

Urban Regeneration for Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals



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This paper discusses the contribution of urban regeneration in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Developed by UN-Habitat Flagship Programme 'Inclusive Communities, Thriving Cities' and the SDG Localization and Local Governments team.

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Image1. Sustainable Development Goals and Targets which could be advanced through urban regeneration.

Summary

Urban regeneration, when conscientiously planned and executed, emerges as a powerful strategy for localizing almost all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. With the potential to advance at least 15 of the 17 SDGs and over 45 SDG Targets, urban regeneration serves as a multifaceted solution addressing challenges such as social equity, human health, carbon emissions, infrastructure improvement, liveability, and housing. It acts as a comprehensive driver for the localization of the SDGs, employing data-driven insights, participatory planning, and targeted interventions to create sustainable urban transformations. Despite its potential benefits, it is crucial to acknowledge that urban regeneration projects may lead to varying degrees of undesirable outcomes, particularly gentrification. To ensure success in achieving the SDGs, a collaborative decision-making process involving diverse stakeholders – such as residents, migrants, women, local businesses, community organizations, and local authorities – becomes essential. A promising strategy lies in aligning urban regeneration efforts with the SDG Localization agenda, encouraging the adaptation of the Global Goals to local contexts through multistakeholder partnerships and multilevel governance. Remarkably, inclusive and integrated urban regeneration can drive a multiplicity of sustainability goals, yielding tangible positive outcomes in the social, environmental, and economic spheres, and thereby moving us closer to a just, resilient, and sustainable future.

Why are integrated planning tools and strategies pivotal for localizing the SDGs?

The world faces a complex set of crises and risks, including the climate emergency, geopolitical tensions and conflicts, trade wars, social cohesion erosion and societal polarization, as well as the cost-of-living crisis. These challenges present a substantial risk of reverting the progress made towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2023 SDG Summit emphasized the urgency for a global rescue plan, given that only 15% of the 169 Targets are on track.¹

The 17 SDGs form a primary overarching framework for shaping development policies across global and local scales. This framework is a complex, interconnected system of Goals and Targets that encompasses economic, social, environmental, and governance dimensions of sustainable development. Several studies have underscored the need for recognizing the interactions and dependencies among the SDGs to leverage synergies and minimize perverse outcomes.^{2,3} The significance of these interdependencies is built within the framework: “Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development” (Target 17.14).^{4,5}

The implementation of transversal and complementary actions not only facilitates the realization of the full potential of the 2030 Agenda but also minimizes conflicts between the Goals. For instance, in Mwanza city, Tanzania, community-driven initiatives designed to alleviate poverty not only have a tangible impact on improving maternal health (SDG 3) but also contribute to enhancing education levels (SDG 4) and promoting gender equality (SDG 5).⁶ However, the challenge lies in the fact that policymakers

and planners often work in silos within their respective domains, with different ministries and city departments overseeing development, energy, agriculture, health or other specific theme. Moreover, the expertise linked to the SDGs is often distributed across different levels of government; for example, local governments may have jurisdiction over or competence in education or water and sanitation. Consequently, decisions and actions are often focused on a single goal, or small subsets of SDGs.³

Strategies and approaches such as **integrated urban planning**¹ and **urban regeneration**¹ can ensure the SDGs are advanced cohesively, taking into account their interactions and interdependencies.⁷ Local governments, urban planners, and developers committed to localizing the SDGs have access to a range of integrated tools developed by UN-Habitat as well, including Our City Plans⁸, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)⁹, and Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF)¹⁰, to enhance planning and policy coherence.

Urban regeneration, in particular, is a powerful integrative approach for advancing a multiplicity of urban sustainability goals.¹¹ It involves “a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which seeks to resolve urban problems and bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change or offers opportunities for improvement”.¹² Moreover, the potential of urban regeneration in fostering consensus among stakeholders for operationalization and implementation of the SDGs positions it as a key instrument for achieving coordination and coherence in urban design and planning.^{13,14}

What is SDG Localization? Where the local meets the national and the global, and vice-versa

As cities continue to grow and evolve, the concept of SDG Localization is becoming widely acknowledged as a catalyst of sustainable development. SDG Localization refers to the process of transforming the Global Goals into reality at the local level, in coherence with national development frameworks and in line with communities' priorities. It involves adapting the Goals to the local context, embedding the 2030 Agenda's principles into decision-making, financing strategies for the implementation of SDGs, and creating monitoring and reviewing systems with locally adapted indicators.¹⁵

