Urban Regeneration Processes and Social Impact: A Literature Review to Explore the Role of Evaluation

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Abstract. From urban regeneration to social regeneration up to culture-led regeneration, the concept of urban regeneration evolves from the idea of the physical transformation of cities to a more complex vision of changing able to improve the inhabitants' quality of life. At the same time, the social dimension of the recognised impacts, from a factor juxtaposed to the regenerative processes, becomes central to build new models of "impact economy" with long-term sustainable effects. In this change of perspective, the driver is the repositioning of culture, the community's centrality and involvement, and the reuse of abandoned cultural heritage spaces. In urban regeneration processes, evaluation has thus assumed a decisive role in guiding strategic choices, empowering the communities involved, supporting decision-makers and attracting new funding. Starting from the keywords "urban regeneration" and "social impact", the paper integrates the literature review with bibliometric maps through the VOSviewer tool to investigate the role of evaluation in a broader framework to feed the contemporary debate on the impacts of urban regeneration.

Keywords: Urban regeneration · Social impact · Literature review · Complex values · Evaluation · VOSviewer

1 Introduction

Faced with the vastness of the subject matter and the complexity of the issues, the concept of "regeneration" has perhaps not yet found a precise codification as well as the actions to be taken to give it substance. Evans and Shaw [1] define urban regeneration as "the infusion of new vitality into declining communities, industries and places, bringing long-term sustainable improvements in economic, social and environmental dimensions." This definition holds together some of the main characteristics that identify the regenerative processes that we intend to analyse: the spatial dimension investigated by the reuse and that of the community, protagonist and beneficiary of the multiple impacts that urban transformations can generate. If historically ample attention has been given to the economic and environmental dimensions of impacts, in recent years, the interest in the social dimension has increased to the point of being, today, a fundamental part

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of a business interested in long-term prospects. While most definitions consider social impact as a positive social change [2], other authors describe it as reducing negative effects [3], confirming the divergence of views that define the complexity of social impact. Generally, social impact refers to change "capable of affecting lifestyle, culture, communities, political systems, the environment, health and well-being, personal and property rights, and even fears and aspirations" [4]. The concept of social impact has emerged over time, with multifaceted meanings and only more recently integrated into the goals of urban regeneration processes.

In the post-war period, the need to rebuild cities and their economies, together with progressive de-industrialisation, have left a social void that, despite the advent of large-scale regeneration projects, in many cases has not been filled [5]. From the 1940s onwards, there was a bold attempt to merge the physical and economic developments of "urban regeneration" with the social aspects, such that "social regeneration" [6, 7] became central to the political agenda of the 1960s. The emphasis that is placed on community involvement in urban transformation processes [8] is mainly reflected in "social housing" plans [9] and employment training measures.

At the end of the 1980s, in a competitive period in which cities rediscovered themselves as central to regional and national economic performance [10], there was full awareness of the profound changes induced in societies affected by the urban transformation. The advent of the New Economy has led to a redesign of the urban landscape that, if on the one hand, has stimulated the reuse of urban heritage generating new jobs, on the other hand, has contributed to the gentrification phenomena. In the new "urban renaissance", the theme of adaptive reuse is experimented with in brownfields and abandoned cultural assets. At the same time, culture-driven regeneration strategies are developed [11] through mega cultural and sporting events [12] and the showcase of the "European City/Capital of Culture" [13]. Contextually, new reflections on social innovation and sustainability pave the way for the "impact economy" [14]. In light of the crisis of the welfare state, "social impact investing" [15,16] tries to overcome the clear separation between social and business, giving new ethical value, but also economic, to private philanthropy interested in urban regeneration.

Over time, the evaluation theme represents the thermometer of the strategic directions taken by urban regeneration processes. It is clear that the evaluation of impacts, especially social impacts, is complex because place-based projects have different characteristics and are difficult to standardise; monitoring and evaluation require human and financial resources, while social impacts occur in the long term. In addition, the different objectives of the assessment, the related approaches (monetary, quantitative, qualitative) and the methods chosen (procedural, multi-criteria, synthetic), as well as the nature of the projects, have an impact [15].

The current research aims to reconstruct the scientific landscape on urban regeneration and its impacts through the lens of evaluation. Therefore, the purpose is to capture the assessment's challenges over time and its role within these processes. Starting from a bibliographic survey conducted through the Scopus online database, the scientific landscape was defined through the VOSviewer tool to build and visualise the bibliometric networks related to the identified articles.

