Social Sustainability and Peacebuilding in Multicultural Neighbourhoods: Case Studies of Coexistence and Resource Sharing

Austin Onyebuchi Uchegbu[a],*; Alex Imemoh Ebimiebo[b]; Olusola Matthew Ojo[c]

[a] Senior Lecturer & Registrar: Centre for Peace, Conflict Resolution & Community Resilience, Owerri, Nigeria.
[b] Senior Lecturer, Centre for Peace, Conflict Resolution & Community Resilience, Owerri, Nigeria.
[c] Senior Lecturer, Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, Abuja, Nigeria.
*Corresponding author.

Abstract

Sustainability as the dynamic stability in social and ecological systems and their interactions have emerged as a growing academic discourse in the 21s century. In multi-ethnic society, public spaces and places have become important sites of shared intercultural encounters that promotes social sustainability and peaceful coexistence. This study examines how social sustainability is produced and maintained in multicultural neighbourhoods through everyday practices of coexistence and resource sharing, and its impacts on peacebuilding. Grounded in a comparative case-study approach, it analyses four empirically-documented contexts: Community gardening and urban green space collaboration in Lagos, community food-sharing initiatives (community fridge) in Ottawa, Canada; inter-ethnic neighbourhood dynamics in Kumasi, Ghana; and social uses of commercial/urban streetscapes in Kadıköy (Bagdat Street), Istanbul. Drawing on qualitative and mixed-method evidence from literature, the study develops a framework that links micro-level resource-sharing practices (informal mutual aid, community infrastructures) to meso-level social cohesion (trust, reciprocal ties) and macro-level institutional supports (policy, planning). Findings indicate, that resource-sharing mechanisms (both formal and informal) act as mediators of coexistence, enabling social sustainability by building reciprocity, fostering inclusive practices, and buffering institutional gaps. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for planners and community practitioners to strengthen social sustainability through supportive governance, hybrid (formal–informal) infrastructures, and culturally sensitive programming.

Key words: Coexistence; Community fridge; Multicultural Neighbourhoods; Neighbourhood cohesion; Peacebuilding; Resource sharing; Social sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

Cities are increasingly multicultural, and neighbourhoods are frontline sites where cultural difference is negotiated in quotidian life. Social sustainability, understood as the capacity of a community to maintain wellbeing, equity, social cohesion, and resilience over time; depends not only on formal policies but also on everyday practices that allow diverse residents to coexist and share resources (material, infrastructural, social). Also, Karji et al. (2019), explain that social sustainability pertains to human quality of life and well-being, encompassing issues such as equitable access to good facilities and services for everyone, safety, inclusion, participation, etc. Recent scholarship emphasizes the neighbourhood scale as a crucial locus for studying how multiculturalism and social sustainability intersect (Wang, 2024; Feng et al., 2023). Wang (2024), emphasising on social sustainability as a multidimensional, neighbourhood-scale construct, noted that measuring social sustainability at the community/neighbourhood level using both objective (access to services, infrastructure) and subjective (belonging, trust) indicators; neighbourhood-focused

frameworks have proliferated in the last decade. On the hand, Huber, Heinrichs, & Jaeger-Erben (2024), posit resource sharing as social infrastructure. Their studies and case reports conceptualize community-level sharing practices (community fridges, sharing platforms, cooperative housing/sharing of amenities) as forms of social infrastructure that produce reciprocity, trust, and practical support, and therefore contribute to social sustainability. Empirical work shows both promise and limits (maintenance burdens, stigma toward recipients). The concept of neighbourhood varies in definitions. Researchers mostly describe neighbourhood as "the building blocks of a city" (Adewumi, et al., 2019, Cheshmehzangi, et al., 2020, Moroke, et al., 2020). Neighbourhood also represent the relationship between the city and the individual (Zumelzu, et al., 2019). According to Kallus and Law-yone (2000), neighbourhood function as components of an urban settlement that aims to bridge the gap between the individual home and the overall urban environment. On the other hand, Khatibi, et al (2023) present a systematic review and conceptual mapping of neighbourhood sustainability metrics and identify social indicators that are underused. They also presented methodological resource for building survey and indicator choices for neighbourhood social sustainability. Shirazi (2021), presents empirical comparative case study developing a tripartite evaluation framework, which provides practical indicators and case-based evidence about design, access, and social cohesion in dense urban contexts; relevant for the public-space dimension of coexistence. Using the commons/infrastructure lens; Jo, J., et al (2024), analyse how community fridges are organized, maintained, and governed, emphasising information, human and social infrastructures, which is good for operationalising governance. While, Mateo-Babiano (2024), examines how multicultural policy and place governance shape everyday intercultural encounters in public spaces, Zetterberg (2024) explores social sustainability indicators and local governance in at-risk neighbourhoods; useful for understanding barriers and the role of local actors. Mayeux (2023) explores emergent local grassroots networks responding to food poverty; situates community fridges and informal food aid within broader food-security assemblages and networks. Also, Kranzle (2024), explores tensions between grassroots multicultural practices in public spaces and exclusionary national politics, which is important for framing risks and political constraints. While substantial work addresses social sustainability metrics and multicultural encounters separately, there is less comparative empirical research linking resource-sharing practices and peacebuilding directly to measurable outcomes of coexistence across diverse global contexts. This article aims to fill that gap by synthesizing empirical findings across distinct cases and proposing a transferable conceptual framework.

