



Community Engagement in Ambon: Building Bridging Social Capital and Intercommunal Networks

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Abstract. Of all the communal conflicts in Indonesia after 1998, the religious conflict in Ambon was among the most severe, resulting in deep social segregation between Christian and Muslim communities. Although the conflict eventually subsided and Ambon entered a peace-building phase, Indonesia's history demonstrates that horizontal conflicts can re-emerge at any time. In a pluralistic society, this risk must be anticipated by strengthening community engagement through social capital, particularly by revitalizing Maluku's indigenous traditions of *pela* and *gandong*, which emphasize brotherhood and mutual assistance among *anak negeri* Maluku. This article is based on a literature review analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach. The literature was systematically collected from journals, books, dissertation accessed through academic databases such as Google Scholar and undergraduate thesis in Pattimura University Library (Ambon), covering publications from the post-conflict period (2002–2024) and selected based on their relevance to social capital, communal conflict, and post-conflict integration in Ambon and comparable contexts. The findings indicate that social capital derived from the traditional institutions of *pela* and *gandong* primarily constitutes bonding social capital, which strengthens internal ties among communities bound by these agreements. However, Ambon's pluralistic society requires bridging social capital, as conceptualized by Robert Putnam (1993), and intercommunal networks, as proposed by Ashutosh Varshney (2002), to integrate citizens across religious boundaries. The development of bridging social capital and intercommunal networks in Ambon's post-conflict context is driven by interrelated factors, including economic interactions, interfaith cooperation, and the role of local governance, all of which contribute to the gradual rebuilding of trust and social cohesion among previously divided groups.

Keywords : conflict, bridging social capital, intercommunal network

1 Introduction

Of all the large-scale social conflicts that occurred during the transition period from the New Order government to Reformasi such as the conflicts in Sanggau Ledo in 1997-1998, Sambas in 1999, Sampit in 2001, Poso in 1998-2001, the Ambon conflict in 1999-2002 is the largest conflict when viewed from the number of deaths, the number of refugees who left their hometowns, and the residents of Ambon City are physically and

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mentally divided in the segregation of Christian and Islamic settlements (van Klinken, 2007 : 147-148). The Ambon conflict initially involved Muslim Bugis migrants against the Christian natives of Maluku because the socio-economic gap factor developed into a religious conflict between fellow Maluku residents who were Muslims against Christians (Tanamal and Trijono, 2004: 231). This conflict illustrates for the first time in Indonesia, Christians and Muslims face each other in a battlefield that lasts relatively long (Bertrand, 2012: 236). During conflict, it conditions a person to show a religious identity and the person feels safe if he feels integrated with his religious group (Pamungkas, 2011: 134).

The open conflict that occurred in Ambon indicates the poor relations between the people in this area. This conflict has damaged the values of mutual trust, tolerance and inter-religious social solidarity in the pluralistic Ambon society. The wave of displacement of Christians and Muslims has created an almost total segregation that separates the Muslim and Christian populations. This segregation strengthens the in-group solidarity of these religious communities, encouraging the development of suspicion and distrust of people of different faiths. Each person only believes in people of the same religion (Koritelu, 2003: 35).

The pluralistic structure of Ambon society, marked by ethnic and religious diversity, demands the existence of social institutions that are able to accommodate this diversity into a bond that forms social integration. There is always a challenge to bring together plurality and integration in an integrated social network. Social relations in a pluralistic society are often colored by differences in interests between various parties and differences in interests can develop into conflicts, both closed (*latent*), *emerging* (emerging) and open (*manifest*) conflicts. If conflict is a necessity, then efforts are needed to identify social institutions that can accommodate the potential for conflict to become social relations that link various interests to social integration (Krisdyatmiko, Anwar and Yulianto, 2013: 239).

