

Collaborative Environmental Governance under Power Asymmetry and Institutional Fragmentation

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Abstract: This study examines collaborative environmental governance in the rescue of Lake Limboto, Indonesia, with particular attention to collaborative dynamics, power asymmetry, and institutional fragmentation. Using a qualitative intrinsic case-study design, the study generated data through in-depth interviews, policy and planning document analysis, and contextual observation. Informants were selected purposively from government institutions, community groups, civil society organizations, and academia based on their direct involvement in, knowledge of, or experience with Lake Limboto governance. The study included 17 informants, and the research period spanned February to December 2025. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, with themes developed around dialogue, trust and commitment, sources of power, institutional coordination, and collaborative outcomes. The findings indicate that formal multi-actor forums coexist with limited substantive deliberation, weak trust and inconsistent commitment, unequal influence over policy agendas and resources, and fragmented institutional arrangements. These interacting conditions produce a pattern termed pseudo-collaboration: collaboration that is procedurally present but does not consistently generate equitable decision-making, integrated implementation, or sustained policy outcomes. The study offers a context-specific synthesis showing how relational and institutional conditions combine to weaken collaborative environmental governance in a critical lake setting.

1. Introduction

Environmental degradation in inland-water ecosystems is not only an ecological problem but also a governance problem because lake conservation cuts across administrative jurisdictions, sectoral mandates, and community interests. Lakes provide ecological services and socio-economic benefits, yet their management frequently involves competing development priorities and fragmented public authority. Existing studies identify sedimentation, land-use change, nutrient loading, and governance weaknesses as recurring pressures on lakes (Carpenter et al., 2011; Schindler, 2012; Xu et al., 2010). In Indonesia, these pressures make critical-lake management an appropriate setting for examining whether multi-actor governance arrangements can translate coordination into sustained implementation.

Current conditions in Lake Limboto resemble those of several lakes in Indonesia, but several experts who study Lake Limboto consider what is happening there worrying (Hasim, 2011; Nusantara, 2010). The rate of shallowing from erosion by rivers flowing into the lake is very high. Over a period of 74 years (1932–2006). Lake Limboto shrank to 3000 Ha with an average depth of 2.5 m, down from about 7000 Ha and 30 m deep. The lake's shallowing has created plains in the middle of the lake and along its edges. Limboto Lake shows visible degradation from shallowing, pollution, and community occupation of the lake area. Limboto Lake has experienced heavy sedimentation and reduced area.

Collaborative governance provides a useful starting point because it emphasizes direct engagement among public and non-state actors in collective decision-making (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Emerson et al., 2012). However, its effectiveness cannot be inferred from the existence of coordination forums alone. Collaborative processes depend on meaningful dialogue, trust, commitment, shared understanding, and institutional arrangements that enable actors to act jointly (Luthfi et al., 2023). Environmental governance adds further complexity because ecological problems rarely align neatly with organizational boundaries, while actors differ in authority, resources, knowledge, and access to decision-making (Bodin, 2017).

Prior literature can be organized into four strands. First, collaborative-governance studies emphasize institutional design and collaborative dynamics, including dialogue, trust, commitment, and shared understanding (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Emerson et al., 2012). Second, environmental-governance studies emphasize networks, adaptive capacity, and the fit between governance structures and ecological problems (Armitage et al., 2007; Bodin, 2017). Third, critical studies show that unequal authority, resource control, legitimacy, and network position shape collaboration, meaning participation does not necessarily produce equal influence (Purdy, 2012; Sørensen & Torfing, 2009). Fourth, studies of implementation in decentralized and institutionally complex settings highlight coordination problems, overlapping mandates, and uneven organizational capacity (Andrews et al., 2013; Smoke, 2015).

Taken together, these strands establish that power and institutional constraints are not new concerns in collaborative governance. The unresolved issue addressed here is more specific: how collaborative-process deficits, unequal sources of power, and institutional fragmentation interact within a single critical-lake governance setting and how their interaction shapes implementation outcomes. Accordingly, this study does not claim that power asymmetry or institutional fragmentation is conceptually new. Its contribution is an empirically grounded synthesis of how these conditions combine in Lake Limboto governance and whether that combination produces a procedural form of collaboration with limited substantive effects.

