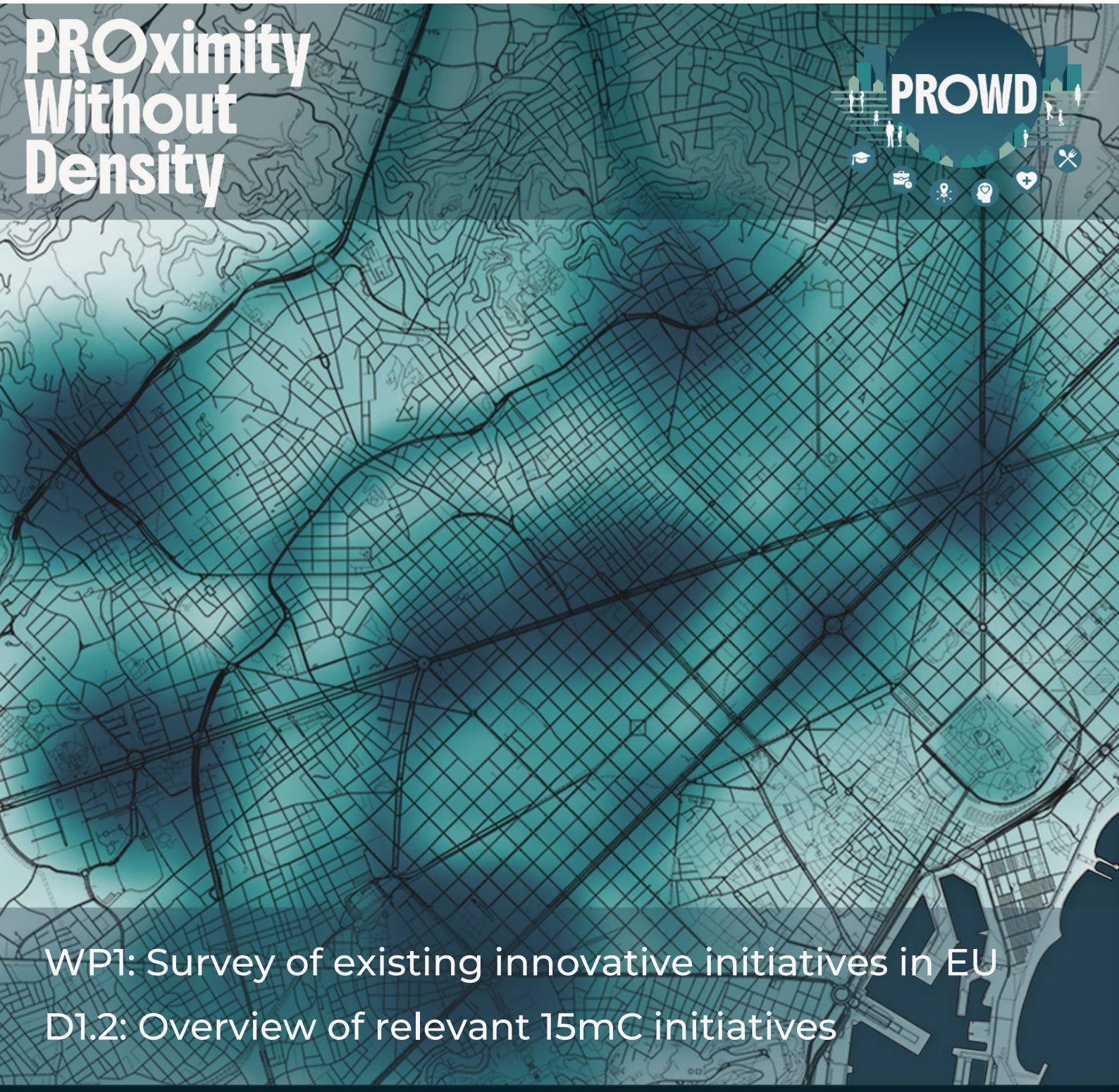
PROximity Without Density

PROWD



WP1: Survey of existing innovative initiatives in EU

D1.2: Overview of relevant 15mC initiatives

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It is acknowledged that the author made use of Notebook LM (Google, notebooklm.google.com) to highlight main ideas from the sources cited during the literature review process. Notebook LM provided information solely based on the sources indicated by the author and referenced in the body of the text.

1. Introduction

The PROWD (PROximity Without Density) project aims to re-conceptualise the 15-minute City (15mC) notion for Low-Density Urban Areas (LDUAs) within metropolitan contexts, moving beyond the typical focus on dense city cores. The project combines academic research with practical implementation, testing innovative local solutions in collaboration with residents and stakeholders in four European metropolitan areas: Rome, Lisbon, Bucharest and Vilnius.

Deliverable 1.1 served as a foundational literature review, providing an analytical backdrop for subsequent local developments. This review directly informs Deliverable 1.2, which involves mapping and selecting relevant 15mC initiatives, particularly *non-conventional* solutions (as defined in the methodology section below), to serve as the bedrock for the 15mC transition in the project's selected demonstration sites.

Deliverable 1.2 identified and mapped 12 innovative "lighthouse initiatives" across six European countries that apply 15-minute city principles to Low-Density Urban Areas (LDUAs). These initiatives were chosen for their relevance to LDUAs and their potential to be transferred to PROWD's demonstration sites. The initiatives represent three different LDUA typologies and include examples from all four PROWD pilot cities: Rome, Lisbon, Bucharest, and Vilnius.

Building on this, Deliverable 1.3 will provide an in-depth analysis of these 12 initiatives. The analysis will use a mixed-methods approach that combines desktop research with interviews to uncover challenges, success factors, and lessons learned. It will act as a crucial knowledge base for the PROWD project, directly informing the co-design of future transition pathways. It will offer practical insights and guidance for practitioners and policymakers, helping to identify scalable solutions and avoid common pitfalls in urban transformation projects

Summary of D1.1

The 15mC concept: state of the art report

The literature review document provides a comprehensive overview of the 15mC concept, its development, aims, dimensions, and challenges, especially in relation to low-density urban areas.

The 15mC concept, formally introduced by Carlos Moreno in 2016 and popularised by Anne Hidalgo's Paris mayoral campaign in 2020, envisions urban environments where residents can access most essential daily needs and services within a 15-minute walk or cycling trip from their homes. Its core aim is to create complete, self-sufficient communities by prioritising proximity, mixed land use, density, and ubiquity. Objectives include reducing CO_2 emissions, improving air quality, fostering community life, enhancing social cohesion, creating local jobs, and promoting equity and inclusivity by ensuring access for all ages and abilities (Moreno et al., 2023; Christoforaki, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated its adoption, highlighting the importance of local accessibility and urban resilience, while also exposing existing social inequalities. However, the concept has also faced considerable public backlash, driven by conspiracy theories and concerns about gentrification, which could exacerbate socio-economic inequalities by increasing the cost of living and potentially displacing long-term residents (Caprotti et al., 2024).

