

Regeneration as a Tool for Enhancing Vitality of Urban Spaces

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Abstract The recent discussion regarding contemporary urban regeneration has underlined its increasing role to revive cities. In the mid-19th century, the process of urban regeneration commenced through upgrading the already built areas, particularly where there is evidence of urban deterioration. This study by using qualitative grounded theory, hypothesized that attaining an effective urban regeneration involves an increasing quality of life and vitality. The study revealed that a successful urban regeneration involves social, environmental and economic aspects which have been neglected in several cases of urban regeneration policies. Moreover, contemporary urban regeneration can rectify the mistakes of past policies and improve the quality of urban spaces to where people want to live. In doing so, the study concludes that to have a successful urban regeneration policy, different dimensions of urban design need to be considered. Furthermore, the current study examines the ways in which urban regeneration is changing the cities and neighborhoods.

Keywords Urban Regeneration, Vitality, Dimensions of Urban Design

1. Introduction

All concern for social inclusion in place of exclusion, re-establishment of social function in the place of dysfunction, economic revitalization where it was lost; the restoration of quality and ecological balance in the

environment refer to urban regeneration. Therefore, Couch and Fraser [7] pointed out that urban regeneration is an endeavor activity within the horizon of planning and management of existing urban areas rather than development of new urbanization.

Accordingly, urban regeneration adduces the reconstruction, recreating, and renewal of existing urban areas. It calls attention to adapting new approaches in reconstructing certain areas. According to Smith [24] and Roberts [18], urban regeneration is a comprehensive and integrated approach which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the physical, economic, social and environmental conditions of an area that has been subject to change. They highlighted very salient features of urban regeneration with social, economic, and environmental imperatives. Within this context, Lichfield [14] provided further insights and offered an improved understanding of declining processes that requires regeneration and awareness of the know-how involved. Other authors such as Donnison [8] have stated that regeneration is a coordinated and involved approach to solve problems which focus on areas where the problems are most intense". Donnison [8] and Lichfield [14] went further to argue that the rationale for concentrating on the problematic areas is to maintain the required standard for improvement. Complementing these definitions, Sönmez [25] observed that urban regeneration is a spatial, economic and social intervention. On the contrary, however, Couch [5] and Hausner [13] saw it as simply a succinct synergy of ad hoc and fragmented physical projects for wider city development.

Considering above mentioned, it is needful to point out

that vitality has been the missing link in urban regeneration and related policy formulations. Thus, scholars have attempted to embed the notion of vitality in the process of urban design. This study, by considering that urban vitality is the most rudimentary factor for attaining the quality of life in the city, stated that urban regeneration policies should be developed in such a way as to encompass all the main indicators shaping vitality in the urban environment. The statement developed in this study will help urban policy makers reconsider different dimensions of urban design in conjunction with other dimensions of urban vitality. It will further assist urban designers in the process of decision-making become involved with developing a comprehensive knowledge of how to design vital urban spaces.

2. Urban Regeneration

Regeneration is the primary instrument of Western cities to inflect the extant urban form. The term is not only peculiar to urbanism but it shares biological and religious nuances. In the biological sciences, urban regeneration pertains to the re-creation of organic life while it invokes rebirth in the region. However, both expressions related to the field of urbanism. The prefix 're', has a Latin extraction and it is inseparably linked with connotations of a new life for the targeted areas, depending on the context and definition of regeneration [2]. In Brazil, for instance, (where regeneration has been coined revitalization), it is often used to denote the conservation of historic monuments and sites (Brito cited in Smith [22]). In Britain, regeneration has seemingly shifted from a regimented and special targeted conservation-based approach to the management of whole city areas [19].

