Original Article

# The Social Fabric of Sustainability: Leveraging Community Networks and Trust to Scale Circular Practices

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## Abstract

Sustainability is the mantra for the current era. Sustainability is required as the resources are fast depleting, resulting in extreme climate crisis and imbalance, poor or no waste segregation, excessive pollution plummeting health. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the future generations are not deprived of the natural resources that we have been generously enjoying without being much mindful and serious about its harmful impacts if not leaning to use it judiciously. Sustainable practices can be further strengthened by Communities as relationships, trust, and shared responsibility guide people's everyday choices. This research paper explores how community networks like neighborhood groups, volunteer teams, repair cafés, sharing platforms, and citizen-led initiatives help in promoting circular practices like reuse, repair, recycle, rethink and research, composting, and resource sharing. It examines how trust within communities encourages participation and collective action. This research paper also talks about various challenges and concerns that are faced by the communities including lack of awareness, limited resources, and low trust among members. The researcher used qualitative insights to understand, apprehend and suggest/advise various ways to strengthen community relationships so that circular actions can grow faster, become more inclusive, and create long-term environmental and social benefits. The research highlights that a sustainable resilient society can be created by creating strong community connections. Hence effective community connections are quintessential for enhancing sustainability. Sustainability should not just be considered as just an environmental concern but it is a fundamental re-evaluation of how humans live, consume, and develop, requiring collective action to build resilient societies.

*Keywords* - *Sustainability, Community relationship, Circular practices, Community networks in sustainability, repair cafes.*

## Introduction

Sustainability should not just be considered as just an environmental concern but it is a fundamental re-evaluation of how humans live, consume, and develop, requiring collective action to build resilient societies. Sustainability is the mantra for the current era. Sustainability is required as the resources are fast depleting, resulting in extreme climate crisis and imbalance, poor or no waste segregation, excessive pollution plummeting health. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the future generations are not deprived of the natural resources that we have been generously enjoying without being much mindful and serious about its harmful impacts if not leaning to use it judiciously. Sustainable practices can be further strengthened by Communities as relationships, trust, and shared responsibility guide people's everyday choices.

Community relationships help in building trust, aids in enhancing social cohesion, helps solve problems collectively, improve quality of life, and foster understanding between diverse people or entities. Community relationship exists between individuals (neighbours), organizations (businesses & residents), or groups (religious & ethnic). These relationships can range from informal social networks to formal collaborations and are built on communication, trust, and shared values. Circular practices refer to designing and creating systems which helps in eliminating waste, reducing pollution, and circulate materials and products. It aids in keeping products and materials in use so as to maintenance, reuse, repair, refurbish.

**Examples of Circular practices are**

- **Individual Actions**

like Repairing (clothing instead of buying new ones. Ex - Patagonia, Inc., an American retailer of

outdoor recreation clothing indicating sustainability.Another example could be Eileen Fisher that emphasizes and prioritizes sustainable and ethical production, which certainly adds up to the huge manufacturing costs. The brand uses high-quality materials designed for longevity, justifying a higher price point. Thus, Eileen Fisher's brand reputation and aesthetically designed products contribute to its perceived value and price. One more example could e of Parley Shoes which uses Ocean plastic to manufacture shoes etc  It (Adidas parley, a German collaboration),an organization that addresses environmental threats towards the oceans, through plastic pollution), Composting (kitchen scraps and garden waste to create nutrient-rich soil for gardening) and Reusing (items like glass jars for storage to extend their utility beyond their original purpose, multi-use containers with long utility life).

Sustainability is the ability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs thus focusing on long-term environmental, social, and economic well-being by using resources responsibly and protecting ecosystems. The mantra for sustainability is Strategy + Innovation + Responsibility. The Three Pillars of Sustainability are Environmental Sustainability, Social Sustainability and economic Sustainability.

Hence effective community connections are quintessential for enhancing sustainability.

True sustainability requires a balance among all three dimensions and prioritizing one at the expense of others can lead to long-term problems.

**Community Relationships**

It is the bond, communication, and shared efforts that create a sense of belonging and mutual support within a community (geographic, cultural, or interest-based). It helps in building trust, aids in enhancing social cohesion, helps solve problems collectively, improve quality of life, and foster understanding between diverse people or entities. Community relationship exists between individuals (neighbours), organizations (businesses & residents), or groups (religious & ethnic). These relationships can range from informal social networks to formal collaborations and are built on communication, trust, and shared values.

Examples of community relationships are

- **Neighborhood Watch Programs** – It is a formal type of collaboration that helps in building trust amongst the neighbours and local police enabling a more resilient community. Hence the people staying together as neighbours in one area work together towards improving local safety.

- **Corporate Philanthropy** – where school supplies are sponsored and donated by a business thereby gaining goodwill and promoting valuable resources for the community

- **Educational Initiatives** – Educational institution engaging actively with students' parents to make significant decisions for students' growth through effective PTA's to be in sync with the latest trends which further help in reducing academia and Industry gaps and helps in smooth transition from college/school to the corporate/Industry. Hence, community needs and requirements can be easily catered to effectively.

