Pathways to Resilience in Purpose-Oriented Networks

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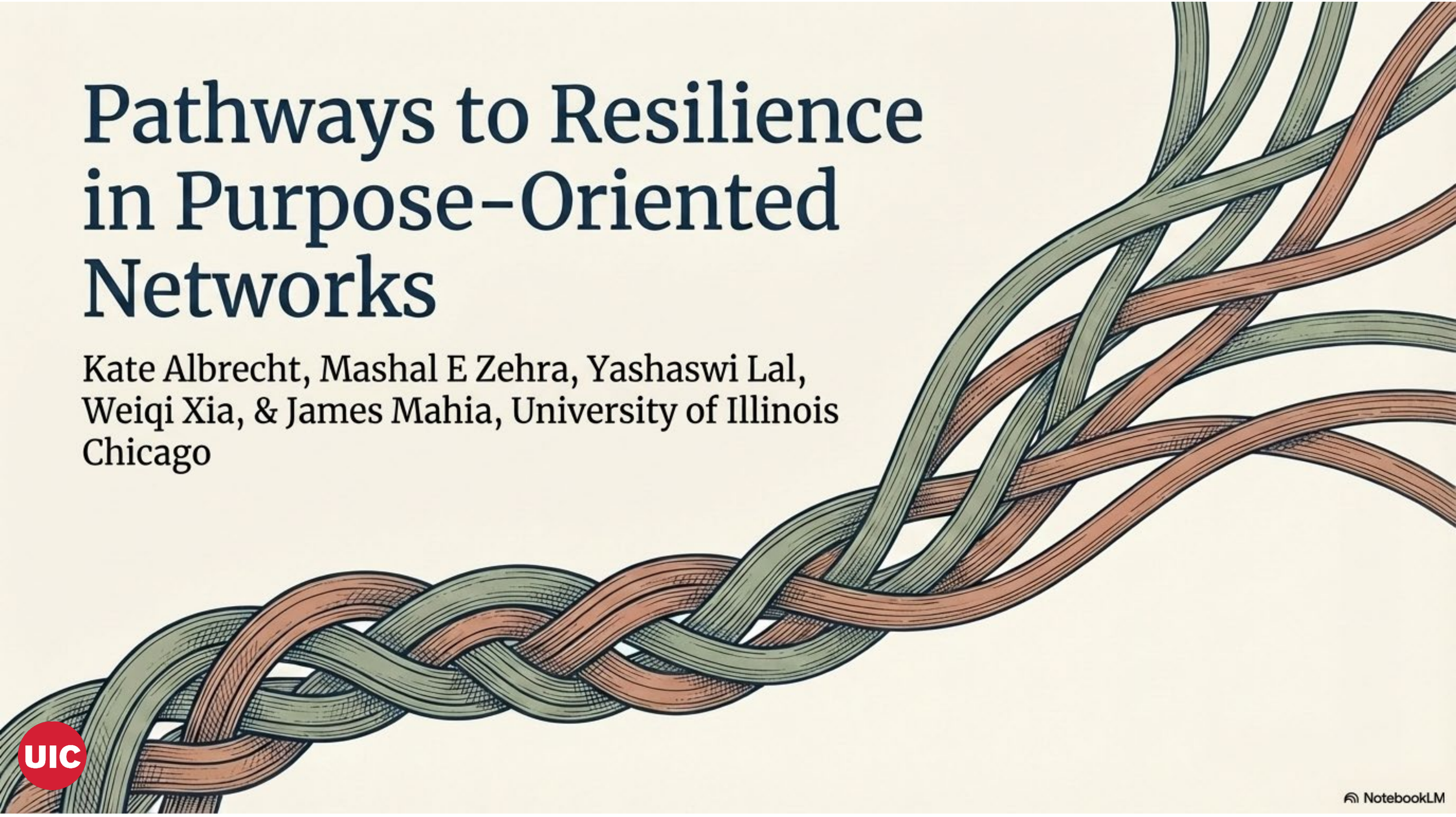


The empirical puzzle of network survival

Volatile Resources & Shifting Policy Priorities (Provan & Kenis, 2008; Stone, 2012).