In the urban discourse, regeneration has been viewed as a multi-sided paradigm. In this regard, Roberts & Sykes [18] posits that "urban regeneration" is an inclusive long-term approach towards improving the condition of a declined area. Couch (cited in Dalla Longa [6]) pointed out that targeted urban regeneration remains a solution to the challenges that are inextricably linked to globalization such as ecological and environmental retardations imbalance, exclusions, as well as economic and social and problems. Evans & Shaw [10] considered Urban Regeneration as the transformation of a declined area to a vital one. According to them, this will involve enhancement of the quality of life, which will further involve a trade-off in economic, environmental, and social needs. Contextualizing the

discussion within the domain of urban policy, Smith [21] viewed regeneration as a break-through in achieving specific objectives or goals in a declining area. Bianchini [3] opined that urban regeneration is a complex concept, involving economic, environmental, social, symbolic, cultural, and political aspects. Thus, regeneration as an integrated process is much rooted than minor adjustments suggesting coordinated area transformation than mere short-term renovations.

Urban regeneration policies since the 1970s underwent major changes. The first wave manifested as extensive physical changes. Indeed, it is a statement of fact that regeneration was previously associated with economic imperatives, without the strong need for affiliation with cultural development. Nonetheless, as more sectors begin to benefit from regeneration strategies, the term became more closely associated with the notion of community development.

Presently, relevant organizations have deliberated the socio-cultural as well as socio-economic footprints of regeneration, and although they have not been able to fully achieve a standardized measure for evaluation, Smith [23] pointed out that shifts in priorities have been observed. Peter & Sykes (cited in Balsas [1]) also observed an ongoing progress in urban regeneration from the rebuilding of the 1950s to the revitalization in the 60s and renewal in the 70s to redevelopment in the 80s and finally, to the regeneration in the 90s [1]. Along this line, it is necessary to highlight here that the socio-economic changes of the 1980s gradually took away the attention of urban planners from managing city growth to dealing with economic crisis [31]. Overall, urban regeneration policies can be classified into four main waves as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

From Figure 1, it is obvious that from the 1990s, onward urban regeneration policies become integrated with social, economic, and physical aspects. Consequently, Roberts & Sykes [18] maintained that regeneration was associated with the 1990s particularly when potential methods (then) were applied to resolve emerging problems of declining areas [16]. These "potential methods" were frequently the outcome of vitalizing (usually by bringing new activities) to the declining area. The 1990s was an era that promoted vitality of regenerated urban areas using economic, social and physical aspects of urban life as tools. From Figure 1, it can also be adduced that the fourth wave of urban regeneration encompassed all dimensions of the third wave. Policies advanced from the fourth wave considers as up-to-the-minute task during urban regeneration process.

