



## URBAN REGENERATION OF WATERFRONTS: Literature Review

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### **ABSTRACT**

The regeneration of urban areas has entered the urban planning agenda of different cities, seeking to respond to scenarios of urban degradation and loss of functionality. In this sense, the urban regeneration of strategic areas of cities stands out, as the example of waterfronts. Based on this, the study aims to review the literature on the urban regeneration of waterfronts, seeking to understand how the theme has been addressed over the years and the existing gaps. The study was developed through a hybrid methodology, considering a systematic quantitative review, a semantic analysis, and a narrative analysis. The results demonstrate the actuality of the theme, the predominance of some countries – the UK, Italy, Australia, Portugal, and the USA - and the most recurrent areas of study - Social and Environmental Sciences. Finally, the main topics addressed are identified: policy, planning, projects, social aspects, cultural aspects, environmental aspects, economic aspects, and financial aspects.

**Keywords:** urban regeneration, waterfronts, literature review.

**Bloque temático:** 1. Ciudad y Proyecto

**Temas:** Proyecto urbano y espacio público / Projeto urbano e espaço público / Urban design and public space. Planificación, políticas y gobierno de la ciudad / Planeamento, políticas y governança / Planning, policies and governance. Estudos metropolitanos e territoriales / Estudos Metropolitanos e territoriais / Metropolitan and Territorial studies.

# 1. Introduction

Urban regeneration has entered as an agenda of urban planning in different cities, either by the need to recover degraded areas or as an alternative to the consumption of new land. Regarding the recovery of degraded areas, some areas are strategic for cities, such as waterfronts. Waterfronts present themselves as strategic areas due to different aspects, such as their location, their historical role, their economic and social importance, and their different functionalities over time. Waterfronts thus present themselves as complex areas and, at the same time, areas of great opportunity for cities.

The complexity and interest in these areas can be observed in different studies focusing on the theme. Giovinazzi & Moretti (2010) study port cities and their waterfronts through case studies, identifying 10 principles for sustainable development of urban waterfronts, important for urban regeneration processes of waterfronts. The principles include issues related to the environment, heritage and historic identity, types of uses and access, and different actors with an emphasis on public-private partnerships and public participation.

Vallega (2001) studies the development of the waterfront in the context of urbanized coastal areas, considering the historical factors that have triggered waterfront regeneration processes and the different functions incorporated into these areas, emphasizing the different conflicts between functions. Kostopoulou (2013) also analyses the relationship between urban waterfronts and their functions over time, subsequently focusing on how urban waterfronts currently assume the role of a creative environment to attract creative tourists. The author thus links urban waterfront regeneration, tourism and contemporary culture.

Another interesting and more recent example is the study done by Avni & Teschner (2019), which deals with the current planning conflicts associated with these areas, focusing on four main topics: land ownership; heritage, identity, and culture; social and environmental justice; environment, ecology, and resilience.

Given the topicality and complexity of the theme, the present paper aims to review the literature produced on urban waterfront regeneration, seeking to understand the main topics studied so far.

Our hypothesis is that waterfronts are key elements in the adaptation of cities to the challenges of competitiveness, social and environmental sustainability, and preservation of the historical legacy left by former industrial and port activities. Recognizing this, we believe that the literature review can bring important information on the topics that scientific knowledge has considered most relevant to the change that has occurred, for example, social and governance issues, environmental and sustainability issues, economic and financial issues, heritage and cultural issues.

In this sense, the study proposes to answer some research questions:

- How do studies on urban regeneration for waterfronts perform over time?
- What are the contributions in terms of countries, authors, institutions, study areas, and journals?
- What are the main issues addressed regarding the theme?
- What gaps can still be studied about the theme?

Seeking to meet the proposed objective and answer the research questions, the study is structured in four parts, namely: this first part consists of a brief introduction to the theme; the second part refers to the methodology of the study; the third part presents the results found, further divided into a systematic quantitative review, a semantic analysis, and a narrative analysis; and the fourth part refers to the conclusions.