The 15mC framework evaluates and implements the model across six key dimensions of daily life: education and culture, employment, mobility, personal well-being and outdoor recreation, care and health, food and provision of daily shopping (Moreno, Carlos et al., 2024).

The applicability of the 15mC concept is profoundly influenced by geographic scales and existing infrastructure. While dense city cores often already possess high service proximity and can focus on enhancing active transport and public spaces, low-density urban areas present significant challenges. LDUAs are characterised by lower population density, spatial fragmentation, limited social infrastructure, and higher car-dependency due to dispersed amenities and often inadequate public transport. Conventional 15mC strategies like urban

densification or large-scale public transport investments are costly and often ill-suited for these areas (Boschma, 2005; Biraghi et al., 2025).

Implementing the 15mC in LDUAs requires tailored strategies, such as establishing multimodal hubs, improving pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and rethinking stringent zoning regulations that control mixed land use. The concept may also need to be adapted to different time thresholds, such as 20-minute neighbourhoods, or 30-minute territories, acknowledging that functions and required solutions are sensitive to population density (Logan et al., 2022; O'Dell and Ledermann, 2024). The sources note a hierarchy of functions, with basic daily needs (lower order facilities) suitable for neighbourhood scale, while specialised services (higher order facilities like hospitals) serve the overall city or the regional level (Barbieri et al., 2023). Furthermore, the implementation of 15mC varies significantly, with higher adoption rates in Western European countries compared to Central and Eastern Europe, influenced by urban development levels and existing financial resources.

Critical view of 15mC concept

A critical approach to the general model, moving beyond destructive narratives and conspiracy theories, highlights multiple significant issues.

Physical determinism, lack of consideration for housing problems, and potential gentrification are at the forefront of the findings from studies and practical research. These identify pitfalls like the overstatement of the concept's originality, unrealistic polycentrism, and problematic notions of neighbourhood self-sufficiency. The location of workplaces is crucial as the least flexible everyday trip, and lack of affordability in service provision can impede equitable access (Pozoukidou and Chatziyiannaki, 2021; Marchigiani and Bonfantini, 2022).

A disconnect between physical and social proximity has been identified - whilst social relationships often involve physical presence, social proximity does not automatically arise from spatial closeness. Even in dense urban environments, phenomena like disorientation, anonymity, and alienation can occur, and individuals might have services within reach but still experience low levels of

social interaction (Casarin et al., 2023). Moreover, gentrification, ghettoisation, and socio-spatial segregation can undermine the inclusiveness that spatial proximity aims to foster. The idea of self-sufficient neighbourhoods risks reinforcing urban fragmentation and fails to account for complex social dynamics within communities, where diverse groups may co-exist without deep social interaction (Mecca, 2023).

The realities on the ground also generate critiques targeting chrono-urbanism's focus on reducing travel time, arguing that it tends to marginalise the experiential and relational dimensions of urban journeys. Instead, journeys should be viewed as habitable space where perception, human contact, and environmental quality enhance urban well-being. The 15mC model's focus on *functional optimisation* overlooks the potential for encounters and coexistence during movement through space (Schiefer and Van Der Noll, 2017).

The applicability of the 15mC model is particularly challenged by contemporary urban structures characterised by low-density configurations. Substantial proportions of the population live and work in these areas, which include extended metropolitan regions, patchwork cities, and in-between territories. These are seen as stable configurations that cannot be radically transformed to fit the compact city ideal of the 15mC, even with significant morphological changes or public transport extensions (Baquero et al., 2024). This inherent mismatch is a core reason why the PROWD project neither aims to optimise the application of the 15mC model in low-density areas nor does it intend to offer a purely theoretical critique. Instead, PROWD's goal is to understand how various initiatives contribute to building and reproducing social proximity even in the absence of urban density, leading to proximity without density.

The analysis of social proximity guides the search for relevant case studies and types of spaces – usually presented as collaborative services (often citizen-initiated services that emerge in response to limitations of traditional welfare systems, such as internet cafés, bookshops, markets, and social farms) or social condensers (clusters of services and/or multifunctional spaces (e.g., schools hosting extracurricular activities).

Ultimately, the critical perspectives question oversimplifications of urban complexity and advocate for identifying solutions that best fit the observed reality

rather than expecting reality to conform to a theoretical model. This underpins PROWD's practical, solution-oriented approach to fostering proximity in diverse urban settings.

The long list

The work on D1.1 concluded with an extensive list of 30 initiatives that can be described as implementing the principles of the 15mC. This extensive list, whilst comprehensive, reflects the *state-of-the-art* literature review completed as part of the deliverable, including initiatives that often are found in higher density urban environments. These include the application, strategies, policies, and concrete actions taken by the relevant actors to embed the concept of 15mC in the local area, as generally reflected by the current literature and reporting.

This is based on online searches and suggestions from the PROWD project partners, reflecting a set of criteria established to ensure relevance. However, this is not an exhaustive list of 15-minute city initiatives, nor does it represent a ranking of the implementation of best practicess.

In some cases, the initiatives referred to are using alternative terms (15 or 20 minute neighbourhoods, superblocks, city of short distances, etc.); also, there might not be any direct association between the plans and the 15mC concept, but the interventions implemented or strategies proposed reflect the six dimensions of daily life and mirror the ethos of the 15mC concept.

While the focus of the overarching PROWD project is on low-density urban areas, it must be acknowledged that the examples included in the long list are not always strictly typical of LDUAs and this list should be only considered as a baseline reference point. Deliverable D1.2 will have a tailored scope, centred on projects and initiatives that have outlined potential solutions, even if only in embryonic form, within low density urban environments, with clear departures from the usual spatial and temporal proximity.

Methodology

Deliverable 1.2 is a crucial component of Work Package 1, following the foundational literature review provided in Deliverable 1.1. Its primary objective is to systematically map and select 12 lighthouse initiatives that align with the principles of the 15-minute city concept, including those envisaged in urban policies or analysed in critical mappings and research, even if radical or not yet fully developed. Furthermore, it will highlight *non-conventional* solutions that are suitable for implementation in low-density urban areas, addressing the challenges identified in the literature review.

The PROWD project, however, explicitly defines "non-conventional" initiatives for LDUAs as practices that combine multiple services in one place with direct local engagement, such as integrating amenities within farms or industrial activity sites, or implementing demand-responsive transport systems. These solutions could be innovative or radical: we believe that innovation and radical solutions could offer insight or be developed and be adapted to become part of institutional policies or collaborative initiatives between public and private actors.