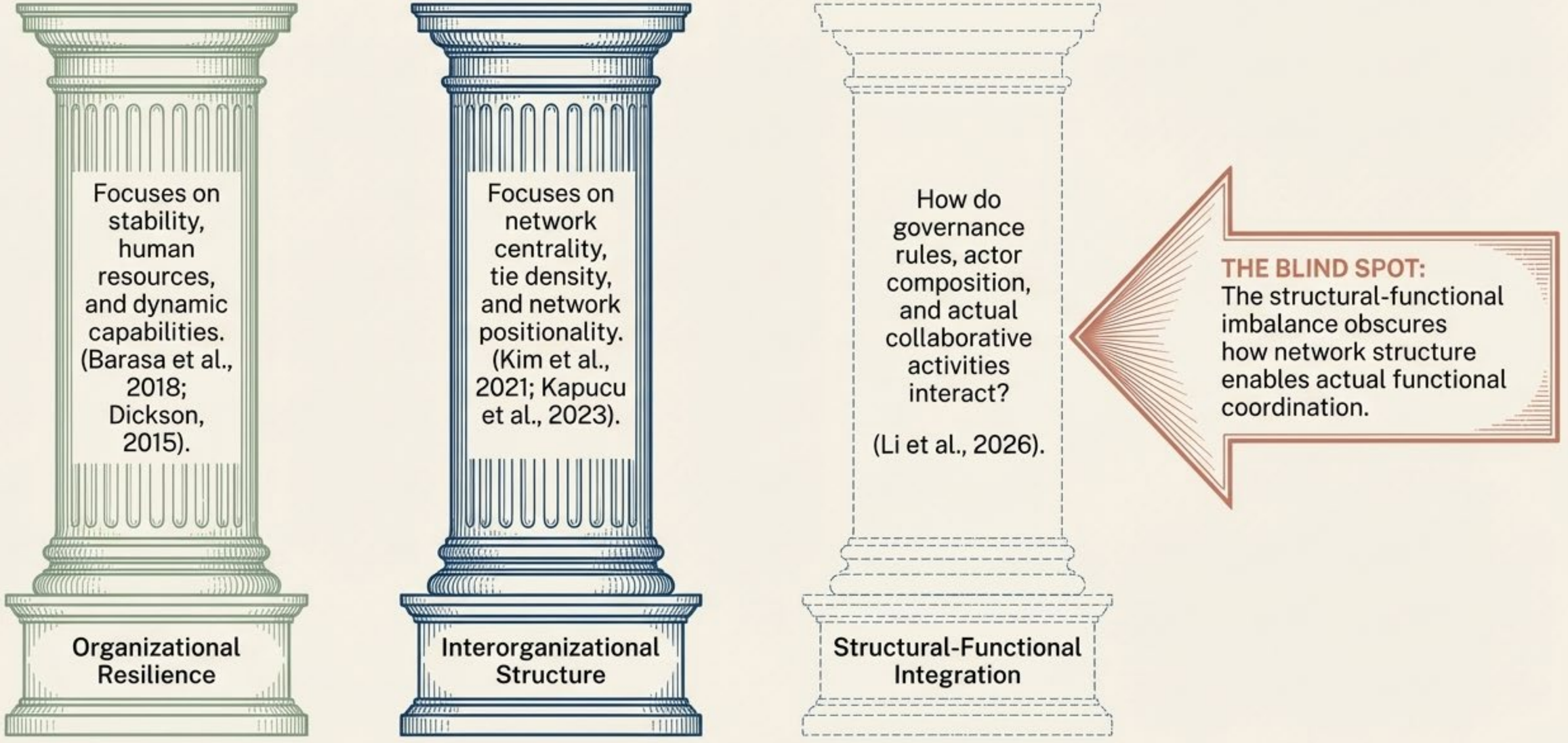
Adaptive Capacity during Crises (Comfort et al., 2010; Boin et al., 2005).

Effective Adaptation without Heavy Structure (O'Toole & Meier, 2011; Milward & Provan, 2006).