## 2. Research Methodology

The study consists of a systematic literature review, considering results in quantitative and qualitative terms. The literature review was conducted in three phases: the search for papers, the exclusion and selection of papers, and the analysis of papers.

The first phase, referring to the search for papers, was carried out in Scopus through two searches, considering the following keywords: urban regeneration and waterfront; urban regeneration and riverfront. In addition to the keywords, documents in scientific article formats and in the English language were also selected. No limitations were imposed on the time period analyzed. The first search resulted in 164 papers found; the second search resulted in 18 papers found. The two searches resulted in 182 papers.

In the second phase, referring to the exclusion and selection of papers, duplicate papers were excluded, i.e., papers present in both searches. Of the 182 papers, 8 papers were duplicates and were excluded, resulting in 174 selected papers, which make up the sample to be analyzed. Table 01 summarizes the search, exclusion, and selection of papers.

Search	Keywords	Query	Papers
1	Urban regeneration + waterfront	( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( urban AND regeneration ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( waterfront ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) )	164
2	Urban regeneration + riverfront	( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( urban AND regeneration ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( riverfront ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) )	18
<b>Total papers</b>			182
<b>Duplicate papers</b>			8
<b>Unique papers</b>			174

Table 01 – Search, exclusion and selection of papers. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The third phase, referring to the analysis of the selected papers, was carried out in a hybrid approach, with results obtained through a systematic quantitative review, a semantic analysis, and a narrative analysis. The quantitative review considered the division of publications by years, countries, areas of study, journals, institutions, and authors. Microsoft Excel tools were used for the quantitative review to organize the available data and develop the graphs and tables.

The semantic analysis, in turn, was performed through word clouds and concept maps. The word cloud was developed through Microsoft Power Business Intelligence, while the concept maps were developed through Leximancer. Finally, the narrative analysis considered the main research topics identified.

Table 02 summarizes the different phases of the methodology used.

Phase	Description
1	<p><b>Search for papers in Scopus:</b></p> <p>Keywords: urban regeneration + waterfront (164 articles); urban regeneration + riverfront (18 articles).</p> <p>Result: 182 articles</p>
2	<p><b>Exclusion and selection of papers:</b></p> <p>Exclusion of duplicate articles (8 articles).</p> <p>Result: 174 articles</p>
3	<p><b>Analysis of the papers:</b></p> <p>Systematic quantitative review</p> <p>Semantic analysis</p> <p>Narrative analysis</p>

Table 02 – Research Methodology. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

### 3. Results

As mentioned before, the results of the study were developed in three parts: a systematic quantitative review, a semantic analysis, and a narrative analysis. The systematic quantitative review, in turn, considered publications by years, countries, areas of study, journals, institutions, and authors.

#### 3.1. Systematic Quantitative Review

##### 3.1.1. Publications by years

Regarding time, the study considered papers from all available years. According to Figure 01, it is observed that the first publications on the theme date from 1989, demonstrating that the study on urban regeneration of waterfronts is relatively current. It is also observed that the number of publications has been increasing in recent years, emphasizing the actuality of the theme.

