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## **INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM VILLAGE MANAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF YOUTH AGENCY AND "CAPACITY TO ASPIRE" IN ALAMENDAH, INDONESIA**

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### **Abstract**

Alamendah Village in Rancabali District, Bandung Regency, has emerged as a prominent tourism destination, distinguished by its effective management under the stewardship of the local younger generation. This study analyzes the institutional ecosystem of Alamendah Tourism Village—a recipient of the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI)—to elucidate how local actors navigate the transition of the tourism village as an alternative economic source for the community. The objective of this research is to formulate a model of "youth agency" as a catalyst for sustainable Halal tourism. Adopting a constructivist paradigm, the research employed a five-stage phenomenological approach, ranging from phenomenon comprehension to theoretical synthesis. Data were accrued via in-depth interviews (n=15) and participatory observation in Rancabali District, Bandung Regency, and analyzed using NVivo 12 to ensure methodological rigor. To substantiate this qualitative narrative with observable physical evidence, the analysis further incorporates a longitudinal GIS-based spatial assessment of tourism-accommodation growth across four benchmark years (2010, 2015, 2020, and 2025). The findings reveal that Alamendah's success is driven by endogenous youth agency characterized by three institutional dimensions: Entrepreneurial Creativity, where youth diversify products based on ecological assets; Organizational Capacity, functioning as an intermediary for "Integrated Rural Development"; and Social Cohesion, facilitated by higher educational attainment. Theoretically, this study validates Appadurai's concept of "Capacity to Aspire" as a tangible institutional force, empirically corroborated by a 680 per cent increase in tourism accommodation units between 2010 and 2025 whose spatial diffusion directly traces the corridors curated by youth-led institutional governance.

**Keywords:** Institutional Framework, Sustainable Tourism, Youth Agency, Capacity to Aspire, Rural Revitalization, Halal Tourism, Spatial Analysis, Land-Use Governance.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of tourism villages aims to drive economic growth by highlighting cultural, natural, and local uniqueness as primary attractions. Rural tourism has emerged as a strategic engine for economic revitalization in the Global South, offering a viable pathway to alleviate poverty and mitigate rapid urbanization (Anríquez & Stamoulis, 2007). In Indonesia, this strategy is institutionalized through the "Desa Wisata" (Tourism Village) program, epitomized by the prestigious Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI). However, the sustainability of such initiatives often remains precarious. Despite robust infrastructure investment, the success of village development is ultimately determined by the social capital possessed by the community. This social capital is constructed by the "institutional order"—namely the rules, norms, and organizations that govern interaction (Binswanger-Mkhize & McCalla, 2008).

Alamendah Tourism Village in Bandung Regency presents an intriguing "deviant case" regarding institutional success. Unlike villages dependent on external Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) or top-down government instructions, Alamendah has integrated traditional agrarian livelihoods with a modern tourism economy through internal social cohesion, supported by Bandung Regent Regulation No. 6 of 2020 concerning Halal Tourism. This regulation provides direction for embedding Halal principles within village tourism governance.

Despite this practical success, there remains a paucity of literature explicitly linking Institutional Theory with Youth Agency in the context of Indonesian rural tourism. This study aims to bridge this gap by deconstructing Alamendah's institutional system. It posits that the primary driver of resilience is not solely government policy, but the "Capacity to Aspire" (Appadurai, 2007) cultivated among local youth. This capacity acts as a navigational tool, enabling the community to bridge the gap between current village development and future projections of sustainable prosperity. To move beyond narrative claims alone, the study further triangulates this institutional account with a longitudinal spatial analysis of physical land-use change, thereby anchoring the concept of youth agency in observable transformations of the village landscape.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design and Philosophical Paradigm**

This study adopts a qualitative constructivist paradigm, utilizing a phenomenological approach to explain institutional dynamics. This perspective was selected to capture the "lived experiences" of local actors, investigating the processes and agency behind the village's success rather than merely measuring quantitative outputs. This qualitative core is complemented by a supplementary

quantitative spatial (GIS) analysis of land-use change, employed not to test hypotheses but to triangulate and materially substantiate the institutional processes narrated by informants.

### Study Area and Site Selection

Fieldwork was conducted in Alamendah Village, Rancabali District, Bandung Regency, West Java. This location was selected through purposeful sampling as it represents a successful model of "endogenous development." Having received the ADWI award, the village is geographically situated in a highland tea plantation area, bordering Margamulya (North) and Ciwidey (South), making it a strategic locus for agrotourism integration, as delineated in the administrative map presented in Figure 1.