UN-Habitat has been at the forefront of the localization movement since the inception of the 2030 Agenda. Through extensive political and institutional partnership efforts, a demonstrated capacity to deliver innovative and impactful technical support at the country level, UN-Habitat has become the lead UN Agency for SDG Localization and engagement with local and regional governments. Over the past few years, the Agency has developed the most integrated and comprehensive approach for localization of the SDGs in the UN system, anchored on five main components: The Local2030 Coalition¹⁶, Global Urban Monitoring Framework¹⁰, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)⁹, SDG Cities Initiative¹⁷, and Multi-level Governance for SDG Localization (MLG).¹⁸ UN-Habitat's global footprint on SDG localization is demonstrated through its engagement in local projects, country programmes, and international partnerships. It focuses on empowering communities as well as local and regional governments (LRGs), which are considered the key beneficiaries and drivers of sustainability.¹⁹

Some LRGs face challenges in operationalizing, implementing, and monitoring the SDGs due to limited legal, technical, and financial resources.¹⁴ The successful implementation of the SDGs requires policy integration to embed the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability into governance structures across all levels, ranging from the national to the local. Action-oriented VLRsⁱⁱⁱ assist in overcoming challenges of localization and policy integration.⁹ They are local counterparts to Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)^{iv}, which are produced by national governments for reporting on SDGs progress. They have several benefits such as aligning local policies with SDGs and setting local priorities, enabling policy integration by multilevel governance and multi-stakeholder partnerships, global and regional advocacy, capacity building, providing on-the-ground data and experiences, data-driven urban planning and developing monitoring tools.⁹

Evidence-based monitoring on the SDG progress is a valuable first step. However, identifying gaps without embedding the outcomes of VLRs into a broader development vision and strategy will not change our urban future.²⁰ VLRs can assist in the transition from evidence to action by enabling the identification of priority areas to accelerate localization. In this way, they can become truly actionable when paired with urban regeneration initiatives which often focus on targeted urban interventions. Together with urban regeneration, they have a transformative potential to cohesively localize SDGs in communities, neighbourhoods, and cities.

What is urban regeneration? An integrated and multi-agent collaborative planning process

Urban regeneration is a comprehensive planning strategy focused on solving problems in distressed urban areas. It is characterized by multi-agent collaborative process for achieving long-term goals in physical, social, economic, climate, and governance dimensions of a vulnerable urban area.^{21,22} UN-Habitat considers urban regeneration as an "integrated and inclusive process that combines physical, environmental, and socio-economic measures."²³ Experts at UN-Habitat Expert Group Meeting in Bilbao in December 2021 unanimously viewed urban regeneration as a powerful tool for economic recovery and designing sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant cities.

Urban regeneration strategies encompass a range of interdependent initiatives including adequate housing, infrastructure provision and upgrading, repurposing historic buildings, land readjustment, adaptive reuse of existing buildings, culture-led regeneration, local economic development, education and health facilities, tourism, restoring natural environment, and enhancing the overall character of cities.

Urban regeneration is not always a reactive response to changing conditions; it can also be a proactive effort aimed at preventing emerging urban issues.²² Notably, the new urban regeneration model transcends the previous efforts in urban revitalization (1960s), urban renewal (1970s), and urban redevelopment (1980s). Identifying the period spanning from the early 1990s to 2008 as the 'golden age of regeneration', Peter Roberts posits that this shift is marked by a departure from a primarily physical transformation process to a more strategic, long-term vision of urban development, placing a growing emphasis on social equity and environmental sustainability.²²

Urban regeneration can be contentious, involving debates over future land use, the incorporation of green spaces, and the provision of social amenities. They may sometimes lead to detrimental outcomes, such as soaring property values and

living costs, social exclusion, gentrification, displacement of long-term residents, economic loss, and social capital loss.²⁴ Conflicts may arise as various stakeholders prioritize different issues such as housing, environment, and commercial interests. Social factors in regeneration initiatives should be given equal importance alongside environmental and economic aspects and should be integrated from the project's early stages.¹⁴ A collaborative decision-making process in which all stakeholders work together towards a common vision aiming at a balance among social equality, economic development, heritage conservation, and climate action can mitigate such undesirable consequences.¹³ It is crucial to engage residents in urban regeneration planning by implementing participatory mechanisms that include the voices of long-term residents.²⁵

How does Urban Regeneration drive SDG Localization?

