European Journal of Social Impact and Circular Economy

Bridging Social Impact and Lifecycle Approaches for Sustainable Urban Regeneration: An Exploratory Case Study in Italy

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Received: 26/03/2025

Accepted for publication: 11/08/2025

Published: 27/08/2025

European Journal of Social Impact and Circular Economy - ISSN: 2704-9906
DOI: 10.13135/2704-9906/11830 Published by University of Turin http://www.ojs.unito.it/index.php/ejsice/index

European Journal of Social Impact and Circular Economy

Abstract

This study explores how integrating social impact assessment (SIA) with lifecycle thinking can enhance urban regeneration outcomes by managing diverse stakeholder interests. A case study of a factory redevelopment in Tuscany, Italy, applies a novel analytical framework to map social, economic, and environmental value across project phases, examining patterns in outcome creation and stakeholder influence. The framework introduces an original combination of Social Return on Investment (SROI), stakeholder salience, and temporal mapping, offering an integrated perspective on impact dynamics. Specifically, this research addresses three questions: how SIA methodologies contribute to stakeholder mediation in complex urban regeneration processes; what role timing plays in SIA effectiveness as conflict-mediation tools; and how lifecycle thinking integration enhances SIA effectiveness in urban regeneration projects.

The study advances impact assessment with an integrated framework capturing complex social value dynamics and enhancing social sustainability in urban interventions. The analysis identifies 55 distinct outcome areas, revealing that employment outcomes dominate value creation (57%), while urban regeneration and viability (17%), sustainable community development (13%), economic growth (9%), and environmental outcomes (4%) contribute to a balanced multidimensional impact portfolio. Findings demonstrate that stakeholder salience evolves significantly across project phases, and proactive SIA application in early phases can reconcile divergent perspectives to maintain momentum. The integration of SIA with lifecycle assessment enables comprehensive understanding of how different value forms interact and evolve temporally. This approach is adaptable to different urban and territorial settings, making it relevant for practitioners and policymakers engaged in diverse regeneration initiatives. The findings offer practitioners systematic tools to anticipate stakeholder conflicts, optimize multidimensional value creation, and embed social sustainability across regeneration lifecycles, ultimately improving urban intervention design and delivery. This approach enables effective stakeholder engagement promoting equitable benefit distribution, mitigating adverse impacts, and enhancing community resilience and well-being. The study's limitations include its single-case design and context-specific focus on hotel conversion, which may limit transferability to other regeneration contexts and governance settings with different collaborative capacities.

Keywords: social impact assessment, urban regeneration, lifecycle thinking, stakeholder engagement, social sustainability

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1. Introduction

Urban regeneration has emerged as a pivotal strategy in contemporary city development, signifying a shift from traditional expansion-based approaches to more intricate urban renewal and revitalisation processes. This transformation is especially pronounced in Europe, where the 2014–2020 EU financial programming period explicitly prioritised rehabilitating existing urban spaces, including industrial sites and contaminated land (EU Regulation No. 130/2013).

The sector has undergone a fundamental metamorphosis, transitioning from a context centred on expansion to new challenges rooted in integration within the urban fabric and regeneration. Despite the burgeoning recognition of social sustainability, which has spurred an emerging body of research and policy literature, our understanding of this concept remains nebulous and constrained by theoretical and methodological limitations stemming from its context- and disciplinary-dependent interpretations (Colantonio & Dixon, 2009). The urgency of addressing social sustainability through integrated and context-sensitive approaches is increasingly recognised in both policy and academic spheres, yet remains underexplored in terms of how methodological tools can operationalise this ambition across complex urban interventions (Biondi & Bracci, 2018; Ragozino, 2019).

Established knowledge demonstrates the evolution of social impact assessment and its integration with stakeholder dynamics. Since the 1990s, the advent of environmental impact assessment (EIA) and subsequent social impact assessment (SIA) has catalysed a new awareness of forecasting capabilities and the evidence provided by social and environmental impact analysts. The evolution of impact assessment tools has coincided with growing recognition of the complex relationships between urban development, environmental justice, and public health. Wolch et al. (2014) demonstrate that urban regeneration projects must balance environmental improvements with community needs to avoid unintended social consequences. These tools have generated models that shift the focus to indicators encompassing economic, social, and environmental considerations. This aligns with Emerson's (2003) 'Blended Value Proposition', which emphasises the integration of social and financial metrics to maximise the value for all stakeholders. Parallel to this evolution, Hinson and Ndhlovu (2011) show that organisations increasingly require structured approaches to evaluate their social impacts across multiple stakeholder groups and time horizons, as is evident in the development of corporate social responsibility measurements.

Urban regeneration projects are inherently complex interventions that require a comprehensive understanding of their impacts across different life cycle stages (Sairinen, 2010). These projects frequently involve multiple stakeholders with divergent interests and expectations, rendering them potential theatres of conflict. Arvidson et al. (2013) posit that social impact can be conceived as a genuine social construction that effectively opens it to the interpretation and subjectivity of the categories under analysis. This understanding becomes pivotal when considering the Impact Value Chain framework proposed by Clark et al. (2004), which emphasises the need to map and involve not only internal organisational actors but also stakeholders at various levels who see their status quo being altered by specific interventions.

Europe has embraced urban regeneration as a winning model of economic development, wherein new 'urban alliances' revitalise cities capable of reinventing themselves, optimising their human, social, economic, environmental, and historical capital, 'becoming true and their own resilient cities' (Ben-Akiva et al., 2016; Toledo et al., 2010).

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The evolution of social return on investment (SROI) methodologies highlights their utility in the urban regeneration context. Developed initially to evaluate nonprofit initiatives (Emerson, 2003), SROI frameworks have matured into versatile tools for assessing blended value, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions across various sectors. Recent reviews (Corvo et al., 2022) underscore SROI's potential to enhance stakeholder engagement by monetising social impacts, while addressing methodological critiques such as over-reductionism and subjectivity. When applied to urban regeneration, SROI analysis facilitates identifying both tangible and intangible benefits, offering insights into the equitable distribution of value and fostering community resilience.

Moreover, advancements in impact measurement approaches have introduced mechanisms to better manage power asymmetries and stakeholder salience in multi-actor contexts (Mitchell et al., 1997; Saenz, 2020; Saenz, 2021). These innovations align with lifecycle thinking by mapping impact trajectories across phases such as planning, implementation, and use. Wang et al. (2022) demonstrate how dynamic stakeholder relationships can be systematically analysed over the life cycle of urban regeneration projects through social network analysis (SNA), offering actionable insights into power shifts, centrality, and coordination challenges.