Although the Ambon conflict has ended, Indonesian history has proven that horizontal conflicts always arise from time to time, both on a small scale and escalated, from those that do not cause damage and casualties to damage infrastructure, public facilities and casualties (Krisdyatmiko, Anwar and Yulianto, 2013: 240-241). The potential for horizontal conflicts that often arise in pluralistic societies needs to be made to identify local mechanisms that can be used to strengthen the building of social integration in pluralistic societies. More specifically, this study focuses on intercommunal ties, which are networks and organizations that integrate Muslims, Christians, and other religious people, not intracommunal ties, namely networks and organizations where all members are Christians or all members are Muslims. In an easy-to-digest expression, Robert Putnam (1993), calls the first bond as *bridging social capital*, while the second bond as *bonding* social capital. His conception of *intracommunal social capital* was developed by Ashutosh Varshney (2002).

This article intends to analyze the social capital formed in the *pela* and *gandong* customary institutions, the question that will be answered is whether the social capital formed from these customary institutions can be used as a medium to build post-conflict peace in Ambon? If the social capital in the traditional institutions of *pela* and *gandong*

is insufficient to build post-conflict social integration in Ambon, what kind of social capital should be developed to build social integration in Ambon?

This article is prepared as a conceptual paper that is strengthened by a descriptive qualitative case study of Wayame Village, Ambon. This approach was chosen to provide an in-depth analysis of the application of *the theory of bridging social capital* (Putnam, 1993) and intercommunal networks (Varshney, 2002) in the context of post-conflict societies. The evidence base was built through triangulation of data sources which included: (1) a literature review of journal documents, books, and undergraduate theses in Pattimura University Library related to the keywords "Community Engagement in Ambon", "*Pela Gandong*", "Bridging Social Capital", and "Conflict Resolution in Ambon", (2) analysis of literature reports on the revitalization of the *Pela Gandong* tradition, and (3) field observation experiences in 2013 related to inter-religious interaction in Wayame Village. The analysis process was carried out thematically, mapping how *community engagement* involving the government, community leaders, and peace volunteers can transform exclusive *social capital bonding* into inclusive *social capital bridging*.

2 Discussion

2.1 Historical Background of Conflict in Maluku

Religious conflicts in Maluku actually have quite long historical roots. Pamungkas stated, "*history of Maluku is a history of war*", since hundreds of years ago before the colonization period, conflicts between tribal groups have become a plural phenomenon in Maluku. This is generally not related to religious affiliation. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, conflicts between tribal groups occurred repeatedly in the Moluccas, especially in *Uli Lima* or the north of the Lei Hitu Islands and *Uli Siwa* or the south and east of the Lei Hitu Islands. After the arrival of the Portuguese, religion became the main reason for the conflict. The conflict continued in the period of Dutch colonization due to *the Hongi Tochten*. The VOC protected Christian villages in Ambon and Lease Island. The VOC attacked Muslim villages with the help of residents from Christian villages. All these wars have made the people of Maluku become militant, the character of every person who believes in Islam and Christianity has become not moderate with each other. *The spirit of conflict* continues to this day (Pamungkas, 2011: 130-131).

The colonization carried out by the Dutch in the Maluku region was not only driven by the purpose of draining and exploiting spices and other natural resources, but also aimed to expand Christianity. There is a strong impression that there is an attempt at coercion in the process of Christianization. It is not uncommon for there to be chases and murders of every resident who does not heed the will of the Dutch rulers to Christianize this region (Koritelu, 2003: 1).

Historical memories of war atrocities are recorded in the form of oral histories of the Leihitu and Hoamual peoples and their distribution throughout Central Maluku. A bitter memory of the brutality of the VOC and its supporters who destroyed the Kingdom of Iha in Saparua, Hoamual in West Seram and Bandar Dagang Hitu. The VOC, assisted by the residents of Leitimor / Uliaser, succeeded in ending Islamic trade and political

power in Maluku at a very high price, namely the rift between Islam and Christianity in Central Maluku. This greatly influenced the way Islam viewed Christianity, not only as a politically and economically advantaged group, but also as those who "hurt" Islam in the region (Manuputty and Watimena, 2004: 89).