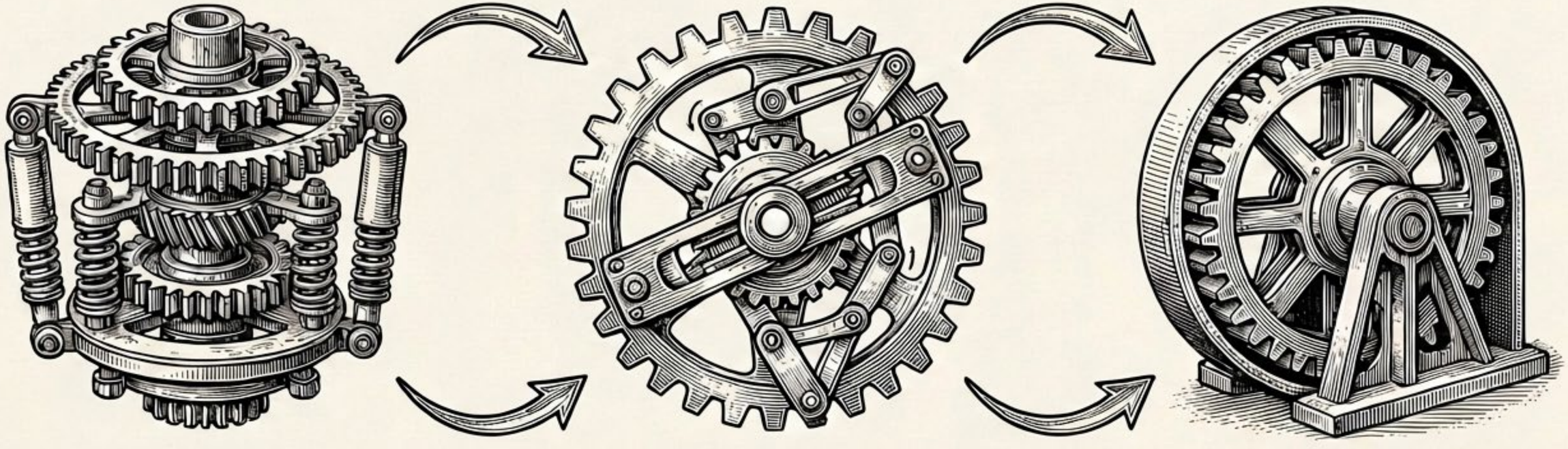
We adopt Lemaire et al.'s definition:

PON resilience is the ability of the network to adapt, recover, and maintain or even strengthen in the face of disruptions or ongoing stressors.

Existing models privilege structural explanations



THE NEW PARADIGM



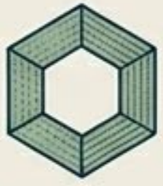
Resilience **Resilience** **Resilience**

Resilience is the institutional capacity to absorb shocks, adapt, and maintain core functions (Duit, 2016; Profiroiu & Nastacă, 2021). It is conjuntural by nature.

What configurations of structural and functional attributes of purpose-oriented networks lead to higher resilience?

Mapping the structural and functional antecedents

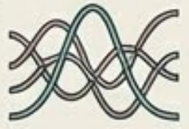
Structural Dimensions



Organizational Diversity.
(Continuous: breadth of member types).

Bridging Organization Share.
(Continuous: proportion of external boundary-spanners).

Functional Dimensions



Activity Breadth.
(Continuous: count of distinct activity types).

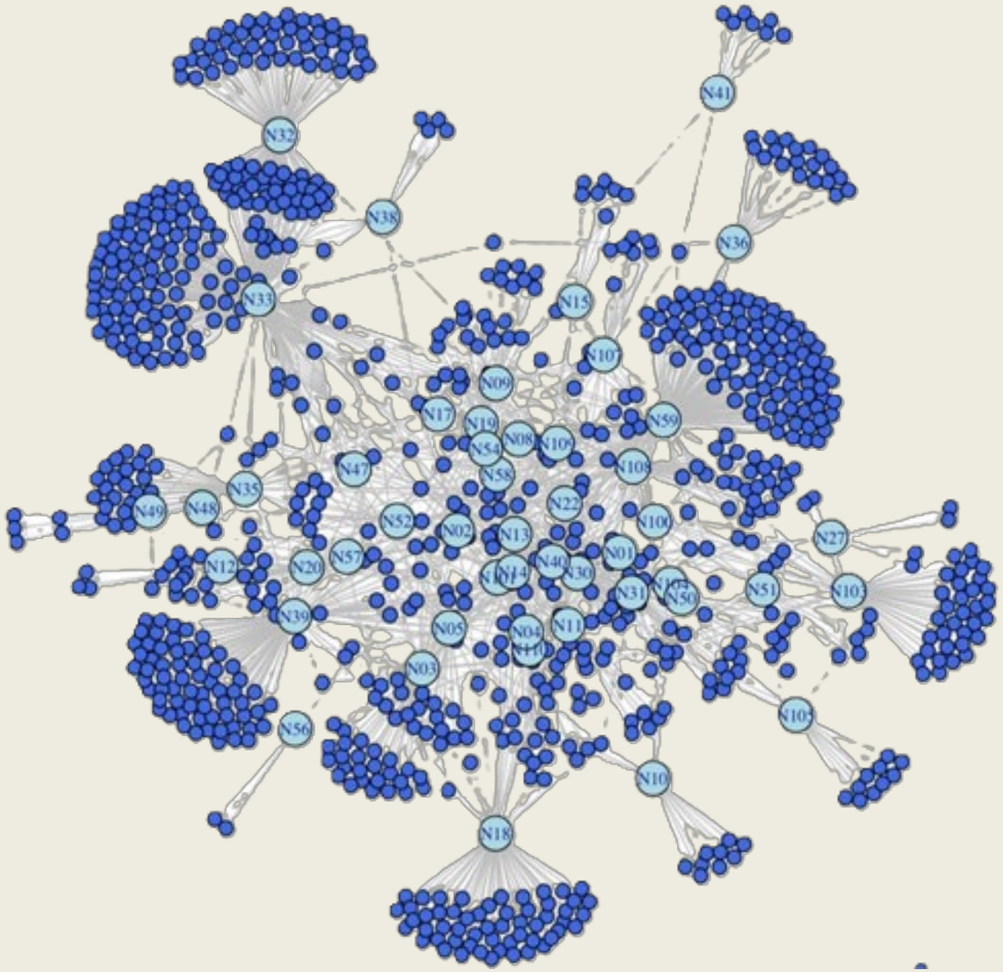
Funding Source Diversity.
(Continuous: count of distinct sources).