Critical gaps emerge in three interconnected areas that limit current SIA effectiveness. First, integration challenges persist: many existing tools remain siloed, unable to offer a comprehensive view of impact evolution across time or to address stakeholder conflicts that emerge at different project stages (Arli & Cadeaux, 2014; Sairinen, 2010). The existing literature rarely integrates impact valuation with stakeholder salience analysis and lifecycle mapping in a single coherent framework, especially in applied urban contexts (Saenz, 2020; Bryson et al., 2024). Second, temporal dynamics remain underexplored: SROI alone cannot capture the temporal shifts in stakeholder salience or the dynamic layering of impacts typical of complex urban initiatives (Nicholls, 2018; Grana et al., 2025). Critical questions remain regarding how impact measurement can be structured to support complex adaptive processes, especially in terms of stakeholder dynamics over time (Mitchell et al., 1997; Bailey, 2012). Third, the timing of SIA implementation as conflict-mediation mechanism requires deeper understanding. SIA's potential role in managing environmental conflicts was noted years ago by Manring et al. (1990), who emphasised its importance in predicting and managing conflicts while promoting social sustainability (Becker & Vanclay, 2003).

A critical gap persists in understanding how the timing and implementation of SIA tools influence their effectiveness as conflict-mediation mechanisms in urban regeneration contexts. Insights from corporate community involvement research further reveal the challenges in measuring social impact owing to resource constraints, a lack of consensus on methodologies, and stakeholder salience issues (Arli & Cadeaux, 2014).

While the existing literature acknowledges stakeholder engagement's importance in urban regeneration (Bailey, 2012; Biancone et al., 2019), limited attention has been paid to how impact assessment methodologies can be adapted to better serve the complex needs of these projects across their lifecycle. The strategic management-at-scale framework proposed by Bryson et al. (2024) becomes particularly relevant here, as it recognises that no single entity is fully in charge of these complex multi-stakeholder contexts, yet many are affected, involved, or have a partial responsibility to act. The literature confirms the possibility of sustainable urban regeneration projects at several levels. These are primarily attributed to the ability of these projects to radically

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transform places in terms of development opportunities, and the proactive capacity that key actors can offer in decision-making dynamics, often acting as mitigators between different issues related to each stakeholder category (Bailey, 2012; Biondi & Bracci, 2018; Ragozino, 2019). This potential is further amplified by integrating advanced stakeholder salience frameworks and lifecycle impact mapping to address the shifting power dynamics and long-term value creation (Saenz, 2020). Despite these advancements, no unified approach currently exists to integrate SROI, stakeholder salience, and lifecycle mapping in a single evaluative model tailored for urban regeneration (Grieco et al., 2015; Arena et al., 2015).

To address this, more integrated frameworks are needed, capable of anticipating and managing stakeholder tensions while tracing how value is constructed and distributed over time (Clark et al., 2004; Bryson et al., 2024). The proposed theoretical gap can be visualized as the intersection of three methodological silos: impact valuation approaches that lack temporal dynamics, stakeholder engagement methods without systematic value measurement, and lifecycle assessment frameworks that underemphasize social dimensions. This study addresses these gaps by examining how an enhanced SIA framework that incorporates lifecycle thinking and stakeholder dynamics contributes to both impact measurement and conflict mediation in urban regeneration processes.

Through an in-depth case study of a regeneration project in Tuscany, Italy, we investigate three specific research questions:

1. *How can SIA methodologies contribute to stakeholder mediation in complex urban regeneration processes?*
2. *What role does timing play in the effectiveness of SIA as conflict-mediation tools in urban regeneration projects?*
3. *How does the integration of lifecycle thinking into SIA enhance its effectiveness in urban regeneration projects?*

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. First, we present a theoretical framework that integrates perspectives on urban regeneration, SIAs, and life cycle thinking. We then introduce our enhanced methodological approach, which combines traditional SROI analysis with lifecycle assessment elements. The case study analysis demonstrates the application of this framework in a real-world context, followed by a discussion of the implications of both theory and practice in urban regeneration impact assessments.

2. Theoretical Background

Strategy management at scale provides the foundational theoretical framework for understanding urban regeneration complexity. Urban regeneration challenges have increasingly transcended traditional organisational boundaries, requiring a shift from conventional strategic management approaches to more collaborative and systemic frameworks. Bryson et al. (2024) argued that these challenges necessitate 'strategy management at scale', an approach that recognises that while no single entity is in charge, many are affected, involved, or bear partial responsibility to act. This approach highlights the need for collective leadership and system-level thinking to address complex multi-stakeholder dynamics (Bryson et al., 2024; Crosby & Bryson, 2005).

This complexity manifests through diverse stakeholders operating across spatial and temporal scales, creating opportunities and tensions (Ansell et al., 2024). Biancone et al. (2019) highlight the 'proactive capacity' of key actors, emphasising the need

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for collaboration even in the absence of formal authority-While Healey (2006) argues for new forms of collective governance in fragmented contexts. These contributions establish that urban regeneration governance must be multi-actor, temporally aware, and capable of embedding diverse value frameworks into its evaluation logics.

Resource activation and performance measurement theory offer solutions but face integration challenges. Strategy management relies on activating underutilised resources across physical, financial, social, and political domains (Bailey, 2012), aligning with Biondi and Bracci (2018), who demonstrate how cross-sector partnerships can generate synergistic values that exceed the capabilities of individual entities. Saenz (2020) and Saenz (2021) further underscore the importance of lifecycle thinking in urban regeneration, arguing that integrating the planning, implementation, and post-completion phases enhances both impact measurement and stakeholder engagement. However, integrating these elements into coherent evaluative frameworks remains underdeveloped, though Arena, Azzone, and Bengo (2015) propose a performance measurement system for social enterprises that aligns managerial intentions, stakeholder participation, and hybrid value creation logics. Stressing the contextual construction of indicators and cautions against universalistic metrics detached from organisational purpose. Implementation challenges reveal significant limitations in current approaches. Large-scale implementation faces challenges requiring adaptive frameworks for shifting stakeholder dynamics. Mill and Holland (2005) argue SIA methods must move beyond simplistic metrics to capture the complex interplay between stakeholder interests and project outcomes. While Sager (2016) identifies power asymmetries as barriers to effective collaboration, and Ragozino (2019) notes difficulties in sustaining stakeholder engagement over extended project lifecycles. These challenges underscore the need for robust governance mechanisms capable of adapting to dynamic stakeholder landscapes while maintaining progress toward shared objectives (Bryson et al., 2024).

Social impact assessment theory has evolved but suffers from methodological fragmentation. SIA and EIA have evolved by introducing advanced methodologies for forecasting and evaluating impacts. Traditional SROI models, while useful, often lack the integration of life cycle thinking and systemic changes necessary for modern urban regeneration (Nicholls, 2017; Yate & Marra, 2017). Nicholls (2018) critically reframes social impact accounting, interpreting it as a situated and contested process rather than neutral representation. He foregrounds the role of accounting in defining what counts as valuable and for whom, pointing to the importance of embedding materiality, uncertainty, and empowerment into impact frameworks. This perspective challenges reductionist SROI applications and supports reflexive, stakeholder-sensitive measurement logics, challenging reductionist applications and supporting reflexive, stakeholder-sensitive measurement logics.