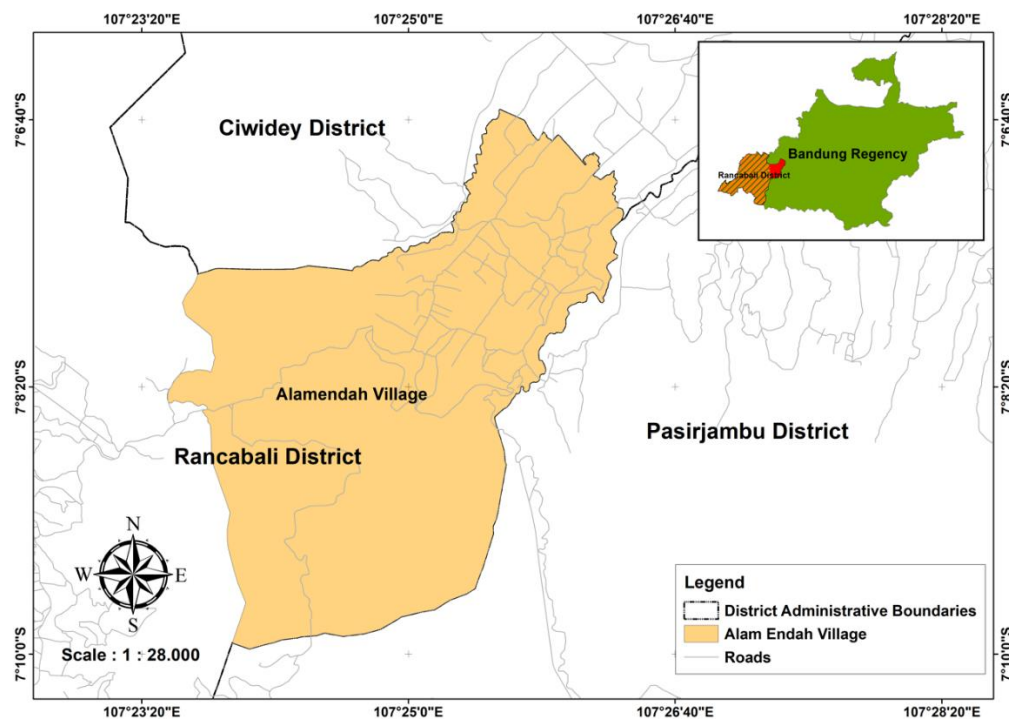


**Figure 1:** Administrative Map of Alamendah Village,  
Rancabali District, Bandung Regency

*Source: Authors' GIS analysis (2026), based on Rancabali District administrative boundary data and village monographic records*

## **Data Collection Techniques**

To ensure rigor and data saturation, the study employed triangulation:

- **In-depth Semi-structured Interviews:** Conducted with stakeholders identified through snowball sampling (n=15). Participants included Village Officials (for the regulatory landscape), Youth Leaders/Local Figures (specifically key actors identified as 'Kang X' and 'Teh Y'), and Community Elders (for social acceptance).
- **Participatory Observation:** Researchers immersed themselves in daily village activities for three months, observing the management of attractions (e.g., Bird Watching, Agro-trekking) and the operations of local groups (Pokdarwis).
- **Document Review:** Analysis of the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes) and ADWI assessment documents.
- **Spatial and Land-Use Data:** Point-location data on tourism accommodation units for four benchmark years (2010, 2015, 2020, and 2025) were compiled from village monographic records and ADWI documentation, verified through field observation, and mapped using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) following the facility-mapping approach of Fan and Subrina (2025) to visualize the physical footprint of institutional governance.

## **Analytical Framework**

Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis framework supported by NVivo 12 Pro software to ensure auditability and systematic coding. The analysis proceeded through three coding layers: Open Coding (identifying initial concepts), Axial Coding (grouping concepts into categories), and Selective Coding (establishing core themes). The step-by-step analysis flow is visualized in Figure 2. To strengthen the credibility of the institutional claims emerging from this thematic coding, the qualitative results were subsequently triangulated with a quantitative spatial analysis of land-use change, detailed in the Discussion section.