Community Advisory Board.
(Binary presence: CAB).

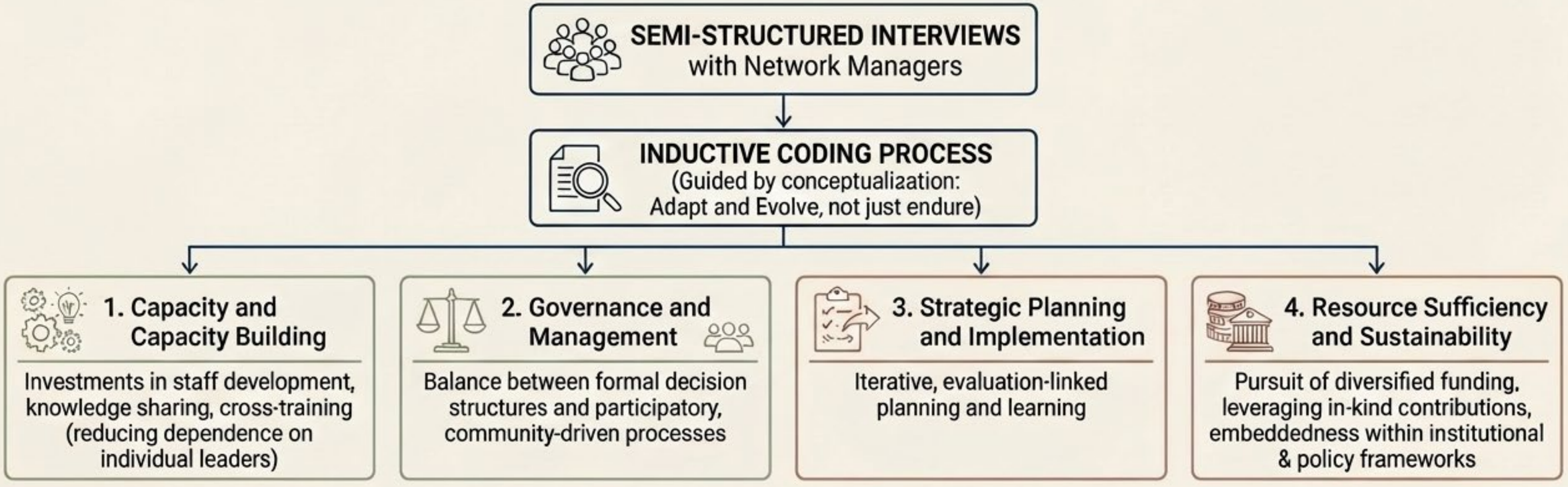
Full-Time Staff.
(Binary presence).

Data: Chicago & Cook County Health Network Domain

- Mixed-methods design combining quantitative network analysis with qualitative community-based participatory research (CBPR)
- Network identification via publicly available sources
- Network data: 54 purpose-oriented networks (PONs), 988 member organizations, 1,549 connections across Chicago and Cook County
- Secondary data: funding sources, staffing levels, governance structures, and network activities
- Interview data: 18 semi-structured interviews with network managers