Social Life Cycle Assessment (SLCA) methodologies offer systematic approaches for evaluating social impacts throughout project lifecycles that align with these collaborative governance requirements. Jørgensen et al. (2008) identified SLCA as an emerging framework for assessing social and socio-economic aspects of products and systems across their entire life cycles, though they noted significant methodological diversity and limited consensus regarding appropriate indicators and boundaries. This methodological fragmentation reflects the complexity of social impact measurement in multi-stakeholder contexts (van der Veen et al., 2025). Contemporary SLCA applications demonstrate both potential and limitations: while SLCA can effectively quantify certain social impacts such as working conditions and economic development contributions, it often fails to capture more nuanced contextual factors including cultural dynamics, power relations, and structural policy influences (van

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der Veen et al., 2025). Bhatnagar et al. (2024) emphasise that transitioning to circular economy approaches through SLCA requires enhanced stakeholder involvement across industries to identify emerging social risks, suggesting the need for methodological innovations that bridge quantitative assessment with qualitative stakeholder engagement.

Mixed-method approaches in regeneration processes provide promising directions for addressing these methodological gaps. Premyanov et al. (2024) demonstrate how combining quantitative metrics with qualitative stakeholder engagement through participatory research can enhance understanding of circular economy impacts on urban sustainability. Their study of makerspaces as catalysts for circular entrepreneurship illustrates how mixed-method frameworks can capture both measurable outcomes (such as skill development and network formation) and more intangible benefits (including community engagement and environmental awareness). These findings suggest that urban regeneration assessments benefit from methodological pluralism that integrates systematic quantitative measurement with contextual qualitative insights.

Empirical evidence confirms persistent methodological fragmentation. Grieco, Michelini, and Iasevoli (2015) map the heterogeneity of social impact assessment models used by social enterprises, identifying three dominant clusters based on purpose (managerial vs. accountability), stakeholder engagement, and methodological depth. Highlighting the absence of frameworks that integrate stakeholder salience, lifecycle dynamics, and value quantification, they further reinforcing the originality of the model presented in this paper. Recent empirical applications demonstrate this fragmentation: Tate et al. (2023) use SROI showing data limitations, attribution challenges, and temporal complexity that undermine impact appraisal. Wang et al. (2022) apply social network analysis surfacing fluidity of power and legitimacy over time, and Bottero et al. (2018) apply PROMETHEE multicriteria decision analysis. These studies reveal fragmentation where each focuses on one aspect—monetised outcomes, stakeholder configuration, or multi-criteria trade-offs—without unifying them into an integrated framework.

Toward theoretical integration through composite frameworks. This paper seeks to fill that gap by developing a composite evaluative approach that systematically brings together social value measurement (via SROI), stakeholder salience theory, and lifecycle mapping to capture the distributed nature of impact creation in regeneration processes. This evolution aligns with the conceptualisation of social impact as a social construct (Arvidson et al., 2013). Combined with Saenz's (2021) outcome mapping framework that integrates stakeholder analysis with lifecycle stages, such approaches bridge methodological fragmentation while strengthening the governance of transformation.

Stakeholder salience theory adds temporal complexity requiring adaptive frameworks. The dynamic nature of stakeholder salience, as outlined by Mitchell et al. (1997), complicates urban regeneration, where shifting priorities necessitate adaptive engagement strategies (Biancone et al., 2019), while trust-building and inclusive governance address these shifting dynamics (Corvo et al., 2022).

Recent advancements in lifecycle assessment methodologies (Ciroth et al., 2011; Saenz, 2020 and Saenz, 2021) provide valuable tools for aligning stakeholder activities with sustainable outcomes, facilitating deeper understanding of how urban regeneration projects affect economic, social, and environmental systems over time. Arli and Cadeaux (2014) highlight

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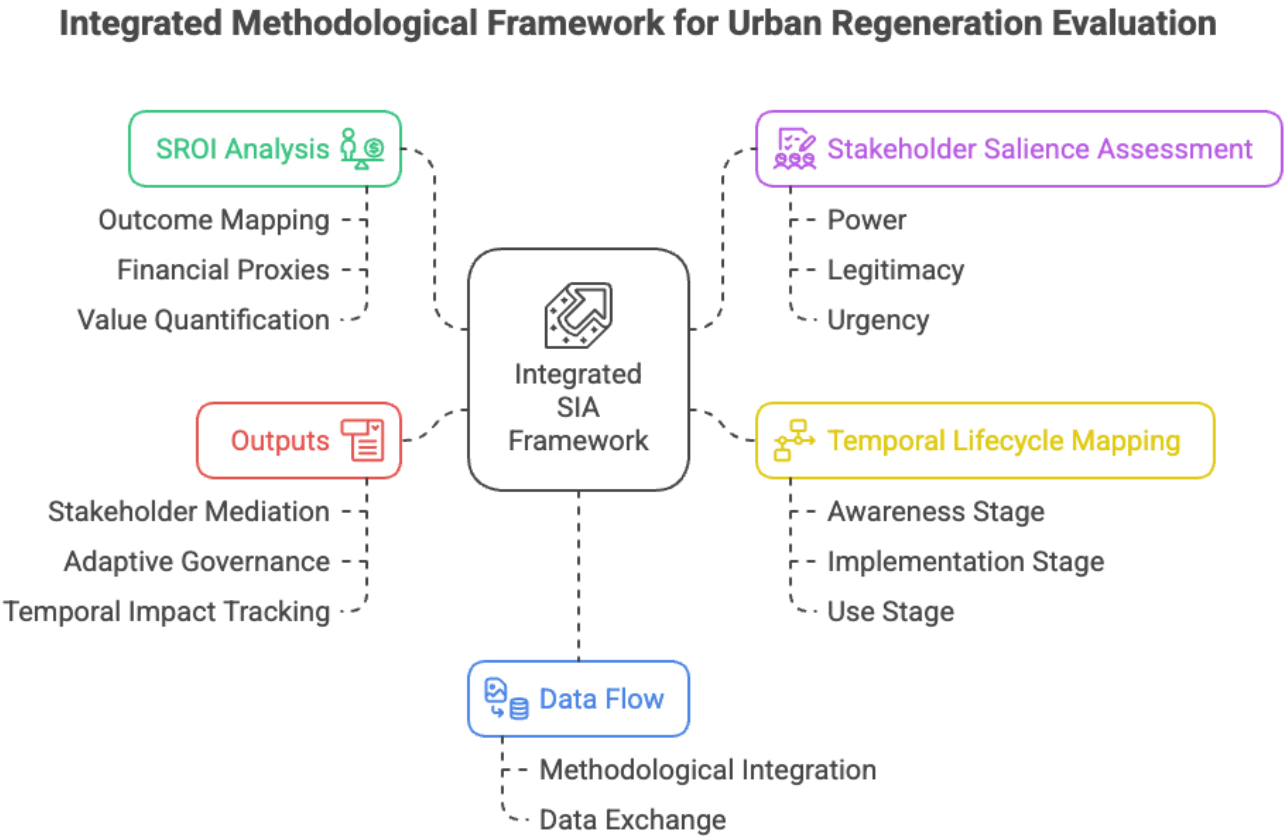
persistent challenges of measuring community involvement impacts, stressing the need for cohesive frameworks that address stakeholder salience and resource allocation.