Recent empirical studies demonstrate that collaborative environmental governance in Indonesia and other decentralized settings remains constrained by unequal power relations, institutional fragmentation, and weak coordination. In West Kalimantan, Arai et al. (2021) show that power imbalances between government actors and local communities can undermine meaningful participation, although facilitation, knowledge-sharing, and community involvement in decision-making can mitigate such inequalities. More recently, Zulkarnaini et al. (2025) identify overlapping authority, competing land-use interests, and cross-sectoral tensions as major obstacles to integrated peatland governance in Riau. In the context of lake governance, Wahyono et al. (2025) show that environmental degradation in Lake Menjer, Central Java, is linked to gaps in existing governance arrangements and emphasize the need for stronger collaborative mechanisms, inclusive decision-making, knowledge exchange, and stakeholder capacity building to achieve sustainable lake management. Similarly, Sumarno (2025) shows that the Citarum Harum Program demonstrates that multi-stakeholder environmental governance is shaped by

power dynamics, information asymmetry, stakeholder interests, and the potential for regulatory capture, showing that formal multi-actor arrangements do not necessarily eliminate unequal influence among stakeholders.

Furthermore, empirical studies of natural-resource governance in Indonesia show that formally established collaborative arrangements may continue to reproduce unequal influence when authority and resources remain asymmetrically distributed among government, community, and other stakeholders (Muttaqin et al., 2023; Said, 2021). Unlike these studies, the present research does not examine power asymmetry, institutional fragmentation, or collaborative processes as separate governance problems; rather, it integrates these dimensions to explain why formally established multi-actor collaboration in the conservation of Lake Limboto may remain substantively ineffective. By examining the interaction between unequal power distribution, fragmented institutional authority, trust deficits, and procedural collaboration, this study conceptualizes “pseudo-collaboration” as an empirical condition in which collaborative structures and forums exist formally but fail to generate equitable decision-making, integrated implementation, and sustained environmental outcomes.

This study therefore aims to analyze: How collaborative forums operate in practice; How trust and commitment are formed or weakened; How formal authority, resources, expertise, and discursive legitimacy shape power among actors; How institutional mandates and coordination arrangements produce or reduce fragmentation; and how these conditions jointly explain the emergence of pseudo-collaboration in the implementation of Lake Limboto rescue policies.

2. Literature Review

Collaborative Dynamics

Ansell and Gash (2008) conceptualize collaborative governance as a formal, consensus-oriented process involving public agencies and non-state stakeholders. Their model highlights face-to-face dialogue, trust building, commitment to the process, shared understanding, and intermediate outcomes. Emerson et al. (2012) broaden this perspective by situating collaborative dynamics within a wider system context and collaborative governance regime. For this study, the analytical question is not whether a forum formally exists, but whether interaction within it enables negotiation, reciprocal learning, shared problem framing, and meaningful influence over decisions.

Huxham & Vangen (2013), distinguish the potential for collaborative advantage from collaborative inertia. This distinction is useful because repeated meetings can coexist with limited joint action. Accordingly, the study treats dialogue, trust, and commitment as empirically observable relational processes rather than as assumed properties of a multi-stakeholder forum. Collaboration does not eliminate power differences. Purdy (2012) identifies authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy as important sources through which actors influence collaborative processes. This framework focuses on who can define the agenda, mobilize budgets, control technical information, invoke regulatory authority, and frame problems in ways that shape collective decisions. Power asymmetry is therefore examined through concrete sources of influence rather than through a general claim of government dominance.

Institutional Fragmentation

Institutional fragmentation refers here to the dispersion of related mandates, programs, resources, and implementation responsibilities across organizations without sufficiently integrated coordination. Provan & Kenis (2008) show that network effectiveness depends on governance form, trust, size, goal

consensus, and coordination. In critical-lake governance, fragmentation may become visible through overlapping mandates, parallel programs, inconsistent priorities, unclear leadership, weak information exchange, or gaps between central policy direction and local implementation.

The analytical framework links three dimensions. Collaborative dynamics capture the quality of dialogue, trust, commitment, and shared understanding. Power asymmetry captures differences in formal authority, resource control, technical knowledge, and discursive legitimacy. Institutional fragmentation captures mandate overlap, program alignment, coordination mechanisms, and network leadership. The study then examines their combined consequences for implementation and collaborative outcomes.