The article is organised according to the following sections: the first one describes the methodology elaborated for the literature review and the functional tools for bibliometric analysis; the next section presents the results of the research, including a literature review integrated with the analysis of bibliometric maps of the scientific landscape; finally, the last section offers a discussion of the results and the conclusions.

2 Material and Methods

The scientific landscape has been constructed through the following steps: 1. Data collection; 2. Literature review construction; 3. Bibliometric maps generation.

2.1 Data Collection

The data collection process took place between April and May 2021, using a bibliometric approach from metadata extracted from Scopus, a database for scientific publications created in 2004 by the publisher Elsevier. A search was carried out in the Scopus collection using the keywords urban regeneration and social impact to analyse the documents interested in the implications and the role of evaluation in urban regeneration processes. This generic research has allowed obtaining an interesting number of publications, for a total of 527 documents, to draw an overview of the urban regeneration theme evolution and transversally understand the role of evaluation through impacts and, specifically, social impact. The database was filtered to refine the result obtained and exclude the relevant documents for the literature review. From the 478 papers thus filtered, we proceeded with the selection, one by one, of the most pertinent articles for the topic of study, eliminating all those with inconsistent titles and abstracts. This resulted in a sample of 253 analysed articles: the oldest dated 1987 and the most recent published by June 2021.

2.2 Literature Review Construction

A histogram has been generated to facilitate the literature review. It is characterised by the years of publication (on the ordinates) and by the number of publications (on the abscissas) to understand the trend of publications on the topic of interest during the years (Fig. 1).

The analysis of the articles was carried out following a subdivision into four time frames corresponding broadly to ten years and the most significant changes of pace in the frequency of publications on the subject. In addition, to reconstruct a literary picture, texts that did not directly emerge from this first research are also analysed but were cited within the publications that occurred or were particularly significant to contextualise better the publications collected.

Moreover, the main keywords were analysed to obtain a general overview of the main issues discussed in the scientific debate concerning the single time frames.

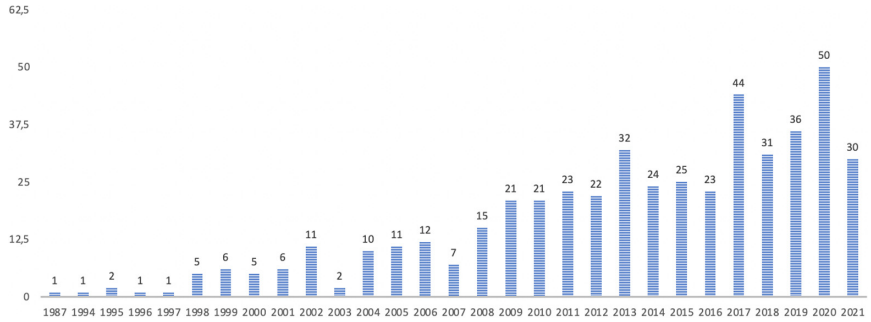

Fig. 1. Histogram of articles published from 1989 to 2021 on the topics of urban regeneration and social impact

2.3 Bibliometric Maps Generation

All 478 papers were exported in CSV format from Scopus with their specific data, including the number of times that the article, author, source, country, and references were cited, in addition to the title, abstract, and keywords. This information was necessary to produce and analyse bibliometric maps to provide opportunities to compare or integrate the literature review conducted.

The maps were generated with VOSviewer version 1.6.16 (0) [17]: software to create maps based on network data and to be able to visualise and explore them. Furthermore, the software manual [18] clarifies how the maps are made up of elements and links: network elements are the objects of interest with which we intend to characterise the maps, i.e. publications, researchers, or terms present within the papers, while relations are the links between two elements, for co-authorship, co-occurrence, citation, bibliographic coupling or co-citation links, represented by a line of variable thickness as the strength of the connection varies. The elements, finally, can be grouped into clusters identifiable by different colours dedicated to them.

The software also offers ways of visualising the maps that emerge: network visualisation, i.e., the representation of a map in which the proximity or lack of proximity of the elements expresses the relationship between them and their size expresses their weight; overlay visualisation, in which the variation of default colours indicates the transition from the elements historically less recent, represented by the colour blue, to the most recent ones, identified by the colour yellow; density visualisation, which can be queried to obtain a density map of both elements and clusters.