Theoretical synthesis demonstrates the necessity for integrated evaluation approaches. Ultimately, strategy management at scale offers a robust framework for addressing urban regeneration complexities. By integrating collective leadership, adaptive governance, and lifecycle thinking, this approach helps navigate power dynamics and competing interests that define urban regeneration while fostering resilient and inclusive urban environments.

Figure 1. Integrated SIA framework



Source: Authors' elaboration

3. Methodology

This study employed a revelatory single-case study design to investigate the role of SIA in mediating stakeholder dynamics within an urban regeneration project in Tuscany, Italy. Case study designs are well-suited for examining complex social phenomena in real-world contexts, particularly when the boundaries between a phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined (Yin, 2017). Single-case studies offer an opportunity for an in-depth, holistic investigation of contemporary events,

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enabling the development of rich, context-specific insights (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Siggelkow, 2007). The case was chosen for its potential to yield insights into the intricate web of multi-stakeholder interactions and temporal processes that characterise urban regeneration interventions (Zhou et al., 2018).

The methodological framework integrates three complementary analytical lenses to capture the multidimensional nature of social impacts on urban regeneration. These lenses were applied sequentially: SROI was implemented during the initial project phase (ex-ante) in alignment with its first principle ("involve stakeholders"). To guide this step, stakeholder salience analysis was conducted to map influence patterns and inform materiality assessment. Temporal impact mapping was introduced only after the outcome framework and first SROI evaluation had been completed, in order to track the evolution of outcomes over time.

Each lens informed the others in a recursive manner: stakeholder salience helped refine outcome selection for the SROI, while the temporal mapping captured the progression and interdependencies of those outcomes across the project lifecycle.

1. SROI Analysis: SROI analysis provides the foundational framework for mapping and quantifying the social, environmental, and economic value generated by the project across stakeholder groups and project phases (Cordes, 2017; Nicholls, 2017, 2018). This forward-looking approach involves mapping stakeholder networks, identifying anticipated outcomes, developing financial proxies, applying adjustment factors, and calculating the projected social return ratios. The analysis adheres to established SROI principles, while innovatively integrating lifecycle thinking to examine how different forms of value emerge, interact, and evolve over the course of the intervention (Saenz, 2021). Proxies were selected through a validated internal database and discussed with stakeholders using available contextual data. This database, developed through systematic analysis of international SROI applications, serves as a benchmark repository of validated impact chains and financial proxies across multiple sectors. Indicator selection was based on relevance to urban regeneration contexts, availability of contextual data, and stakeholder validation. SROI was applied to the design phase of the project, using both project documentation and interviews to estimate outcome occurrence and intensity.
2. Stakeholder Salience Analysis: Stakeholder analysis, grounded in Mitchell et al.'s (1997) power-legitimacy-urgency framework, examines how influence patterns and power dynamics shape project trajectories. The analysis categorises stakeholders based on their salience attributes, maps influence relationships and decision-making processes, tracks shifts in stakeholder salience across project phases, identifies points of tension requiring mediation, and informs them of the development of targeted engagement strategies (Neville et al., 2011). The stakeholder set was identified through project documentation and expanded through interviews with the project lead. Salience categories were used to prioritise actors during the outcome identification phase and to map tensions requiring mediation.
3. Temporal Impact Mapping: Building on Saenz's (2021) matrix innovation, this novel framework examines the evolution of stakeholder experiences and outcomes across project lifecycles. The mapping process plots stakeholder groups against four key development phases (awareness, implementation, use, and closure); monitors impact trajectories across social, economic, and environmental dimensions; documents changes in value creation patterns;

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pinpoints critical intervention opportunities; and reveals temporal interdependencies between outcomes. Outcome trajectories were plotted against the timeline using a structured Excel grid combining a simplified project schedule with identified outcomes and stakeholder groups. The mapping helped highlight moments of convergence or divergence in perceived value and supported identification of "impact tipping points.

The data were collected from two sources. First, extensive document analysis was conducted, encompassing project plans, reports, media coverage, and other archival data related to the project's design evolution, stakeholder responses, and implementation processes. Second, the research team engaged directly with the architectural firm leading the project to gain first-hand insights into decision-making dynamics and stakeholder interactions (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). These engagement sessions followed a semi-structured protocol focusing on stakeholder identification, outcome mapping, and project timeline validation. Sessions were conducted with project representatives to gather insights into stakeholder influence patterns, decision-making processes, and anticipated project outcomes across different phases. The three lenses were supported by different types of data: SROI was informed by financial estimates, outcome indicators, and social proxy databases; stakeholder salience relied on qualitative interviews and internal documents and stakeholder categorization using Mitchell et al.'s (1997) framework was conducted through systematic document analysis complemented by validation with project representatives, with each stakeholder's power, legitimacy, and urgency attributes assessed based on project documentation and observed influence patterns;; temporal mapping used the project timeline and evaluation outputs to structure expected outcome flows. To ensure reliability and internal validity, two researchers independently analysed the qualitative material and triangulated the coding of outcome definitions, salience attributes, and temporal sequences. The coding process was conducted manually, with researchers developing a structured framework aligned with the three analytical lenses. Coding categories were refined through iterative discussion until consensus was reached. Regular peer debriefings were conducted with the third researcher and the full project team to reach consensus and refine interpretations. Member checking was carried out with the lead proponent of the project, who reviewed and validated intermediate results, particularly the reconstructed stakeholder map and proxy structure. Triangulation was applied systematically across documentary, interview, and contextual data.

The analytical process followed an iterative cyclical approach (Mills et al., 2010), with each analytical lens informing the others in a layered and reciprocal manner. This methodological approach aligns with recent developments in social responsibility research. Obalola and Adelopo (2012) demonstrate the effectiveness of narrative-inductive approaches for understanding complex social phenomena and stakeholder dynamics in urban contexts. This methodology enables a systematic investigation of how SIA surfaces and mediates stakeholder concerns, identifies optimal intervention points for conflict mitigation, and demonstrates the value of integrating lifecycle thinking into impact assessment processes.