The process followed a two-stage approach:

-stage A: this will involve the identification of 30 initiatives strictly located within the low-density urban areas, which align the 15mC concept[1]

-stage B: the narrowed-down selection of 12 case studies, including those envisaged in urban policies or analysed in critical mappings and research, even if radical or not yet fully developed; these will be presented in the form of short *ID cards*

This compact list will aim to incorporate at least one project from each of the countries hosting pilot projects, while covering a range of geographical areas and low-density urban areas typologies. This stage concerns only the identification of the 12 benchmark examples, with brief qualitative descriptions; further analysis

[1] Some overlap with the list provided in D1.1 may exist; to be regarded as a long-list for LDUA-specific 15mC initiatives

and review of the degree of success, lessons learned, and transferability potential will be explored in the next deliverable D1.3.

The selection methodology for these initiatives is designed to ensure their relevance to the PROWD project's core mandate. It mandates a geographical focus on EU LDUAs within metropolitan contexts, recognising the diversity of urban patterns. The initiatives must align with at least one of the six key dimensions of daily life previously outlined in Deliverable 1.1: education/culture, employment, mobility, personal well-being/recreation, care/health, and food/shopping. Priority is given to initiatives that have already been implemented or delivered and have received support or promotion through EU-funded projects (e.g., H2020, Horizon Europe, UIA, URBACT).

Deliverable 1.2 aims to serve as a repository of implementation practices, facilitating the elaboration of *collaborative pacts* between local administrations and stakeholders, as well as developing adaptation strategies for the transfer and replication of these initiatives in other contexts. In the process, D1.2 is seeking initiatives that are relevant to the issues outlined by the critical views on the 15mC concept, as illustrated in section 2.2. The analysis will also highlight the limitations of these practices and the obstacles these initiatives encountered, so they can be considered in the organisation of local workshops during the subsequent phases of the project. The insights gained from mapping and screening these initiatives will directly inform later work packages, particularly WP4, which focuses on co-designing 15mC transition pathways for the project's demonstration sites. By highlighting innovative features and approaches, Deliverable 1.2 lays the groundwork for practical solutions to enhance proximity without density in LDUAs.

Drawing on the comprehensive methodology employed by the Driving Urban Transitions (DUT) Partnership for their "*Mapping of 15-minute City Practices*", we outline an adapted and detailed methodology for PROWD's Deliverable 1.2, emphasising its unique focus on LDUAs and non-conventional 15mC environments (Büttner et al., 2024).

DUT's general mapping methodology overview

The DUT Partnership's mapping activity aimed to provide a sound and adaptive overview of international practical definitions, strategies, instruments, and implementation experiences related to the 15mC concept. Their *15mC practices* refer to applications, strategies, policies, and concrete actions cities take to implement 15mC principles. This was achieved through a three-phase data collection process:

- Comprehensive literature review, including academic and grey literature.
- An expert survey targeting practitioners and experts.
- A web search to identify self-proclaimed 15mC initiatives.

The collected data was classified using 24 criteria, divided into city-level and practice-level attributes (see appendix for extract table covering the criteria). The study successfully identified 98 case studies globally, with 94 remaining in the dataset after rigorous data filtering. These cases were associated with approximately 414 distinct policies, with a significant majority (58 cases, or 59%) located within Europe.

DUT's proposed Key Areas of Action have been reviewed in the light of the unique challenges faced by low-density urban areas, especially where the concerned topics cannot be easily understood and resolved through physical proximity alone. The existing framework, while robust to assess the 15mC initiatives in the most prominent cases, may not adequately capture the multi-faceted, often non-physical, solutions that are critically important for LDUAs, where achieving physical proximity is inherently more challenging.

It must be noted that a practice considered "radical" in a dense city (e.g., converting car lanes into green public spaces) might be less applicable or even conventional in a low-density setting. Conversely, a "non-conventional" solution in an LDUA (e.g., a community-operated pop-up market or a factory repurposed to host a healthcare clinic) might not be recognised as "radical" by the current framework if it does not involve large-scale physical transformation of public space. This indicates that the current definition of "radical" may be too narrowly

focused or implicitly biased towards physical, large-scale interventions in dense urban areas.

For LDUAs, "radical" innovations often manifest as pioneering social organisation, flexible and adaptive use of private land, or digital solutions that achieve proximity without requiring significant physical densification. The adapted methodology must, therefore, redefine or broaden the concept of "radical" to appropriately capture and value these distinct LDUA-specific innovations.

Adapted methodology for D1.2: mapping 15mC initiatives in LDUAs

The methodology for PROWD D1.2 is based upon DUT's rigorous approach, specifically adapting it to the unique challenges and characteristics of LDUAs and the project's focus on non-conventional initiatives. The main goal is to identify and select 30 initiatives matching the 15mC concept in low density urban areas (this approach is different from the selection completed as part of D1.1); subsequently, the selection will be narrowed to 12 significant case studies that can serve as a repository for further work and facilitate the development of collaborative pacts and strategy adaptation for transfer and replication.

For this project, we define low density urban areas through three lenses, often showing a significant degree of overlap in their characteristics, covering one to three of the angles below:

• Suburban contexts within metropolitan areas, where suburban areas characterised by spatial fragmentation and residents face limited options for essential services, thereby inhibiting the fulfilment of their "*proximity rights*". These typically include areas with spread-out populations and single-family housing, often found in the outskirts of capital cities posing challenges for the conventional 15-Minute City model implementation due to lower population density.

• Peripheral and outskirt urban zones that refer to parts of urban systems situated beyond the dense urban core, where the feasibility of proximity-based planning

is reduced due to the dispersed nature of the population and services; however, this does not exclude capital cities like those part of the PROWD initiative. Planning in these areas concentrates on enhancing connectivity and accessibility, and they are distinct from dense, multifunctional urban spaces.

• Intermediate density areas or urban clusters (derived from OECD/EU Definition), corresponding to towns and semi-dense areas or urban clusters. These are formally defined as areas comprising contiguous grid cells with a population density of at least 300 inhabitants per km² and a collective population of at least 5,000 inhabitants, distinguishing them from high-density urban centres while still being part of an urban continuum. They may also include "suburban or peri-urban areas" characterised as "semi-dense areas" that are adjacent to, but not part of, dense urban centres.

On top of the broad definition for LDUA, the PROWD project also introduces the concept of "*hybrid proximity*", which blends physical and digital realms, acknowledging that technology can bridge gaps in low-density settings. This indicates that PROWD is not simply adapting the 15mC; it is fundamentally redefining what proximity entails within LDUAs. It recognises that in environments where extensive physical densification is neither feasible nor desirable, social networks, community-driven initiatives, and digital solutions become equally, if not more, important in ensuring access to daily needs and fostering overall well-being. This elevates proximity from a purely spatial metric to a complex socio-spatial, organisational, and even digital construct. This redefinition implies that the success of 15mC implementation in LDUAs cannot be solely measured by traditional GIS-based accessibility maps. Instead, it must also incorporate indicators of social cohesion, community resilience, the effectiveness of informal networks, and the integration of digital services. This nuanced framework challenges the "one-size-fits-all" application of the 15mC and provides a more contextually relevant understanding of urban life in low-density settings. The shortlisting process will essentially bring to the forefront those initiatives that address the 15mC concept, are located in a low-density urban area and present the highest potential in addressing the new proximity perspectives. Later, deliverable 1.3 will provide a detailed account of the role of social proximity for each case.