Table 1. Developed Analytical Framework

Collaborative Dynamics	Power Asymmetry	Institutional Fragmentation	Implementation Outcome
Dialogue • trust • commitment • shared understanding	Authority • resources • expertise/data • discursive legitimacy	Mandate overlap • program alignment • coordination • network leadership	Integrated/equitable action OR procedural collaboration with weak substantive outcomes

3. Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative intrinsic case-study design to examine collaborative environmental governance in Lake Limboto, Gorontalo Province. The case is bounded by the actors, policies, programs, and coordination processes directly related to Lake Limboto rescue and management. Informants were selected purposively because of their direct involvement in policy formulation, program implementation, coordination, community representation, civil-society engagement, or relevant academic expertise. The informant categories comprise central-government representatives, local-government officials, community representatives, civil-society/NGO actors, and academics.

There were 17 informants, informants and key informants who have direct contact with Limboto lake management policies include Regional Research and Development Planning Agency (BAPPEDA) Province and Gorontalo Regency, Public Works and Spatial Planning Office (PUPR) Gorontalo Province; Gorontalo Regency and Provincial Environment Office, Gorontalo Regency Village Community Empowerment Office, Gorontalo Regency Fisheries and Marine Service, Gorontalo Regency Agriculture and Plantation Office, Gorontalo Regency Tourism Office, Bone Bolango Watershed and Protected Forest Management Center (BPDAS), Regional River Basin Center Sulawesi (BWSS) II Gorontalo, Biota Community, JAPESDA Gorontalo, PT. Selaras Mandiri Sejahtera (SMS), PT. Bumi Karsa, NGOs observing Lake Limboto, academics/researchers attending Lake Limboto, and several community leaders in zoning the lake area.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, contextual observation, and analysis of policy and institutional documents. Documentary evidence should cover the formal basis and implementation architecture of Lake Limboto governance, including regulations, management plans, ministerial or agency programs, regional regulations, budget/planning documents, coordination records, and evaluation reports. Data were analyzed using [Braun & Clarke \(2006\)](#) thematic analysis procedure. The analysis involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, development of candidate themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and naming of themes, and production of the analytical narrative. The study's analytical dimensions guided coding, while remaining open to patterns emerging from interviews, documents, and observations. The final themes were organized around collaborative process

and formalistic dialogue, trust and commitment deficit, power asymmetry in decision-making, institutional fragmentation, and the synthesis of these conditions into pseudo-collaboration. Credibility was strengthened through source and method triangulation and member checking.

4. Results and Discussion

Collaborative Process and Formalistic Dialogue

The findings indicate that multi-stakeholder meetings and coordination forums have been established in Lake Limboto governance, but their operation remains largely formalistic and produces limited substantive follow-up. Government agencies have repeatedly facilitated consultation forums involving NGOs, academics, lake observers, and other stakeholders; however, civil-society actors perceived many of these meetings as repetitive, with recommendations often recorded but not consistently translated into joint programs or coordinated action. NGOs such as Japesda, Yayasan Biota, and Forum DAS Limboto have actively participated in meetings, dialogues, and seminars and provided recommendations on environmental management and lake conservation. Nevertheless, their involvement tends to diminish during implementation, when government agencies predominantly carry out activities. Local communities similarly reported limited involvement in lake management. Thus, while collaborative forums provide institutional spaces for participation, participation does not consistently translate into substantive influence over implementation.

The findings further show that agenda-setting and implementation remain government-centered and fragmented by sectoral interests. Government institutions occupy a leading position through their control over formal policy authority, program design, and budgetary resources, yet this authority has not generated integrated collective action. A provincial planning official indicated that institutions continue to pursue their respective sectoral interests and programs rather than a shared agenda, while an academic and Lake Limboto observer emphasized persistent problems concerning the division of responsibilities, coordination, and budget allocation. Consequently, overlapping programs and weak coordination persist across government levels and agencies despite formal regulations and the Lake Limboto Area Forum. These findings reveal a gap between the formal presence of collaborative arrangements and the substantive quality of collaboration, in which participation exists but reciprocal influence, shared agenda-setting, and integrated implementation remain limited.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate a clear distinction between the formal presence of collaborative forums and the substantive quality of deliberation. Consultation mechanisms provide spaces for government agencies, NGOs, academics, and communities to interact, but participation does not consistently translate into reciprocal influence over decisions, program design, and implementation. Civil-society actors are predominantly positioned within consultation and participation functions, whereas government actors retain greater authority over policy, budgets, implementation, and sanctions. Interpreted through [Ansell & Gash, \(2007\)](#), this pattern indicates weak face-to-face dialogue because interaction has not consistently developed into shared influence, mutual commitment, and joint action. The collaborative process in Lake Limboto can therefore be characterized as procedurally inclusive but substantively constrained: stakeholders are brought into collaborative spaces, yet their participation does not necessarily reshape decisions or produce integrated implementation.