The ethno-religious territorial segregation policy in Maluku during the colonial period has divided the people of Maluku based on ethnicity and religion. There is the land of Salam, which is the village where the Muslim community lives and the land of Serani where the Christian community lives (Pamungkas, 2011: 131). The term country that denotes various communities in Maluku is actually formed by the Dutch, previously known as hena or aman. The purpose of the Dutch Colonial Government was actually to facilitate hegemony, take advantage of the loyal population and carry out the mission of spreading Christianity. Educated Protestant Christians were recruited into the Dutch bureaucracy, while less educated ones joined the Dutch colonial army. Meanwhile, Muslims who do not want to change religion are considered synonymous with rebel activists and are often the object of massacre (Yuniarti; Marieta and Triatmoko, 2003: 13).

In the early 19th century there was a spontaneous migration to Ambon as the center of colonial government, trade and education. Ambon has become a magnet for the arrival of people from outside Ambon, both from Maluku and other islands. Migrants from the country of Serani come to Ambon to seek education, while migrants from the country of Salam arrive in Ambon to participate in economic activities. Migrants from Maluku built new settlements in Ambon like their place of origin, namely the land of Serani and the land of Salam. In contrast to migrants from South Sulawesi and Java, they built settlements based on their ethnic identity. The segregated settlement pattern in Ambon with a more heterogeneous society creating primordial sentiments with an ethno-religious background has encouraged the development of social fragmentation in the post-colonial period (Pamungkas, 2011: 131). Such a socio-cultural configuration places ethno-religious groups playing different economic roles that Furnival calls it a political feature that reflects the absence of a "common social will" among them. Such a situation can be referred to as a primordial plural trait in which the cultural and emotional loyalty of a person or group of people is closely related to ethnic, religious and racial sentiments (Pariela, 2009: 58).

2.2 Segregation of Residential Settlements in Ambon City

The city of Ambon as the capital of Maluku Province is the center of government as well as the economy in this region. The process of forming Ambon as the center of economic, political and administrative activities of the government has begun since the colonial period. Ambon in the past was a strategic city and contested by various colonizing nations from Europe such as the Portuguese, Spanish, British and the one who has held its power for the longest time is the Dutch. The Maluku Islands as a spice production center that became an international trade commodity in the past became this area was very important to be contested and controlled by colonial countries. Cloves and nutmeg were commodities that sold highly in international trade from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. The Dutch colonial government chose Ambon as the center

of power to control the Maluku archipelago by placing most of the troops and administrative personnel of the colonial government in this city.

Along with the development of economic and government activities in this city, there is a process of population migration from various islands, especially Ambon-Lease which consists of the islands of Ambon, Haruku, Saparua, Molana and Nusa Laut. In addition, Ambon is also a migration destination for the Buton, Bugis, Makassar, Javanese and other ethnic groups. However, the settlement process built by migrants, especially from Ambon-Lease and other islands in Maluku and North Maluku, formed a system of spatial and social segregation. A typical phenomenon of the settlement pattern in the city of Ambon is the formation of segregation of residential areas based on religion. Paulus Koritelu (2003: 1-2) said that the process of segregation of the settlements of the inhabitants of Ambon city followed the pattern of segregation that existed in the area of origin of these migrants. Several examples can be given to illustrate how the process of segregation crystallizes in the rural areas of Maluku, especially those in the Ambon-Lease area, the population is spread in villages according to their respective religions. For example, Siri Sori Islamic Village and Christian Siri Sori Village, Iha Village where all residents are Muslim and Ihamahu Village where the residents are Christians, there are also Tial Islamic Village and Tial Christian Village and so on. This pattern is applied by immigrant residents from various regions of Maluku, they build settlements in Ambon City based on the religious groups they follow.