1.1.1. Multi-source literature review

This phase systematically gathered information from various sources, adjusting search terms to capture LDUA-specific and non-conventional examples:

Academic literature: Comprehensive review using databases like Web of Science, Google Scholar, transport and social sciences research.

Grey literature: Review reports, whitepapers, and policy documents from public agencies, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and private organisations.

Expanded search terms: Search word combinations that combine general 15mC terms (e.g., "15-minute City", "20-Minute Neighbourhoods", "Superblocks", "proximity", "local services", "walkable cities", "sustainable mobility", "shared mobility") with terms specific to LDUAs ("urban outskirts", "suburbs", "low-density urban areas"); including terms related to non-conventional solutions and the six dimensions of daily life to identify initiatives that might not explicitly use 15mC terminology but embody its principles in LDUA contexts.

Web Searches: Explore institutional websites, municipal portals, and community platforms to find initiatives that self-advertise or report on implementing proximity-based concepts, with a keen eye for examples within suburban or low-density settings.

Table 1: Terms used to identify relevant initiatives

10-minute city	45-minute city
10-minute neighbourhoods	Community of communities
10-minute town	Complete communities
15-minute community life circle/ cycle	Complete neighbourhoods
15-minute city	Healthy neighbourhoods
15-minute neighbourhoods	Liveable neighbourhoods
15-minute region	Proximity city
20-minute city	Superblock
20-minute neighbourhoods	Walkable neighbourhoods
20-minute town	

1.1.2. Refined search scope and parameters

This phase involves clearly defining what constitutes a relevant initiative for PROWD, with a strong emphasis on LDUAs:

A. LDUA setting

In the first step, the selection process will differentiate between initiatives located within low-density urban areas, as defined at the beginning of the methodology, and those in more conventional settings where the 15mC has been implemented (i.e. densely populated, compact urban centres).

The evaluation will select initiatives that address typical LDUA characteristics such as lower population density, spatial fragmentation, high car dependency, mono-functional structures, or strict zoning limitations.

B. Thematic scope

This criterion will ensure the focus remains on initiatives, policies, and concrete actions that embody 15mC principles. A specific emphasis is placed on *non-conventional* solutions. These include, but are not limited to, integrated trade services, demand-responsive transport, and amenities integrated within private properties such as farms, factories, or large industrial parks. Initiatives must address at least one of the six key dimensions of daily life: education and culture, employment, mobility, personal well-being and outdoor recreation, care and health, and food and provision of daily shopping. The evaluation will seek evidence of initiatives supporting community involvement, in a visible and impactful manner.

Table 2: PROWD's six key dimensions of daily life

Dimension	Description
1. Education and culture	Accessibility of institutions and resources for learning and cultural enrichment (schools, kindergartens, libraries, cultural attractions).
2. Employment	Availability of opportunities for work and economic activity within walking/ cycling distance.
3. Mobility	How residents move sustainably and efficiently within and beyond their local neighbourhood, prioritising active transport (walking, cycling) and public transport. Includes public space redistribution and integration of people/goods mobility.
4. Personal well-being and outdoor recreation	Access to spaces and facilities for physical/mental well-being, leisure, and recreation (green spaces, parks, playgrounds, sports facilities).
5. Care and health	Accessibility of healthcare facilities and services (primary care, pharmacies, hospitals, medical offices).
6. Food and provision of daily shopping	Availability of essential goods and services for daily life (supermarkets, local markets, retail outlets).

Table 3: PROWD's prompts identified and relevance for the six key dimensions

Prompts to ensure relevance for LDUAs	1. Education and culture	2. Employment	3. Mobility	4. Personal well-being & outdoor recreation	5. Care and health	6. Food and provision of daily shopping
Supports human capital development, lifelong learning, and community engagement.	X					
Integration of cultural connection points and public art contributes to liveability.	X			X		
Potential for shared use of educational buildings as community centres enhances space efficiency and provides cultural/ social opportunities.	X					
Strategic placement of the initiative influences travel behaviour.		X	X			X
Reduces long-distance commuting and fosters local job creation.		X	X			

A productive mix of uses creates vibrant and safer streets.				X		
Helps overcoming high car dependency and mono-functional structures.			X			
Fundamental changes in employment allocation models, treating local job provision as a key public policy element.		X				
Solutions include multimodal hubs, pedestrian/ cycling infrastructure development, and digital mobility information systems.		X	X		X	
Promotes physical and mental health.					X	
Fosters community co-creation of public spaces, strengthening local connections and identity.				X	X	
Focus on people-centred urban spaces and mixed-use developments underpins this dimension.			X	X		
Critical for ensuring equitable access for all residents, especially vulnerable groups.	X	X	X	X	X	X

May involve strategic planning of service networks, consider long-term demographic projections, and explore home-based health services.				X	X	
Supports local economies, and promotes consumption of local produce, goods and services, thereby reducing the necessity for longer trips and leads to community cohesion.		X	X			X
Includes activities that foster proximity relations within the production–consumption chain of goods.		X		X		X
Prompts to ensure relevance for LDUAs	1. Education and culture	2. Employment	3. Mobility	4. Personal well-being and outdoor recreation	5. Care and health	6. Food and provision of daily shopping

C. Geographical distribution

For a representative sample of projects across the European space, the selection will aim to covering the more developed West, South and Nordic as well as more incipient initiatives in the Central and Eastern Europe or Baltic countries. A minor bias towards a higher proportion of cases selected from areas nearby the four pilot sites is anticipated, reflecting the main aims and objectives of the overall project.

D. LDUA types

The process also aims to differentiate and cover a range of LDUA types, considered under three categories, as introduced below.

For PROWD, ensuring proximity in LDUAs transcends mere convenience or general sustainability goals; it is fundamentally a matter of social justice. The lack of accessible services in LDUAs creates a form of *mobility poverty* or *proximity deprivation* for specific vulnerable populations who are constrained in their ability to travel. By focusing on *proximity rights*, PROWD elevates the 15mC from an urban planning ideal to a fundamental right, particularly for those who face significant barriers to accessing services in low-density environments. This perspective mandates a strong equity lens in all proposed methodologies and recommendations for LDUAs. It means that the success of 15mC initiatives in these areas should be evaluated not just by overall accessibility metrics but specifically by how they improve access and quality of life for the most marginalised groups. This may necessitate highly targeted interventions and a re-prioritisation of resource allocation to address existing disparities.