Operationalizing resilience as distributed adaptive capacity



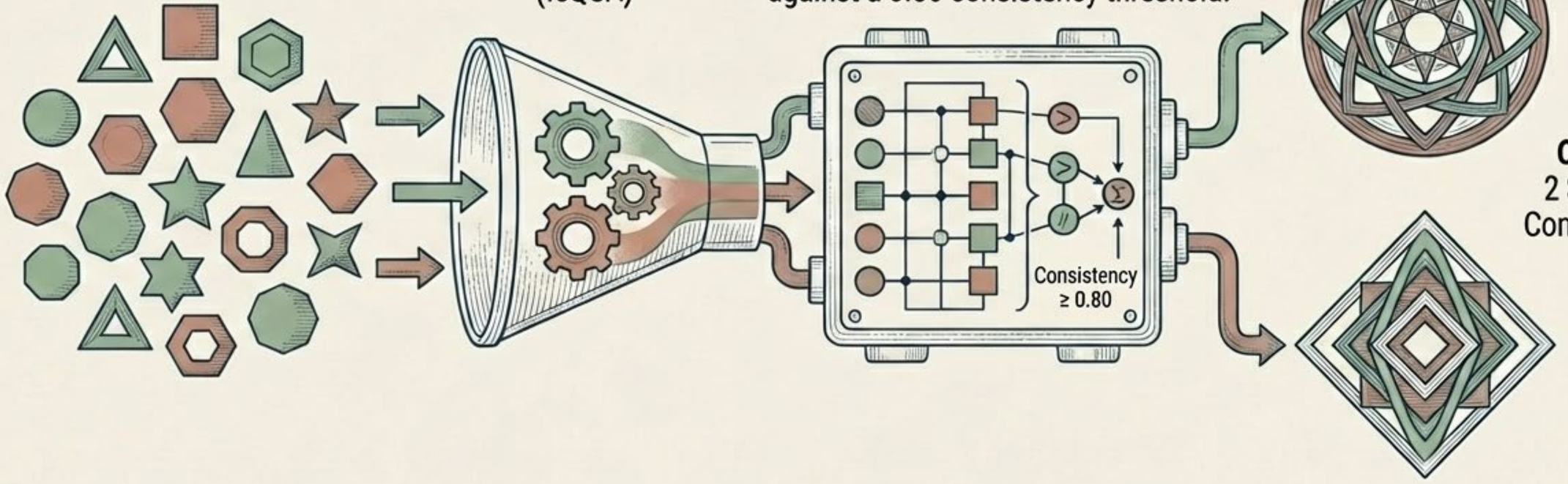
This framework illustrates how resilience is operationalized as a distributed adaptive capacity, building on qualitative insights to identify key areas for capacity building, governance, strategic planning, and resource sustainability.

Identifying sufficient combinations through fsQCA

18 Purpose-Oriented Networks
(Chicago/Cook County)

Fuzzy-Set Qualitative
Comparative Analysis
(fsQCA)

Boolean Minimization.
Testing 64 logical combinations
against a 0.80 consistency threshold.



OUTPUT:
2 Sufficient
Configurations

Why fsQCA? It enables the analysis of how conditions combine rather than independently contribute, matching our theory of equifinal causation.

No Necessary Conditions

Necessity analysis reveals that high resilience is never systematically produced by the presence or absence of any single feature. Even the absence of a CAB scored higher (0.723) than its presence.