In Ambon City, there are Ahusen, Uritetu, Rijali, Batu Meja and Batu Gajah Villages which are dominated by Christian residents while Waihaong, Honipopu, Silale, Urimessing, Soabali and Batu Merah villages are dominated by Muslim residents (Koritelu, 2003: 2). Such patterns are also formed in the countryside of Ambon Island such as Liang, Larike, Tulehu, Mamala, Wakal, Morela, Seith and Batu Merah which are dominated by Muslim populations. On the other hand, it is also easy to find villages with Christian inhabitants such as Waai, Alang Liliboi, Tawiri, Hatu, Naku, Hukurilla, Emma, Soya, Passo, Hutumuri, Amahusu, Seilale, Latuhalat and so on (Koritelu, 2003: 29). This phenomenon is related to the history of colonialization in the area that became the center of spice production, namely the Ambon-Lease area and the islands in the North Maluku region. What the Dutch colonial government did in the Maluku colony, especially the Ambon-Lease area as a spice center, was a very unique phenomenon and may be different from what was done in other colonies in Indonesia. In addition to the process of draining and exploiting spices and other natural resources, the Dutch colonial government also carried out the process of spreading Christianity intensively. There is an impression that there are attempts at coercion in the process that the Iha and Kulur people consider to be a process of forced Christianization. As a result, it is not uncommon to pursue and attempt to kill every resident who does not heed the will of Christianization carried out by the Dutch. This historical process was ultimately a bitter experience that further aggravated the process of thickening segregation between the Christian and Muslim populations in the Ambon-Lease area as the center of spices in Maluku as well as on the islands of Banda and North Maluku. The bitter experience during the Dutch penetration was an old wound that was not easy to heal. This situation is what encourages and strengthens the process of segregation of settlements based on religion in rural and urban areas on the island of Ambon (Koritelu, 2003: 1-2).

Koritelu (2003: 31-32) describes the general characteristics of population concentration based on the segregation of their settlements according to the majority religion of the population. The concentration of the Muslim population is generally in villages or sub-districts located in the center or suburbs of the city. Muslim settlements like this are usually inhabited by migrants from Sulawesi, Java and Sumatra who have a tendency to make a living in informal economic sectors in the center or suburbs, such as traders in the market, pedicab drivers, collectors of used goods and others. The Protestant Christian population is generally concentrated in sub-districts and villages located on the outskirts or far from the center of Ambon City, except for the villages of Ahusen, Rijali, Amantelu, Batu Gajah, Batu Meja and Uritetu. Especially for residents who live in the center and suburbs of Ambon City, they usually make a living as civil servants. Some of them are native to Ambon and some come from the islands around Ambon and from outside the Maluku region. The Catholic population is generally spread across several villages and sub-districts on the outskirts of the city and only a small part is spread unevenly in several sub-districts in the center of Ambon City. The Catholic population is spread across several villages in Sirimau District, Benteng and Wainitu Villages, Nusaniwe District, and in Waiheru Village, Baguala District. The Hindu and Buddhist populations, although they are small, are also scattered in several villages and sub-districts.

3 Social Categories of Ambon City Residents

3.1 *Anak Negeri*

In Maluku, the concept of *anak negeri* is widely known to refer to a group of people who are categorized as 'indigenous' residents of Maluku. The word *anak negeri* also refers to the meaning of the so-called child of a social entity of a country. A state is a territorial federation consisting of several *soas* that generally amount to at least three people. The people of Maluku have an emotional bond with *negeri* because *negeri* has a territorial meaning but also means a strong socio-cultural unity because it is bound by the same historical narrative, customs and customary laws. Thus, everyone who feels that they are *anak negeri* has a sense of calling, and a sense of willingness to sacrifice for their respective countries. Maluku Provincial Regulation No. 14 of 2005 states that *negeri* is a Customary Law Community Unit that has territorial boundaries, which is authorized to regulate and manage the interests of local communities based on the origins, customs and local customary laws recognized and respected in the Unitary State Government system of the Republic of Indonesia (Waileruny, 2009: 78).