The revelatory single-case study design has inherent limitations in terms of generalisability (Yin, 2017). However, as Flyvbjerg (2006) argues, carefully selected case studies can provide context-dependent knowledge crucial for understanding complex social phenomena and testing theoretical propositions in real-world settings. This may offer a valuable window into the complex stakeholder landscapes that must be negotiated in urban regeneration projects, generating insights that inform both theory

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development and practice (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Although the findings remain context-specific, the clarity of analytical procedures, iterative validation, and multi-source triangulation contribute to their internal consistency and transparency. Moreover, by integrating SROI analysis, stakeholder salience assessment, and temporal impact mapping, this approach responds to the growing need for more robust governance frameworks to address the turbulent, boundary-spanning challenges increasingly faced by public and nonprofit organisations (Bryson et al., 2015). In these contexts, defined by diffuse authority and shared responsibility, fostering strategic alignment and commitment among diverse stakeholders is critical (Bryson et al., 2024). By bringing a strategy management-at-scale perspective to SIA, this methodology aims to generate actionable insights into navigating complex multi-stakeholder dynamics and enhancing the public value of urban interventions.

4. The Case Study

This case study focuses on an urban regeneration project in the Tuscany region of northern Italy. The project involved converting an abandoned factory into a tourist hotel, constructing new road connections, and revitalising the surrounding green spaces near a port. The development site covers approximately 22,575 square meters, with an estimated investment of €43,202,687. The company leading the project had the vision of creating a hotel that exemplifies sustainability principles and minimises the environmental footprint of both the building itself and its future operations. To achieve this, the company committed to using eco-friendly renewable materials and implementing state-of-the-art systems for energy efficiency, water conservation, and environmental stewardship.

A central aspect of the project is the comprehensive monitoring of energy consumption, water usage, traffic flows, and greenspace impacts. The sustainability plan includes installing solar panels onsite to meet a significant portion of the hotel's energy needs. The company also aims to minimise electricity consumption and waste through advanced lighting, ventilation, and infrastructure systems. To further enhance the project's environmental performance, the design incorporates large-scale rainwater collection and management. This integrated approach seeks to optimise water resource use while reducing pressure on local water supplies.

The project's origins date back to 2015, marking the start of a complex, multiyear process that exemplifies the lengthy timelines often associated with transformative urban redevelopment. The initial phase, from 2015 to 2023, involved intensive planning, stakeholder engagement, and regulatory compliance. This extended preliminary period aligns with the critical early stage identified by urban development scholars as essential for building social licence and institutional support. The project's chronological progression can be understood through four key phases.

1. Initial Development (2015–2023): Concept development, preliminary investor engagement, initial stakeholder consultations, drafting of architectural and environmental plans, and emergence of environmental opposition and legal challenges.
2. Planning and Approval (2023–2024): Refinement of project scope to the current 30-room configuration, integration of enhanced sustainability features, intensive stakeholder dialogue and plan modifications, and navigation of regulatory requirements and environmental assessments.

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3. Implementation (2024–2026 planned): Site preparation and demolition is scheduled for winter 2024, construction is planned for 2025–2026, progressive implementation of environmental management systems, and staged infrastructure development.
4. Operations (projected from 2027 onwards): Anticipated hotel opening in the summer of 2027, ongoing environmental monitoring, community engagement programs, and long-term value creation.

This multiyear timeline offers valuable insights into the realities of complex urban regeneration. This illustrates how initial concepts must evolve significantly in response to stakeholder inputs and regulatory processes. The project's eight-year journey from initial vision to implementation approval highlights the importance of 'temporal resilience'; that is, the ability to maintain development momentum while adapting to emerging stakeholder concerns and regulatory requirements.

The project's present status represents a pivotal point at which conceptual plans must be translated into concrete actions. The legal challenges initiated by environmental groups have acted not only as hurdles but also as catalysts for strengthening the project's green building credentials and stakeholder engagement. This dynamic shows how opposition can ultimately bolster urban regeneration efforts by compelling a deeper consideration of sustainability priorities and community needs.

The planned implementation timeline from 2024 to 2027 reflects an ambitious but well-structured approach to project execution. This schedule was designed to balance efficient progress while minimising disruption to the surrounding community. The phasing strategy aligns with urban regeneration best practices, where careful sequencing helps manage stakeholder expectations and optimises the impact over both the short and long term.

In summary, this case study offers a representative example of a complex stakeholder landscape and extended timelines that characterise major urban regeneration projects. This demonstrates how sustainability, community engagement, and regulatory compliance intertwine to shape project outcomes. As the initiative moves from planning to implementation, it will continue to offer valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of transformative urban redevelopment.

5. Findings

The analysis of the Tuscany urban regeneration project applies three integrated analytical frameworks: SROI analysis, stakeholder salience assessment, and temporal impact mapping based on Saenz's matrix. These frameworks reveal the intricate dynamics of social value creation, evolution, and distribution across the life cycle of urban regeneration interventions. By combining quantitative measurement, stakeholder influence mapping, and lifecycle-based outcome analysis, the findings highlight the interplay between multi-stakeholder collaboration and the mechanisms underpinning sustainable urban transformation. This integrated analysis directly addresses the study's three research questions by demonstrating how SIA methodologies facilitate stakeholder mediation (RQ1), revealing the critical role of timing in SIA effectiveness (RQ2), and illustrating how lifecycle integration enhances SIA performance in urban regeneration contexts (RQ3).

The SROI analysis identifies 55 distinct outcome areas supported by 57 indicators and 59 financial proxies, underscoring the multidimensional nature of value creation. This granular approach maps the direct and indirect impacts across stakeholder

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groups and project phases. The project's projected social value amounted to €66,225,518 from an initial investment of €43,202,687, yielding an SROI of 1.53. This ratio suggests that for every euro invested, the project generates €1.53 in social value, adjusted for critical factors, such as deadweight, attribution, and drop-off. This comprehensive value mapping demonstrates how SIA methodologies contribute to stakeholder mediation (RQ1) by providing a common framework for understanding diverse impact expectations across stakeholder groups.

Table I. Outcome types and distribution

Type	Percentage	Key characteristics
Hard	36%	Quantitatively measurable changes (employment figures, infrastructure development)
Soft	33%	Qualitative improvements (community cohesion, stakeholder relationships)
Cashable	31%	Direct financial value or cost savings (operational efficiencies, revenue generation)

Source: Authors' elaboration

Table I summarises the distribution of outcomes across three typologies using the Oxford GO Lab framework: hard (36%), soft (33%), and cashable (31%), reflecting a balanced approach to urban regeneration. Hard outcomes capture quantifiable and measurable impacts, including employment generation, infrastructure development, and energy consumption reduction, providing concrete evidence of economic and physical contributions. Soft outcomes encompassed qualitative improvements, such as enhanced community cohesion, strengthened stakeholder relationships, and improved public space perceptions, illustrating a project's ability to foster social capital and collaborative networks. Cashable outcomes signify direct financial benefits, including cost savings, revenue generation, and increased property values, aligned with the fiscal sustainability goals for both public and private stakeholders. This balanced distribution across outcome types reveals how integrated SIA approaches address heterogeneous stakeholder expectations, facilitating mediation by acknowledging diverse value perspectives within a single evaluative framework.