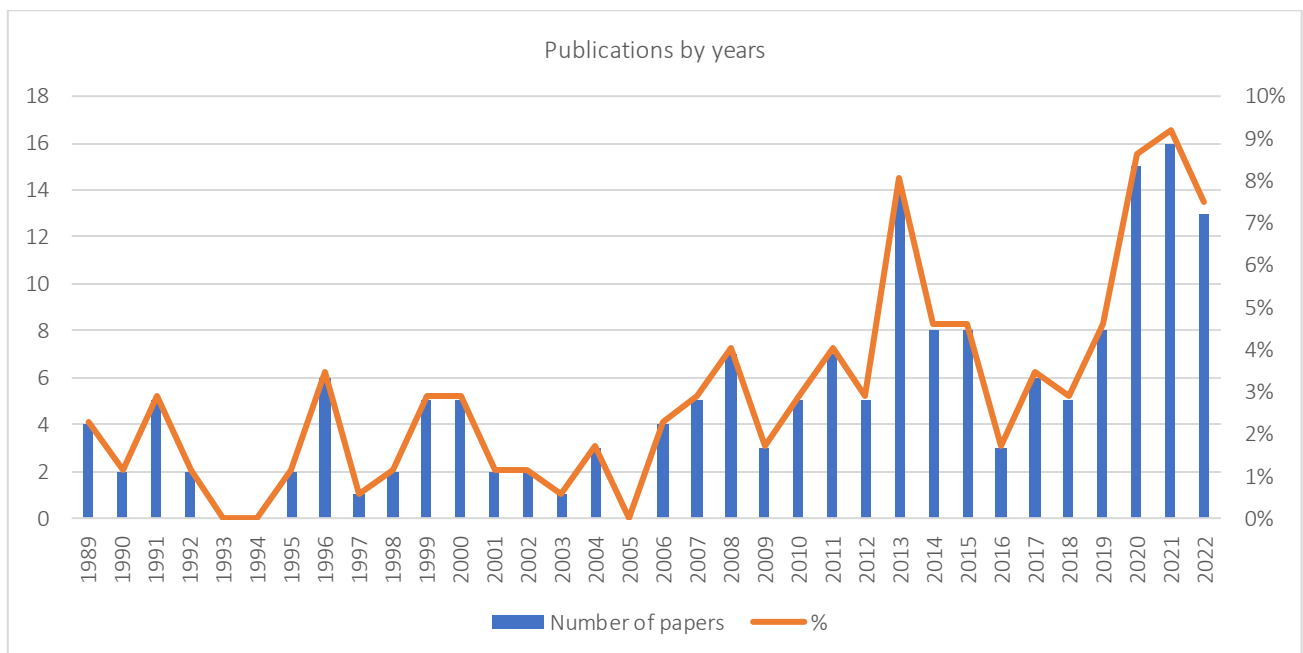


Figure 01 – Publications by years. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

### 3.1.2. Publications by countries

Regarding countries, the study considered papers from all over the world. As can be seen in Figure 02, the UK has the largest number of publications on the theme, followed by Italy. Together, these two countries hold more than 30% of the analyzed publications. Australia, Portugal, and the United States appear in the next positions.