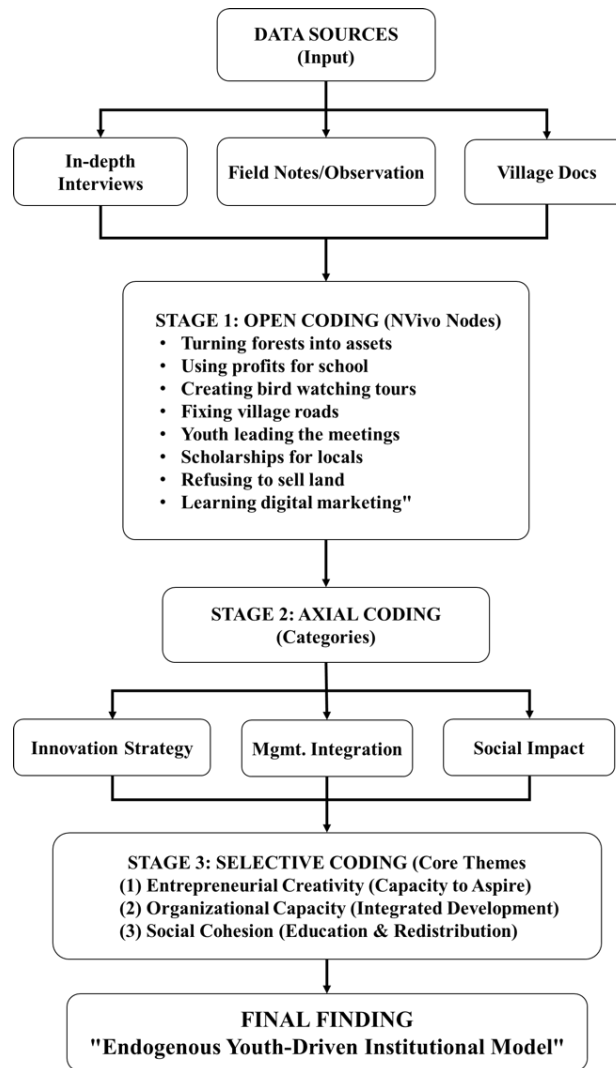


**Figure 2:** Thematic Analysis Framework using NVivo 12  
*Source: Authors (2026)*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interpretation of phenomena in Alamendah Village reveals that institutional resilience relies heavily on local youth agency. This agency manifests in three interconnected dimensions: Business Creativity, Organizational Capability, and Social Cohesion.

## Results

### **Local Youth and Business Creativity**

Findings indicate that local youth groups, led by figures such as Kang X (pseudonym) and Teh Y (pseudonym), have successfully diversified the rural economy. Unlike traditional models that rely passively on landscape views, these youths have engineered specific tourism products tailored to local potential, such as Bird Watching and Plantation Trekking. This diversification represents a cognitive shift. As expressed by Kang X in an interview regarding the transition from agriculture to ecotourism:

*"Previously, we only saw the forest as a source of timber or land to plant potatoes. But then we realized, if we cut down the trees, the money comes only once. If we sell the 'Bird Watching' experience, the trees remain, the birds remain, and the income flows forever. We match our village's nature with what city people long for."* (Interview with Youth Leader, 2024).

This statement empirically validates Appadurai's (2007) concept of "Capacity to Aspire." It demonstrates that aspiration is not a fixed trait but a "navigational capacity" nurtured through practice. The youth navigate the "dense combination of nodes and pathways" between their agrarian present and a tourism-oriented future. By transforming "dormant assets" into economic value, they connect dreams with viable pathways, making Alamendah a competitive Tourism Village.

### **Organizational Capability for Integrated Rural Development**

The second finding is the sophisticated Organizational Capability of the youth. Youth groups do not operate in a vacuum; they function as a bridge for "Integrated Rural Development" (Binswanger-Mkhize & McCalla, 2008). Data shows that youth manage the intersection of education, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. Teh Y, a key organizational figure, highlighted this integration:

*"We don't just run a business. Profits from the glamping sites and trekking guides go partly into the village treasury. We use it to repair roads and support school activities. If the village is messy, tourists won't come. So, tourism manages the village, and the village supports tourism."* (Interview with Pokdarwis Member, 2024).

This aligns with the assertion that rural development components cannot be treated independently (Baldock et al., 2001; Nemez, 2005). Alamendah youth have implemented an integrated strategy where tourism profits cross-

subsidize public goods, fostering an entrepreneurial cycle (Chambers & Conway, 1991). This finding addresses a common failure in rural development: the lack of local institutional capacity (McAreavey, 2009). In Alamendah, the youth are the institution.