Urban regeneration processes can drive SDG Localization across four key areas:

- **Disaggregated data:** by focusing on community-level data, urban regeneration initiatives enable a nuanced understanding of the local needs, aiding targeted interventions aligned with the SDGs;
- **Enhanced participation and inclusion:** the inclusive urban regeneration process engages a diverse range of stakeholders, including disadvantaged groups and communities, in decision-making processes. This participatory approach ensures the implementation of SDGs is informed by local insights and effectively addresses community-specific challenges;
- **Collaboration and policy coherence** by enabling a common vision, bringing together agencies, sectors, and jurisdictions that otherwise work in silos;
- **Concrete urban regeneration interventions** by delivering the SDGs at the city and community level using evidence-based community- or neighbourhood-level assessments.

Urban regeneration's strength lies in its capacity to target the specific needs of distressed urban areas and disadvantaged communities. It facilitates 'urban co-governance' for shaping a shared future vision by engaging diverse actors from neighbourhood to city level, including city leaders, planners, policymakers, civil society, and investors in the co-design and co-creation of cities. Such approaches can leverage synergies in sustainable urban transition and minimize conflicts arising from urban complexity.¹⁴

When aligned with SDG Localization initiatives, urban regeneration can play a transformative role in achieving sustainable development. For instance, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) typically do not provide substantial data for planning at the neighbourhood level.²⁶ When integrated with urban regeneration initiatives, they together can contribute to tangible positive changes by producing and using community-level data analyses, and subsequently embedding the recommendations into actionable regeneration plans that specifically address the areas most in need of transition.

Remarkably, urban regeneration has the potential to advance at least 15 of the 17 SDGs, and over 45 SDG targets, with a primary focus on SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 17 (Target 17.14: Policy Coherence) (See Appendix). A recent study on making SDGs operational at sub-urban scale identifies a total of 52 'Urban Targets' out of the 150 SDG Targets (excluding SDG 17 targets related to the means of implementation), directly or indirectly impacted by urban planning and design at the neighbourhood scale.²⁶

These targets contain keywords related to potential urban issues such as "basic services" (Target 1.4), "small-scale food production" (Target 2.3), "road traffic accidents" (Target 3.6), "sustainable lifestyles" (Target 4.7), "participation of local communities" (Target 6.b), "local culture and products" (Target 8.9), and "local planning" (Targets 15.9).²⁶ As urban regeneration projects predominantly operate at the neighbourhood scale, these 52 targets are critical for local policymakers and urban planners seeking to align their regeneration initiatives with the SDGs.

To effectively address multifaced goals of sustainable development, various regeneration strategies can be tailored to the specific needs of declining urban areas. Heritage-led urban regeneration, for instance, not only aims to preserve urban fabric and architectural landmarks while enhancing urban infrastructure but could also stimulate tourism, create jobs, reduce poverty, boost the local economy, encourage social cohesion, and empower local communities.²⁷

Community-led regeneration actively involves residents in local political processes, including housing and planning committees. Community organizations may take measures such as using urban planning legislation to increase residents' control over the maintenance, management, and even ownership of their homes. This approach, aligned with SDGs 1, 10, 8, 5, 17, and 16, prevents displacement, reduces poverty and inequalities, stimulates local economies, ensures gender equality, and promotes just governance through transparency and accountability.²⁵

Creating **walkable streetscapes** and a **network of connected public spaces** can function as the glue needed

to hold different parts of the city together.²⁸ Use of sustainable drainage systems and permeable ground surfaces across the city can contribute not only to SDG 13 (Climate Action) but also to SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). Compact and mixed-use city planning also promotes efficient land use, reducing urban sprawl and car dependency (SDG 12). A network of open and green spaces, urban forests, green roofs, community gardens, and urban agriculture can help with local food production (SDG 2), increase biodiversity (SDG 15), absorb carbon emissions (SDG 13) and improve public health and well-being (SDG 3).²⁹

The **Positive Energy District (PED)**^v renovation model aligns directly with SDGs 7, 9, 11, 12, and 13, aiming for energy-efficient urban areas with net-zero emissions.²¹ Moreover, urban regeneration can play a substantial role in enabling **circular economy**, i.e., eliminating waste and pollution, circulating products and materials at their highest value, and regenerating nature throughout the urban area in decline, directly advancing SDGs 9, 12 and 13.

Coastal city regeneration enhances resilience to sea-level rise (SDG 13) and provides opportunities for marine conservation (SDG 14). Using innovative landscape design such as soft landscaping rather than hard-engineered seawalls can help preserve terrestrial ecosystems while increasing biodiversity (SDG 15).²⁹ Infrastructure solutions for ports and waterfronts can stimulate innovation and economic growth (SDG 8, 9).