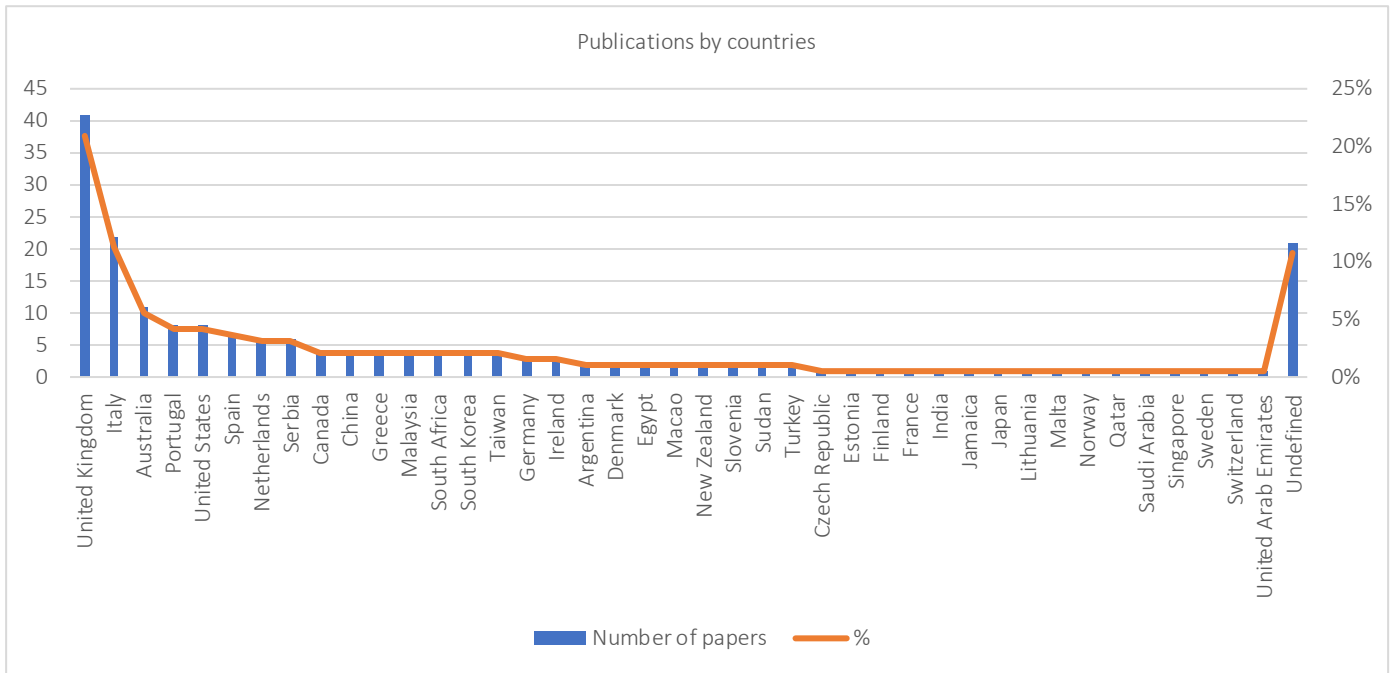


Figure 02 – Publications by countries. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

### 3.1.3. Publications by area of study

Regarding the areas of study, the study considered papers from all available areas. The urban regeneration of waterfronts, as shown in Figure 03, has been studied mostly within the Social Sciences and Environmental Sciences. The two areas together account for more than 60% of the studies on the theme.

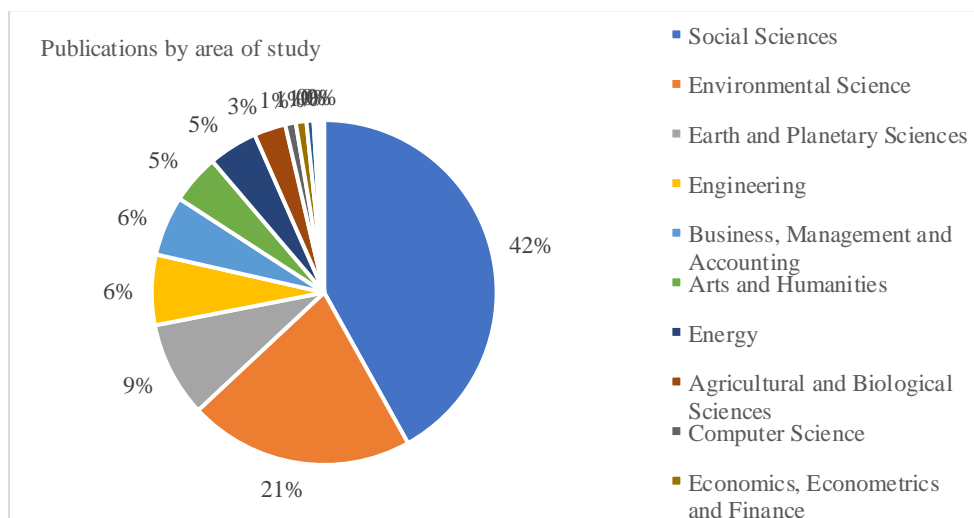


Figure 03 – Publications by area of study. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

### 3.1.4. Publications by journals

Regarding journals, the study considered papers from all available journals. According to Table 03, the journals with the largest number of publications on the theme are Sustainability Switzerland and Wit Transactions on Ecology and the Environment, both with 11 publications each, followed by Cities, with 7 publications, and Urban Studies, with 5 publications. Also highlighted is a large number of publications in journals with only one publication.