### ***Social Cohesion and the Role of Education***

The third critical aspect is Social Cohesion, underpinned by educational attainment. Local youth demonstrate a "broader vision" of social policy, prioritizing nation-building and redistribution (Anriquez & Stamoulis, 2007; Gallie & Jacobs, 2003). The ability of Alamendah's youth to pursue higher education has catalyzed this cohesion. Education acts as a primary driver for empowerment and critical thinking (Ahmad et al., 2023; Redding, 2023). Empowered individuals in Alamendah have become agents of change, leveraging their resilience to confront socio-economic shifts (Borase, 2023). In contrast to the "brain drain" phenomenon often seen in rural areas, Alamendah is experiencing "brain gain," where educated youth return to manage complex tourism systems.

Taken together, these three institutional dimensions do not operate merely as abstract social processes: as the following discussion demonstrates through spatial analysis, they materialize into observable, spatially measurable transformations of the village's physical landscape.

## **Discussions**

### ***Reconstructing Collaborative Planning as an Institutional Catalyst***

In contemporary planning discourse, Healey (2006) argues that planning is not merely spatial allocation but a process of consensus-building through the reshaping of institutional culture. Healey emphasizes the importance of communication among stakeholders to bridge social hierarchies. Alamendah Village possesses distinct hierarchical social structures; however, the "collaborative space" has been actively created by the village's younger generation.

Complementing Healey's perspective, Judith Innes and David Booher in *Planning with Complexity* (Innes & Booher, 2018) introduce the concept of Collaborative Rationality. They assert that for collaboration to produce resilient decisions, "authentic dialogue" meeting the conditions of diversity and interdependence is required. Innes (1996) emphasizes that consensus is not merely compromise, but the result of joint learning. However, existing literature rarely elucidates *who* initiates this joint learning in rural communities transitioning from agriculture to tourism. Herein lies the limitation of Western planning theory when applied directly to the context of Indonesian tourism villages.

This study in Alamendah offers theoretical novelty by positioning Youth Agency as the "missing link" in collaborative planning theory. Field findings indicate that collaborative rationality does not emerge from top-down bureaucratic mandates but is initiated organically by youth. Contrary to Healey's assumption of broad public participation, in Alamendah, collaboration begins with a specific segment—the youth—acting as intermediaries. They translate the language of modern tourism bureaucracy into terms acceptable to the customary norms and religious values held by village elders.

This research reveals that institutional success in Alamendah is the result of integrating Appadurai's (2004) "Capacity to Aspire" with Healey's framework. In this case, the Capacity to Aspire functions as the engine of Collaborative Planning. Without the youth's aspiration to transform "dormant assets"—such as forests and plantations—into new economic value, the collaborative institutions imagined by Healey would not form. The youth of Alamendah are not only planning *for* the future; they are using their cultural aspirations to *navigate* the current institutional map.

### ***The Youth-Driven Institutional Continuum Model***

Empirical evidence from Alamendah challenges traditional narratives of rural decline. The emergence of these youth figures aligns with Chen et al., (2022), who describe "rural tourism makers" as critical agents in bridging the rural-urban divide. Unlike passive aid recipients, Alamendah's youth demonstrate what Han (2020) identifies as the pivotal role of skilled labor in promoting revitalization. These youths exhibit inward-directed "lifestyle mobility," transforming the village into a fashionable destination (Yamagishi & Doering, 2025). Furthermore, the transformation of tea plantations into glamping sites represents profound "spatial restructuring" (Gao & Cheng, 2020). This validates the theory of Bi & Yang (2023) regarding the spatial production of rural settlements, where traditional spaces are reconfigured into commercial assets without losing their rural essence—a process requiring careful governance to avoid gentrification (Kan, 2021). This study concludes that the institutional success of Alamendah Tourism Village is not solely a product of government policy, but the result of Endogenous Institutional Construction driven by youth agency.

The Youth-Driven Institutional Continuum Model illustrates that sustainable rural tourism relies on three pillars (see Figure 3):

1. Spatial-Economic Optimization: Natural assets are creatively commodified through the "Capacity to Aspire."
2. Digital-Financial Inclusivity: Mediated by educated youth acting as digital brokers.
3. Cultural-Social Cohesion: Ensuring development benefits the broader community through redistribution.