Given this backdrop, this study asks: How do resource-sharing practices enable coexistence and contribute to social sustainability and peacebuilding in multicultural neighbourhoods? To answer this question, the study analysed four cases (one local and others international) that illustrate different resource-sharing modalities and socio-political contexts.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study proposes a three-tier framework to analyse how resource sharing supports social sustainability and peacebuilding in multicultural neighbourhoods:

• Micro-level mechanisms: interpersonal reciprocity, informal mutual aid, everyday encounters (e.g., sharing food, tools, childcare).

• Meso-level structures: community organizations, local economies, shared public spaces that institutionalize or scaffold micro-level practices.

• Macro-level conditions: municipal policy, welfare regimes, migration and housing policies that enable or restrict resource sharing.

This framework treats resource sharing as both a practice and an infrastructural form that produces social capital (bonding, bridging) and inclusive norms, key ingredients of social sustainability. The framework guides case selection and comparative analysis, and the framework is informed by community sustainability and social infrastructure literature.

3. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

3.1 Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions to understanding social sustainability, coexistence, and resource sharing in multicultural neighbourhoods, this study is subject to several limitations.

First, the study relies partly on secondary data for selected case examples, particularly where access to sustained primary fieldwork was constrained. While the literature review drew on peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and institutional reports published between 2016 and 2025, secondary sources may not fully capture the everyday, informal, and relational dimensions of neighbourhood-level resource sharing (Silver, 2016; Watson, 2018). Informal practices such as tacit norms of reciprocity, micro-negotiations over space, or unrecorded conflict resolution mechanisms—are often underrepresented in official documentation (Simone, 2019).

Second, contextual specificity limits generalisability. The case studies examined are embedded within distinct governance regimes, socio-economic conditions, and

cultural histories. As emphasised in comparative urban research, social sustainability outcomes are shaped by local institutional arrangements and historical trajectories (Dempsey et al., 2016; Healey, 2020). Consequently, findings from one urban context should not be assumed to be directly transferable to another, but rather understood as offering analytical insights that can inform comparative reasoning (Flyvbjerg, 2016).

Third, the study adopts a predominantly qualitative and interpretive methodological approach, prioritising social relations, trust, and lived experience. While this approach is well-suited to examining multicultural coexistence and hybrid governance arrangements, it limits the ability to quantify causal relationships between resource sharing and long-term outcomes such as social cohesion, conflict reduction, or neighbourhood resilience (Sullivan & Svara, 2018; Woodcraft et al., 2019).

Fourth, power asymmetries within neighbourhoods may not be fully visible through available data. Research on informal governance cautions that community-led initiatives can inadvertently reproduce exclusions related to gender, age, class, or legal status if power relations are insufficiently examined (Cleaver & Whaley, 2018; Miraftab, 2017). Although this study acknowledges such dynamics, it cannot comprehensively assess internal inequalities across all cases due to data constraints.

3.2 Avenues for Future Research

Building on these limitations, several directions for future research are recommended.

First, longitudinal and ethnographic research would provide deeper insight into how social sustainability and resource-sharing practices evolve over time in multicultural neighbourhoods. Long-term observation can reveal how trust, cooperation, and conflict are shaped by demographic change, policy interventions, or economic shocks (Pink et al., 2016; Simone & Pieterse, 2017).

Second, future studies should adopt mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative insights with quantitative indicators, such as participation rates, perceived trust indices, or access to shared resources. Mixed-methods designs are increasingly recognised as effective for capturing both relational processes and measurable outcomes in urban sustainability research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Woodcraft, 2020).

Third, there is a strong case for comparative cross-city research, particularly between cities in the Global South and Global North. Comparative studies can illuminate how variations in decentralisation, state capacity, and civil society engagement shape the effectiveness of hybrid formal–informal governance models (Parnell & Robinson, 2018; Schindler, 2020).

Fourth, future research should place greater emphasis on equity and inclusion within resource-sharing initiatives. Examining how gender, migration status, youth participation, and socio-economic inequality influence access to shared resources would deepen understanding of the distributive dimensions of social sustainability (Fraser, 2019; Fainstein, 2021).

Fifth, action research and policy experimentation offer promising avenues for advancing both theory and practice. Participatory governance experiments, policy labs, and pilot projects can test how hybrid governance arrangements function in real time and under varying regulatory conditions (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; Healey & Williams, 2022).

Finally, future scholarship should further explore the connections between social sustainability, peacebuilding, and urban resilience. Research that explicitly examines how everyday practices of resource sharing contribute to conflict prevention, social stability, and adaptive capacity would strengthen interdisciplinary links between urban studies, peace studies, and sustainability science (Bollens, 2018; Meerow & Newell, 2019). By acknowledging these limitations and outlining future research pathways, this study underscores the complex and context-dependent nature of social sustainability in multicultural neighbourhoods. Advancing longitudinal, comparative, and participatory research agendas will be essential for deepening empirical understanding and informing policies that support inclusive, resilient, and peaceful urban communities.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Social sustainability and the neighbourhood scale

Social sustainability has been variously defined; common elements include social equity, inclusion, cohesion, participation, and well-being (Hofstad et al., 2021; Wang, 2024). According to Lami and Mecca (2021), Social sustainability focuses on the realisation of human well-being, which addresses pertinent human needs to improve the quality of life. Scholarship argues that the neighbourhood is a pragmatic scale for operationalizing social sustainability because it is where everyday interactions, service access, and local institutions converge. The main factors contributing to the sustainability of a neighbourhood include: physical form and morphology, community and sense of place, liveability, equity and viability. Social interaction is a social bond that holds the community together (Larimian, et al., 2020). It promotes social cohesion, which addresses the existence of strong community bonds formed based on the absence of social or structural conflict in community (Zhang, et al., 2020). Communities have been accepted as more effective environment to implement social sustainable policies and initiatives than other scales of the built environment. Khamis et al. (2023), posit that social sustainability is vital for creating liveable communities. Nevertheless, resident's expectations and

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their participation in local decision-making processes, should be accommodated, and not neglected Measurement efforts at the neighbourhood level emphasize both subjective (sense of belonging, trust) and objective (access to services, safety) indicators.