PROWD explicitly differentiates itself from standard 15mC applications that typically rely on strategies like urban densification or substantial investments in public transport infrastructure. Instead, it prioritises "non-conventional" initiatives, located in low-density urban areas, which are defined as practices that integrate multiple services within a specific location, coupled with direct engagement from local inhabitants. Illustrative examples of these non-conventional solutions include shared trade services, demand-responsive transport systems, and the innovative placement of cultural, educational, and healthcare amenities within private properties such as farms or factories. These are viewed as significant contributions stemming from the ingenuity of citizens,

local associations, and small enterprises. The overarching objective is to expand the focus beyond isolated initiatives to foster comprehensive "daily ecosystems" that are sustained through collaborative efforts with institutional partners. The strategy on approaching the analysis for the individual projects is further detailed in Chapter 4; the classification below is not an examination of the numerous variables observed in the 15-minutes city ecosystems, but it aims to demonstrate the common traits of the concept under different low density scenarios.

To better reflect the diversity of low-density urban realities, a classification system is proposed based on the mechanisms that foster social proximity. The principles above represent the foundation stone of these types, introduced below, and will be used for the detailed analysis of the cases in the next deliverable. The classification of LDUA types, as proposed here, will be used at this point only to ensure a good coverage of the distinct types in the resulting short-list.

Type 1: *The socially-anchored hub-and-spoke model*

This typology describes areas with sparse density but robust, often historical, *social condensers* that act as hubs for community interaction. These hubs, akin to historical oases or refuges, serve as indispensable gathering points. They demonstrate "*proximity without density*", where daily social life is strong and locally-anchored, even if specialised services require leveraging supra-local or regional networks (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982; Cipolla and Manzini, 2009). The strength of this model lies in its human-scale infrastructure, often driven by community-led, collaborative initiatives.

Type 2: *The functionally-fragmented sprawl*

This model represents the classic low-density urban sprawl where physical proximity to services is undermined by a lack of social infrastructure. Despite the presence of amenities, residents experience low levels of social interaction. This is often a result of *unfunctional zoning* that separates residential and commercial areas, leading to car dependency (Mombelli et al., 2025). In this typology, amenities are accessed via car or delivered, reinforcing social isolation and a sense

of disconnection from one's neighbours (Graells-Garrido et al., 2021; D'Onofrio and Trusiani, 2022).

Type 3: *The proximity-in-transit network*

This typology applies to extended metropolitan regions where the logic of proximity is not localised but exists along major transit corridors. This model acknowledges that longer travel times are a given in these suburban environments and emphasises the vital role of public transport in creating connectivity. It moves beyond the limitations of the 15mC's single metric, proposing a multi-tiered, "X-minute framework" (e.g., 15-30-45 minutes) that better reflects multi-modal travel patterns and leverages supra-local networks to connect disparate hubs or interchanges (Burger and Meijers, 2012; Ramírez Saiz et al., 2022).

Table 4: The proposed LDUA typologies

Typology name	Lived experience	Defining elements	Spatial logic
Socially anchored hub-and-spoke	Proximity without density	Social condensers & collaborative services	Hub-and-spoke (non-concentric)
Functionally fragmented sprawl	Physical closeness, social distance	Car dependency & zoning	Disconnected fragments (pure sprawl)
Proximity-in-transit network	Networked proximity	Public transit & multi-modal connectivity	Networked (linear or polycentric)

Rationale of the analysis

Chapter 4 presents a systematic analysis of the 30 initiatives identified through the multi-source research process. This analysis table serves as the foundational dataset from which the 12 lighthouse initiatives detailed in the subsequent ID cards were carefully selected.

The analysis table employs a structured evaluation framework that assesses each initiative, systematically categorised by geographical location, intervention type, and alignment with PROWD vision. This comprehensive mapping approach ensures that the diversity of 15-minute city applications across different urban contexts is captured and understood.

Recognising the unique challenges faced by low-density urban areas, the table specifically evaluates each initiative's relevance to LDUA contexts, examining whether initiatives successfully address characteristics such as spatial fragmentation, limited social infrastructure, and high car dependency. The analysis incorporates assessments of community involvement levels and the presence of supportive initiatives that foster collaborative approaches to urban transformation.

Geographical representation spans across Europe and beyond, with particular emphasis on European Union contexts relevant to the PROWD project's focus areas. The table differentiates between various LDUA typologies—the socially-anchored hub-and-spoke model, functionally-fragmented sprawl, and proximity-in-transit network—providing insights into how different spatial configurations influence proximity strategies.

For the purpose of efficiency and clarity, this remains a focused short-listing exercise. The 30 nominated projects have been then evaluated through a more flexible, rich analytical grid which considered aspects such, to generate individual ID cards for the final 12 initiatives. The aspects considered in the prioritisation of the 12 projects are included below, but it must be noted that it is not the purpose of D1.2 to provide an in-depth account of these; instead, these will be at the core of the next deliverable D1.3.

To limit the case study numbers to 12 initiatives and to shape the ID cards for each, the following aspects have been considered:

- the type of activities through which social proximity is generated;
- duration (temporary uses to long-standing initiatives);
- organisational (private, public, mixed), with focus on land property management, and on the financial management model (profit / non-profit / public funded, etc.);
- which networks (local/trans-scalar) are activated;
- how proximity spaces are configured;
- which features of the initiative are influenced (positively/negatively) by population density and accessibility.

Analysis table

Table 5: Shortlisting of 15mC initiatives in Low Density Urban Areas

	Title / name	Location	Country	Dimensions	Webpage Key references / map reference	Inclusion of supportive initiatives	Community involvement	Geog. region	LDUA type
1	Parsec Cooperative – Relationships that build	Rome	ITALY	Care and health- Employment Education and culture	www.cooperativaparsec.it https://maps.app.goo.gl/VtM9aSCtTtARkJvi6	Y	Y	S	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
2	Lumen	Florence	ITALY	Education and culture Employment Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Care and health	http://www.lumen.fi.it/storialumen https://maps.app.goo.gl/viQrdXFHJR9SVh3H7	Y	Y	S	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
3	Conca d'Oro – Social Farm for Inclusion	Bassano del Grappa	ITALY	Employment Care and health Food and provision of daily shopping	www.concadoro.org/fattoria-sociale-agricoltura-biologica https://maps.app.goo.gl/heXS4oNzjQUkkqxm8	Y	Y	S	Functionally fragmented sprawl Proximity-in-transit network
4	Hammarby Sjostad	Stockholm	SWEDEN	Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Care and health	https://copenhagenwater.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/hammarby-sjostad.pdf	Y	Y	N	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
5	Supergrätzl Lichtental	Alsergrund, Vienna	AUSTRIA	Education and culture Employment Mobility	https://la21.wien/projektgruppe/lichtental	Y	Y	C	Functionally fragmented sprawl
6	Park House – Explore. Experiment. Meet	Cevo	ITALY	Education and culture Employment Personal well-being and outdoor recreation	www.casadelparcoadamello.it https://maps.app.goo.gl/MzgACaiV7XDTD38g8	Y	Y	S	Proximity-in-transit network
7	Naujoji Vilnia city community	Vilnius	LITHUANIA	Mobility Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Food and provision of daily shopping	www.naujojivilnia.lt/bendruomene	Y	Y	N-E	Proximity-in-transit network
8	Matrijaršija	Belgrade	SERBIA	Education and culture Employment Personal well-being and outdoor recreation	www.matrijarsija.com https://maps.app.goo.gl/KmdGdM3k1Zct1Muz9	Y	Y	S-E	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
9	1Muranow	Warsaw	POLAND	Education and culture Personal well-being and outdoor recreation	www.1muranow.pl https://maps.app.goo.gl/JshtULMzJDB43yLi6	Y	Y	N-E	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
10	Strategy for food planning - city-region	Lisbon	PORTUGAL	Food & Daily Shopping	https://documentacao.aml.pt/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Estrategia-Transicao-Alimentar-AML.pdf	Y	Y	S-W	Proximity-in-transit network Socially anchored hub-and-spoke