3.2 *Anak Dagang*

The term *anak dagang* is used to refer to all immigrants from outside Maluku. *anak dagang* do not have customary rights and obligations and do not have a basis of cultural legitimacy to own land or customary land and do not have the right to occupy the position of leaders in the *negeri* regulated by customary norms. The name of this *anak dagang* may be related to the wave of arrival of migrants from outside Maluku, most

of whom work as traders. These *anak dagang* synonymous with non-permanent migrants, they come to Ambon just to complain about their fate to seek fortune in business. The description of this *anak dagang* can be observed from the traders who sell at the Mardika Market. In her study in the residential area of RW 02 in Rijali Village, Christy Tamaela (2010: 46) found that the traders who live in RW 02 are immigrants from East Java and Buton. Most of the Javanese here make a living as mobile vegetable traders and Buton people as vegetable sellers at Mardika Market. These immigrants tend to maintain their original cultural identity by maintaining a close relationship with their relatives or family who live in their hometown, and they also periodically return to their hometowns.

3.3 Social Capital in Customary Institutions

The 'indigenous' Ambon people live within *negeri-negeri* governed by social norms rooted in ancestral traditions and bound by the historical narrative of the origins of *negeri* and the ancestors who founded the *negeri*. The 'native' citizens of Maluku are often also called *children of the country* because they are the ones who inherit the cultural values instilled by their ancestors who founded the *negeri* and they also maintain the oral history of the process of forming their *negeri* as well as the area of origin of their ancestors. *Anak negeri* are also called *anak adat* because they are the ones who maintain the honor of the customs and traditions of their ancestors, in them the obligations and rights of the indigenous people that exist in the system of socio-cultural norms that apply in their country. *Anak negeri Maluku* can generally be grouped as followers of Islam and Christianity and tend to live in separate areas according to their respective religious groups, this does not mean that the *anak negeri Maluku* are scattered and conflicted between groups of followers of Islam and Christianity. The ancestors of *anak negeri Maluku* taught the mechanism of mutual trust and cooperation between countries, both whose inhabitants have the same religion and religious differences. Social mechanisms to establish inclusive social relations across the borders of the country, island and religion through traditional institutions of *pela* and *gandong*. The traditional institution of *pela* and *gandong* is binding on *anak negeri Maluku*. The existence of the values of togetherness and brotherhood unites those who have different religions, different *negeri*, different island origins and so on so that they feel like one *anak negeri Maluku*. For *anak negeri Maluku* who are bound by the *gandong* and *pela*, they have never discriminated against the religious background they adhere. The activity of building a church building in a *negeri* is not only the responsibility of Christians in their *negeri* but is the responsibility of the *anak negeri Maluku*, both Christian and Islamic, who are bound in one *gandong* or *pela*. Likewise, the construction of a mosque building must be done on a shared responsibility. The values of togetherness in traditional institutions such as *pela* and *gandong* like this are referred to by Waileruny (2010: 3) as social capital that has a strong binding force in the social networks that exist in society.

Pela is a system of social relations known in the people of Maluku, in the form of an agreement on the relationship of one *negeri* -- the name for a village or village -- with another *negeri*, which is usually on another island and sometimes also adheres to other religions in Maluku (Krisdyatmiko; Anwar; Yulianto, 2013 : xlviiii). *Pela* is one

of the social institutions in the life of the people of Maluku, especially the people who inhabit customary lands in Ambon, there are social relations based *on pela*, both between *negeri* whose residents are of the same religion or different religions. The events that led to the birth of the relationship between one community and another in Maluku are different. This social institution *pela* existed and developed as an adhesive for social relations in the environment of the people who inhabit one customary land with another *negeri* long before the entry of religious influence. *Pela* relations are also not limited to different communities or the same religion but also apply to people with different customs and are far outside their territory.