<b>Journal</b>	<b>Number of papers</b>
Sustainability (Switzerland)	11
WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment	11
Cities	7
Urban Studies	5
Others – four publications	16
Others – three publications	27
Others – two publications	24
Others – one publication	73

*Table 03 – Publications by journals. Source: Elaborated by the authors.*

### 3.1.5. Publications by institutions

Regarding institutions, the study considered papers from all available institutions. According to Table 04, the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II stands out with 10 publications on the theme, followed by The University of Adelaide (6 publications), University of Dundee (5 publications), Politecnico di Milano (4 publications) and University of Lisbon (4 publications). We also highlight a large number of institutions with only 1 publication on the subject.

<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Number of papers</b>
Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II	10
The University of Adelaide	6
University of Dundee	5
Politecnico di Milano	4
University of Lisbon	4
Others – three publications	27
Others – two publications	42
Others – one publication	118

*Table 04 – Publications by institutions. Source: Elaborated by the authors.*









### 3.3. Narrative Analysis

Through the words identified in the word clouds and concept maps, as well as by reading the articles in the sample, it was possible to identify relevant themes in the literature produced on urban regeneration of waterfronts. The main themes identified refer to policies, planning, projects, social aspects, cultural aspects, environmental aspects, economic aspects, and financial aspects. These themes will be briefly identified below.

The topic of Policies is present in 71 (41%) papers analyzed. The topic emphasizes different policies related to urban waterfront regeneration, different levels of policy implementation, and ideologies associated with the policies. Regarding the policies, urban waterfront regeneration is related to urban policies - and in many cases neoliberal urban policies (Erbaş & Emre, 2021) -, sustainability policies (Borriello, 2013), land use policies (McCarthy, 1999), conservation policies (De Rosa & Di Palma, 2013). Silvestre & Jajamovich (2022) also cites the issue of mobile regeneration policies. Regarding levels, one finds different levels of policies, such as European policies (Jones & Ponzini, 2021) and local policies (Silvestre, 2022). Still within the topic, Sager (2015) discusses different ideologies related to policies: neoliberalism, participatory democracy, and environmentalism.

The topic of Planning is present in 83 (48%) papers analyzed. Urban waterfront regeneration can be associated with different types of planning. Oakley (2021) refers to metropolitan planning, while Thorning et al. (2019) refer to local planning. Some authors approach the topic by referring to plans, with emphasis on integrated plans (Theodora & Spanogianni, 2022). Finally, some studies refer to event planning as a starting point for waterfront regeneration (Pinto & Dos Santos, 2022).

The topic of projects is present in 147 (84%) papers. The case studies addressed by the authors refer to different typologies of projects: mega events projects (Jones & Ponzini, 2021), contemporary mega projects (Perić & Maruna, 2022), industrial areas and brownfields projects (Leger et al., 2016), sustainable cities projects (Shamsuddin et al., 2011), projects related to cultural heritage and naval heritage (Clark & Pinder, 1999), business districts projects (Furlan et al., 2019), creative districts projects (Sepe, 2013), projects related to informal areas (Attia & Ibrahim, 2018). Each typology presents characteristics and particularities.

Social aspects are present in 118 (68%) papers. Governance is one of the most mentioned social aspects, with emphasis on entrepreneurial governance (Bruns-Berentelg et al., 2022) and local governance (Feldman, 2000). Different actors are identified: public actors, such as municipalities and port authorities (Garcia, 2008); private actors, such as real estate developers (Oakley, 2009); local communities, citizens, tourists, and visitors (Mikkelsen et al., 2018). All these actors are embedded in different conflicts of interest and power struggles. The issue of public participation is also addressed (Sepe, 2014). Finally, two concepts are mentioned: social innovation (Bagaini et al., 2017) and social sustainability (Hamdoon & Ahmed, 2021).