11	Uma praça em cada bairro	Lisbon	PORTUGAL	Mobility, Well-being & Outdoor Recreation	www.lisboa.pt/temas/urbanismo/espaco-publico/uma-praca-em-cada-bairro	Y	Y	S-W	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
12	InPUT	Römerland Carnuntum -De Kempen -The Green Metropolis Food Valley -Braga-Guimarães-Famalicão region	AUSTRIA BELGIUM Netherlands PORTUGAL	Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Mobility	www.projectinput.org	Y	Y	C,W,S-W	Proximity-in-transit network
13	The Osa	Madrid	SPAIN	Education and culture Employment Care and health Food and provision of daily shopping	www.laosa.coop/supermercado/funcionamiento https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZExct9ZSprcCmGaR8	Y	Y	S	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke Functionally fragmented sprawl
14	Huertos Sociales Urbanos de San Jerónimo	Seville	SPAIN	Education and culture, Employment Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Food and provision of daily shopping	https://huertosocialesanjeronimo.wordpress.com https://maps.app.goo.gl/UD9XVdQVQHsdhTo67	Y	Y	S	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
15	The REcyclerie	Paris	FRANCE	Education and culture Food and provision of daily shopping Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Employment	www.larecyclerie.com https://maps.app.goo.gl/TQWeAnm77Vu5xnaD6	Y	Y	W	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
16	The Canal Prairie	Paris	FRANCE	Education and culture Food and provision of daily shopping Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Employment	www.canalprairie.fr https://maps.app.goo.gl/oemX3Y9cUzaGdciu9	Y	Y	W	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
17	TuneTo15	Cross-border project		Mobility Care and health	www.tuneto15.eu	Y	Y	C	Proximity-in-transit network
18	PROXIMITIES	Cross-border project		Mobility Food and provision of daily shopping	www.interregeurope.eu/proximities	Y	Y	C	Proximity-in-transit network
19	Vauban Sustainable Urban District	Freiburg	GERMANY	Mobility Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Food and provision of daily shopping Employment	https://uclg-cisdp.org/sites/default/files/observatory/files/2021-06/Freiburg_EN.pdf	Y	Y	W	Proximity-in-transit network Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
20	The Nearby town or The Ten-Minute Town	Oslo	NORWAY	Mobility Personal well-being and outdoor recreation	https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/c6fc38d76d374e77ae5b1d8dcdbbd92a/kmd_public-spaces_innmat_eng_org.pdf	Y	Y	N	Proximity-in-transit network
21	MeetFactory	Prague	CZECH REPUBLIC	Education and culture Employment Personal well-being and outdoor recreation	www.meetfactory.cz https://maps.app.goo.gl/c9Km1ZNZMVSPAeVy6	Y	Y	C	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke

22	Holzmarkt25	Berlin	GERMANY	Education and culture Employment Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Food and provision of daily shopping	www.holzmarkt.com https://maps.app.goo.gl/5zeoaBNb6xwB4gZ7A	Y	Y	W	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
23	Communa (Minimum, The Marelle)	Brussels	BELGIUM	Education and culture Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Care and health	www.communa.be https://maps.app.goo.gl/5GRUyNUhrPkYjg7k7 https://maps.app.goo.gl/Wk4kiEdjKowBRb4S9	Y	Y	W	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke Proximity-in-transit network
24	SPECIFIC	Maastricht	Netherlands	Mobility Employment	www.15mcityspecific.org/maastricht	Y	Y	W	Proximity-in-transit network
25	Zero Waste Lab	Lisbon	PORTUGAL	Education and culture Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Employment Food and provision of daily shopping	www.zerowastelab.pt https://maps.app.goo.gl/oYyY74AS99QBUbrZ7	Y	Y	S-W	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
26	The Fertile City	Paris	FRANCE	Education and culture Employment Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Food and provision of daily shopping	www.citefertile.com https://maps.app.goo.gl/uaiF1VZtRZJ3Hq7J8	Y	Y	W	Functionally fragmented sprawl
27	Contemporary neighbourhoods	Kaunas	LITHUANIA	Food and provision of daily shopping Mobility Employment Education and culture	www.kaunas2022.eu/visikaipvienas/en/contemporary-neighborhoods	Y	Y	N-E	Functionally fragmented sprawl
28	The creative neighbourhood	Timișoara & Bucharest	ROMANIA	Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Education and culture	www.cartierulcreativ.ro	Y	Y	E	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
29	*În*cotroceni	Cotroceni, Bucharest	ROMANIA	Education and culture Mobility Personal well-being and outdoor recreation	www.incotroceni.ro	Y	Y	E	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke
30	Sam Rozkwit	Warsaw	POLAND	Personal well-being and outdoor recreation Education and culture	https://samrozkwit.org/ENG https://maps.app.goo.gl/GEyb4ALnJVxHhq4n9	Y	Y	E	Socially anchored hub-and-spoke

Selected initiatives' ID cards

Parsec Cooperative – Relationships that build (Rome, ITALY)

Why selected: Parsec is a Social Cooperative, established in 1996, that operates based on the principle of mutual aid and the social function of cooperation, as defined by Article 45 of the Italian Constitution, explicitly rejecting private speculation. The cooperative's constant commitment focuses on promoting interventions and services that address complex social needs at both local and national levels, framing welfare support as a critical public investment. Its comprehensive objectives align across multiple PROWD dimensions: Care and Health, Employment, and Education/Culture. Specifically, Parsec seeks to reinforce the existing sense of community, enhance local liveability and security, and actively involve citizens in planning and implementing neighbourhood services and social/cultural animation. This mission to establish new ways of increasing citizen participation directly targets the perception of institutional proximity.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: As an initiative based in Rome, a PROWD pilot city, Parsec provides a highly transferable model for strengthening social fabric and institutional trust in peripheral, low-density areas where social relationships and formal services are often perceived as distant or diminished. The emphasis on developing local networks, synergies, and cooperation between citizens, schools, churches, and senior centres provides a concrete strategy for addressing social proximity gaps in low-density suburbs.
- Non-conventionality: The initiative's non-conventional character stems from its *organisational model*. Parsec functions as a strategic, systemic provider of social welfare—a form of collaborative service—integrating essential services (Care, Employment, Education) and generating proximity

through social capital and mutual support rather than relying solely on physical co-location or new public infrastructure.