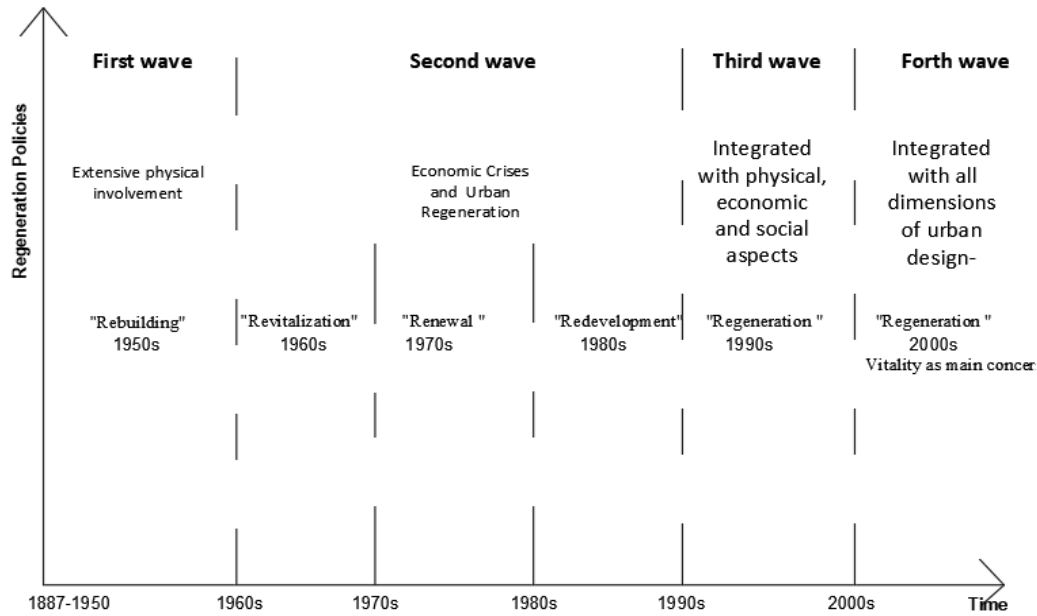


Figure 1. Four main waves in urban regeneration policy

Table 1. Different aspects of Urban Regeneration [23]

<i>Regeneration as . . .</i>				
<i>a 'panacea' for economic decline</i>	<i>a tool for social development</i>	<i>physical improvement</i>	<i>aestheticisation or beautification</i>	<i>a political or image-enhancing tool</i>
Job creation	Housing	Conservation	Landscaping	Flagship buildings
Attraction of investment	Education	Environmental protection	Public art	Mega-events
Tourism development	Entertainment	Renovation	Animation	Branding

Urban regeneration refers to programs or policy intervention, which may be at different geographical scales to eliminate problems associated with declining areas. Smith [23] observed that motivation for implementing urban regeneration could be wide-ranging from intention to attract tourist by promoting city image and developing infrastructure building as catalyst for further development. However, it should be considered a regeneration scheme that is sustainable at city scale may not be sustainable at the local scale, while what may enhance the economic vitality of an area may damage it environmentally [27]. Table 1 summarize different aspects of urban regeneration.

In addition to the approaches and motivations for regeneration, there are other coexisting and sometimes mixed approaches associated with different themes include: cultural industries development; encouragement and subsidy; health or community-based development; flagship or property-led projects; image reconstruction; provision of infrastructure; area-based improvements; business-driven interests and developing urban design frameworks [29] [4]; [20]; [11]. Each of these approaches is defined by specific local governance arrangements. Following these, Roberts

[18] stated five main purposes of urban regeneration:

1. To obtain quality of life and economic development.
2. To correspond to urban needs.
3. To establish a link between social deprivation and urban physical condition.
4. To show the significance of urban policy application.
5. To sustain the best use of urban land.

There are other cases however where urban regeneration is solely aimed at providing short-term physical solutions to induce gentrification [32]. Gentrification was born with urban regeneration in the 1960s in Western countries [30]. In respect of this, urban regeneration can be classified in a plethora of ways, however for this study, Turok's [26] classification of 'place', 'people' and 'business' seems applicable. In terms of people, regeneration aims to enhance skills, aspirations and capacities to provide the needed advantage for participating in and benefiting from opportunities. Amongst others, regeneration further aims to enhance competitiveness, business performance, the economic well-being and prosperity of immediate neighborhoods by improving the physical appeal of the place.

Aspects of urban regeneration can be classified into the following mutually exclusive but interconnected ranges: physical, environmental, governance-related, economic and social issues. Successful urban regeneration, especially within local context, recognizes the link between these aspects. With these considerations, the scope of urban regeneration can be lengthened over the physical environment to culture, human resources and values, and historical essence. The indicators related to the social dimension should be emphasized in urban regeneration. Moreover, urban regeneration policies should be developed in such a way as to enhance people's interaction with the environment to increase vitality. To do so it is necessary to assess the social dimension of urban regeneration. This is explained below.

