training programs	Workshops, seminars, governance training	Improved management and governance skills, enhanced participation effectiveness
Performance assessments	Regular evaluations, feedback mechanisms	Identification of improvement areas, continuous organizational development
Specialization and professionalization	Staff with expertise in relevant fields	High-quality service delivery, substantive policy engagement

5.4. Trust Building and Communication Platforms

Building trust and establishing effective communication platforms are crucial for enhancing the collaborative participation of social organizations in community governance. Regular consultation meetings between government agencies, social organizations, and community residents can facilitate dialogue, exchange of perspectives, and joint problem-solving. In addition, developing information-sharing systems allows stakeholders to access timely and accurate data, increasing transparency and enabling more informed decision-making.

Promoting participatory governance further strengthens mutual understanding and trust among actors. When social organizations and community members are actively involved in agenda setting, policy consultation, and evaluation processes, they are more likely to feel ownership over decisions and cooperate effectively with government authorities. These measures contribute to a governance environment characterized by transparency, accountability, and sustained collaboration.

5.5. Digital Empowerment

Digital empowerment offers new opportunities for enhancing the participation of social organizations in community governance. Utilizing digital platforms for collaborative decision-making and information sharing can increase transparency, streamline communication, and facilitate real-time coordination among government agencies, social organizations, and community residents. Such platforms enable stakeholders to engage actively in policy discussions, project planning, and service delivery, reducing barriers caused by geographical or temporal constraints.

Moreover, strengthening data-driven coordination and online participation mechanisms supports more informed decision-making and efficient resource allocation. By leveraging data analytics, social organizations and government agencies can monitor program performance, identify emerging community needs, and adjust strategies promptly. Digital tools also expand access to governance processes for community members, fostering inclusiveness and participatory engagement. Overall, digital empowerment not only enhances operational efficiency but also contributes to more responsive, transparent, and collaborative community governance.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the participation of social organizations in community public affairs management from the perspective of collaborative governance, highlighting both the challenges they face and the strategies to enhance their engagement. Social organizations have become essential actors in modern community governance, contributing to service delivery, civic engagement, and the co-production of governance outcomes. However, their participation remains constrained by a combination of institutional, resource, capacity, trust, and coordination-related barriers. Ambiguous legal frameworks, administrative dominance, limited funding, and human resource shortages reduce the autonomy and effectiveness of these organizations. Deficiencies in management skills, governance knowledge, and professional specialization further limit their capacity to engage proactively. Moreover, insufficient transparency, low levels of mutual trust, and fragmented communication channels undermine collaborative relationships, while overlapping functions and unclear boundaries among actors exacerbate coordination challenges.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Institutional synergy, including clear legal recognition and standardized collaborative procedures, provides a stable foundation for engagement. Resource integration through public-private partnerships, joint funding models, and community-level cooperation networks ensures that social organizations have access to the financial, human, and technical resources needed for meaningful participation. Capacity enhancement, achieved through systematic training and professionalization, strengthens organizational competence and governance capabilities. Trust building and the establishment of regular communication platforms foster mutual understanding and long-term collaboration. Finally, digital empowerment, by leveraging online platforms, data-driven coordination, and e-participation mechanisms, enhances transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness in community governance.

In conclusion, the collaborative governance perspective provides both a theoretical framework and a practical guide for improving the role of social organizations in community public affairs. By implementing coordinated strategies that address institutional, resource, capacity, trust, and digital challenges, governments and community stakeholders can facilitate more inclusive, effective, and sustainable governance. Future research may focus on empirical evaluation of these strategies in diverse community contexts to further refine the mechanisms of collaboration and measure their impact on governance outcomes.

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