4.2 Multiculturalism, coexistence, and everyday practice

A multicultural neighbourhood is a residential area where people from multiple cultural background live in close proximity and interact in everyday life, and where this cultural diversity is a structuring feature of social relations, institutions, and shared spaces. Multicultural neighbourhoods are not defined solely by diversity, but by how diversity is lived and managed in everyday social life. The key characteristics of multicultural neighbourhood include: cultural diversity, shared physical and social spaces, daily intercultural interaction, and negotiation of differences, institutional and informal governance. They are key sites of social sustainability, crucial for peacebuilding and social cohesion, frontline spaces where migration, inequality, and urban change are experienced, and laboratories for inclusive urban governance and shared living. Research on multicultural urban spaces highlights that coexistence is produced through routines, encounter infrastructures (parks, streets, markets), and institutional frameworks that can either enable or constrain intercultural exchanges (Mateo-Babiano, 2024; Feng, 2023). Everyday multiculturalism scholarship points to the ways routine encounters—shopping, using public transport, attending parks—generate new forms of shared practice and, at times, hybrid identities. This literature suggests a need to focus on the micro-practices and community initiatives that support inclusion.

4.3 Resource sharing as social infrastructure

Resource sharing ranges from formal programs (food banks, community centres) to informal mutual aid (neighbour-to-neighbour lending, shared childcare). Scholars treat such sharing as social infrastructure that undergirds trust and reciprocity, thereby contributing to social sustainability (Germain, 2023; Fan, 2025). Community fridges and similar grassroots initiatives have been studied as sites where material support and social recognition intersect, often crossing cultural boundaries to include migrants, newcomers, and long-term residents. Community-oriented sharing practices create, maintain and experience social ties among neighbourhoods. The resources that are commonly shared in neighbourhoods include: recreation parks and open spaces, markets, and other public amenities and services, as social infrastructure. Research in recent times has been on discovering sustainability strategy that counteract climate change. The concept of sufficiency which is about minimum and maximum levels of 'enoughness' (Spengler, 2016) delineating 'consumption corridors' (Fuchs, et al.,

2021) has gained prominence as a serious sustainability strategy to counteract climate change, and is promoted by prominent international bodies such as Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023). The minimum consumption standards in the context of social sustainability and neighbourhood, imply that all human beings should be enabled to lead a decent life through access to adequate public services and goods (Huber, et al., 2024).

4.4 Social sustainability and peacebuilding in multicultural neighbourhoods

Social sustainability in multicultural neighbourhoods contributes to peacebuilding by transforming everyday diversity from a potential source of tension into a foundation for trust, cooperation, and non-violent conflict management. The relationship operates through several mutually reinforcing mechanisms, spanning individual, community, and institutional levels. Social sustainability in multicultural neighbourhoods creates what peace scholars describe as 'everyday peace infrastructure'- the social norms, relationships, and practices that prevent conflict before it escalates. These, include: trust among culturally diverse residents; inclusive access to shared resources; regular, non-threatening intercultural interaction; and fair and participatory local governance. These elements aligned closely with positive peace prevents the emergence of structural and cultural violence at the local level. Also, resource sharing serves as conflict prevention mechanism. Resource-sharing practices (community fridges, shared public spaces, mutual aid networks, community gardens) reduce material scarcity and perceived inequality, both of which are well-established drivers of social conflict. Therefore, in multicultural settings, shared resource normalise interdependence across cultural lines; cooperative access reduces "us versus them" narratives; and reciprocity replaces competition. All these, lower likelihood of grievances escalating into ethnic or cultural conflict, and builds horizontal solidarity, a core pillar of local peace.

Socially sustainable neighbourhoods promote frequent, low-stakes intercultural encounters (contacts) in markets, streets, schools, and shared amenities. According to contact theory (Allport, 1954, Crips & Turner, 2012, Zurma, 2014), repeated interaction under conditions of equality, shared goals (keeping spaces clean, managing shared resources), and institutional support reduces prejudice and fear; hence, cultural difference becomes familiar rather than threatening, and misunderstandings are resolved informally before they become political or violent. Social sustainability builds both bonding social capital (within cultural groups), and bridging social capital (across cultural groups). Bridging capital is essential for peacebuilding, because, in socially sustainable neighbourhoods: conflicts are more likely to be mediated by peers, residents are more willing to engage in dialogue,

and informal norms discourage violence and exclusion. The peacebuilding outcome is that local disputes are managed through dialogue rather than coercion or withdrawal.

Social sustainability emphasises participatory neighbourhood (inclusive) governance, through community or neighbourhood associations, resident councils, and co-management of shared spaces. When governance structures are inclusive of cultural minorities: residents perceive rules as legitimate, grievances are channelled through institutional rather than violent means, and power asymmetries are reduced. The consequence is institutional trust is strengthened, which peace practitioners identify as essential for long-term stability. In socially sustainable multicultural neighbourhoods, identities shift from exclusively ethnic or national to place-based ("we are neighbours), and shared practices create a collective narrative of coexistence, thereby, reducing identity-based polarization, which is a major driver of intergroup conflict. Also, social sustainability increases neighbourhood resilience during: economic crises, pandemics, political polarization, and inflows of newcomers or refugees. Neighbourhoods with strong sharing networks and trust are better able to absorb shocks without scapegoating minorities, and maintain cooperation under stress. This of course, prevents crisis-driven violence and radicalization. In summary, social sustainability in multicultural neighbourhood function as a form of everyday peacebuilding by transforming diversity into cooperation through shared resources, trust and inclusive local governance.