The customs and traditions of *gandong* are the cultural heritage of the people of Maluku, especially the customs on Seram Island, Ambon and Lease. *Gandong* actually means a bond between brothers and sisters that come from the same womb. In general, the people of Central Maluku understand *gandong* as a brotherly relationship between brothers and sisters or brotherhood between two or more countries, both countries whose population is Muslim and Christian. *Gandong* can also be interpreted as a blood relationship that comes from one ancestral womb and a very strong and sacred traditional bond. Referring to Colley's opinion, *gandong* is a bond or brotherly relationship between all residents of two or more countries based on customary ties. *Gandong* also has a genealogical meaning, namely the population of *countries* that are bound in one *gandong* means that they have the same ancestral origin. For example, the *gandong* relationship between the Land of Seith and the Land of Ouw began with the separation of two ancestors or ancestors named Assarate as the older brother who settled in Seith and Assabate as the younger brother who sailed and then stopped in a place and had children and grandchildren in a *negeri* called the Land of Ouw on Saparua Island (Paulain, 2010: 2-3). Thus, *gandong* can be meaningful as a relationship between two or more groups of descendants who come from the same womb or one common ancestor or ancestor. The brotherly relationship continues to be maintained from generation to generation, such as the *gandong* relationship between the Land of Seith in the Leihitu Peninsula of Ambon Island and the Land of Ouw on Saparua Island.

4 Ambon Conflict and Social Capital Problems

Social capital is a set of intangible capital that is important for the daily life of the community such as good intentions, friendship, sympathy, and social relationships between individuals and families that form a social unit. Social capital can also be understood as a number of resources owed to individuals or groups based on mutual acquaintances and recognition in an institutionalized network. In summary, the definition of social capital refers to the patterns of social organization such as networks, norms, and social beliefs that facilitate mutually beneficial coordination and cooperation (Halpern, 2005: 6-7). According to the World Bank, social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of social interaction of a society. A growing body of evidence suggests that social cohesion is essential for society to achieve economic well-being and sustainable development. Social capital is not only

the sum of the social institutions that support society but social capital is the 'glue' that binds them together (Halpern, 2005: 16).

Social capital is generally related to social organizations, social ties or relationships, norms and beliefs that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. In relation to social relations, social capital can be divided into two categories, namely social bonding and social bridge--. Social ties are exclusive social relationships based on kinship, kinship, religion, ethnicity, region and others. Meanwhile, social bridges are intersecting or intersectional social relationships that are plural and inclusive: inter-religious, inter-ethnic, inter-regional, inter-family and others (Putnam, 1993).

The social capital owned by the people of Maluku, especially Ambon, is reflected in the traditional *institutions of pela* and *gandong* which are proven to have only limited power to encourage brotherhood, harmony, tolerance and peace among fellow *Maluku citizens*. The relationship *between pela* and *gandong* can only reach the *children of Maluku* who are in this relationship, in this case the relationship is only limited between the people of one *negeri* and the people in another *negeri*. During the Maluku conflict, citizens of countries with different religions did not attack each other, but they attacked other *anak negeri Maluku* of different religions. (Waileruny, 2010: 8-9). In the process of conflict, there has never been a conflict between *pela* or *gandong*. However, it is only limited to *pela*, because there will still be attacks on other areas that are not related to *pela* (Manuputty and Watimanela, 2004: 93).

Pela, as a social institution that guarantees security and peace for citizens of *negeri* bound by *the Pela agreement*, has a weakness, namely that the peace relationship is more bilateral, or does not involve more than two regions. This weakness is coupled with the absence of customary structures that are able to go beyond the village level, thus it is very difficult to find traditional leaders who are able to be accepted by the public beyond the village level (Kadir, 2011: 5). The social function of *pela* and *gandong* as a cultural framework that forms a network of citizenship that binds two different *negeri* is fading because people's knowledge about *pela* and *gandong* and their social values and norms is increasingly blurred (Letsoin, 2005: 80-81). The function of the social glue of *the pela* and *gandong* social institutions has become weak because the social institution as a structural device that supports *the pela* and *gandong system* is considered to be no longer valid since the enactment of Law Number 5 of 1979 concerning Village Government, the role of customary institutions in the *country* has become increasingly weakened (Manuputty and Watimanela, 2004: 91-94). In the areas where the majority of the population is *anak dagang* or an immigrant, they do not know much about the customary institutions that used to be the basis for social order for *anak negeri Maluku* (Sartono, 2008: 59).