**Circular Practices**

- Refers to designing and creating systems which helps in eliminating waste, reducing pollution, and circulate materials and products. It aids in keeping products and materials in use so as to maintenance, reuse, repair, refurbish. Examples of Circular practices are -

- **Individual Actions -** like Repairing (clothing instead of buying new ones. Ex - Patagonia, Inc., an American retailer of outdoor recreation clothing indicating sustainability. Another example could be Eileen Fisher that emphasizes and prioritizes sustainable and ethical production, which certainly adds up to the huge manufacturing costs. The brand uses high-quality materials designed for longevity, justifying a higher price point. Thus Eileen Fisher's brand reputation and aesthetically designed products contribute to its perceived value and price.One more example could e of Parley Shoes which uses Ocean plastic to manufacture shoes etc  It (Adidas parley, a German collaboration),an organization that addresses environmental threats towards the oceans, through plastic pollution), Composting (kitchen scraps and garden waste to create nutrient-rich soil for gardening) and Reusing (items like glass jars for storage to extend their utility beyond their original purpose, multiuse containers with long utility life).

- **Industrial symbiosis**: Waste or byproducts from one industry are used as raw materials for another (like for eg - a power plant using waste heat to warm a nearby greenhouse).

**Community network in sustainability**

It means that it helps in connecting and collaborating local people, groups, and resources hence building a more resilient, eco-friendly, and socially equitable community, which acts as a catalyst for change through shared projects like community gardens, pooling resources (tools, transport), and advocating and promoting for green policies to timely address environmental and social challenges together. These networks, often citizen-led, thus create self-sustaining systems thereby reducing consumption and enhancing social well-being. Thus community networks help in Resource Sharing (community workshops to reduce individual purchases and waste), Local Food Systems (establishing community gardens to shorten food miles and increase access to fresh produce),Sustainable Transport (carpools to lower carbon footprints),Digital Inclusion (like building citizen-owned internet networks bridge the digital divide, Waste Reduction, Education and Advocacy (raising awareness about sustainable practices and influencing local policies for green initiatives).

**Repair cafes**

These are community-driven, volunteer-led events where people bring their broken household items (electronics, clothes, furniture, bikes) to be fixed for free, learning repair skills from experts, promoting sustainability, reducing waste (especially e-waste), and fostering

community connection, with a global network started in the Netherlands. Repair Cafes offer tools, materials, and skilled helpers to fix things, turning a "throwaway" culture into one of reuse and empowerment.

## Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows-

- To understand what motivates people to participate in community-based circular initiatives like repair cafés, community composting, and sharing platforms.
- To find out the challenges and concerns that communities face while trying to trust and work together for sustainability.
- To suggest various ways of strengthening community networks to enable circular practices grow faster and more effectively thereby promoting social and environment progress.

## Data and Methodology

**Type of study** – The research is a descriptive study

**Data collection tools** – Secondary data is collected from reports and research manuals

## Research gap

After reading few research papers, following research gaps can be highlighted

1. A specific definition of Community is not clear in many research studies
2. Trust, social capital, everyday practices, community identity are less studied.

## Review of Literature

1. A systematic literature review exploring the nexus between circular economy and communities (2024) – the paper talks about the community dimensions have been largely overlooked by Circular economy.
2. 2. Knitting Circular Ties: Empowering Networks for the Social Enterprise-led Local Development of an Integrative Circular Economy (2023) – The study investigates how social enterprises (SEs) and their networks — including formal and informal links between public, private, and social sectors — contribute to a "socially integrated circular economy" at local (city or neighbourhood) scale.
3. The (missing) social aspect of the circular economy: a review of social scientific articles (2024) – The research paper talks about the major imbalance in CE research. The authors point out that topics such as social inclusion, community participation, and everyday practices remain under-studied.
4. Social Economy Organizations as Catalysts of the Green Transition: Evidence from Circular Economy, Decarbonization, and Short Food Supply Chains (recent years) – This paper talks about the idea that community networks and organizations can significantly shape and scale circular practices, especially in socially and economically marginalized settings.

## Result and Discussion

## Findings

1. Trust increases participation in circular practices because people feel more confident sharing resources or joining community-led initiatives.
2. The real motivators turn out to be Community networks as it helps individuals to adopt reuse, repair, rethink, research and recycle behaviours.
3. Repair cafés and community composting definitely leads to improved skills as it assists people learn to fix broken items, manage waste responsibly, and reduce dependence on new non sustainable products.
4. Local leaders and volunteers play a major role in influencing sustainable behaviour and spreading awareness.
5. People participate more when they feel a sense of belonging and see others in their community taking part too.

## Suggestions

1. Awareness programs should be increased to help people understand the benefits of circular practices.
2. Regular community meetings, events, and open communication should be encouraged to build trust.
3. Create more repair cafés and sharing platforms to make circular activities accessible.
4. Various schools and colleges must be encouraged to participate in community sustainability drives.
5. Simple training sessions should be provided on repairing, composting, and recycling to empower people with practical skills.
6. Recognize and reward community volunteers, motivating others to join.
7. Clear guidelines and support systems for sustaining long-term community projects should be developed.
8. Strengthen collaborations between government, NGOs, and neighbourhood groups to scale circular practices effectively.

## Conclusions

This research shows that the social fabric of a community its relationships, trust, and shared values plays a significant role in promoting sustainability. When people feel welcomed, loved, cared, connected, supported, and informed, they are more willing to participate in circular practices such as repairing, reusing, rethinking, recycling, research, composting, and sharing. Strong community networks help reduce waste, protect the environment, and improve overall quality of life. However, challenges such as lack of awareness and low trust need to be addressed through better communication, education, and collaborative efforts. By strengthening community relationships and encouraging collective action, circular practices can grow faster and become a natural part of everyday life. Hence, sustainable communities are built on trust, cooperation, and shared responsibility. To be more responsible, we need to adopt to sustainable practices.

## Acknowledgment

**Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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