2.1. The Social Dimension of Urban Regeneration

The social dimensions of urban regeneration programs are considered as an important aspect. This includes enabling an environment for social and economic opportunities, social inclusion, and reducing multiple social exclusion [33]. Indeed, according to Ginsburg [12], social regeneration is inextricably associated with the prioritization of improved delivery of welfare services in urban spaces as well as giving autonomy to local communities to act in the process of regeneration. Traditionally, social regeneration stems from a combination of efforts on places (internal investment and creation of job opportunity, community facilities and better environment) and/or people (confidence, education achievement, improving skills and health). Further, Evans [9], Ginsburg [12] and Della Spina [28] highlighted that successful social regeneration stems from policies that are designed to close-in on a plethora of social factors, which includes bottom-up approaches in the decision-making, welfare fund for the disadvantaged, and creating opportunity for sustainable means of livelihood. Considering the above mentioned, i.e. the social dimension of urban regeneration, and from a social point of view, it is obvious that vitality is the main concern of urban regeneration. Bearing in mind that people and place are two main concerns within the social dimensions / urban design framework, vitality is considered as a common objective of urban regeneration.

3. Vitality

Vitality is a "performance" aspect of urban design with a capacity to represent the interrelation between forms of places and to support the capabilities of human beings, biological requirements and functions. It is a measure to distinguish social success at urban spaces. According to Montgomery [15], vitality is an indication of intensiveness of daily pedestrian flows to which people feel lively in a place. Urban vitality brings motivation for dynamic

cultural reviews and exchange, promotes the viability of commercial investments, helps to flatten out cultural shocks and reduce crime. It has also been found to associate strongly with urban health index.

In this regard, it is obvious that vitality in a city could be enhanced if rich assortments of choices and places are there to experience and feel over different periods [17]. Accordingly, providing the undergirding of urban images, motivating factors such as street pedestrians and those in public spaces affect the use of public facilities, programs and events and foster the diversity of social composition. In addition, Barry (1988) adjudged vitality as a pointer to successful urban planning in as much as suitable design for a public space is considered a congenial apropos to the needs of its users.

Overall, an extensive qualitative study showed that there are five main classifications for urban vitality (see Table 2). To achieve successful urban regeneration policy, urban designers may need to consider all the leading dimensions of urban vitality.

Table 2. Five dimensions of urban vitality and leading factors in successful urban regeneration

Dimensions of Urban Vitality	Factors leading to a successful Urban regeneration
Cultural Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes respect and appreciation of the city and its traditions. • Handicrafts, artefacts and symbols.
Functional Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ergonomic design. • Functional design.
Social Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making vibrant society. • Developing community spirit. • Developing opportunities for involvement of wide range of lifestyles.
Environmental Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental survival. • legibility, sense of place, safety and adaptability. • Connectivity and linkage.
Economic Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agglomeration of commercial enterprises. • Market freedom, urban consumption.

Results from Table 2 reveal that vitality is a product of both the qualitative design in urban spaces of the diversity of the supported activities and the environment. From the other side, it should be noted that a more appropriate design of a public space satisfies more needs of the people.

4. Discussions

Urban regeneration is an integrated and comprehensive action aimed at providing long-term improvement to the physical, economic and social dimensions of an environment [14]. Assessment of indicators and objectives of urban vitality show that they are following the same objectives for increasing the quality of urban spaces via social, economic and environmental factors. In both approaches, "place" and "people" can distinguish the nuances toward urban development:

The “Place” on one hand, focus on urban regeneration development and aim at initiating and/or fostering economic revitalization through property development and commercial growth.

The “People” on the other hand, focus on urban regeneration by giving recourse for avoiding multiple deprivation through provision of functions for people from diverse social classification. In this way, it aims at improving accessibility and enhancing satisfaction. Hence, equity in distributions of urban public infrastructure is the dominant objective for regenerating public urban spaces by referring to people.

Effective strategies for urban vitality based on urban regeneration policy would preferably include a compromise of both “place” and ‘people’. This would provide a way-out than simply gentrifying deprived communities.