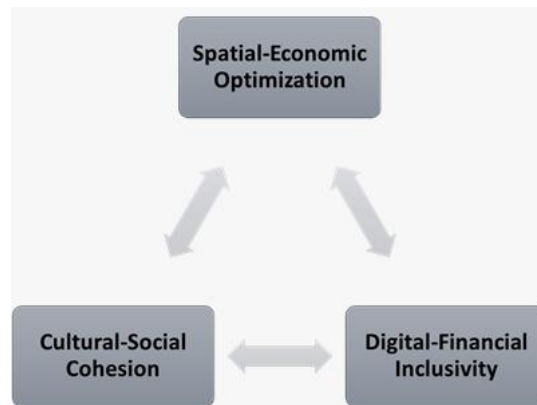


**Figure 3:** Youth-Driven Institutional Continuum Model  
*Source: Authors (2026)*

***Spatial Analysis: Institutional Governance and Land-Use Transformation (2010–2025)***

To substantiate the Spatial-Economic Optimization pillar with observable physical evidence, this study extends the qualitative findings with a longitudinal spatial analysis of tourism accommodation units across the Ciwidey–Rancabali tourism-village cluster in which Alamendah is embedded. Point-location data for four benchmark years—2010, 2015, 2020, and 2025—were mapped in a Geographic Information System (GIS) and cross-verified against village monographic records and field observation, following the GIS-based facility-mapping approach recently applied to rural tourism governance by Fan and Subrina (2025). The resulting distribution maps (Figure 4) and growth trend (Figure 5) allow the institutional narrative developed above to be read directly onto the village landscape.

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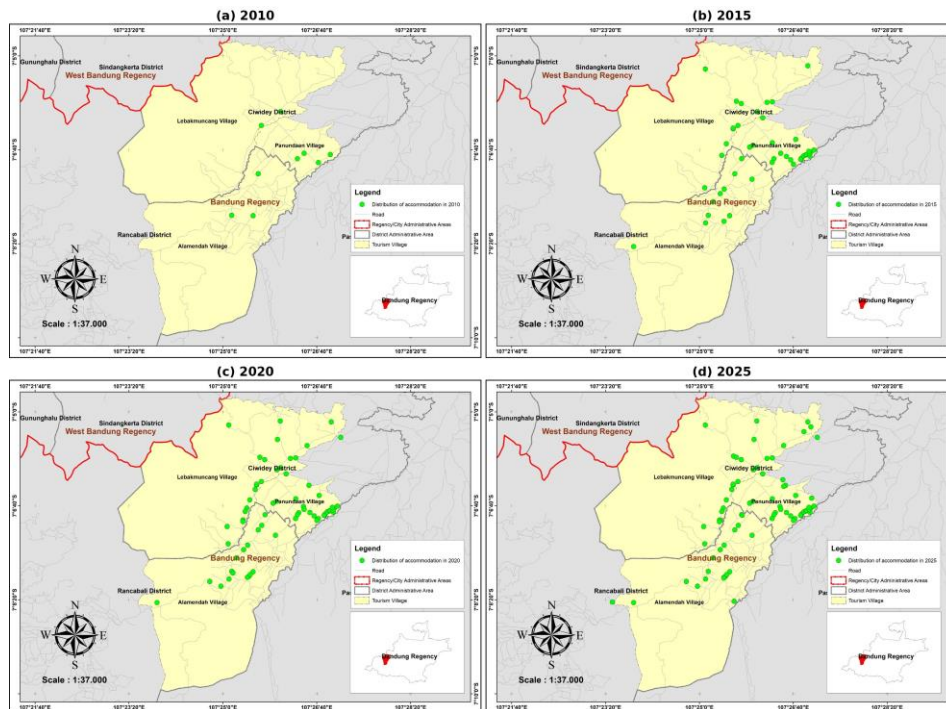


**Figure 4:** Spatial Distribution of Tourism Accommodation in the Ciwidey–Rancabali Tourism Village Cluster, 2010–2025  
 Source: Authors (2026)

As shown in Figure 4, the spatial pattern of accommodation shifted from a small, tightly clustered node of ten units concentrated around the Ciwidey District centre and its main arterial road in 2010 (Figure 4a) to a dispersed, linear pattern that progressively followed secondary access roads southward through Panundaan Village into Alamendah and the Rancabali periphery by 2025 (Figure 4d). This trajectory corroborates the “spatial production of rural settlements” documented by Bi and Yang (2023) and the tourism-driven spatial restructuring identified by Gao and Cheng (2020), while adding a distinctive governance signature: new nodes did not emerge randomly but along corridors actively curated by the youth-led collaborative institutions described above, as forest and tea-plantation plots were incrementally converted into glamping sites, homestays, and trekking bases. This governance-mediated diffusion pattern mirrors the mechanism recently identified by Zhang et al. (2026), who demonstrate that tourism-driven rural land-use change in metropolitan suburbs follows the institutional capacity of local actors rather than market forces alone.