Pariela (2009: 66-68) states that the pluralistic Ambon society cannot rely on social capital that only binds to *negeri* and religious communities. Therefore, it is necessary to strive for the construction of bridging social capital to bridge primordial barriers so as to stimulate the growth of the process of tribal de-territorialization and religious de-territorialization to form a new social capital bonding area based on the territory of the village without eliminating the plurality or bridging of social capital in the village concerned. This is what is meant by plural social capital which can be defined as social

relations between groups with different identities in a community, which strengthen social ties as a community.

5 Bridging Social Capital and Intercommunal Networks

The development of social capital in Ambon's post-conflict communities is influenced by several interrelated factors, including economic interactions, interfaith cooperation, and the role of local governance. These elements contribute to the gradual rebuilding of trust and social cohesion among previously divided groups.

Economic activities have facilitated social integration, allowing individuals from different religious backgrounds to engage and collaborate. The results of research by Wardani (2021) and Ernas (2018) show that economic transactions in Ambon allow interethnic, inter-village, and interreligious social interactions, eliminate mistrust between traders and buyers, and potentially expand the narrative of peace at the micro level of community members. The *Mardika* and *Batu Merah* markets, which are geographically located right between the Muslim and Christian communities in Ambon City, serve as a medium that brings people together. Those from both Muslim and Christian communities sell their wares there. Gradually, the *Mardika* market, which had been burned during the conflict, was active again and became the first public space to meet each other. Bugis, Makassar and other traders who have left Ambon have returned to the market and rebuilt their destroyed shops. The role of the market has changed into a medium of social integration, bringing together various social groups and stalls that were initially driven by economic needs. However, through these trade contacts, the disconnected communication is resumed. Economic activities in the market became the beginning of the reconciliation movement in Ambon, which was carried out without engineering and based on the inspiration of the lower society, was very inclusive and at the same time proved that through economic relations it could develop into a social relationship between the Islamic and Christian communities.

The natural process of reconciliation during conflict and post-conflict in Ambon shows how women's daily economic practices and mobility are essential infrastructure for survival and the peace process. Women traffickers are the main agents of peace because there are generally accepted social norms that women and children must be protected. Women traders take advantage of gender perceptions about women who are not perpetrators of violence and women are not a threat, causing women traders to feel safe interacting with buyers from different religious communities. Women traders are agents of the micro-economy. The case of women traffickers confirms that peacebuilding in communal conflicts often occurs outside the institutional arena, but is embedded in the daily life practices, women's labor, and informal economy that tacitly rejects the totality of violence (Wardani, 2020: 140-143).

When access to the main market became limited, the Christian community established temporary markets, while border trading points emerged as the main sites of interfaith exchange. Although the boundary lines were initially battlefields, over time they evolved into relatively controlled spaces of interaction due to the military presence. These areas allow for pragmatic economic cooperation, as traders can retreat

quickly if violence erupts. The Wayame Market, located in a village that declared neutrality, symbolizes peaceful coexistence and is a safe trading zone despite violence elsewhere. The market as an arena for economic exchange reshapes social relations between Ambon citizens of different religions (Wardani, 2020: 144-148). The market is a vehicle for the formation of *bridging social capital* in the conception of Robert Putnam (1993) and intercommunal networks, as proposed by Ashutosh Varshney (2002)

Key factors influencing the development of bridging social capital in Ambon's post-conflict communities include inter-religious cooperation, the role of the Forum for Religious Harmony, and the need for dialogue and conflict resolution capacity building to foster trust and collaboration. Inter-religious cooperation and synergy are absolutely needed to cope with socio-spatial segregation and lack of trust in post-conflict Ambon. In this sense, organizations from different religious backgrounds can work together, build a collective platform, and produce more joint work. The Forum for Religious Harmony (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama) has been strongly identified as a particularly well positioned organization to play the role, given its formal links to the government and influential membership, while mandated to work with communities at large. Since the Forum for Religious Harmony (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama) is a multireligious organization, it has the ideal starting point for providing an example for other organizations and bringing groups together as well as working with all. (An-sori and Rostineu, 2018).