This framework treats resource sharing as both a practice and an infrastructural form that produces social capital (bonding, bridging) and inclusive norms—key ingredients of social sustainability. The framework guides case selection and comparative analysis. (Framework informed by community sustainability and social infrastructure literature.)

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to move beyond interaction-based explanations of coexistence, this study draws on critical peacebuilding, political ecology, and recognition-based theories to examine how power, resources, and governance intersect in multicultural neighbourhoods. These perspectives foreground the material and symbolic dimensions of resource sharing, highlighting how everyday practices of cooperation are shaped by structural inequalities, cultural hierarchies, and hybrid formal-informal institutions. By situating neighbourhood-level resource sharing within broader political and social relations, the framework conceptualises social sustainability as both a peacebuilding process and a justice-oriented outcome.

5.1 Critical Peacebuilding Theory

Critical Peacebuilding Theory critiques mainstream, liberal, top-down approaches by prioritising local agency, subaltern identities, and social justice over mere institutional stability. It emerged from the Frankfurt School (by Roger Mac Ginty; Oliver Richmond) to examine power structures, discourse, and hegemony in post-conflict, focusing on emancipation rather than imposed international, state-centric models. It recognises the importance of understanding the hybridity of peace, which is formed through the interaction of local and international actors.

Critical peacebuilding theory explains that peacebuilding is shaped by unequal power relations between formal institutions and local actors; and local peace is often negotiated rather than imposed. This theory challenges top-down governance and exposes how "local" practices are co-opted or marginalised. In the context of resource sharing, it analyses hybrid formal–informal governance, reveals tensions between municipal regulations and grassroots sharing initiatives, and highlights how marginalized groups may resist or reshape official policies. It strengthens the conceptual framework by theorising hybrid governance explicitly, showing how peace emerges through negotiation, not consensus, and avoiding romanticisation of "community".

5.2 Political Ecology

Political ecology is an interdisciplinary field, emerging in the 1980s (by Robbins; Leach; Watts) that examines power relations, economic structures, and political decisions drive environmental change, degradation, and marginalisation. It highlights that environmental issues are rarely purely natural, but are rooted in social inequality, capitalism, and unequal access to resources, particularly in the Global South. Its goal is to identify and promote more sustainable and socially equitable forms of environmental governance. The theory emphasises that resource access is always political; environmental and material resources are embedded in power, history, and inequality. Applying to Multicultural Neighbourhoods, the theory explains, who controls land for community gardens? Who has access to water, waste services, green space? How race, ethnicity, class, or migrant status shape resource access. The theory contributes to conceptual framework by making resource sharing a political act, exposing hidden exclusions in "shared" spaces, and linking social sustainability with environmental justice.

5.3 Recognition Theory

Recognition theory is a philosophical and sociological framework arguing that human beings require mutual recognition from others to develop a healthy sense of self, identity, and agency. It posits that self-consciousness is not purely internal but is formed through interactions with others, and that 'misrecognition' (disrespect, neglect, or demeaning treatment) can cause severe psychological and

social harm. The theory has roots in 19th-century German philosophy, particularly in G.W.F. Hegel's (1807) idea of the "struggle for recognition", and has been developed into a modern framework for social justice and critique by contemporary thinkers, most notably Axel Honneth (1995). Some key concepts of the theory include: Denying some recognition or demeaning them is a form of oppression that can distort a person's identity and destroy their self-confidence; and social conflicts are driven by the need for recognition, where marginalised groups fight against misrecognition and for the validation of their identity and contributions. The theory explains that social conflict often arises from misrecognition, not just material deprivation. Hence, justice requires recognition + redistribution + representation.

Applying to resource sharing, the theory questions: Whose cultural practices are legitimised in shared spaces? Are migrant or minority forms of resource use recognised as valid? Who participates in decision-making? The theory enhances the conceptual framework of this study through integrating symbolic power and cultural hierarchy, balancing material sharing with dignity and voice, and helps to explain why sharing can fail despite interaction.

Table 1
Integrating the theories

Theory	Focus	Contribution
Critical Peacebuilding	Power & hybridity	Governance realism
Political Ecology	Material resources	Resource justice
Recognition Theory	Cultural power	Dignity & voice

Source: Field Report, 2025.

6. METHODOLOGY

This study used a convergent mixed methods design, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative case analysis to examine social sustainability, coexistence, and resource sharing in multicultural neighbourhoods. A mixed-methods approach was selected to address the multi-dimensional and relational nature of social sustainability, which encompasses both measurable patterns (e.g., participation in resource sharing) and context-specific social processes (e.g., trust, and power dynamics). While, large-scale quantitative data allow for pattern identification and general trends, qualitative comparative analysis provides depth, contextual understanding, and explanatory insight into how and why resource-sharing practices contribute to peaceful coexistence across different governance contexts. It also employed semi-structured survey to obtained a limited primary data. Cases were selected (Lagos, Nigeria; Ottawa, Canada; Kumasi, Ghana; and Istanbul, Turkey) for diversity in geography, governance, and dominant modalities of resource sharing: **Lagos-** Community

Gardening and Urban Green Space collaboration in Lagos, Nigeria; **Ottawa, Canada-** community fridge as a grassroots food-sharing initiative (qualitative study/thesis). **Kumasi, Ghana-** dynamics of ethnic minority residential segregation and neighbourhood resource access (mixed-methods urban study); and **Istanbul, Turkey - Bagdat Street / Kadıköy-**urban streetscapes and social uses as sites of multicultural encounters and social sustainability (urban social space case study).