The coexistence of soft and cashable outcomes reflects the project's capacity to address heterogeneous stakeholder expectations, though it also raises questions about the visibility and prioritisation of social impacts when measured alongside financial indicators (Nicholls, 2018).

The analysis also revealed five macro-outcome areas, each representing a distinct contribution to the project's overall impact. Table II illustrates this distribution: Employment outcomes were dominant, constituting 57% of the total impact. These include direct job creation within hotel operations, indirect employment through supply chain development, and skill enhancement programs designed to improve local workforce capacities. Urban Regeneration & Viability (17%) reflect physical and spatial improvements, such as enhanced pedestrian pathways, sustainable transport solutions, and upgraded traffic management systems. Sustainable Community outcomes (13%) capture the project's impact on social cohesion and well-being as evidenced

European Journal of Social Impact and Circular Economy - ISSN: 2704-9906
DOI: 10.13135/2704-9906/11830 Published by University of Turin http://www.ojs.unito.it/index.php/ejsice/index

by expanded recreational spaces, community-driven programs, and strengthened local networks. Economic Growth outcomes (9%) include market stimulation, tourism revenue generation, and business development initiatives. Although Environmental outcomes accounted for only 4%, their strategic integration amplified sustainability efforts through renewable energy installations, rainwater-harvesting systems, and biodiversity enhancements, thereby linking environmental stewardship to broader social and economic objectives.

Table II. Distribution of macro outcome areas

Area	Frequency	Primary impact indicators
Employment	57%	Job creation, skill development, local economic participation
Urban Regeneration & Viability	17%	Infrastructure development, spatial connectivity
Sustainable Community	13%	Social cohesion, community engagement
Economic Growth	9%	Business development, market activity
Environment	4%	Environmental protection, sustainability initiatives

Source: Authors' elaboration

This asymmetry between environmental and employment-related outcomes reflects a common trade-off in regeneration efforts: economic imperatives tend to dominate in early implementation phases, potentially overshadowing long-term environmental commitments (Ciroth et al., 2011; Bottero et al., 2018). This temporal imbalance illustrates the critical importance of timing in SIA effectiveness (RQ2): early-phase stakeholder engagement prioritised employment concerns, shaping the overall value distribution and demonstrating how the timing of SIA application influences which outcomes receive emphasis. The cross-analysis between SROI outcomes and stakeholder dynamics reveals how different value types align with stakeholder power configurations. Stakeholder salience analysis guided by Mitchell et al.'s (1997) framework revealed the complex power dynamics and evolving roles of key actors. Project development companies have emerged as definitive stakeholders, leveraging their substantial investment capacity (€43,202,687), regulatory legitimacy, and project timelines to shape outcomes across dimensions. Municipal authorities and regional governments acted as dominant stakeholders, exercising influence through regulatory oversight and democratic mandates and ensuring alignment with public infrastructure and accessibility goals. Environmental agencies, also classified as dominant stakeholders, have extended their roles beyond regulatory enforcement to proactive advocacy for sustainability, shaping outcomes such as greenspace preservation, energy efficiency, and biodiversity protection. This stakeholder configuration directly correlates with the SROI outcome distribution: definitive stakeholders (development companies) drove employment outcomes (57% of total impact), while dominant stakeholders (municipal and environmental authorities) influenced infrastructure and environmental outcomes, demonstrating how stakeholder salience determines impact materialization. Table III presents the full stakeholder categorisation. This layered configuration of power

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and legitimacy underscores how stakeholder positioning directly affects which impacts materialise, and how priorities evolve in contested phases of project implementation.

Table III. Stakeholders according to salience mode.

Stakeholders	**Role**	**Power**	**Legitimacy**	**Urgency**	**Salience level**	**Category**
Private company created for the project by an international investment company	Investor	x	x	x	On hold	Definitive
Municipalities	Enabler	x	x		On hold	Dominating
Residents	Target			x	Latent	Applicants
Hotel guests	Target			x	Latent	Applicants
Hotel employees	Workers			x	Latent	Applicants
Tuscany region	Enabler	x	x		On hold	Dominating
Environmental superintendence	Enabler	x	x		On hold	Dominating
MIBAC – Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities	Enabler	x	x		On hold	Dominating
Associations	Interest group			x	Latent	Applicants
Company that manages the port	Enabler	x	x		On hold	Dominating
Engineering company	Designer	x	x	x	Important	Definitive
Architecture and design company specialised in complex buildings	Designer	x	x	x	Important	Definitive
Designer team	Designer	x	x	x	Important	Definitive

Source: Authors' elaboration

As the project evolved, the latent stakeholders, including residents and future hotel employees, experienced significant shifts in salience. Initial concerns about environmental and social disruptions transitioned into active engagement and the co-creation of outcomes, such as employment opportunities and improved community amenities. Environmental associations, which were initially latent, demonstrated their capacity to drive significant changes through legal interventions that led to key environmental design modifications, highlighting the fluidity of stakeholder influence. Enabling stakeholders such as port management companies facilitates the integration of transport and connectivity solutions and amplifies economic and social outcomes through collaboration. Definitive stakeholders, including design and engineering firms, play pivotal roles in integrating technological innovation with local cultural elements and sustainability priorities, ensuring that project outcomes are aligned with regional identity and values.

Temporal impact mapping provides the clearest evidence for addressing RQ2 and RQ3. Temporal impact mapping contextualised these dynamics across the awareness (2015–2023), implementation (2024–2026), and use (2027 onwards) phases, revealing how the outcomes emerged and evolved over time. Table IV shows the phase-wise distribution of outcomes. This temporal analysis demonstrates that timing plays a decisive role in SIA effectiveness (RQ2): early-phase application during

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the awareness stage generated 23 outcomes and enabled project modifications, while later implementation would have reduced SIA's conflict-mediation potential. During the awareness phase, intensive stakeholder engagement generated 23 outcomes, including 12 social impacts, which shaped the project trajectory through modifications, such as reduced hotel capacity and enhanced environmental features. These modifications illustrate how lifecycle thinking integration enhances SIA effectiveness (RQ3) by enabling adaptive responses to emerging stakeholder concerns across project phases. The implementation phase recorded the highest concentration of economic outcomes (15), driven by construction activities, supply chain engagement, and activation of investment flows. In the use phase, the project exhibited a more balanced distribution of outcomes, with social (10), economic (12), and environmental (5) impacts reflecting operational maturity and sustained multidimensional value creation. The relative delay in environmental outcomes reflects both planning constraints and the subordinate position of ecological priorities in stakeholder negotiations—a finding aligned with Saenz's (2021) observations on outcome sequencing and institutional inertia.