For the current research, maps of the scientific landscape were generated from bibliographic data and network data extracted from the Scopus database. In detail, the following analyses were performed through VOSviewer:

1. Co-citation analysis, in which the co-citation connection links two items both cited from the same document. In particular, the links between the cited references were analysed to better investigate the relationships between the references cited within the papers in the database;
2. Network data analysis to build a network of co-occurrence links between terms.

3 Results

This section has been articulated into two main outputs considered complementary for defining the scholarly landscape on the topic at hand: literature review and bibliometric maps.

3.1 Literature Review

The search for scientific literature in Scopus using the keywords "urban regeneration" and "social impact" shows that the number of articles published on the subject has increased, especially in recent years. Most of the publications have the European field of exploration, especially that of the United Kingdom. In general, the articles analysed take on the issue of urban regeneration and its impacts from different points of view: housing as a response to the problems of social exclusion that follows major urban transformations; social regeneration, for a long time, an alternative to urban renewal; the community-based participatory approach to build collaborative decision-making processes; the cultural dimension, superimposed and/or integrated into regenerative strategies, typical of culture-led regeneration. In addition, other authors have approached the issue by analysing the impacts of "major events" and tourism, the mechanisms of public-private and community partnerships and the theme of reuse.

The articles have been divided into four periods: 1987 to 1997, 1998 to 2007, 2008 to 2016, and 2017 to 2021.

The period "1987–1997". The smallest number of articles extracted from the Scopus database was published during this period. Considering that it is between 1998 and 1997, a certain constancy in publications on the subject is acquired. Although the Audit Commission in 1989 [19] encourages an urban regeneration capable of addressing economic and social issues, these are still far from being integrated. In particular, urban dynamics in the post-war reconstruction of cities are studied [20, 21] and the physical and economic impacts of modifying the urban landscape. Part of the scientific debate investigates the evaluation of the environmental implications of these transformations [20] using quantitative indicators [22]. At the same time, the social dimension, aggravated by the de-industrialisation [23], is mainly addressed through housing-oriented programs [20].

"Urban renewal" turns out in these years to be the most shared keyword about the physical transformations taking place in cities. Yet, at the same time, "regeneration" is mainly used in an economic sense, in an era in which effectiveness in implementing public policies counts, and evaluation methodology is a crucial tool to ensure value for money.

The research excludes some publications, cited from those that emerged, that are of particular interest. Thus, for example, between 1994 and 1995, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) and the Commission on Social Justice (CSJ) appeared, emphasising the importance of increasing the involvement of local communities in regeneration processes [24]. In particular, the CSJ takes a radical line by advocating the need for "people-led regeneration" [25] and strategies aimed at building social capital [26] to elicit a social as well as a physical dimension of neighbourhood renewal.

The period "1998–2007". A more significant number of papers are published in the decade ushering in the 21st century. In general, there is growing attention to the quality of life impacts of urban regeneration, with great interest in housing [27, 28]. The social dimension, often mentioned in the "social and economic regeneration" processes [29–31], begins to have a certain weight in urban policies, introducing the concept of "social impact" as a possible consequence of urban transformations and the "new economy" [32], but also, more timidly, capable of generating economic impacts. The European Commission promote various initiatives, from the URBAN project to the MEANS program (Means for Evaluating Actions of a Structural Nature) to measuring the impacts of structural funds in the socio-economic sphere, comparing different evaluation traditions: from the British "value for money" approach to pluralistic Scandinavian models [30]. At the same time, it is significant the publication of the Sustainable Communities Plan [33] and, even earlier, of the New Deal for Communities [34]. For the first time, this one considers mini-good practices capable of generating real impacts through informal, place-based and community-led actions, not only focused on physical regeneration.

Wide attention in these years is also dedicated to the cultural dimension of transformation processes, thanks to some studies that established the theme [35–37] and the many opportunities for reusing brownfield land. While Richard Florida promotes the "creative cities" [38] and Evans and Shaw [1] outline the "culture-led regeneration" approach, different publications try to define the concrete impacts on the territory considering the risks: "…is culture simply a superficial froth that may make people feel better, but has a little tangible impact on the social and economic of places in the twenty-first century? [39].