Two distinct configurations ensure high resilience

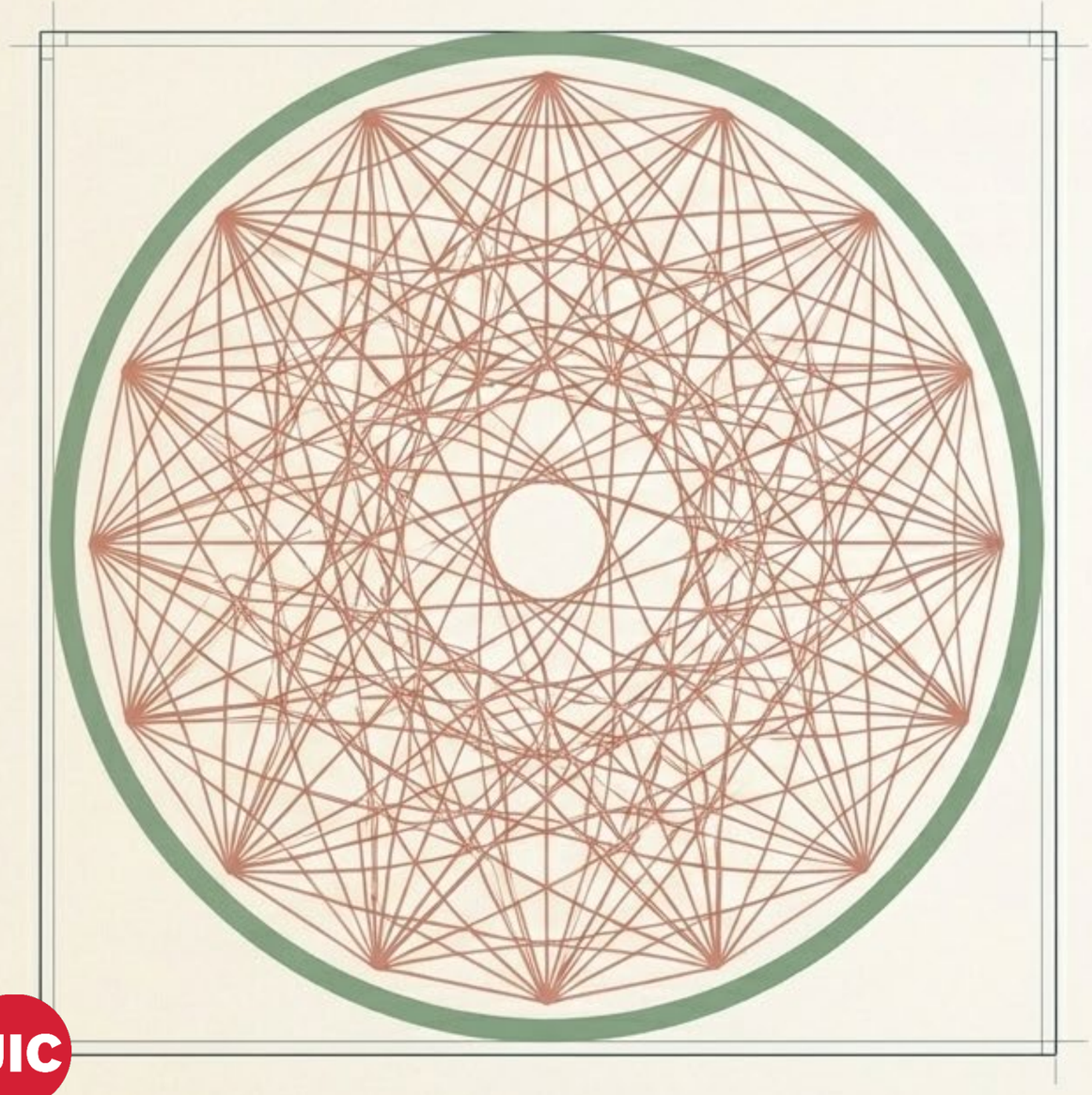
	Path 1	Path 2
Community Advisory Board	○	⊗
Full-Time Staff	○	⊗
Organizational Diversity	⊗	○
Bridging Organization Share	⊗	●
Activity Breadth	●	●
Funding Source Diversity	○	⊗

Path 1 Consistency: **0.825**

Path 2 Consistency: **0.963**

Overall Solution Consistency: 0.799. Solution Coverage: 0.503. Both configurations lack conditions traditionally assumed to be critical (e.g., diversity, formal staff).

Path 1: Functional depth over structural breadth



The Profile

Organizationally homogeneous, isolated from external domains, yet engaged in a massive breadth of shared activities.