Universities serve as **anchors** in urban regeneration, driving transformation in communities facing challenges such as social deprivation and economic stagnation. They often contribute to SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10. They are viewed as “factories of knowledge,” collaborative partners with industry, and drivers of entrepreneurship. Local governments and city planners are exploring ways to harness the economic potential of universities, such as “knowledge-based urban development” and “creative cities.”^{30,31}

While strategies outlined here provide an overview of different urban regeneration mechanisms and entry points, it is important to note that the list of examples is not exhaustive, as the spectrum of urban regeneration is vast and evolving. The following section presents case studies underscoring the versatility and impact of urban regeneration aligning with and advancing multiple SDGs.



Image 2. Urban regeneration for climate adaptation – Tåsinge Plads (Klimakvarter) | Copenhagen, Denmark

Parque de la Equidad

 Focus: Equitable greenspaces



Region: Latin America
City/Country: Cancun, Mexico



Cancun city in Mexico has experienced an accelerated urbanization driven by tourism and a booming hotel industry that has caused deep spatial and social inequalities. The Strategic Projects Agency of the State of Quintana Roo (AGEPRO) partnered with UN-Habitat to develop the city largest public space project – Equity Park, a 16-kilometre long and 61.8-hectare linear park that crosses three of the main avenues of the city aiming to improve infrastructure, services, and facilities for more than 200,000 people.³⁴

Three components are central to the initiative: an urban regeneration masterplan, land-value capture mechanisms, and a conceptual design guide for the public space. With the aim to provide sustainability and universal access to a safe, inclusive, and accessible green area for all age groups across socio-economic conditions, this project was conceived through a comprehensive **participatory planning process** that integrated stakeholders from a wide range of social sectors, and local inhabitants. The

participatory actions included targeted activities for specific groups such as students, women, families and neighbours through itinerant modules, collective events, and social media. Covid-19 measures required the introduction of several virtual approaches, such as online workshops with diverse local stakeholders.

The initiative is designed in line with several SDGs – building sustainable communities (SDG 11), as well as advancing gender equality (SDG 5), social inclusion (SDG 10), health and wellbeing (SDG 3), water and sanitation (SDG 6), economic growth (SDG 8) and promoting sustainable use of ecosystems (SDG 12). Working towards **49 SDG Targets***, it is recognized as an SDG Good Practices project.

* 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 3.9, 4.4, 5.5, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.6, 6.1, 6.b, 7.1, 7.2, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.9, 8.10, 9.3, 10.2, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 11.6, 11.7, 11.a, 11.b, 11.c, 12.2, 12.8, 13.2, 13.3, 13.b, 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, 15.5, 15.9, 15.a, 16.1, 16.6, 16.7, 16.a, 17.1, 17.17, and 17.19.



Image 3. Participatory Activities | Cancun, Mexico.

Central Riyadh Regeneration

 Focus: Heritage-led regeneration and socioeconomic development



Region: Middle East
City/Country: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