Data sources include peer-reviewed articles, doctoral theses, and institutional reports. The study conducted a thematic synthesis of findings from these sources, coding material according to the three-tier framework (micro, meso, macro). Where primary datasets were not available, the study relied on detailed empirical descriptions and qualitative data presented in the selected studies.

It is important to note that while mixed-methods design enhances analytical depth, several potential biases and limitations must be acknowledged. Although, stratified sampling was employed, the survey may underrepresent: transient populations, undocumented migrants, and residents with limited language proficiency. These groups often play key roles in informal resource-sharing networks, meaning their experiences may be insufficiently captured. As a result, findings may reflect a partial view of neighbourhood dynamics, particularly regarding informal or precarious forms of coexistence. Integrating limited primary data with diverse secondary case materials presents challenges related to comparability and scale. Survey findings vary in scope, data quality, and methodological orientation. To address this, the study prioritises analytical coherence over strict empirical symmetry, using theory as a bridging mechanism. The study employed a comparative qualitative design, drawing on case studies from different governance contexts (e.g., Global South and Global North urban neighbourhoods). Cases were selected using theoretical sampling, based on variation in: Institutional capacity, Degree of formalisation of resource-sharing initiatives, Cultural diversity profiles, and Governance arrangements (formal, informal, hybrid). Despite these limitations, the mixed-methods design strengthens the study in three key ways: It balances empirical breath and contextual depth, combining survey-based patterns with rich comparative insight; It enables s critical examination of power and governance, situating local perceptions with broader institutional and political contexts; and it supports theory-building by linking everyday practices of resource sharing to peacebuilding and social sustainability outcomes. Integration of the mixed-methods occurred at three analytical stages: Conceptual Alignment-

Survey variables were designed to correspond with key theoretical constructs identified in the literature (e.g., recognition, trust, access, participation). This ensured coherence between primary data and the conceptual framework grounded in critical peacebuilding and

social sustainability theory; Explanatory Triangulation-Quantitative findings were triangulated with qualitative case evidence. For example, Survey results indicating higher trust in neighbourhoods with shared spaces were examined alongside qualitative accounts of how such spaces were governed and negotiated, and variations in perceived fairness were interpreted in relation to governance arrangements documented in case studies. Finally, Analytical Iteration-Survey findings informed the refinement of comparative insights, while qualitative case analysis helped explain anomalies or contradictions in the quantitative data. This iterative process strengthened interpretive validity and avoided treating numerical results as self-explanatory. Therefore, by integrating a focused primary dataset with a theoretically informed comparative analysis, the mixed-methods design enables a nuanced examination of social sustainability that neither purely quantitative nor purely qualitative approaches could achieve independently.

7. CASE ANALYSES

7.1 Community Gardening and Urban Green Space collaboration in Lagos, Nigeria

Lagos, one of Africa's largest and most densely populated cities, is home of ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups, popularly known as the "last Bus stop". Rapid urbanisation places pressure on resources, public space, food access, and social infrastructure. In response, grassroots and local initiatives have emerged that encourage collective resource sharing, environmental stewardship, and intercultural cooperation, contributing to social sustainability at the neighbourhood level (Lagos Global, 2025). This is evident in:

Community gardens as shared resources: A growing movement of community gardening projects in Lagos exemplifies how residents from diverse backgrounds come together to cultivate food, share knowledge and build social bonds. These gardens often developed on underutilised lots or small open spaces, act as social infrastructure, enabling interaction, mutual support, and resource exchange across cultural and socioeconomic lines. They promote collective management, resource sharing, skill exchange, and cultural exchange, which inevitably strengthens neighbourhood reciprocity, enhances collective capacity, and builds interpersonal networks that transcend cultural boundaries. The social sustainability impacts include: strengthening of social cohesion, access to food and well-being, shared stewardship of space, and environmental awareness (Disciplines in Nigeria, 2025). The Lagos community gardening example illustrates key principles of social sustainability in multicultural urban contexts, because it promotes, material and social resource sharing; coexistence in daily life, and formally links stakeholders.

In summary, community gardening and similar localised resource sharing practices (such as parks, markets, etc) in Lagos offer a vivid example of how social sustainability unfolds in multicultural urban neighbourhoods. By co-creating and co-managing shared resources, residents not only meet immediate needs like food access but also build inclusive networks and shared identities, strengthening social cohesion and laying the groundwork for long-term neighbourhood peace and sustainability.

7.2 Community fridge, Ottawa-Canada (resource sharing and everyday inclusion)

Community fridges, publicly accessible, community-managed refrigerators stocked by donors and used by people in need, have proliferated as mutual-aid responses to food insecurity. Germain (2023), qualitative thesis on an Ottawa community fridge document how the fridge functioned as a node of cross-cultural interaction: donors and users included long-term residents, recent immigrants, students, and precariously housed people. The fridge reduced food waste while providing low-threshold access to food and an informal site of social recognition where culturally diverse food items circulated, creating small moments of intercultural exchange and learning. Management practices (rules around labelling, food safety, and volunteering) mediated tensions and enabled a relatively inclusive atmosphere, though challenges (stigma, maintenance burdens, and uneven volunteer representation) were noted. The study concluded that community fridges serve as locally-embedded social infrastructure enhancing immediate wellbeing and fostering bridging social capital among diverse residents. The study observed that: Material reciprocity (donation and shared use) reduced barriers to interaction; volunteer roles created cross-cultural collaboration and decision-making spaces, and there is symbolic inclusion when culturally specific foods were respected and shared.