Classification from literature already discussed reveal four main approaches in urban regeneration. These are social regeneration, physical regeneration, cultural regeneration and Economic-led regeneration. In addition, in reaching the main objectives of urban regeneration, it is necessary to develop three main policies. In this regard, Place-oriented strategy mostly deals with physical improvement and environmental action. Organizational development deals with the economic revival of a district. People-oriented strategies require social support to continue. Social supports equivalent to people-oriented strategies in most cases are successfully implemented due to people’s involvement. Unlike regeneration exercises where the people are not considered. The Figure below illustrates the interrelation of the four main strategies in urban regeneration with the three main policies in urban regeneration.

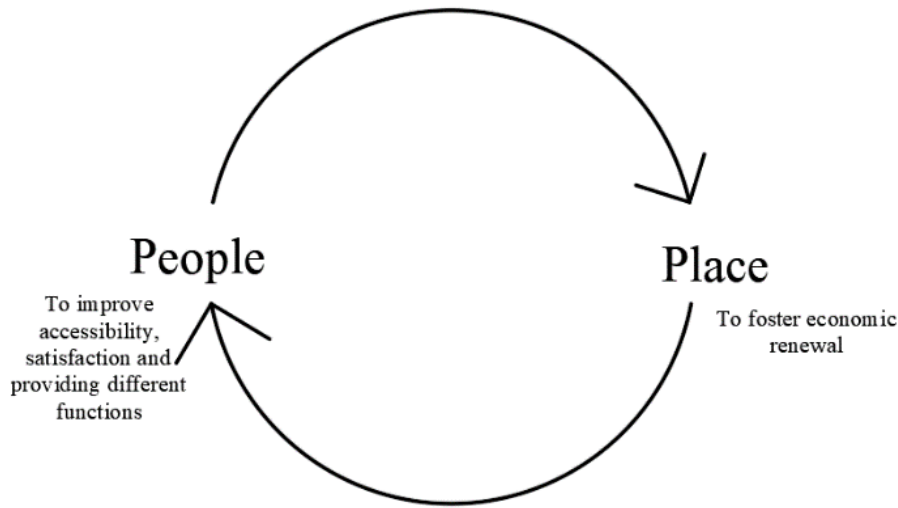


Figure 2. People and place as effective strategies for urban vitality and urban regeneration

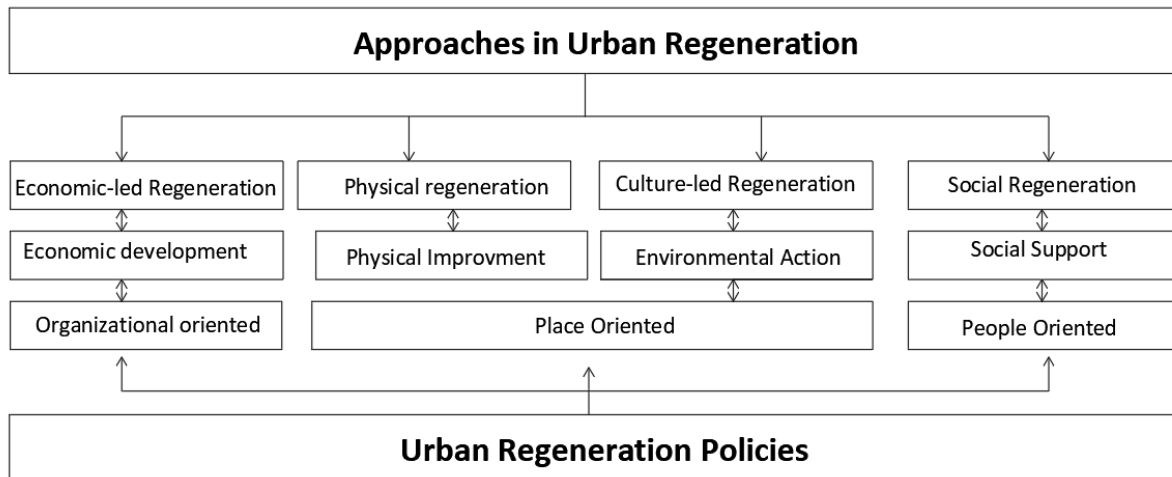


Figure 3. The interrelation between approaches in urban regeneration and urban regeneration policies

4.1. Implementing the Concept of Vitality in Urban Regulation Process

As discussed already, urban regeneration policies need to consider two main pillars, which are people and place. Fulfilling all the requirements of people and increasing the functionality of place to achieve the requirements of people for their daily activities will lead to successful urban regeneration and vitality.