Trust and Commitment Deficit

Distrust among stakeholders stems from repeated experiences of weak follow-up and differing perceptions of responsibility between government and civil-society actors. Interviews and FGDs indicate

that communities, NGOs, and academics have participated in meetings and consultations concerning Lake Limboto, demonstrating an initial willingness to engage in collective action. However, agreements reached through these forums have not consistently been translated into concrete programs, particularly those requiring sustained community involvement, creating uncertainty about whether collaborative commitments will be implemented. Mutual distrust is further reinforced by contrasting assessments of environmental responsibility: government agencies expect communities to contribute to lake conservation and perceive some community activities as contributing to environmental degradation, while NGOs question the effectiveness of government supervision because harmful activities, including illegal fishing, illegal logging in upstream areas, and settlement expansion, continue to occur. These experiences indicate that distrust has developed cumulatively through previous interactions rather than simply reflecting negative attitudes among stakeholders.

Weak trust and commitment are also evident within government institutions, particularly in how responsibilities are distributed across governmental levels and agencies. Designating Lake Limboto as a national strategic area has created uncertainty about the respective responsibilities of central, provincial, and district governments. While Gorontalo Regency actors must consider the boundaries of their authority in relation to provincial and central policies, provincial actors maintain that the district government retains responsibility because a substantial part of the lake lies within its jurisdiction. Similar difficulties occur at the inter-agency level: although the Lake Limboto Area Forum was established in 2019, interviews with local government agencies indicate that commitments made through the forum have been difficult to realize because agencies remain unable to reach consensus. Consequently, formal agreements have not consistently developed into stable inter-organizational commitment, reinforcing uncertainty over whether collaborative decisions will lead to coordinated implementation.

Taken together, these findings indicate that low trust and inconsistent commitment in Lake Limboto governance stem from a cumulative history of interaction. Repeated gaps between consultation and implementation, competing perceptions of responsibility, weak enforcement, ambiguity across governmental levels, and difficulties in realizing inter-agency agreements have gradually weakened confidence that collaborative commitments will produce coordinated action. This interpretation aligns with [Ansell & Gash \(2007\)](#) and [Emerson et al. \(2012\)](#), who position trust-building and commitment as central to sustained collaborative dynamics. In the Lake Limboto case, therefore, the central problem is not simply the absence of trust, but the repeated institutional experiences through which trust is eroded: actors participate, and agreements are established, yet implementation remains uncertain, responsibilities are contested, and commitments are inconsistently translated into collective action.

Power Asymmetry in Decision-Making

Power asymmetry in Lake Limboto governance is reflected in the unequal distribution of formal authority, financial and implementation resources, technical knowledge, and contextual legitimacy among stakeholders. Government institutions occupy the strongest structural position because they possess statutory authority to formulate regulations, establish collaborative forums, coordinate programs, allocate public resources, and determine formal interventions concerning Lake Limboto. This authority is reflected in various regulatory instruments and government programs, including the establishment of the Lake Limboto Area Forum and the implementation of large-scale revitalization programs coordinated by the Sulawesi II River Basin Agency (BWSS II).

Government and implementing agencies therefore have greater capacity to translate policy priorities into material interventions, whereas NGOs operate with more limited financial resources, making

many of their conservation activities situational and dependent on available resources. At the same time, knowledge relevant to Lake Limboto is distributed across actors: government technical agencies possess administrative and programmatic information, while Forum DAS Limboto, Japesda, BIOTA, academics, and other non-state actors contribute environmental research, advocacy, biodiversity knowledge, monitoring, and community facilitation. Local communities similarly possess substantial contextual knowledge derived from their long-term dependence on the lake for fishing, settlement, livelihoods, and cultural continuity; however, this knowledge does not provide equivalent formal authority over policy and program decisions.

