PROPOSAL FOR THE CALL DUT 2026

Re-Embedding Production in Neighbourhood Economies

New Working Spaces, Functional Mixity and the 15-Minute City

General information about the call

- Deadline for pre-proposal submission : 17 Nov 2026
- Deadline for full proposal submission : Feb 2027
- Project duration : 3 years
- Project start : End 2027/beginning 2028

Summary of the call's objective on 15mC topic 3

15mC topic 3: Nurture neighbourhood economies – activate innovation in local everyday offers

This topic focuses on neighbourhood economies, understood as systems of diverse local commerce and social exchange, embedded in community relationships. Such systems generate shared wealth by circulating value locally, reducing travel distances and strengthening trust, identity and resilience – while acknowledging its embeddedness in bigger city-regional systems

Key questions addressed by our proposal:

- Under what conditions can small-scale production, manufacturing and hybrid business models (e.g. co-working spaces, repair cafés, makerspaces) be successfully (re)embedded in neighbourhood economies?
- Which collaborative models between public, private and community stakeholders can enable and stabilise initiatives that strengthen local services and infrastructures?
- How can anchor institutions, community-based initiatives and hybrid business models strengthen local supply, social ties and community wealth? What is needed to synthesise, translate and scale related existing practices to other contexts?

- How do spatial planning and mobility policies interact with neighbourhood economies, and to what extent can they be applied to avoid daily trips or shift to sustainable mobility options, while enhancing local economic vitality?

Our project proposal

Neighbourhood economies are usually discussed through the lens of retail and services. This project proposes to broaden the debate by investigating how productive activities, manufacturing functions and hybrid working spaces can be re-embedded within urban neighbourhoods and contribute to the 15-minute city, functional mixity and sustainable mobility transitions.

Furthermore, it aims to highlight the contribution of such hybrid working spaces to the drive for reindustrialisation advocated by the European and national authorities. Hybrid working spaces could be of interest for hosting small manufacturing businesses, which form the backbone of the economic fabric of many regions. Recent public policies increasingly recognise hybrid economic models and innovative workspaces as drivers of local economic revitalisation, community resilience and functional mixity.

Project objectives and targets

Functional mixity is now a key driver of the revitalisation of both established and emerging urban neighbourhoods. It involves an economic aspect, including production activities compatible with the urban neighbourhood. Such productive economic activities, although often displaced to peripheral business parks, remain essential to achieving a genuine 15-minute city. These activities can reactivate vacant or underused spaces through the New Working Spaces (NeWSps) model, generating both local renewal and social cohesion.

Our research proposal lies at the intersection of three dimensions shaping the territorial development of urbanised areas through functional mixity as a common thread:

- No Net Land Take: encouraging densification and the mobilisation of vacant or underused spaces to support the implementation of the 15-minute city concept.
- Reindustrialisation: promoting the maintenance and development of economic activities within already urbanised neighbourhoods.
- New Working Spaces (NeWSps): permanent or temporary formal and informal workplaces that foster collaboration, mutual learning, knowledge sharing, and social and spatial interactions among users[1].

[1] see also Mariotti, I., Tomaz, E., Micek, G., & Mendez-Ortega, C. (20-24), Eds., Evolution of New Working Spaces: Changing Nature and Geographies, Springer

The main focus is extending the New Working Spaces perspective to productive economies, including small-scale manufacturing, makerspaces, repair activities and other hybrid economic models embedded within neighbourhoods. The project aims at identifying the factors explaining success, transferability and long-term territorial integration of these initiatives.

The objectives are as follow:

1) Understanding of the choice of location and location factors for small-scale production, manufacturing and hybrid business regarding different levels of analysis (macro and micro)
2) Measure economic, social, spatial and mobility-related impacts on neighbourhoods, inhabitants and users:
   a) Assess the impact (costs and benefits) of small-scale production, manufacturing and hybrid business models on local economy based on the following criteria:
      - Users' consumption patterns
      - Residential mobility
      - Turnover of these businesses
   b) Assess how these initiatives contribute to the implementation of the 15-minute city through functional mixity and proximity-based services.
      - Mobility measures/policies supporting the accessibility (and attractiveness) of local economic activities that influence users' travel behaviour
      - Changes in travel patterns resulting from the proximity and diversity of local economic activities
      - Role of mobility policies and public-space design as determinants of the location and development of local economic activities
3) Compare top-down and bottom-up development pathways, governance arrangements and stakeholder coalitions.

Particular attention will be given to post-industrial regions or regions in industrial transition[2] where productive activities may contribute to urban regeneration and local economic renewal. The project builds in particular on previous research, notably COST Action CA18214: *The Geography of New Working Spaces and the Impact on the Periphery*. Our office[3] is also the (co-)author of a series of recent expert studies in support of Walloon policy, focusing on third places and infrastructure for economic activities. It will then be based on the analysis of concrete case studies.

[2] See OECD (2019), Regions in Industrial Transition: Policies for People and Places, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/c76ec2a1-en.
[3] Lepur - Centre de Recherche en Sciences de la Ville, du Grand Territoire et du Milieu rural – University of Liège : https://www.lepur.uliege.be/cms/c_5622112/fr/lepur

Expected outcome and impact

The project will deliver evidence-based recommendations for integrating productive activities and hybrid workplaces into neighbourhood economies while supporting sustainable mobility and the 15-minute city agenda.

Expected outputs include a comparative typology of initiatives, policy guidelines, transferable governance models, and assessment tools for public authorities, and a series of lessons regarding the location of economic activities and public support for reindustrialisation and land planning policies.

The research will contribute to community wealth building, local economic resilience, reduced travel demand and the reuse of vacant or underutilised urban spaces.

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