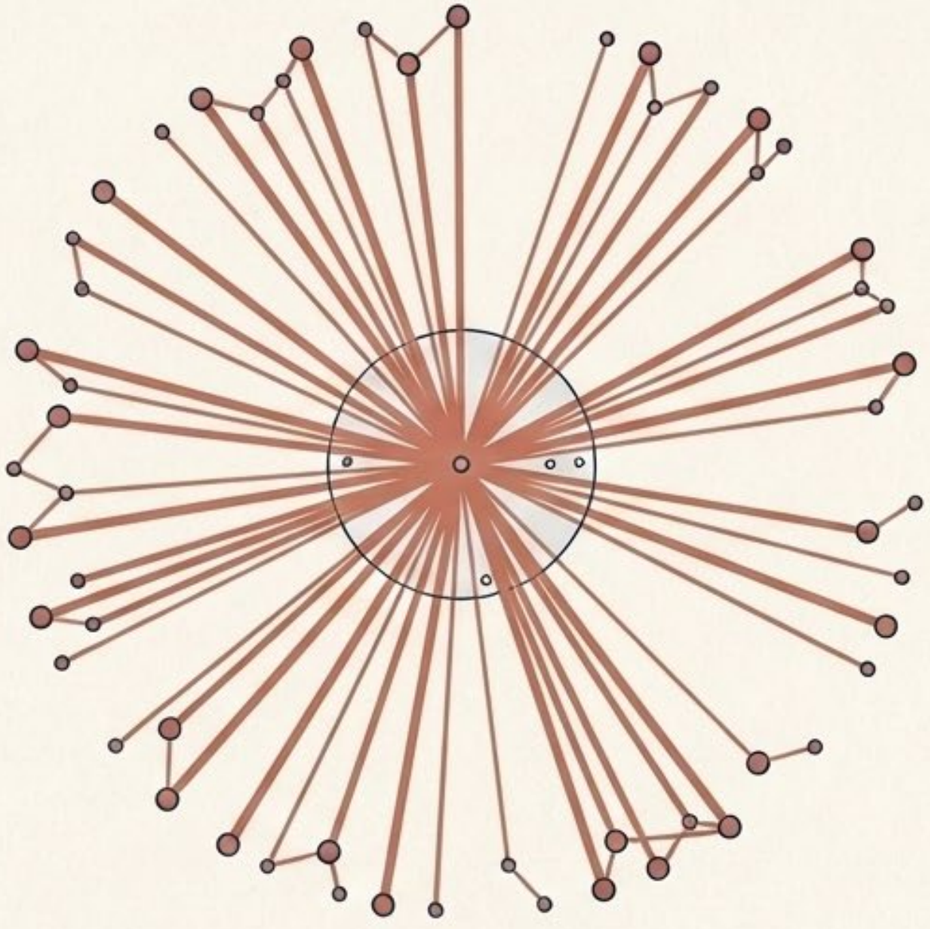
The Mechanism: Functional Redundancy

Overlapping internal processes sustain core operations. Activity breadth compensates for a lack of structural diversity.

Counter-intuitive Insight

High internal engagement makes external bridging ties a liability rather than an asset, avoiding policy-practice coordination strain.

Path 2: Relational breadth and funtional depth



The Profile

No formal community governance (CAB), no professional staff, and narrow funding, but high bridging connectivity and broad activity.

The Mechanism: Distributed Coordination

Draws on relational resources and social capital from the broader ecosystem rather than relying on internal hierarchy.

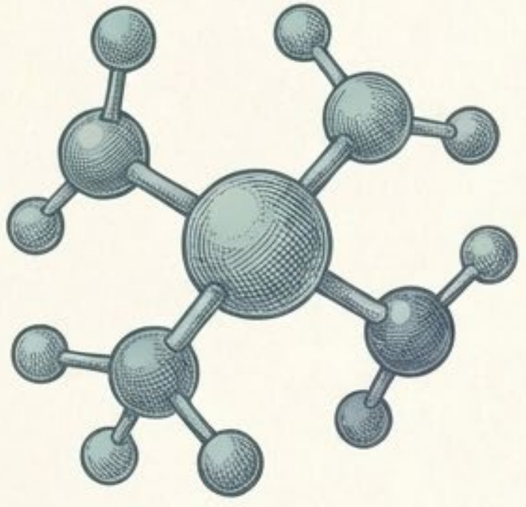
Counter-intuitive Insight

Concentrated funding and lack of staff actually reduce administrative overhead, allowing lean networks to focus purely on broad activity execution.

Divergent pathways, equifinal outcomes

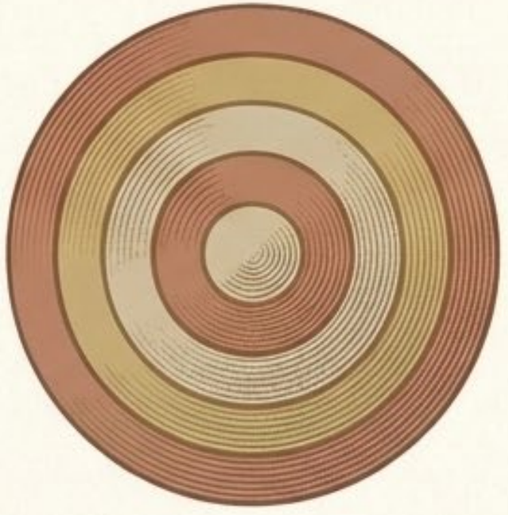
	Path 1 (Functional Depth)	Path 2 (Relational Breadth)
Structural Profile	Homogeneous & Closed	Sparse & Externally Anchored
Functional Profile	Broad internal activity	Broad activity, narrow funding
Defining Mechanism	Functional Redundancy	Distributed Domain Coordination
Counter-intuitive Insight	Survives without bridging ties	Survives without formal staff or CAB

Rethinking resilience investments



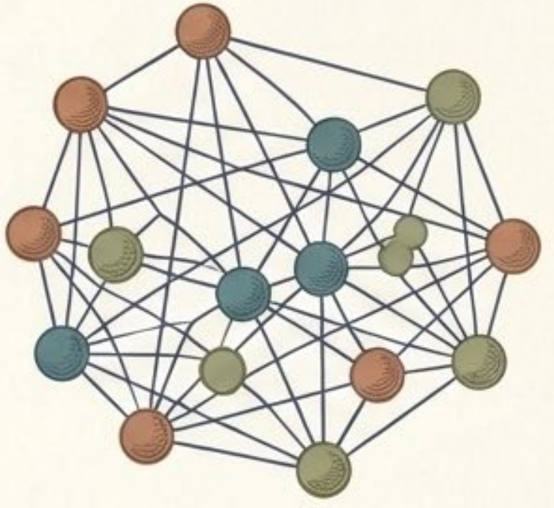
Don’t Overemphasize Formalization

Funders who demand CABs and full-time staff systematically underestimate the resilience of governance-light networks.