7.3 Ethnic dynamics and resource access in Kumasi, Ghana

Asibey et al. (2021) examine residential segregation and its consequences in Aboabo and Asawase (Kumasi), focusing on migrant settlement patterns and local resource distribution. The study highlights how informal institutions and neighbourhood networks shape access to services and livelihoods. Where segregation was high, resource scarcity and limited cross-ethnic ties weakened social cohesion. Conversely, neighbourhoods with mixed ethnic populations that sustained marketplaces, religious venues, and multi-ethnic associations tended to exhibit stronger patterns of shared resource use (e.g., shared water points, cooperative savings groups), which supported cooperative and peaceful coexistence. The Ghanaian case demonstrates that resource sharing (when institutionalized through local associations) can mitigate the negative effects of segregation and enhance social sustainability.

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The study highlights that diverse ethnic groups in the city exhibit distinct spatial clustering patterns; there are levels of clustering even in highly densely populated and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods; and neighbourhoods of ethnic minorities impact on the sustainability of cities; and integrating local perceptions of ethnic minorities into urban planning support sustainable development efforts.

It further observed: Marketplaces and local associations function as meso-level spaces for resource exchange across ethnic lines; Local norms and leaders play critical roles in brokering inter-group cooperation; and Spatial segregation constrains informal resource sharing and weakens bridging ties.

7.4 Urban streets and social sustainability: Bagdat Street, Istanbul

Urban streets, commercial strips, and public spaces are arenas where every day multicultural encounters occur. A case analysis of Bagdat Street (Kadıköy) shows that streetscape design, commercial diversity, and event programming create environments conducive to frequent encounters among diverse groups (e.g., different linguistic, religious, and migratory backgrounds). These encounters, when structured by inclusive public policies and well-designed public spaces, can promote social interaction and local attachments, as ingredients of social sustainability, and peacebuilding. The Istanbul study emphasizes that public space activation (festivals, markets, pedestrianization) facilitates informal resource exchanges (sharing of knowledge, local services, informal child supervision) that sustain coexistence (Feng & Hou, 2023). The study further observed the following mechanisms- Accessible, mixed-use streets encourage incidental encounters that build bridging capital; Public programming (cultural events, markets) provides platforms for cross-cultural exchange; and Spatial design that prioritizes walkability and shared amenities amplifies everyday resource sharing (Feng & Hou, 2023).

8. DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Demographic Analysis of Respondents

The primary data instruments in the study were questionnaires. The instruments were used to gather information from residents and various stakeholders who are within the study population.

Table 1
Age of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
20-50	450	75%
51-70	120	20%
71 and above	30	5%
Total	600	100%

Source, Field Report, 2025

The age distribution showed that respondents aged 20–50 years constituted the largest proportion (75%), followed by those aged 51–70 years (20%). Participants aged 71 and above years accounted for 5%. This distribution suggests that the study largely captured the largest population of residents in the neighbourhoods are in the age bracket of 20-50 years.

Table 2
Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	400	66.7%
Female	200	33.3%
N	600	100%

Source: Field Report, 2025

Table 3
Cultural Background

Identity	Frequency	Percentage
Igbo	200	33.3%
Yoruba	150	25%
Hausa/Fulani	100	16.7%
Others	150	25%

Source: Field Report, 2025.

Table 4
Mean score showing prevalent types of resources shared

Resources	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
Facilities (Parks, etc)	200	150	50
Food	100	133.3	47.1
Markets	200	150	50
Skills	100	100	0

Source: Field Report, 2025.

Interpretation: Resource sharing is fairly balanced, with facilities and markets most commonly shared. This suggest that shared resources greatly influence social sustainability and peacebuilding in multicultural neighbourhood.

Table 5
Mean score showing the rating of accessibility of Shared resources in the neighbourhood

Rate Value	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
Excellent	100	3.0	0.33
Good	400	2.8	0.20
Fair	100	2	1.0
Poor	0	0	0

Source: Field Report, 2025

Interpretation: Accessibility is generally rated between good and Excellent, with low variability, and mean 3.00, and SD 033, the study indicated consistent access across respondents.

Table 6
Analysis of the Questionnaires

Questions/ Indicators	SA	A	N	D	SD	Value	Mean	Standard Deviation
A Social Sustainability perception: Sense of belonging in the neighbourhood	320	200	50	20	10	600	4.33	0.79
Positive interaction with neighbours from different cultural backgrounds	300	220	50	20	10	600	4.30	0.78
Shared spaces encourage intercultural interaction and peaceful coexistence	320	200	30	20	30	600	4.28	1.10
B. Community Cohesion: Neighbours cooperate on community issues	320	200	30	30	20	600	4.28	1.00
Conflicts are resolved fairly	120	400	30	30	20	600	3.95	0.75
I trust people in the neighbourhood	120	400	20	30	30	600	3.93	0.90
Resources and services in the neighbourhood are fairly distributed	120	400	20	30	30	600	3.93	0.90

Source: Field Report, 2025.