In this framework appears a "new orthodoxy" towards public/private and local partnerships [40] to facilitate plans implementation and support urban transformation processes. Entrepreneurship and community also find a shared space for reflection within regenerative processes under the umbrella of "Community entrepreneurship" [41]: communities seeking to use the process of entrepreneurship as a force for economic development by providing shared resources and assets.

This result has made it necessary to explore new and increasingly complex ways of measuring, monitoring and evaluating that require indicators other than the quantitative ones usually used, to capture the intangible elements of social and cultural impacts and going beyond the usual economic terms (the growth in the number of tourists, business relocation and inward investment) [13]. Monitoring, in particular, is considered a moment of learning by and for communities [42] whose opinions become necessary to understand the concrete effects of transformation programs [43].

The period "2008–2016". In the years affected by the Great Recession, the scientific debate relates to the effects of an era in which the growth of global cities, also called "urban renaissance" [44] coincided with a rapid economic and urban development, but also with an extreme social polarisation and an alarming growth of inequalities [45]. In this decade, the clear distinction between urban renewal and social regeneration is overcome, trying to integrate into the more shared "urban regeneration" the physical and social dimensions of the impacts, explicitly recognising in the literature the "social impact" [46, 47].

Following international guidelines [48], historic heritage begins to be understood as a common good capable of generating new sustainable processes [49], and its reuse becomes a key factor in improving the quality of life and empower community action and involvement [50]. In particular, "adaptive reuse" emerges as a powerful strategy to manage the changing status of buildings and reduce the environmental, social, and economic costs of the continued expansion of cities [51, 52]. Meanwhile, suppose significant creative activities, cultural and sporting events become part of broader re-branding and place-marketing campaigns of cities [53, 54]. In that case, there is a growing awareness about how culture can intercede in the social and relational dimension fostering the development of social capital in communities [53] in a sustainable perspective.

Similarly, around the issue of sustainability, the language innovates by placing alongside economic and environmental sustainability, "social sustainability" [54] and "sustainable communities" [55], characterised by interaction and participation capable of stimulating multi-dimensional improvements by attracting new investments and opportunities. But, on the other hand, the chance to include communities to improve the process and empowerment of citizens through paths of active citizenship [56] also conceals the risk that participation may become more than symbolism [57, 58].

This context strongly orients the role of evaluation and its approaches since the multitude of variables and actors involved and the "long-term" nature of urban regeneration processes expose the evaluation process to a high degree of uncertainty. Thus, integrated and negotiated decisions are required, and the issue becomes a complex and multi-objective evaluation problem [59]. Furthermore, although it is an emerging concept, traditional evaluation methods integrate with the concepts of happiness, social mixing, social inclusion, community integration, shared values [60, 61] and sense of place, which are definitely less easy to measure [62, 63]. Therefore, new approaches and tools of assessment come into use to better structure decision support environments, such as fuzzy inference systems (FIS) [64], and to measure, among others, social impacts (SIA) [63]. Social Impact Assessment (SIA), specifically, focuses on impacts on people and their daily lives, defining a process during which community involvement and the definition of appropriate sets of criteria and quanti-qualitative indicators become central [65]. In addition, present and future baseline conditions, geographic scale of impacts, cumulative and residual impacts, and impact management during the process are also considered [63]. Thus, adaptive [66] and multi-criteria assessment of socio-economic factors, if previously neglected, becomes the scientific field in which the game is played to overcome the limitations of many of the activated urban regeneration processes.

The period "2017–2021". In the last five years, the most productive from a literary point of view, great emphasis was on the cultural heritage, the chosen for the European year 2018. In an increasingly shared way, cultural heritage is recognised as the "glue" between the different dimensions of sustainable development [55, 67, 68] as capable of improving the economic, social and environmental productivity of the city [69, 70]. For this, Dalmas et al. [71] highlight how the notion of heritage is "inseparable from its multi-dimensional nature" [72], highlighting the need to measure its impacts already previously emerged with the Historic Urban Landscape [73] and the operational tool of the Heritage Impact Assessment [74].

The adaptive reuse of heritage thus becomes a practice of sustainable urban regeneration [75] capable of producing innovation in allowing inhabitants to manage resources as commons [76, 77], through tools that connect local governments with active citizenship and stimulate social innovation in new forms of entrepreneurship. In these collective goods [78], new social enterprises are developed, capable of hybridising profit and non-profit, private and public volunteering by focusing on local communities and facilitating local development [79, 80].