Invest in Activity Breadth

Expanding the range of collaborative activities is the most generalizable, accessible resilience strategy across all network types.

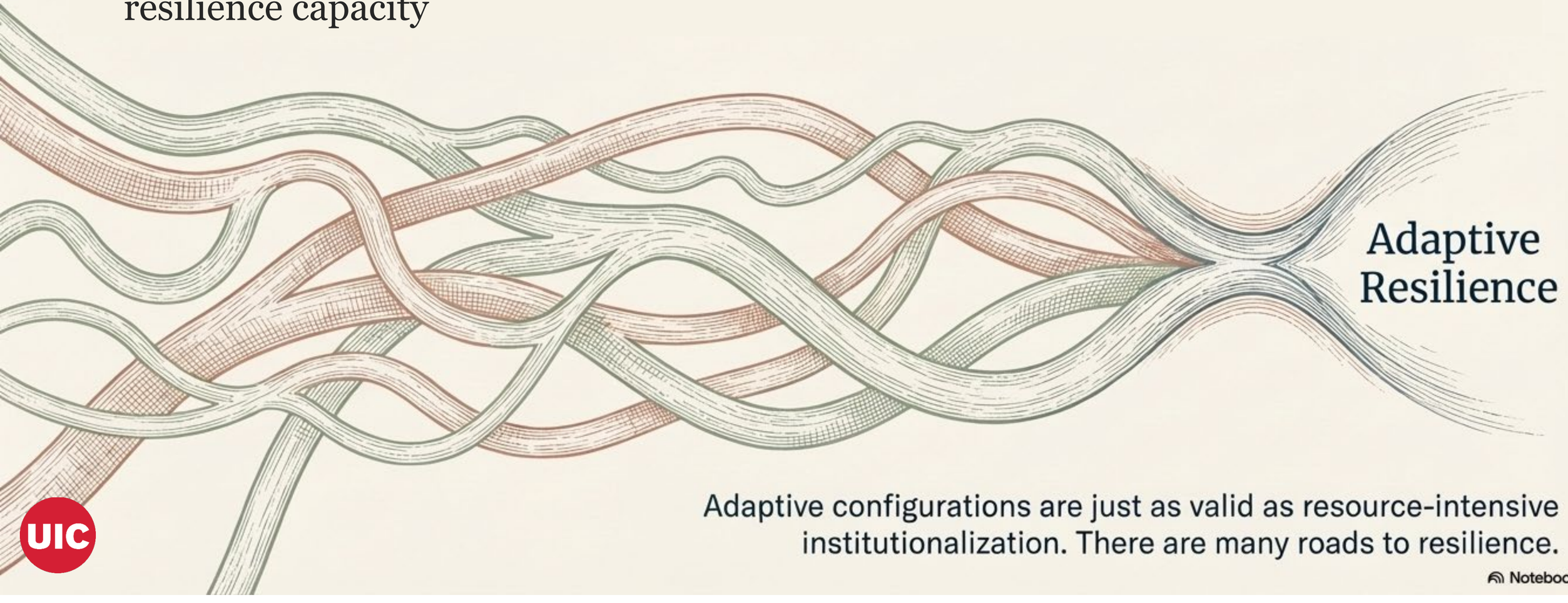


Fund the Domain, Not Just the Node

Cross-network coordination (bridging) is a systemic resilience resource that lean networks rely upon to survive.

A Structural-Functional Framework for PON Resilience

- Both pathways demonstrate that resilience is not reducible to structural attributes or functional characteristics alone, rather it emerges from their interaction
- Supports Li et al.'s (2026) call for frameworks treating governance processes, institutional arrangements, and resource configurations as jointly constitutive of resilience capacity



Adaptive configurations are just as valid as resource-intensive institutionalization. There are many roads to resilience.

Activity Breadth as an Undertheorized Driver of Resilience

- Appears in both sufficient configurations and approached necessary - most consistent correlate of resilience across the PON cases
- Activities as the functional dimension across network domains warrants greater theoretical attention

A Practitioner-Grounded Operationalization of Resilience

- Four-thread operationalization, capacity building, governance and management, strategic planning and implementation, and resource sufficiency, was derived inductively from network manager interviews
- Grounds measurement in how resilience is enacted in practice, consistent with Norris et al.'s (2008) treatment of adaptive capacity as distributed across networked resources

UIC

Thank you!

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