Cultural aspects are present in 92 (53%) papers. Cultural aspects include urban and architectural heritage, with emphasis on naval heritage (Clark & Pinder, 1999). They also influence the concept of local identity (Jelovac & Environment, 2013) and the image that the waterfront regeneration wants to obtain (Smith & von Krogh Strand, 2011). The role of the affective atmosphere as a relevant aspect for the realization of specific projects is also highlighted (Yu, 2019). Some authors approach culture through cultural corridors (Acri et al., 2021) and also through urban art (Ochoa, 2022). The role of the European Capital of Culture program is highlighted as a catalyst for waterfront regeneration (Jones & Ponzini, 2021). Finally, the role of tourism and leisure in the regeneration of these areas is emphasized (Shostak, 1992).

Environmental aspects are present in 65 (37%) papers. Great emphasis is placed on sustainability and sustainable urbanism (Furlan et al., 2019). The recovery of contaminated soils is also addressed (McCollum, 2000). Climate issues and flooding problems are studied by Macdonald & Jones (2006), while the importance of coastal ecosystems is mentioned by Ciampa et al. (2021). Finally, environmental aspects also refer to the urban landscape (Mei et al., 2021).

Economic aspects are present in 66 (38%) papers. The changing economic use of waterfronts is mentioned (Gastaldi, 2013), as well as the problems of economic decline (Wood & Handley, 1999) and the need for the economic regeneration of these areas (Shostak, 1992). The concept of circular economy is also referenced (Acri et al., 2021).

Finally, Financial aspects are present in 15 (9%) papers. The different types of financing are studied, such as community funds (Tort-Donada et al., 2020). Revolving funds models are also discussed (Bruns-Berentelg et al., 2022). Hermelin & Jonsson (2021) refer to the management of financing and financial risks.

## 4. Conclusions

The present study reviewed the literature produced on Urban Regeneration of Waterfronts, seeking to identify the main themes studied and the existing gaps. The study also characterized the literature regarding production over the years, countries, areas of study, authors, affiliations, and journals. To this end, the study used a hybrid methodology, considering a systematic quantitative review, a semantic analysis, and a narrative analysis.

The results obtained through the systematic quantitative review demonstrate the theme's actuality, whose first publications date back to 1989 and with higher growth in recent years. Some countries stand out in terms of publications: the United Kingdom and Italy, followed by Australia, Portugal, and the United States. In terms of institutions and authors, the predominance of these countries remains. Regarding the areas of study, the publications on the theme are mostly concentrated on Social Sciences and Environmental Sciences. The areas of study are also confirmed through the journals, with emphasis on Sustainability Switzerland, Wit Transactions on Ecology and the Environment, Cities, and Urban Studies. The elevated number of journals, institutions, and authors with only one publication also stands out.

The semantic analysis, in turn, was performed through word clouds and concept maps. Through the word clouds, it was observed the high variety of keywords used by different authors. Some main keywords were identified - development, redevelopment, renewal, planning, city/cities, sustainable/sustainability, cultural, heritage, port, public, social, and governance. The conceptual maps, in turn, identified eleven main themes - waterfront, urban, industrial, city, environmental, social, economic, project, plans, tool, based - and a number of sub-themes associated with them.

Finally, the narrative analysis considered the main topics identified in the semantic analysis and defined some main themes: policy, planning, projects, social aspects, cultural aspects, environmental aspects, economic aspects, and financial aspects. These topics have been briefly described, trying to give an overview of the literature. Among the main topics addressed, financial issues represent the least recurrent topic in studies on urban waterfront regeneration, demonstrating a gap that should be better observed in future studies.

Despite meeting the proposed objective, the study has limitations. The methodology used for the search for papers considered only the Scopus search engine and two main searches (urban regeneration + waterfront; urban regeneration + riverfront). In addition, only scientific articles in English were analyzed. Thus, there are limitations to the scope of the search. In this sense, future works may include a larger database on the theme in order to have a more comprehensive review.

Another limitation refers to the topics of the narrative analysis. Although based on the semantic analysis previously performed, the topics addressed present a subjective character resulting from the authors' interpretation. Future work may include new topics in the narrative analysis developed.

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