In this sense, urban regeneration is perceived as "interventionist", like a way to mobilise communities to invest in the acquisition of new skills and capabilities [81]. The result is a positive impact both in terms of human capital (access to educational, recreational and cultural activities) and social capital (civic participation; density of horizontal relational networks) [82].

The complexity faced by evaluation in this context is interpreted through various tools, techniques and methods. They include the Community Impact Evaluation (CIE) [83] and the Social Return of the Investment (SROI) [84] to assess social impact and map its change considering social, environmental and economic costs and benefits; and the Multicriteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) [85], or a combination of economic and multi-criteria evaluations. Multicriteria analyses, specifically, allow understanding experts' opinions on how the city should develop [86] by defining in a common framework both quantified and non-quantifiable criteria of project actions, outcomes and impacts [87].

3.2 Bibliometric Maps

3.2.1 Co-Citation Analysis

Co-citation analysis defines the frequency with which pairs of scientific papers were co-cited in the selected articles, thus outlining the intellectual structure of the main issues related to the research field. Specifically, a map was generated in VOSviewer based on bibliographic data extracted from the Scopus database, choosing the "Co-citation" analysis, the "Full Counting" as counting method and the "Cited references" as a unit of analysis. To build the bibliographic map, 3 citations of a cited reference was established as the minimum number, thus obtaining 71 items from the initial 24375 citations. Table 1 shows the 10 items that were cited the most times.

The largest of the most cited articles were published between 2000 and 2005, all concerned with the controversial culture-led regeneration debate. In particular, the most cited paper review by B. Garcìa highlights how the high investments to produce cultural events and related infrastructures were not supported by paths of evaluation of long-term impacts, nor included in broader strategies capable of ensuring a balanced distribution, both spatial and social, of benefits. So, the vagueness of the assessment terms for cultural and social impacts motivates policy-makers to rely on projections based on assessing economic and physical impacts. The result, according to Garcìa, is the creation of "virtually unquestioned 'myths' about the value of hosting the title, which cover up the lack of serious attempts to learn lessons from experience and establish replicable models of successful and, most importantly, sustainable culture-led regeneration" [88]. Regarding the bibliometric map generated (Fig. 2), the connections between the different nodes indicate the presence of co-citations. In contrast, the nodes represent the references

Table 1. Classification of co-cited references

Author	Title	Year	Citation	Total link
B. Garcia	Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration in Western European Cities: Lessons from Experience, Prospects for the Future	2004	13	41
J. Peck	Struggling with the Creative Class	2005	9	24
S. Miles	The Rise and Rise of Culture-Led Urban Regeneration	2005	7	22
M. Miles	Interruptions: Testing the Rhetoric of Culturally Led Urban Development	2005	5	17
S. Zukin	The Cultures of Cities	1995	5	17
G. Evans	Measure for Measure: Evaluating the Evidence of Culture's Contribution to Regeneration	2005	6	16
B. Garcia	Deconstructing the City of Culture: The Long-Term Cultural Legacies of Glasgow 1990	2005	6	16
A. J. Scott	The cultural economy of cities	2000	6	16
F. Bianchini & M. Parkinson	Cultural policy and urban regeneration: the West-European experience	1993	4	15
R. Paddison	City Marketing, Image Reconstruction and Urban Regeneration	1993	3	15

and their size the number of citations per document. These are divided into 5 clusters represented by 5 different colours.

3.2.2 Network Data Analysis

A network data analysis was generated in VOSviewer to know and visualise the distribution and the relationship between the terms mainly recurring in the analysed articles. The "Overlay" visualisation of this map (Fig. 3) allows us to observe, in addition to the most recurrent terms and their thematic connections, when they were introduced in the debate, thanks to a chromatic gradation that marks the transition from 2010 (blue) to 2018 (yellow).