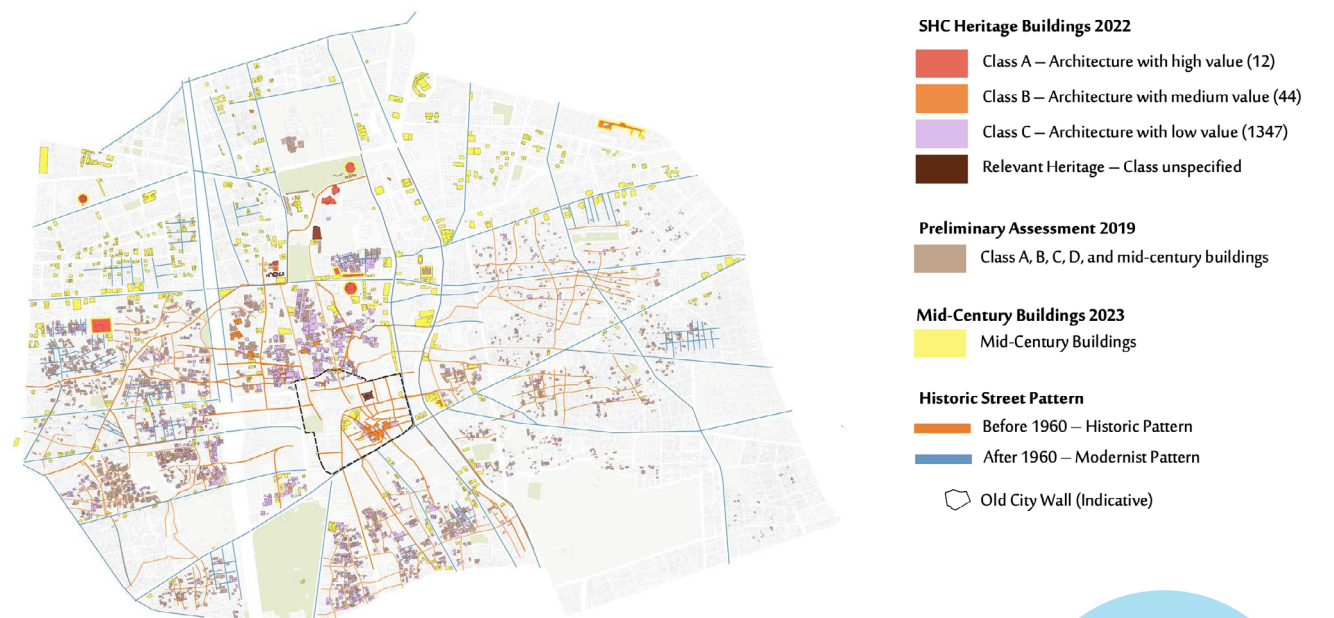


The Central Riyadh Regeneration (CRR) project is a transformative initiative aimed at revitalizing the heart of the Saudi Capital, Riyadh. A key component of this endeavour is the Central Riyadh Socioeconomic Strategy, led by UN-Habitat's Flagship Programme: "Inclusive Communities, Thriving Cities." This strategy is overseen by the Central Arriyadh Development Company (CADC) and supported by the Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund. Through this collaborative effort, the project seeks to foster inclusive communities and create dynamic, thriving urban spaces in Central Riyadh.

Central Riyadh, historically known as Hajar and situated in the Yamama region, is the heart of the capital city of Saudi Arabia. It is the oldest part of Riyadh with a rich history spanning centuries. This area was once the residence of the KSA Government, functioning as a centre for political, administrative, cultural, and commercial activities in Riyadh. Today, Central Riyadh stands as a vibrant reflection of the

Kingdom's rich past and its ongoing role as a cultural and administrative hub. The CRR programme aims to enhance the urban environment in the region and improve the quality of life for all. It targets 20 districts with an aim to co-create a vibrant city centre, a hub for knowledge, rich in heritage and culture through: 1. Establishing the capacities for city management and the formation of new regulations; 2. Enhancing infrastructure and public spaces; 3. Upgrading of public utilities; and 4. Implementing participatory socio-economic development programs. This initiative is designed to foster socioeconomic growth, attract anchor tenants, including corporations, government entities, provide opportunities for mixed-income and underprivileged groups, preserve heritage buildings and urban fabric, provide affordable housing, enhance infrastructure quality, and promote health, education, walkability, tourism, and environmental sustainability, thereby potentially advancing multiple sustainability goals including **SDG 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 17.**³⁴

Image 4. Map of CR heritage buildings and related classification | Riyadh, South Arabia



Downtown Regeneration through Restoration of the Cheonggyecheon River

 Focus: River Restoration



The Cheonggyecheon river restoration project involved revitalizing a neglected stream, covered for decades by a heavily trafficked overpass. The project began in 2002 with the establishment of organizations like the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Headquarters and Citizens' Committee to plan the restoration. Partnerships between the city, expert groups, and citizens committees were successful in the Cheonggyecheon restoration project, contributing to **SDG 17**.³² The regeneration led to a transformation of the downtown economy, with a significant shift from declining industries, such as manufacturing and wholesale, toward financial and professional services sector, which had grown from 38% before the project to 60% afterward. This project also generated jobs through a wide range of cultural events, hosting 259 events between 2005 and 2007.³² Besides the project's success in **SDG 8 and SDG 11**, it contributes to residents' wellbeing through the creation of public spaces, a green network, reduced car dependence and traffic, and restoration of the ecosystem, leading to decreased city temperatures. It reduced the heat island effect in the downtown area, with the Cheonggyecheon area's temperature dropping by 18%. Air quality also improved notably, with reduced concentrations of

