
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES – Maja Uecker

Ensuring sustainable cities and communities involves investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in a way that is both participatory and inclusive. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11 wants to make cities more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable by 2030. This means ensuring access to safe and affordable housing and upgrading slum settlements.

Today more than half the world's population lives in cities. It is estimated that by 2050, 70% of people will live in cities. Cities are an ally for economy growth, but they also generate a lot of greenhouse gas emissions. If well planned, we can make cities more climate friendly, and then we can also generate inclusive prosperity. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, and other crises, the importance of sustainable urban development has been highlighted. The pandemic not only threatened our health but also the economy. Through a high concentration of people, infrastructure, housing and economic activities, cities are more vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Strengthening our adaptability and preparedness for responding to future crises is necessary. To ensure this, we need substantial cities and a substantial lifestyle.

How can we make our cities and communities sustainable?

First of all, we have to stay informed on how to live more sustainably. It is the job of the cities and communities to inform the citizens about the environmentally friendly lifestyle.

Through adequate housing, transport, and economics, we can make our cities and communities more sustainable. We can build more eco-friendly houses and buildings into the infrastructure of our cities and communities. Additionally, we can use recycled materials for the building of our houses, like containers.

Our neighborhoods should be more walkable and bike friendly. We should also let more green places grow in our neighborhoods, plant more trees, and create an area for community gardens, which are open for everyone. Of course, there are big cities with no extra space for gardens, but we could use the roofs of the building and plant more vegetables, and fruits, and even small trees.

Green buildings and areas are a very important part of sustainable communities.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – we all know these words and their meanings, but why do we all not enforce them into our lives? The awareness of these three words is a small but very important step into changing our communities and creating more sustainable lives.

Do we all have to have one or more cars? Do we really need them? Instead of buying more cars let's share them. Let's make car sharing into a trend! Instead of using cars, let's walk, ride bikes, or use public transportation.

Another aspect which would make cities more eco-friendly is green energy. Building big solar farms is expensive and needs a lot of space, but we could build solar panels on roofs in our cities or in the countryside. The collected energy could be divided for the community and the citizens.

In addition, I think that we should change our food culture. We buy way too much food and nearly 20% of it gets thrown away. Why is that? Why don't we buy less and buy food that we really will eat? Besides we should help our local farmers and buy local food. Let's avoid buying imported food.

We should build more water tanks for collecting rainwater. The rainwater can be used to water plants and gardens - maybe even fill out community pools.

These projects are not cheap. To be able to afford these kinds of projects, we need funding and charity events. Maybe you will think that some of these projects will never be implemented, but if we work together, we can achieve this!

Our cities and communities won't change overnight. But if we live more eco-friendly lives and with more environmental awareness, we can slowly make our cities and communities even more sustainable. Let's be part of changing the ecological footprint of our cities and communities. It is hard to change our lives, but it is time to prioritize sustainability and fight climate change to create a better world for the future generations! And remember people, change doesn't happen overnight, let's do this together! Step by step!