The descriptive statistics insights on how resource-sharing practices enable coexistence and contribute to social sustainability and peacebuilding in multicultural neighbourhoods are indicated as follow: The study used Likert scale, coding (*Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Agree = 1*). The calculated mean and standard deviation (SD) provide insights into the respondents' perceptions. The high mean scores on belonging, intercultural interaction, and peaceful coexistence, combined with good accessibility of shared resources; demonstrate that resource sharing significantly supports social sustainability and peacebuilding in multicultural neighbourhoods. The high perceived cooperation among neighbours, with relatively low dispersion, indicated a brood agreement. Trust levels are high, though slightly more variation exists compared to conflict resolution. Perceptions of fairness in resource distribution are positive and closely mirror trust levels. The findings suggest that shared resources and spaces are not only functional assets but also powerful social tools for fostering coexistence and long-term harmony.

9. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Comparing the synthesised cases, and field surveys, the study reveals convergent patterns about how resource sharing contributes to social sustainability and peacebuilding in multicultural neighbourhoods:

• Resource sharing fosters social capital bridging. Across all cases, practices that enable strangers to exchange material goods/services (community fridges, markets, shared public amenities) create conditions for trust and reciprocity beyond tight-knit co-ethnic ties. This bridging capital is critical for inclusive coexistence and peacebuilding (Germain, 2023, Lagos Global, 2025).

• Meso-level institutions matter- Informal initiatives (volunteer groups, traders' associations) and formal supports (municipal permissions, public space programming) scaffold micro-level practices, shaping who participates and how equitable the benefits are. The Ottawa fridge operated more inclusively when supported by local volunteer governance; Kumasi's mixed-use markets depend on local associations to negotiate resource allocation (Germain, 2023).

• Design and governance of public space are enablers. Streets, parks, and commercial strips that are physically accessible and socially activated, produce high rates of incidental intercultural encounters that translate into practical forms of resource sharing (information, services, child-care, food), inclusive coexistence and peacebuilding. Istanbul's Bagdat Street highlights the role of design and events in producing inclusive interactions (Fenge & Hou, 2023), which fosters sustainable neighbourhood.

• Power, stigma, and exclusion persist- Resource sharing alone does not eliminate inequality. Structural constraints, segregation, housing precariousness, xenophobic attitudes, and uneven volunteer leadership, can limit who benefits, thereby negatively impacting coexistence and peacebuilding in multicultural neighbourhoods. The study reveal that such initiatives can reproduce inequalities if government institutions are not attentive to representation and safety of residents (Asibey, et al., 2021). This of course, will inhibit peaceful coexistence in multicultural neighbourhoods.

• Hybrid formal–informal models show promise. Successful examples of mix grassroots initiatives with institutional recognition (e.g., permitting, hygiene guidance, small grants), are essential for sustainable peace and coexistence in multicultural neighbourhoods. Such hybrids can provide legitimacy, scalability, and continuity, while, preserving local adaptability. Evidence from community initiatives suggests hybrid supports, reduce maintenance burdens and stigma (Germain, 2023). This builds trust and confidence for a peaceful coexistence in multicultural neighbourhoods.

This synthesis advances theory by situating resource sharing as a mediating mechanism that translates intercultural contact into social sustainability outcomes.

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While past work often positioned multicultural encounters as primarily symbolic or conflictual, the evidence here shows material sharing practices produce tangible social capital and adaptive capacity for social sustainability in multicultural neighbourhoods. The three-tier framework (micro/meso/macro) foregrounds the need to study both practices and their institutional supports. The thematic and primary data analyses further, indicated four dominant findings: Intercultural coexistence and trust-building enhances social cohesion and peacebuilding in a multicultural neighbourhood; Shared spaces and community infrastructures facilitate intercultural interactions; Cooperative resource management strengthens social networks and reduces inequalities; and Inclusive frameworks ensure representation and prevent marginalisation (Sachs, 2019).

According to Lagos Global (2025), sports and recreation have emerged as powerful catalysts for connection and cohesion among residents amidst economic disparities, and diverse cultural differences. They foster sense of belonging and diffuses ethnic and social identities. Sports nurtures community spirit and inclusivity, irrespective of ethnic and cultural disparities. Vibrant community parks, modern sports complexes, and multi-use recreational facilities fosters social interaction while promoting healthy and peaceful coexistence. Small businesses are emerging as pivotal agents of change with local communities. They not only drive economic growth, but also, foster social cohesion and resilience for peaceful coexistence in multicultural neighbourhoods.

9.1 How policymakers can implement hybrid formal–informal governance models to strengthen social sustainability in multicultural neighbourhoods:

Hybrid formal–informal models combine structured, supportive public policies (formal) with grassroots, community-driven initiatives and norms (informal), allowing flexibility, trust, and local ownership while ensuring standards, safety, and equity, especially through resource-sharing, coexistence, and inclusive community life. Hybrid Models are essential for Social Sustainability because they Promote inclusion by allowing diverse cultural norms to shape shared resources. Build trust, as residents see their culture reflected and respected. Reduce inequalities as shared governance helps equalise access. Enhance resilience through grassroots networks plus formal support to create robust social systems. Strengthen coexistence, when cooperation through shared resources, reduces prejudice and conflict. This discourse will focus on diverse governance contexts: low-resource, mid-income city, and highly institutionalised city, to show practical strategies, actions, and expected outcomes.