fine dust, particle pollution (PM-10), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), volatile organic compounds, and other pollutants shortly after the project.³² These positive environmental benefits align with **SDG 3, 12, and 13**. The restoration project also advances **Target 13.1**: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters. Flood damage had been a recurrent issue in the Cheonggyecheon area in the past two decades. However, following the restoration, the neighbouring areas have remained largely free from flood damage. While overflow and damage occurred in the downtown area in the two years before the restoration began, no flood damage has been reported since its completion.³² Moreover, the Cheonggyecheon project is a successful example of localizing **SDG 15**, as it contributes to positive impacts on local ecosystems and minimizing biodiversity loss in Seoul by providing habitats for wildlife and plants in the city. The removal of the elevated highway created a wind corridor and the stream's creation positively influenced the surrounding environment. The river restoration led to ecosystem recovery, resulting in increased populations of fish species, birds, insects, and plants.³²



Image 5. Cheonggyecheon River | Seoul, South Korea

Moravia Florece para la Vida

 Focus: Socio-environmental regeneration; informal settlement context



Moravia Florece para la Vida, a project in Medellin, Colombia, showcases the socio-environmental resurgence of El Morro de Moravia. Once a dumping ground towering 35 meters high and weighing a million and a half tonnes, the hillside has been transformed into a sprawling 30,000 m² garden, emblematic of the revitalization of decaying urban areas and community engagement. This informal settlement, born out of poverty and displacement, faced severe environmental degradation, social exclusion, and violence. Declared a disaster zone in 2006, collaborative efforts between local and international entities devised a comprehensive revival strategy focused on: 1. Facilitating citizen engagement and consultation processes; 2. Resettling families residing in El Morro; 3. Implementing environment-friendly decontamination methods; 4. Integrating the space into the urban fabric, envisioning a future urban park. Led by the UNESCO Chair for Sustainability and the UNESCO-SoST Colombia office, the revitalization plan, developed through inclusive participatory efforts, aimed at accelerating socio-environmental transformation, safeguarding public health, and fostering social and economic prosperity. Inspired by

Colombia's flower cultivation tradition, the project envisioned a mountain of flowers, symbolizing the transformation from a refuse heap to a blossoming mountainside. Female community leaders, trained in gardening techniques, played a crucial role. Evidently, the project advances **SDGs 1, 3, 10, 11, 12, 15, and 17**. However, recent setbacks, including squatting, have marred El Morro's progress due to the lack of sustained political interest and effective governance. The situation serves as a cautionary tale, underscoring the essential need for ongoing political commitment and robust governance mechanisms to preserve and safeguard the progress of community-driven initiatives.