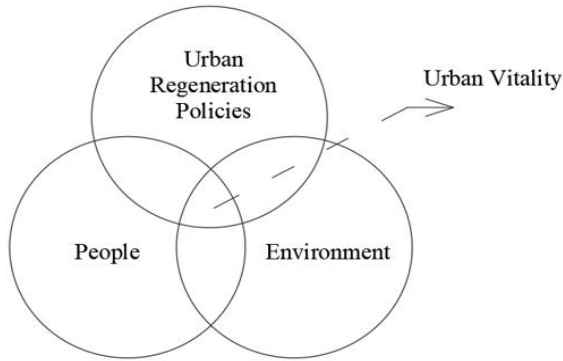


Figure 4. The common point where urban vitality emerges

Overall, urban policies should be planned in such a way as to improve the physical images of places, alleviate economic and environmental imbalance and provide a better life for people [18]. If, in a context, vitality increased, it means that urban regeneration policies have been successfully implemented. A Successful implementation of urban regeneration will pass the test of

time. This indicates that the project will survive after implementation and the potential to continually invite people will continually invigorate. Providing potentials for passive and active involvement of people in a place will also lead to increased vitality of the urban spaces. In contrast, there are some projects, which might fail through time. As a result, the rate of crime may increase. This may also lead to many social and economic problems, which has negative effects on the vitality of public urban spaces.

Overall, the Figure below reveals two prospective scenarios for urban regeneration. One may lead to failure, which is the result of unsuccessful urban regeneration policies. The other one represents successful urban regeneration, which is the result of a comprehensive implementation of urban regeneration polices. This leads to increasing vitality of urban spaces through the time.

Within declining areas, especially those characterized by blight, urban regeneration would require community networking and participation to increase the vitality of urban spaces. By comparing the five main dimensions of urban vitality with the four main approaches in urban regeneration, it is possible to conclude that every approach has a direct effect on most of the other dimensions of urban vitality. For example, as illustrated in Figure 6 below, social regeneration of urban spaces has a direct effect on economic, social, environment, cultural and functional vitality of urban spaces. Given this fact, it is obvious that the urban designer should carefully consider the four main approaches of urban regeneration to achieve a much more integrated and successful urban vitality.