This asymmetry is especially visible when government interventions seek to alter established livelihood practices: the Fisheries Agency, for example, has encouraged fishers to adopt more environmentally friendly practices, while a local fisher reported that government alternatives were not always easy to understand and that communities remained accustomed to traditional practices inherited across generations. Thus, the central power asymmetry does not arise from the absence of resources among non-governmental actors, but from differences in the type and convertibility of those resources: communities and NGOs possess contextual knowledge, environmental expertise, and social legitimacy, while government actors control the formal authority, budgets, and implementation mechanisms through which preferences are more readily converted into binding policy decisions.

Table 2. Distribution of Power Resources Among Stakeholders in Lake Limboto Governance

Power Resource	Main Empirical Actors	Empirical Evidence	Implications for Collaboration
Formal Authority and Agenda-Setting	Central Government, Gorontalo Provincial Government, Gorontalo Regency Government, and related government agencies	Regulatory authority, development planning, establishment of collaborative forums, and formulation of government programs	Government actors have greater capacity to define formal agendas and determine policy priorities
Budgetary and Implementation Resources	Government agencies, BWSS II, and implementing contractors	Public budgets, lake revitalization programs, dredging, sediment control, and infrastructure development	Greater capacity to translate policy decisions into programs and material interventions
Technical Knowledge and Data	BWSS II, Environmental Agency, Fisheries Agency, Forum DAS Limboto, academics, Japesda, and BIOTA	Environmental and watershed data, biodiversity knowledge, research, technical expertise, monitoring, and advocacy	Knowledge is distributed across actors, but technical expertise does not necessarily provide equivalent decision-making authority
Contextual Knowledge and Social Legitimacy	Fishers and local communities around Lake Limboto	Local knowledge of livelihoods, fishing practices, environmental conditions, and intergenerational experience	Local knowledge is important for lake governance, but communities have more limited formal influence over policy and program decisions
Advocacy and Discursive Resources	Japesda, Forum DAS Limboto, BIOTA, Forum 45, and other civil-society actors	Environmental advocacy, education, community facilitation, research, campaigns, and articulation of community concerns	Civil-society actors can influence policy discourse and provide alternative perspectives, but have limited control over budgets and implementation

Source: Primary Data Analysis (2025).

Following Purdy (2012), these findings demonstrate that power asymmetry in Lake Limboto governance is multidimensional rather than simply a matter of generalized government dominance. Different actors hold different forms of power, but these resources do not convert equally into policy influence. Government institutions combine formal authority, agenda-setting capacity, financial resources, and implementation instruments, whereas NGOs, academics, and communities primarily contribute technical, advocacy, and contextual knowledge. Consequently, participation does not necessarily imply equal influence over agenda formation and decision-making. This unequal capacity to transform resources and preferences into binding decisions constitutes a central mechanism of power asymmetry in the collaborative governance of Lake Limboto.

Institutional Fragmentation

Institutional fragmentation in Lake Limboto governance is reflected in the distribution of responsibilities across multiple government institutions, overlapping programs, and weak integration across government levels. The governance structure involves nine government agencies in Gorontalo Regency as lead sectors and eight related provincial and central government institutions, each operating under its respective mandate and authority. Although Provincial Regulation No. 9/2017 provides a framework for integrated spatial planning and cross-sectoral management of the Lake Limboto area, implementation remains fragmented because district and municipal governments continue to develop their own policies and interventions. At the agency level, several local government organizations reported that lake-related activities are often implemented as routine sectoral programs without sufficient synchronization, resulting in overlapping interventions, repeated activities, and inefficient resource use.

Formal coordination mechanisms have not fully resolved this fragmentation. Gorontalo Regency established the Lake Limboto Area Forum through Regent Decree No. 280/26/IV/2019 to strengthen cross-sectoral coordination and assign responsibilities among government agencies. However, interviews indicate that coordination between provincial and district/municipal governments remains weak and that institutions continue to implement programs according to their respective sectoral interests. A provincial planning official described this as a persistent problem in which sectoral priorities prevent programs from producing integrated outcomes, while an academic and Lake Limboto observer highlighted continuing ambiguity over “who does what” and how budget responsibilities are allocated. Interpreted through Provan & Kenis (2008), these findings suggest that fragmentation is associated not with the absence of formal coordination structures, but with weak coordination capacity, insufficient goal consensus, and the limited ability of the existing coordinating arrangement to integrate actors across institutional boundaries. Consequently, the Lake Limboto governance network contains formal structures for collaboration, but these structures have not yet produced an integrated implementation system.