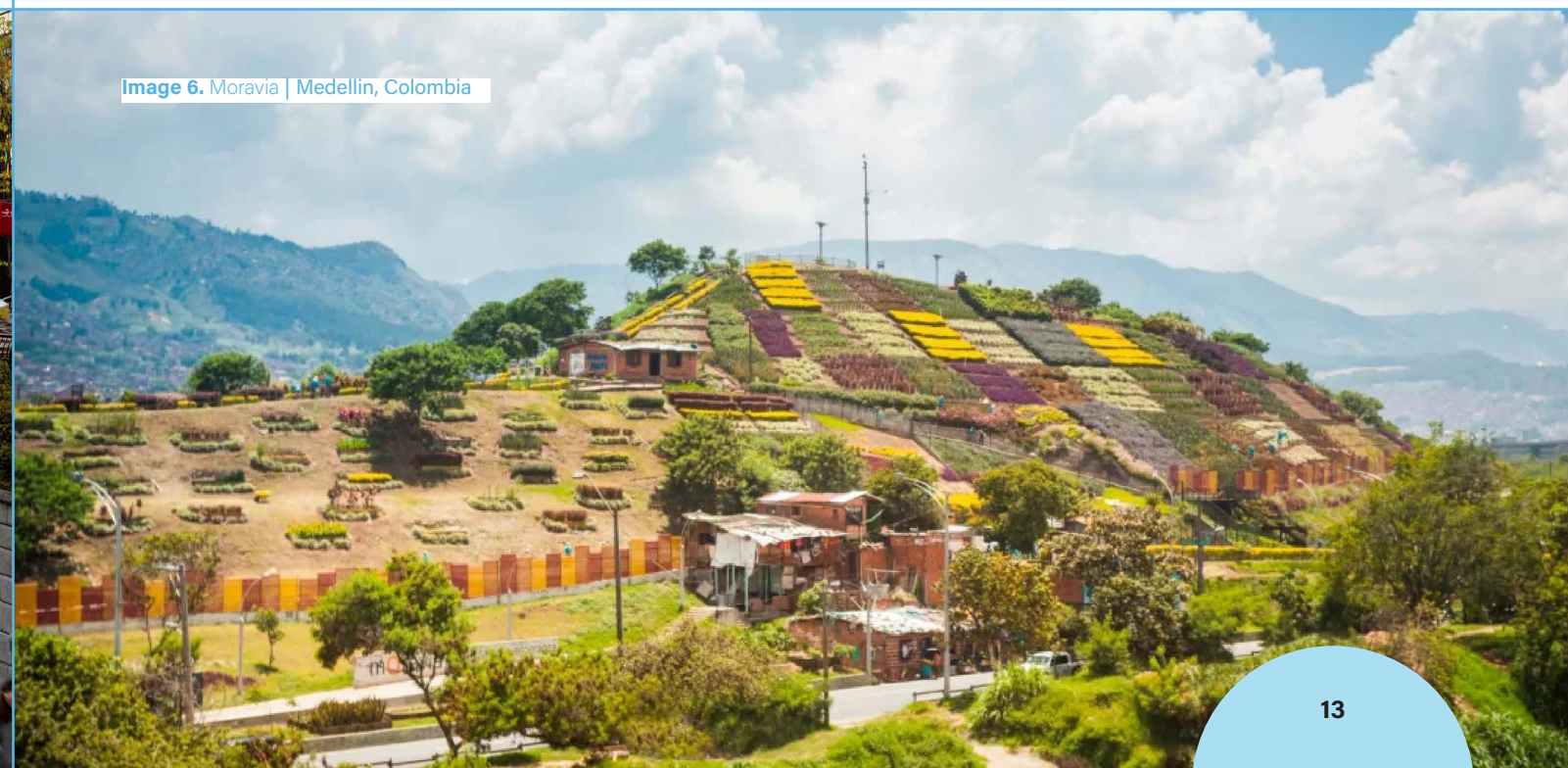


Image 6. Moravia | Medellin, Colombia

Appendix

The article²⁶ by authors Valeria Saiu, Ivan Blečić, and Italo Meloni called “Making sustainability development goals (SDGs) operational at sub-urban level: Potentials and limitations of neighbourhood sustainability assessment tools” published in Environmental Impact Assessment Review identifies SDG “urban targets” relevant at the neighborhood level as shown in the following table:

SDGs “Urban Targets”	Theme	Urban planning and regeneration issues
1.5, 11.5, 11.6, 11.B, 13.1, 13.2, 13.3	Resilience and risks	Climate change mitigation and adaptation
2.4, 6.6, 11.4, 14.4, 14.5, 15.1, 15.4, 15.5, 15.9	Ecosystem protection	Agriculture; coastal, terrestrial, and inland freshwater ecosystems; reforestation; degraded land and soil, biodiversity
6.4, 6.5, 7.1, 8.4, 9.1, 9.4, 11.C, 12.1, 12.2, 12.5	Resources efficiency	Water, energy, waste, building footprint, consumption and production patterns
3.4, 3.6, 6.3, 11.2, 12.4, 14.1	Health and safety	Health and wellbeing, road traffic accidents, pollution, chemical, waste
4.4, 4.7, 4.a, 8.3, 8.9, 9.5, 12.8, 12.b	Education, awareness, jobs	Skills, sustainable lifestyles, education facilities, job opportunities, innovation, sustainable tourism
1.4, 1.5, 2.3, 5.a, 6.b, 10.2, 10.3, 11.1, 11.3, 11.A, 16.4, 16.6	Equity and justice	Basic services, public spaces, land and other properties, social inclusion, equal opportunities, participation

Notes

I. Integrated Urban Planning, for example, involves a participatory and agile management process for increasing a city’s capacity to collaboratively address planning and environmental challenges across agencies, jurisdictions, and sectors.

II. Urban regeneration is an inclusive and sustainable process that improves the social, physical, environmental, and economic conditions of an urban area, connecting their improvements to the overall city. The process leverages the existing local assets such as culture, infrastructure, governance, nature and builds on broad residents’ and other stakeholders’ participation.

III. Voluntary Local Review (VLR) is a self-assessment and reporting process undertaken voluntarily at the sub-national level to evaluate and advance on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within their specific community or region. They play a vital role in showcasing the essential position of local and regional governments and local initiatives in fulfilling national agendas and driving progress on the SDGs.