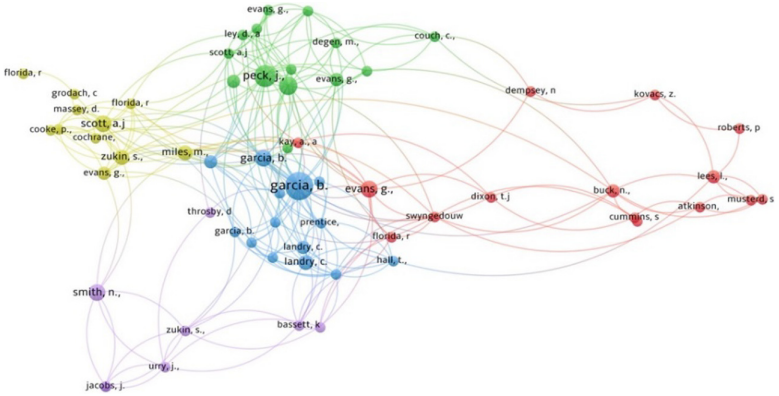

Fig. 2. VOSviewer network visualisation of the cited references bibliometric map

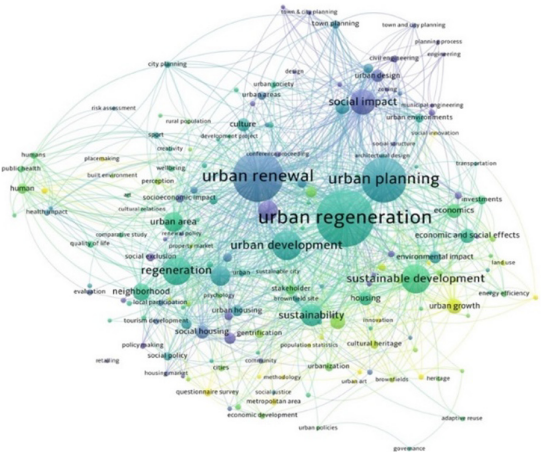

Fig. 3. VOSviewer network visualisation of the network data map's overlay (Color figure online)

In 2010 the terms "social impact", "economic regeneration", and "social exclusion" were already quite widespread. About five years later, the concept of "urban renewal" seems outdated in favour of "urban regeneration". In these years, the literature becomes particularly sensitive to the issue of sustainability, as shown by the sharing of the terms "sustainability" and "sustainable development", but also "quality of life" and "well-being". Between 2016 and 2017, the debate explores the field of "decision making" processes, related to "economic and social effects", but also to the terms "evaluation", "local participation", and "cultural heritage". In yellow colour appear all the terms more shared between 2017 and 2018. The presence in this cluster of "questionnaire survey", along with "methodology" and "assessment method", suggests that the search for qualitative-quantitative evaluation tools and techniques are at the centre of attention in recent years.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

For over thirty years, urban regeneration, with its many forms, has been central to the international and European debate as a practice of transforming cities, capable of affecting their physical and economic development and generating social inequalities and gentrification phenomena. Yet, at the same time, if social objectives were for a long time secondary, consecutive or juxtaposed to the actions of urban regeneration, the social impact has more recently become its motive and engine. This trend reversal is driven by the need to involve communities in decision-making processes and reuse abandoned spaces. The reuse of abandoned cultural heritage, in particular, has generated places of opportunity in which the community can express itself through collaborative processes designed to build social cohesion, produce social innovation and trigger new impact economies.

All of this requires structuring new paradigms. On the one hand, regenerative models' global and replicable perspective has given way to a local place-based, site-specific and community-led vision. On the other hand, identifying new forms of cooperative governance and impact investment has become necessary to generate new value chains. However, although evaluation has played a leading role in the evolution of regenerative strategies, few methodologies can combine multiple approaches to assess social impact with economic, physical and environmental effects. The literature has been enriched with criteria and indicators to accommodate the complexities of the processes and tools. The related impacts evaluation method (SROI, SIA, etc.) has increased and improved in different scientific fields. Nevertheless, these are still difficult to adapt to the singularity of the cases, poorly interconnected and not yet able to assess the creation of value about the processes themselves. Only a smaller strand of literature has been interested in the value of the process, evaluating its ability to build active and sustainable communities and enable them in decision-making processes by developing their capabilities and empowerment. Ultimately, shifting the focus from the outcome of the project evaluation to evaluating the process by which it is implemented.

The reconstruction of the scientific landscape around the fundamental concepts of "urban regeneration" and "social impact", integrating the literature review with analysis of bibliometric maps, aimed to define a general framework to explore the role of evaluation over time grasp the future challenges. From this framework, the research intends to investigate the opportunities of social impact investing about the reuse of abandoned assets as "collective goods" in urban regeneration processes. The intent will be to recognise new hybrid economic models, new forms of social entrepreneurship and new models of social impact measurement.

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