- LDUA type: Socially-anchored hub-and-spoke. The cooperative acts as an indispensable social condenser, sustaining community life and fostering interaction by serving as a hub for mutual support and collective planning involvement.

Lumen (Florence, ITALY)

Why selected: Lumen Firenze, located in the neighbourhood of Via del Guarlone, has evolved from an iconic nightclub known for electronic music into a versatile, hybrid cultural and community space. It supports extensive cultural programming and integrates activities across Education/Culture, Employment, Personal Well-being/Outdoor Recreation, and Care/Health. This is demonstrated by the provision of a dedicated Student Meditation and Relaxation Lab, which focuses on wellness, holistic practices, and resilience for its student body. The venue actively aims to enhance students' and local residents' exploration of, and connection to, Italian culture in a meaningful and interesting way.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: Lumen offers a model for transforming existing commercial or entertainment venues in peripheral locations into multifunctional community resources. By creating a physical space that explicitly addresses both cultural education and mental wellness (Care/Health), it helps mitigate the sense of anonymity and lack of localised amenities often experienced in developing LDUAs. This integration supports diverse human needs, particularly for students who may lack an established social network.
- Non-conventionality: The initiative's non-conventional approach lies in its *hybrid function*. It strategically combines commercial viability (Employment/Culture) with mental health and wellness services

(Care/Health/Well-being). This integrated, layered model ensures efficient utilisation of space and resources, which is a critical requirement where population density is insufficient to sustain single-function public services.

- LDUA type: Socially-anchored hub-and-spoke. Lumen functions as an intentional local nexus, acting as a modern social condenser that draws diverse populations together for cultural, educational, and social connection, stabilising community identity in a peripheral environment.

Supergrätzl Lichtental (Alsergrund, Vienna, AUSTRIA)

Why selected: Supergrätzl Lichtental is Vienna's localised adaptation of the *Superblock* concept, strategically developed as a response to the dual challenges of climate change and growing urban populations, anchored in the Smart Climate City Strategy Vienna. The core objective is to improve the quality of life and stay in the existing urban environment by systematically reorganising, optimising, and calming traffic flows. This process reclaims public street space, leading to the creation of *cooler, inclusive, and active neighbourhoods* that prioritise people, reduce noise and pollution, and improve environmental quality. This effort explicitly promotes active transport (pedestrian flow/ cycling) over private vehicles, addressing Mobility, Education/Culture, and Employment indirectly.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: While this adaptation is implemented in Vienna, the model is highly relevant for LDUAs because it provides a method for addressing the issues of *functional fragmentation* and high *car dependency* prevalent in suburban sprawl. The initiative demonstrates how urban design principles typically associated with urban cores can be adapted to systematically reallocate existing road space for community and proximity-enhancing uses, which is necessary where large-scale, costly infrastructure upgrades are impractical or ill-suited.

- Non-conventionality: The non-conventional solution is the *tactical adaptation* of a dense-city policy (Superblock) to achieve social and environmental proximity in a less dense, typically car-dominated district. By calming traffic, the physical barriers between existing dispersed amenities are reduced, effectively increasing the reach and safety of walking and cycling access to local services.
- LDUA type: Functionally-fragmented sprawl. The initiative provides a direct intervention against the dominance of the car which defines this typology, aiming to integrate previously fragmented functions through a re-engineered local mobility network and public space allocation.

Naujoji Vilnia city community (Vilnius, LITHUANIA)

Why selected: Naujoji Vilnia is significant because of its historical context as a former independent town and critical industrial and transport hub (on the imperial Petersburg-Warsaw railway), now integrated into the Vilnius capital region. The local community's efforts, which target Mobility and Personal Well-being/Outdoor Recreation, focus on generating local proximity by improving public amenities such as parks, waterfronts, streets, and cycling provisions. Critically, the initiative investigates the potential conversion of former industrial areas and related land into public spaces for community use. This addresses the challenges of spatial fragmentation and the legacy of large, mono-functional industrial land common in post-Socialist Eastern European LDUAs.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: As an initiative from Vilnius, a PROWD pilot city, Naujoji Vilnia directly confronts LDUA challenges, including low density, spatial fragmentation, limited social infrastructure, and reliance on private transport due to dispersed activities. It offers practical lessons on re-integrating massive, typically segregated industrial land into the public daily ecosystem.
- Non-conventionality: The core non-conventional solution is the *adaptive reuse and conversion of industrial real estate and land* for public amenity

and community interaction. This strategy successfully creates new local centres for Wellbeing and Culture by creatively repurposing existing large structures, thereby contributing to the proximity without density paradigm by utilising space without requiring new dense residential construction.

- LDUA type: Proximity-in-transit network. Due to its history as a major transport hub reliant on the railway, the area exhibits a spatial pattern where proximity needs are best anchored to existing, repurposed, or planned transit/corridor infrastructure, establishing a networked approach to accessibility.

The Osa (Madrid, SPAIN)

Why selected: The Osa is a cooperative supermarket in Madrid dedicated to promoting the consumption of local, ecological, and high-quality food products. This innovative structure is fundamentally non-profit, relying on a model where cooperative members are simultaneously consumers, co-owners, and active participants in its operation. This model represents a direct application of participatory principles, addressing Food, Education/Culture, Employment, and Care/Health through the explicit linkage of consumption, the local economy, and social participation.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: LDUAs often face difficulties in accessing resilient, non-vulnerable food supply chains, resulting in reliance on distant, car-dependent supermarkets. The Osa provides a replicable model for localising the Food dimension through a resilient, community-owned system, strengthening the local economic ecosystem and reducing travel dependency for a fundamental daily need.
- Non-conventionality: The core non-conventional solution is the cooperative, self-managed food system. It generates social proximity by requiring membership participation (shared work and ownership), which blurs the line between consumer and service provider and

generates the highly resilient collaborative services integral to the PROWD vision. This structure ensures that economic activity is directly anchored in mutual trust and community benefit.

- LDUA type: Socially-anchored hub-and-spoke. The Osa operates as a critical economic and social hub, sustained by the active involvement and mutual trust of its community members. It is a powerful social condenser centred on a daily necessity.