IV. Voluntary National Review (VNR) is a process wherein countries assess and present national progress they have made in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including achieving its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the pledge to leave no one behind. Annually presented at the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), VNRs are intended to be voluntary and state-led. They are conducted by both developed and developing countries, serving as a platform for fostering partnerships.

V. Positive Energy Districts (PEDs) are urban areas designed to be energy-efficient and energy-flexible. They aim to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by actively managing an annual surplus production of renewable energy at the local or regional level. They play a crucial role in sustainable urbanization strategies. The European Union (EU) has set a target under the Strategic Energy Technology Plan to establish 100 PEDs by 2025.

Image credits

Image 1. Sustainable Development Goals and Targets which could be advanced through urban regeneration.

Image 2. Urban regeneration for climate adaptation – Tåsinge Plads (Klimakvarter) | Copenhagen, Denmark

Image 3. Participatory Activities | Cancun, Mexico.

Image 4. Map of CR heritage buildings and related classification | Riyadh, South Arabia

Image 5. Cheonggyecheon River | Seoul, South Korea

Image 6. Moravia | Medellin, Colombia

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Targets	SDG Target Names	
	1.2 Reduce poverty by at least 50%.	
	1.3 Implement social protection systems.	
	1.4 Ensure equal access to basic services.	
	1.5 Improve the resilience to natural disaster and extreme weather of the poor and those in vulnerable situations.	
	2.3 Promote the small-scale food production and ensure secure and equal access to land.	
	2.4 Implement resilient agricultural practices that help maintain ecosystems.	
		3.4 Promote mental health and well-being.
		3.6 Reduce road traffic accidents.
	3.9 Reduce air, water and soil pollution and contamination.	
	3.d Strengthen the capacity for early warning, risk reduction and management of health risks.	
	4.4 Increase technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.	
	4.7 Promote education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles.	
	4.a Build and upgrade education facilities.	
	5.a Give access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property.	
	6.3 Improve water quality by reducing pollution.	
	6.4 Improve water-use efficiency.	
	6.5 Implement integrated water resources management at all levels.	
	6.6 Protect and restore water-related ecosystems.	
	6.b Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.	
	7.1 Implement the efficient energy systems.	
	7.2	
	7.3 Increase the use of renewable energy.	
		8.3 Create new job opportunities related to building efficiency and urban sustainability.
8.4 Reduce the built environment's footprint and decouple economic growth from environmental degradation.		
8.9 Devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture.		
	9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructures.	
	9.4 Increase resource-use efficiency and adopt clean technologies.	
	9.5 Encourage Innovation.	

Targets	SDG Target Names	
	10.2 Empower and promote the social inclusion of all.	
	10.3 Ensure equal opportunities.	
	11.1 Ensure access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slum.	
	11.2 Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all.	
	11.3 Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable planning.	
	11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.	
	11.5 Reduce the Adverse Effects of Natural Disasters.	
	11.6 Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities.	
	11.7 Provide universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible, green and public spaces.	
	11.a Strong national and regional development planning.	
	11.b Implement policies for inclusion, resource efficiency and disaster risk reduction.	
	11.c Support least developed countries in sustainable and resilient building.	
	12.1 Implement the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production.	
	12.2 Promote efficient consumption of natural resources and production patterns.	
	12.4 Achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle.	
	12.5 Reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse.	
	12.8 Information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles.	
	12.b Develop and implement tools to monitor impact of sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture.	
		13.1 Improve resilience to natural disasters and extreme weather.
		13.2 Integrate climate change measures into planning.
		13.3 Improve awareness-raising and planning capacity on climate change mitigation and adaptation.
	13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for climate change-related planning in least developed countries.	
	14.1 Prevent and reduce marine pollution from land-based activities.	
	14.2 Manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems.	
	15.1 Ensure the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems.	
	15.2 Promote sustainable management of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and increase reforestation.	

Targets **SDG Target Names**



15.3	Combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods.
15.3	Combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods.
15.4	Maintain terrestrial, inland freshwater and mountain ecosystems, and forests.
15.5	Reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity.
15.9	Integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into local planning.
15.a	Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems.



16.1	Reduce violence.
16.4	Recover and reassign of stolen assets, (e.g., confiscated lands and properties for social use).
16.6	Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions, at the municipal level, regarding urban planning offices.
16.7	Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision making at all levels.



17.1	Strengthen domestic resource mobilization to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection.
17.8	Increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data.
17.9	Develop measurements of progress on sustainable development.
17.14	Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.
17.17	Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships.