From Collaboration to Pseudo-Collaboration

Pseudo-collaboration is used here as a data-grounded synthesis rather than as a starting label. It refers to a condition in which collaborative structures and activities are formally present, but their relational and institutional qualities are insufficient to produce equitable decision-making, integrated implementation, and sustained policy outcomes. Four empirical conditions jointly support this interpretation: (1) formal forums with limited substantive deliberation; (2) weak trust and inconsistent commitment; (3) unequal distribution of authority, resources, expertise, or agenda-setting capacity; and (4) fragmented institutional mandates and implementation arrangements.

The concept should be distinguished from related ideas. Collaborative inertia describes the difficulty of achieving collaborative advantage despite joint activity. [Huxham and Vangen \(2013\)](#) define pseudo-collaboration as the coexistence of visible collaborative procedures with persistently weak substantive integration and influence. It also differs from tokenistic participation because the unit of analysis is not participation alone, but the interaction of dialogue quality, power distribution, and institutional coordination. Finally, it is narrower than a generic claim of failed collaboration because formal collaborative arrangements may continue to operate even while substantive outcomes remain limited.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that pseudo-collaboration in Lake Limboto governance emerges not from the absence of collaboration, but from the persistent gap between collaborative form and collaborative substance. Multi-stakeholder forums and formal coordination mechanisms are present, yet deliberation generates limited influence over subsequent implementation; trust and commitment are weakened by inconsistent follow-up and contested responsibilities; authority, budgets, and implementation capacity remain concentrated within government institutions despite the knowledge and legitimacy contributed by communities and civil-society actors; and institutional mandates remain fragmented across agencies and levels of government. These conditions are mutually reinforcing. Limited influence reduces trust, weak trust constrains commitment, unequal control over resources restricts shared decision-making, and institutional fragmentation prevents agreements from being translated into integrated action. Thus, collaboration in Lake Limboto is neither entirely absent nor simply unsuccessful; rather, it operates procedurally while remaining substantively constrained in its capacity to generate shared influence, coordinated implementation, and sustained policy outcomes. This configuration constitutes what this study identifies as pseudo-collaboration.

Moving beyond pseudo-collaboration therefore requires strengthening the substantive functions of existing collaborative arrangements rather than merely creating additional forums or institutions. The Lake Limboto Area Forum should serve as an integrative coordination platform with clearly defined cross-institutional responsibilities, jointly agreed priorities, and mechanisms to monitor implementation of collaborative decisions. Coordination should link central, provincial, and district programs to reduce overlapping interventions, while decision-making arrangements should provide communities, NGOs, academics, and other non-governmental actors with meaningful influence beyond consultation. Equally important, commitments reached through collaborative forums should be translated into identifiable programs, responsible institutions, resource allocations, implementation timelines, and transparent follow-up mechanisms. In this way, institutional integration, more balanced influence, and accountable implementation can transform collaboration from a predominantly procedural arrangement into a sustained mechanism for collective action in governing Lake Limboto.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that the central challenge in Lake Limboto governance is not the absence of collaboration but the gap between formal collaborative arrangements and their substantive operation. The analysis identifies four interconnected conditions: limited deliberative quality, deficits of trust and commitment, unequal sources of influence, and fragmented institutional arrangements. Their interaction provides the empirical basis for describing the observed pattern as pseudo-collaboration, in which collaborative procedures are visible but do not consistently generate equitable decisions, integrated implementation, or sustained outcomes. The theoretical contribution is therefore context-specific: it connects relational dynamics, power distribution, and institutional fragmentation in explaining why formally col-

laborative environmental governance may remain substantively weak. Practically, improvement requires stronger cross-institutional coordination, clearer allocation of responsibilities, more transparent agenda and resource governance, and mechanisms that give non-state actors meaningful influence rather than attendance alone. The study is limited by its single-case design and the bounded set of actors and documents examined. Future research should test the analytical pattern through comparative studies of critical lakes or cross-regional collaborative governance and examine whether similar combinations of power and fragmentation produce comparable implementation outcomes.

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