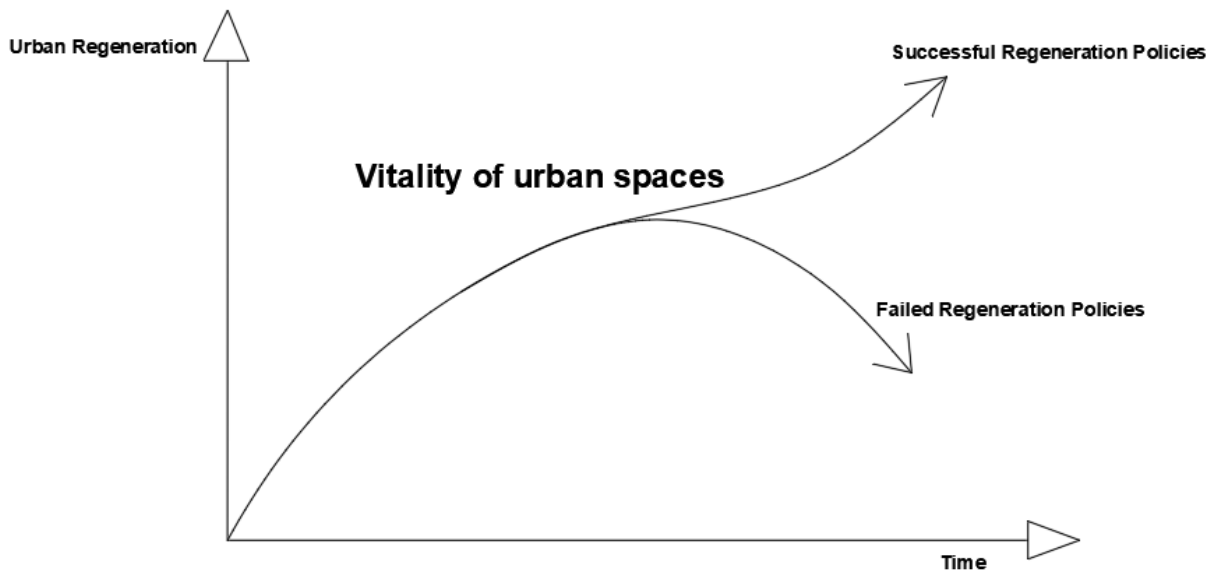


Figure 5. Success and failure of urban regeneration and vitality through

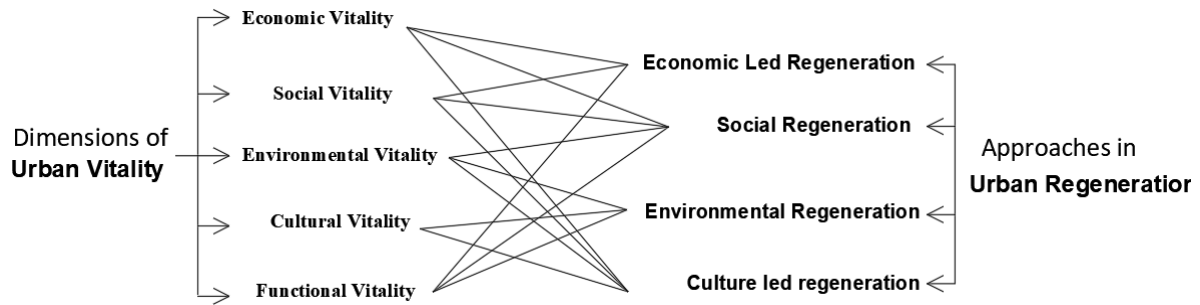


Figure 6. The interrelation between Different approached in urban regeneration and dimensions of urban vitality

5. Conclusions

This paper revealed that urban regeneration aimed at transforming places and re-constructing traditional meanings in existing socio-cultural settings. Therefore, the study posits that in a successful urban regeneration, the social and psychic meanings invoked by the elements of the urban environment are overriding and often more important than the actual physicality of the city imagery. Furthermore, this research highlighted the importance of urban regeneration policies in implementing the principles of vitality in urban environment.

The study further revealed that space-bounded activities and interactions signalize urban space vitality. Drawing from this, it follows that the vitality in each spatial unit of the city or simply space is an indication of the intensity of human activity. Generally, the study submits that urban regeneration is an intervention targeted at solving social and economic urban problems, nonetheless, the objectives of urban regeneration and employment policies relating to it are more diverse than only economic environmental or physical development.

The study also revealed vitality as the fourth wave of urban regeneration policy, starting from the 20th century. Today, it is obvious that urban regeneration policies have been developed in such a way as to increase the vitality of urban spaces. In this regard, social dimensions of urban design were considered to study the effects of vitality in the failure and success of urban regeneration.

Overall, the study disclosed that vitality is a product of qualitative design of urban spaces and assorted activities for social, economic, and environmental viability. This study tries to emphasize that urban policy makers should consider different dimensions of urban design to have a comprehensive knowledge of vital urban spaces during any process of urban regeneration. Hence, an evaluation of difference between diverse dimensions of urban design regarding the vitality of urban spaces is recommended for future research.

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Conflict of Interests

The Author declares there is no conflict of interest.

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