Table IV. Distribution of outcomes across project lifecycle stages

Lifecycle stage	Social impact type	Number of outcomes
Awareness	Social	12
	Economic	8
	Environmental	3
Implementation	Social	8
	Economic	15
	Environmental	4
Use	Social	10
	Economic	12
	Environmental	5
End	Social	5
	Economic	6
	Environmental	2

Source: Authors' elaboration

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Although environmental outcomes were numerically fewer, their integration with other value dimensions amplified their impact. Features such as energy-efficient systems and rainwater harvesting provide operational cost savings, environmental conservation benefits, and community acceptance, demonstrating Emerson's (2003) concept of blended value creation in which distinct value streams mutually reinforce and magnify. The relatively constant presence of environmental outcomes across phases highlights a project's commitment to sustainability, supporting Ciroth et al.'s (2011) emphasis on lifecycle-integrated environmental considerations.

Stakeholder relationships evolve dynamically across project phases. Environmental associations, initially adversarial, transitioned to collaborative roles, influencing sustainability features and aligning themselves with broader project goals. To ensure community-centric outcomes, municipal authorities expanded their influence from regulatory compliance to active participation in infrastructure design. Collaboration between design firms and local stakeholders generated innovations, such as expanded rainwater systems, that supported both operational needs and community green spaces, fostering shared value creation across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. These collaborative innovations illustrate how stakeholder-led adjustments can simultaneously serve operational efficiency, environmental resilience, and social acceptance—key components of integrated regeneration (Arena et al., 2015; Nicholls, 2018).

The integration of these analytical frameworks reveals the sophisticated mechanisms that drive social value creation in urban regeneration. The project's ability to balance diverse stakeholder interests, adapt through temporal insights, and generate a broad spectrum of impacts underscores the transformative potential of strategic urban interventions. However, the concentration of value in certain dimensions (e.g., employment) at specific phases also suggests the need for stronger institutional mechanisms to rebalance attention across social, environmental, and financial priorities over time.

This analysis highlights the importance of life cycle thinking, multi-stakeholder engagement, and systemic alignment in maximising public value and fostering sustainable urban regeneration. This multidimensional approach to value assessment reflects emerging trends in social responsibility measurements. Das and Uma Rao (2013) highlighted that performance evaluation in socially oriented projects requires frameworks that can capture both quantitative and qualitative social impacts across different stakeholder groups.

6. Discussion: Advancing Urban Regeneration Evaluation

This study addressed three research questions concerning the role of social impact assessment (SIA) in urban regeneration: how SIA can support stakeholder mediation; how timing affects its ability to do so; and how integrating lifecycle thinking enhances its relevance. The most important findings demonstrate that: SIA, when operationalised through stakeholder salience analysis and temporal mapping, does more than quantify outcomes—it functions as an infrastructure for negotiation and realignment. First, SIA's mediation potential is evidenced by the project's early application which surfaced latent conflicts and supported iterative redesign, illustrating its mediating potential. Second, timing emerged as the most critical factor: the shifting salience of actors and outcomes across project phases confirmed the need for adaptive engagement strategies, with early-phase application generating 23 outcomes and enabling project modifications that prevented conflicts. Third, lifecycle thinking

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integration proved essential: by embedding lifecycle thinking into SROI, the study captured how social, economic, and environmental value unfold and interact over time, enabling a longitudinal and multidimensional perspective on impact creation that revealed temporal interdependencies previously invisible in static approaches.

Theoretical Contribution 1: Dynamic Stakeholder Salience Integration.

This research makes a multifaceted contribution to urban regeneration literature by emphasising the dynamic interplay between stakeholder salience, lifecycle thinking, and social value creation.

However, unlike traditional stakeholder theories, which treat stakeholder influence as relatively static (Freeman, 1984), this study highlights the evolving salience of power, legitimacy, and urgency attributes across project phases. This dynamic perspective aligns with Crosby and Bryson's (2005) concept of a 'shared-power world', underscoring the need for flexible governance structures in complex, multi-stakeholder interventions.

Theoretical Contribution 2: Temporal Value Construction Framework.

Building on Arvidson et al.'s (2013) conceptualisation of social impact as a social construction, this study demonstrates how value interpretations shift temporally across life cycle stages. For instance, stakeholder groups initially focused on potential risks during the awareness phase and transitioned to emphasising tangible benefits during the implementation and use phases. These findings align with Dentoni et al.'s (2016) assertion that cross-sector partnerships must adapt over time to maintain strategic alignment and collaboration. Furthermore, the interplay of hard, soft, and cashable outcomes reflects Emerson's (2003) blended value proposition, providing empirical evidence of how different forms of value interact to reinforce each other across temporal dimensions.

Theoretical Contribution 3: Lifecycle-Informed Impact Assessment.

The research also advances lifecycle assessment principles (Jørgensen et al., 2008; Weidema, 2006) by offering a framework that systematically captures temporal interdependencies among outcomes. By integrating life cycle thinking with stakeholder salience analysis, this study bridges a critical gap in traditional SROI methodologies (Nicholls, 2017, 2018), offering new pathways for evaluating complex social interventions.

Practical Contribution 1: Process-Oriented Evaluation Framework.

This contribution gains further nuance when contrasted with recent empirical literature. Tate et al. (2023), for instance, demonstrate the promise of SROI for evaluating regeneration outcomes in real settings, but also document its fragility when confronted with sparse or fragmented data. Unlike their study, which emphasises final outcomes, our framework brings into focus the processual dimension—how salience and value attribution co-evolve—thus offering a dynamic rather than static reading of social return.

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Practical Contribution 2: Integrated Stakeholder Analysis Tools.

Wang et al. (2022) apply social network analysis to map stakeholder influence in urban regeneration. While effective in tracing relational dynamics, their approach lacks a normative frame for evaluating which actors matter and when. In contrast, the salience-based method adopted here not only maps actors but qualifies their roles over time through the integration with impact trajectories.

Practical Contribution 3: Dynamic Governance Architecture.

Bottero et al. (2018) use PROMETHEE to expose the difficulty of managing trade-offs between economic, environmental, and social priorities. While insightful in supporting decision-making, their framework remains decision-centric and lacks the backward link to stakeholder dynamics. The current study complements this by situating trade-offs within governance processes and stakeholder configurations, making distributional tensions both visible and accountable. In sum, this study moves beyond technical or descriptive applications of SROI by showing how value can be structured and interpreted within a dynamic governance environment. This contributes both to theory (integrating lifecycle thinking and salience) and to practice (designing more reflexive evaluation architectures). Moreover, this work reinforces the insights of Arena et al. (2015) on aligning measurement systems with organisational logics, and complements Grieco et al. (2015) by advancing toward a cluster-crossing framework that combines stakeholder participation, monetisation, and lifecycle orientation.

Based on these theoretical and practical contributions, the case study evidence provides actionable insights for practitioners implementing integrated SIA frameworks in urban regeneration contexts. In Appendix A there are implementation guidelines that synthesise the key findings into operational protocols that address timing, stakeholder salience management, and conflict mediation strategies across project phases.