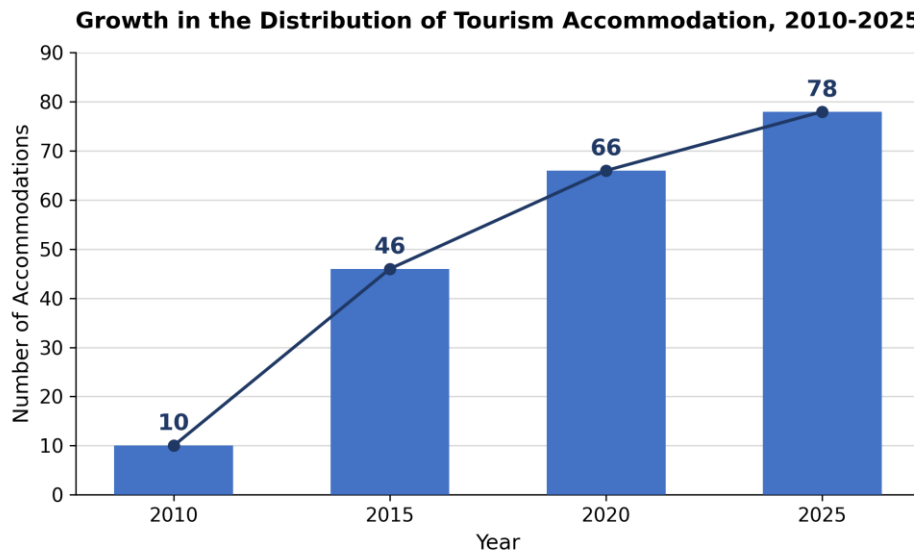


**Figure 5:** Growth Trend in the Number of Tourism Accommodation Units, 2010–2025  
*Source: Authors (2026)*

This spatial diffusion is corroborated by the quantitative growth trend in Figure 5: the number of accommodation units rose from 10 in 2010 to 46 in 2015, 66 in 2020, and 78 in 2025—an increase of 680 per cent over fifteen years. The steepest increment (10 to 46 units, 2010–2015) coincides with the formative phase of youth-led organizational capability identified in the Results section, whereas the more moderate but sustained growth after 2020 corresponds to the consolidation of formal governance support following Bandung Regent Regulation No. 6 of 2020 concerning Halal Tourism. This pattern empirically echoes Wang et al. (2023), who demonstrate that the spatial distribution of rural governance demonstration villages in China is directly shaped by institutional and organizational factors rather than infrastructural endowment alone.

Taken together, these spatial findings respond directly to recent calls in the land-governance literature for closer coupling between regulatory institutions and observable land-use outcomes (Kourkouridis et al., 2026). In Alamendah, the youth-driven “Capacity to Aspire” functions as the missing institutional mechanism that translates policy instruments into measurable spatial-physical transformation—expanding accommodation supply and converting dormant agrarian assets into tourism infrastructure—while avoiding the land-market gentrification risk that Kan (2021) warns can accompany unmanaged rural tourism commodification. The spatial evidence thus reinforces, rather than merely illustrates, the institutional argument advanced in this study.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research objective to formulate a model of "youth agency" as a catalyst for sustainable Halal tourism, this study formulates three pillars: (1) Spatial-Economic Optimization, (2) Digital-Financial Inclusivity, and (3) Cultural-Social Cohesion. This research substantiates the form of "Capacity to Aspire" embodied by the village's younger generation, demonstrating that institutional governance produces not only social outcomes but also measurable physical transformation: longitudinal GIS analysis confirms a 680 per cent increase in tourism accommodation units between 2010 and 2025, diffusing along corridors actively curated by youth-led institutions rather than emerging from market forces or infrastructure investment alone. The findings provide a recommendation that rural human resources, particularly youth, serve as social capital and the driving engine of collaborative planning in village institutional development, while the accompanying spatial evidence underscores the need for continuous governance oversight so that this land-use transformation remains inclusive and does not tip into unmanaged commodification or gentrification.

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