Low-Resource/Developing City Context (Lagos State, Nigeria)
In this context, local sharing initiatives (community gardens, informal food sharing, shared childcare) exist, however, there are lack of formal support, clear mandates, or safe shared infrastructure. These, therefore, should be addressed through: (a) **Municipal Recognition + Community Codes of Practice**, where, local government issues formal recognition to neighbourhood sharing hubs (e.g., community gardens), by simple registration and a light permit system for community spaces. Neighbourhood associations should henceforth, develop mutually agreed "Codes of Conduct" (roles, upkeep, safety norms). The outcome is legitimacy (formal support) + local accountability (informal code). (b) **Shared Public Space Stewardship Partnerships:** City authorities should designate underused public plots for community-managed purposes (gardens, play spaces), while, government institutions provide formal support, through providing tools, water access points, waste bins, and Neighbourhood volunteers schedule maintenance and harvest days, as informal leadership. The outcome will be shared ownership and reduced municipal service burden. (c) **Micro-Grants and Peer Mentorship:** Local government should offer small grants for resource-sharing projects (tool library, food hubs), and provide minimal reporting, basic safety guidelines. Senior community members mentor new participants and recruit volunteers, as informal support. The outcome becomes grassroots scalability and public accountability.

Middle-Income/Urban Municipality (Toronto, Canada)
Middle-income cities have high diversity, many grassroots initiatives (community fridges, cultural exchanges), but risk of exclusion or burnout without institutional support. Hybrid implementation can be factored through (a) Co-Managed Community Infrastructure- The city co-funds multipurpose neighbourhood hubs (kitchens, resource rooms), by providing funding, insurance coverage, and facilities maintenance as a formal component, while local multicultural associations run programming, decide schedule, and tailor services (as informal model). The outcome is an inclusive resource access with cultural nuance and community ownership. (b) Institutionalised Volunteer Corps and Citizen Councils- Government should establish neighbourhood volunteer corps linked formally to municipal services while, city authority trains/coordinates volunteers in safety, and intercultural facilitation (as formal component). Volunteers co-design services (language cafes, shared meals) with neighbours (as informal role). The outcome becomes quality control and community creativity. (c) Policy Co-Creation Labs- There should be regular policy labs where policymakers and residents collaboratively design guidelines for resource sharing (e.g., where community fridges may be placed) and municipal policy inclusion, and official guidelines (as formal output); while, local lived experience shapes guidelines. The outcome is co-owned policy that reflects social realities.

Highly Institutionalised/Regulated City (e.g., Amsterdam, Netherlands)

In highly institutionalised/regulated city, strong regulatory frameworks and service delivery may overshadow grassroots initiatives or create barriers for informal sharing. Hybrid implementation should include (a) Legal Sandbox for Social Innovation- Authorities should create a regulatory sandbox allowing pilot resource-sharing projects to operate with temporary relaxed rules. City monitors safety, equity, impact as formal oversight, while residents test new sharing formats (tool shares, skill exchanges). The outcome is innovation without permanent legal barriers; tested ideas can scale. (b) Municipal-Supported Intercultural Mediators- The city should employ community connectors embedded in neighbourhoods to link formal services (libraries, schools) with informal groups (cultural associations, mutual aid networks). I should be funded and trained by the city as formal role, while, residents build trust and translate across cultural groups (informal role). The outcome is better service accessibility and reduced social friction. (c) Participatory Budgeting for Shared Resources- Local budgets allocate funds to neighbourhood-nominated projects (public gardens, shared tool sheds, intercultural festivals), through participatory budgeting process with municipal oversight, while, neighbourhood assemblies nominate and vote. The outcome becomes local priorities shape spending, and strengthens community ownership.

In summary, policymakers should map existing grassroots sharing practices, co-design governance frameworks, provide enabling conditions, not just rules, evaluate social outcomes (trust, inclusion, conflict incidents, resource equity), and embed hybrid mechanisms in local planning, not as one-off pilots. Implementing hybrid formal–informal models in governance requires collaboration, flexibility, and cultural sensitivity. Rather than imposing rigid rules or leaving initiatives unsupported, policymakers can co-create frameworks that empower communities while ensuring equity and safety — strengthening social sustainability and peaceful coexistence in multicultural neighbourhoods.

10. CONCLUSION/ POLICY AND PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The combination of few surveys study and synthesizing of published empirical studies gives this study a robust view. Comparative secondary synthesis is useful for building transferable insights, while context-sensitive ethnographic fieldwork, enriches the work. Resource sharing, ranging from community fridges to marketplaces and activated streets, emerges as a powerful, practical mechanism for building peaceful coexistence and supporting social sustainability in multicultural neighbourhoods. When supported by inclusive governance and well-designed public space, these practices foster social capital bridging and resilience. Policymakers should adopt hybrid strategies that legitimize and sustain grassroots sharing while designing neighbourhoods that encourage everyday intercultural encounters. Future empirical work should prioritize longitudinal and participatory methods to more precisely map causal relationships between sharing practices and social sustainability outcomes.

Policymakers and planners seeking socially sustainable and peaceful multicultural neighbourhoods should therefore:

• De-emphasise ethnic and cultural differences, and cultivate social inclusion and cultural sensitivity.

• Support hybrid infrastructure: Provide light-touch institutional recognition to grassroots sharing initiatives (e.g., permitting, small grants, guidance) while preserving community governance. (Community fridges benefit from municipal guidance on safety without losing volunteer autonomy.)

• Design inclusive public spaces: Prioritize pedestrianization, mixed uses, and programming that encourage incidental encounters and shared use. Streetscapes that combine commerce, leisure, and mobility, promote everyday resource sharing.

• Strengthen local associations and markets: Support multi-ethnic traders' and residents' associations to act as brokers of reciprocal exchange, especially where segregation threatens bridging ties.

• Address stigma and representation: Ensure volunteer and leadership structures are culturally inclusive and ensure that resource-sharing initiatives specifically aimed to reduce stigma toward recipients.

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