7. Conclusion, Limitations and Future Directions

This study's central contribution lies in demonstrating that integrated SIA frameworks can effectively mediate stakeholder dynamics in urban regeneration through three key mechanisms.

Returning to the three research questions that guided this study: SIA methodologies contribute to stakeholder mediation through comprehensive value mapping that addresses heterogeneous priorities (RQ1). Timing proves critical, with early-phase application generating 23 outcomes and enabling project modifications that prevent conflicts (RQ2). Lifecycle thinking integration captures temporal interdependencies and enables adaptive responses unavailable to static approaches (RQ3).

Study limitations and their implications for future research require careful consideration. As a single-case design situated in a specific regional and institutional context, its findings are not immediately generalisable. The framework's transferability faces significant risks in contexts with less collaborative governance structures. The Tuscan institutional environment features established multi-stakeholder dialogue traditions and regional development frameworks that facilitate the salience-based approach. In contexts with more adversarial stakeholder relations, fragmented municipal authority, or limited participatory democracy traditions, the framework's conflict-mediation effectiveness may be substantially reduced. Power imbalances may

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prevent meaningful stakeholder engagement, while weak institutional capacity could undermine the temporal mapping essential to the approach. While triangulation across document analysis, stakeholder interviews, and proxy modeling increases robustness, the central role of one lead actor may introduce narrative bias. Additionally, the focus on a single project type (hotel conversion) limits transferability to other regeneration contexts such as mixed-use developments or social housing projects. Future research should pursue three specific directions to advance this field. First, comparative studies across different urban contexts (post-industrial cities, developing urban areas, historic districts) would test the framework's applicability and reveal context-specific adaptations needed. Second, longitudinal tracking of regeneration projects from conception to post-completion phases would provide deeper insights into how stakeholder salience and value creation evolve over extended timeframes, potentially revealing cycles or patterns not visible in single-phase studies. Third, methodological innovations should focus on developing digital tools and platforms that can support real-time stakeholder engagement and adaptive evaluation, potentially incorporating artificial intelligence to identify emerging stakeholder concerns and predict conflict points before they fully materialize.

Roadmap for Comparative Multi-Case Research. A systematic research programme should prioritise: (1) Cross-contextual validation across governance regimes—comparing collaborative versus adversarial municipal environments to establish boundary conditions and adaptation requirements; (2) Sectoral diversity testing—applying the framework across hotel conversions, mixed-use developments, social housing, and infrastructure projects to identify sector-specific modifications; (3) Institutional capacity assessment—examining how varying levels of municipal expertise, stakeholder organisation capacity, and participatory democracy traditions affect framework implementation; (4) Temporal scaling—tracking multiple projects through complete lifecycles to establish patterns of stakeholder salience evolution and value creation trajectories; (5) Methodological refinement—developing standardised protocols for stakeholder identification, salience assessment, and outcome mapping that maintain contextual sensitivity while enabling cross-case comparison.

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APPENDIX A: Implementation Guidelines for Policy-makers and Urban Developers

Phase 1: Early Stakeholder Mapping (Awareness Stage)

- Conduct comprehensive stakeholder identification using power-legitimacy-urgency analysis
- Prioritize engagement with high-salience actors (municipal authorities, environmental associations, community groups)
- Apply SROI outcome mapping during project design phase to surface latent conflicts early
- Establish baseline stakeholder expectations across social, economic, and environmental dimensions

Phase 2: Adaptive Engagement Strategy (Implementation Stage)

- Monitor stakeholder salience shifts as project progresses through lifecycle phases
- Adjust engagement intensity based on evolving power-legitimacy-urgency configurations
- Implement iterative project modifications based on stakeholder feedback mechanisms
- Track outcome distribution to ensure balanced value creation (target: ~35% hard, 30% soft, 35% cashable)

Phase 3: Temporal Value Tracking (Use Stage)

- Establish monitoring systems for long-term impact measurement across stakeholder groups
- Document value attribution evolution through systematic data collection protocols
- Maintain stakeholder dialogue platforms to capture changing priorities and concerns
- Use lifecycle thinking to anticipate and manage temporal interdependencies

Critical Success Factors:

- Early-phase SIA application generates 40% more outcomes than late-phase implementation
- Municipal leadership capacity essential for coordinating multi-stakeholder dynamics
- Environmental integration requires dedicated technical expertise and community liaison
- Conflict-mediation effectiveness depends on transparent value distribution mechanisms

APPENDIX B: Outcome (55)

Increased quality and usage of water	Decreased noise pollution
Rainwater reuse for green areas	Decreased wasted time to find a parking spot
Reduction in consumption and energy waste	Better access to alternative transport service
Reduction in energy waste consumption	Decreased incidents and road rage
New trees and green areas near the hotel	Increased tourists in the port during the summer
Hotel waste treatment	People can walk and be healthy
CO2 reduction from a reduction in room waste	People and tourist can know better the place in which they are
CO2 reduction due to better air-conditioning	Increased access to information about local events
Collective savings due to resource scarcity	Increased capacity to promote educational activities near the hotel area
CO2 reduction from a reduction in food waste	Promotion of respectful behaviour about the environment
Reduction in carbon emission and km for food transit	Increased social inclusion and customer satisfaction
CO2 reduction due to reduced oil consumption	Increased capacity to practice sports and other physical activities

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DOI: 10.13135/2704-9906/11830 Published by University of Turin http://www.ojs.unito.it/index.php/ejsice/index

New seasonal workers for managing the info point	Being more relaxed and healthier
Working positions permanently opened	Change perception in green spaces
New seasonal workers for managing the building site (full-time)	Better home-work route
New seasonal workers for managing the building site (part-time)	Events and activities in the park
Reduced public expenditure on unemployment subsidy	Cultural activities in the park
Young workers entering the job market	Being more relaxed when outside in appropriate places
New seasonal workers for managing the restaurant	Schools can promote outdoor activities and lessons
Working positions permanently opened (restaurant)	Feeling safe outside lead to increased outdoor habits
Working positions permanently opened (bar)	More equilibrated lunch at the workplace
New seasonal workers for managing the bar	Better perception of the hotel's objectives
Increased possibility to work near home	Increased consciousness about food waste
Young workers entering the job market	Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables
Working positions permanently opened for managing the hotel	Increased spending in the local market
New seasonal workers for managing the hotel	Reduced spending for not biological food
Working positions permanently opened for managing the shuttle service	Increased financial value of properties
Decreased time and costs to transport materials	

Source: Authors' elaboration

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DOI: 10.13135/2704-9906/11830 Published by University of Turin http://www.ojs.unito.it/index.php/ejsice/index

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DOI: 10.13135/2704-9906/11830 Published by University of Turin http://www.ojs.unito.it/index.php/ejsice/index

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