Wayame Village is a special area on Ambon Island because the villagers do not have *pela* and *gandong* relations with other *negeri*, but Wayame Village is a peaceful area that has never been involved in the vortex of the Maluku conflict. Various provocations from outsiders, both from the Islamic and Christian sides, to drag the residents of Wayame Village into the conflict in Ambon, have never succeeded. The community leaders of Wayame Village succeeded in building a social agreement to make this village area peaceful. The community leaders of Wayame Village forbade the villagers from putting up attributes that symbolize a certain religious identity in front of their houses and forbade the residents to help other communities in war. Mujib and Rumahuru (2010: 195) describe the efforts of this village community in warding off provocations from outsiders. In this village, Team 20 Wayame has been formed since February 1999. The team, whose balanced membership involves these two communities, has been determined to protect and defend Wayame Village from the impact of conflict. In the implementation of its activities, the team has avoided external intervention in an effort to maintain security in their territory.

Even though open conflict has long ceased, there are still thousands of people affected by conflict who cannot get out of the snare of helplessness. So far, development has always been biased by the interests of the elite and middle class and ignores the interests of the poor or marginalized groups. To overcome this problem during 2011-2013 in Ambon and Maluku, covering 15 states or villages, a peace development program was initiated. This program involves refugees from Ambon conflicts, community leaders collaborating with Bappeda, state governments (villages/sub-districts) and sub-districts to formulate development in their countries or villages (Krisdyatmiko et al., 2013)

6 Conclusion

Ambon's plural and post-conflict society cannot only rely on traditional social capital that binds inwards or bonding social capital, but urgently needs bridging social capital and intercommunal networks to maintain peace. While indigenous institutions such as *pela* and *gandong* have historically served as a source of strong trust, reciprocity, and solidarity among *anak negeri*, their reach is structurally limited. They bind specific villages or communities in pairs, most of which are bilateral, and do not automatically extend protection or solidarity to all religious or ethnic groups in Ambon. During the conflict, violence did not occur between *pela* or *gandong* couples, but attacks still targeted other Maluku communities outside of these ties, revealing the boundaries of social capital bonds.

The above findings reinforce the difference between Putnam's conceptions of bonding social capital and bridging social capital. For the segregated and pluralistic population of Ambon, peace depends on social relations that cross religion, ethnicity, region of origin, and migrant-indigenous gaps. Bridging social capital and intercommunal networks emerged and developed most effectively through daily economic interactions, especially in the market, and through women's trade activities, which reopened communication channels and normalized cooperation. Markets such as Mardika, Batu Merah, and Wayame become informal infrastructure for reconciliation processes, while institutions such as the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) provide a formal platform for interfaith cooperation. Wayame Village exemplifies how locally negotiated social agreements can successfully prevent violence even without *ties pela-gandong*.

Implications and explicit priorities that need to be implemented by the government and other stakeholders include, first, local governments must prioritize the protection and expansion of shared public spaces such as markets, schools, social service centers that allow for regular interaction between communities. Second, peacebuilding policies should strengthen economic inclusion, especially for women traders, refugees, and marginalized groups, as economic cooperation has proven to be a key driver of trust. Third, institutions like FKUB must be empowered not only symbolically but also operationally, with resources for dialogue, mediation, and grassroots capacity building. Fourth, development planning must move beyond elite-driven models and actively engage conflict-affected communities.

Finally, an important limitation must be acknowledged: this conclusion is based primarily on the literature and secondary sources. Although theoretically robust, it does not have systematic empirical testing through fieldwork, surveys, or network analysis. Therefore, future research should validate these claims through mixed methods to better capture how bridging social capital operates in practice and over time.

Statement of Originality and Submission Declaration.

"We hereby declare that this manuscript titled "*Community Engagement in Ambon: Building Bridging Social Capital and Intercommunal Networks*" is our original work. It has not been published previously, and it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. The manuscript contains no unlawful statements and does not infringe upon the rights of others. We confirm that all authors have approved the final version of the

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