Huertos Sociales Urbanos de San Jerónimo (Seville, SPAIN)

Why selected: The Huertos Sociales Urbanos project consists of sixty social garden plots located within San Jerónimo Park, where cultivation activities are managed predominantly by retirees and unemployed residents. While focused on the ecological and healthy auto-consumption of food, the key significance of the project lies in its explicit recognition that the personal and collective relationship is as important as the harvest of healthy products. This initiative successfully integrates the dimensions of Food, Personal Well-being, Education (via collective training), and Employment, creating a powerful example of generating social capital, promoting mutual aid, and establishing well-balanced habits.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: Huertos Sociales offers a solution to LDUA challenges such as social isolation among vulnerable populations (retirees and the unemployed) and the sporadic access to fresh, local produce, particularly in fragmented suburban areas. The project strategically utilises available public or marginal park land for high social and environmental return.
- Non-conventionality: This is a definitive non-conventional solution where urban agriculture is leveraged as an intentional social welfare and therapeutic tool. It operates as a collaborative service based on communal self-sufficiency, collective management, and continuous collective

training, transforming agriculture from a purely economic function into a core generator of social proximity and stability.

- LDUA type: Functionally-fragmented sprawl / Socially-anchored hub-and-spoke. The dual classification is appropriate because the project occupies public park land typical of sprawl, yet it creates an intensely cohesive, highly localised hub anchored by the collective work and shared governance of its participants.

The Recyclerie (Paris, FRANCE)

Why selected: The Recyclerie is characterised as an "*unusual third place*", functioning as a hybrid, 100% eco-responsible space located in a former Paris railway station near the inner ring road. Its multi-functional purpose encompasses a café-canteen, an urban farm, a library, a conference room, and a repair workshop, actively promoting the 3R principle (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). It influences the Food, Well-being, Employment, and Education/Culture dimensions, and its success is supported through partnerships, such as with the Veolia Foundation for environmental programs.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD contexts:

- LDUA relevance: The Recyclerie's highly strategic utilisation of *former transport infrastructure* (a railway station) and its location near the Parisian fringe offers a crucial model for LDUAs that often possess large, underutilised infrastructure assets or abandoned industrial sites. The project directly addresses spatial fragmentation by converting a transport barrier into a high-value community hub.
- Non-conventionality: The initiative's non-conventional character is its adaptive re-use of transport-related land/buildings into a comprehensive, eco-cultural community hub. This facility successfully integrates multiple functions (commerce, learning, repair, leisure) within a single property, aligning perfectly with PROWD's focus on non-conventional amenity integration in environments lacking density.

- LDUA type: Socially-anchored hub-and-spoke. It functions as a clear social condenser, using a strong philosophical framework (eco-responsibility) to drive intentional social interaction and collaborative service provision.

The Canal Prairie (Paris, FRANCE) – alternative choice for France

Why selected: La Prairie du Canal is an urban initiative centred on urban ecology, plant sales, and comprehensive community engagement. It offers a varied program of socially responsible events, workshops, concerts, and training days, and is actively involved in major urban agriculture events in Paris. The association is uniquely recognised as part of Paris's network of "*caring establishments*", with its teams trained in the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, integrating social safety into urban design. It strongly addresses the Education/Culture, Food, Well-being, and Employment dimensions.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: This initiative provides a successful model for utilising marginal or underutilised urban land, a common condition in LDUAs, for multi-faceted community benefit. The initiative's integration of urban ecology with crucial social welfare functions (e.g., safety training) directly supports PROWD's mandate to enhance social proximity and proximity rights, especially for vulnerable populations who require safe, accessible local spaces.
- Non-conventionality: The non-conventional status of this project is its fusion of commercial urban ecology with proactive social safety infrastructure. This approach transcends passive recreation, elevating the public space's role to active social resilience and care provision, which is vital in LDUAs where traditional social services and safety networks may be dispersed or weak.
- LDUA type: Socially-anchored hub-and-spoke. The initiative successfully fosters a strong sense of belonging and community support by anchoring

its program in continuous community engagement and culturally responsible events.

MeetFactory (Prague, CZECH REPUBLIC)

Why selected: MeetFactory is an independent, citizen-founded international cultural centre located in Prague, dedicated to supporting contemporary art and making it accessible to the public. Established in 2001, it operates as a platform for diverse art forms (music, theatre, film, literature), facilitating original projects often free of charge. Crucially, it functions independently of traditional power structures and market demand, positioning itself as a unique venue for new, innovative art. The initiative provides strong contributions to the Education/Culture, Employment (for artists), and Personal Well-being dimensions.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA Relevance: MeetFactory is located in Prague 5, often utilising large former industrial or marginalised properties. This models how vital cultural and educational amenities—which are typically centralised—can be successfully decentralised to peripheral or industrial zones. By doing so, it creates local employment and intellectual hubs, serving to combat the mono-functional zoning common in LDUAs.
- Non-conventionality: Its non-conventional status is derived from its civic foundation and its self-sustaining, independent economic and organisational model. It utilises the adaptive re-use of industrial property to secure long-term artistic and cultural freedom, providing a highly valued amenity that might otherwise be economically unaffordable or geographically inaccessible in a dispersed LDUA context.
- LDUA type: Socially-anchored hub-and-spoke. The facility acts as an essential social condenser for the creative community and local residents, sustained by its focus on engagement and non-market-driven collaboration.

Communa (Minimum, The Marelle) (Brussels, BELGIUM)

Why selected: Communa is a non-profit organisation dedicated to fostering a more affordable, democratic, resilient, and creative city, utilising temporary occupation (transitional urbanism) as its main operational tool. Its practice emphasises experimentation, engagement, frugality, and agility in using urban spaces. The organisation systematically facilitates the implementation of projects by other groups, federating initiatives to confront the pervasive commodification of urban spaces. It provides flexible, temporary spaces that support Education/Culture, Well-being, and Care/Health services.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: Transitional urbanism offers a flexible, low-cost mechanism for LDUAs that often lack the capital or political consensus for permanent service infrastructure. By making use of vacant or underutilised properties, Communa rapidly creates effective social condensers in areas where physical proximity to services is deficient, directly addressing LDUA resource constraints and inertia.
- Non-conventionality: Communa's non-conventional status lies in its systemic and organised use of temporary occupation as a policy tool for generating stable social proximity and affordability. It represents an organisational model for the scalable, agile deployment of collaborative services across fragmented urban landscapes, a key concept for achieving proximity without density.
- LDUA type: Socially-anchored hub-and-spoke / Proximity-in-transit network. This dual assignment reflects the decentralised reality of Brussels' LDUAs. Local hubs are created rapidly (Hub-and-Spoke), while Communa's strategy for federating these initiatives necessitates robust connectivity, often along existing transit networks (Proximity-in-transit network).

Zero Waste Lab (Lisbon, PORTUGAL)

Why selected: The Zero Waste Lab (ZWL), a Lisbon-based initiative, operates under a zero-waste philosophy, aiming for regenerative participation and seeking a positive social and environmental legacy. Its focus is on provoking civic and critical participation around social, cultural, and environmental justice causes, promoting social and environmental entrepreneurship. As an initiative in a PROWD pilot city, it strategically integrates Education/Culture, Well-being, Food, and Employment, using its sustainability mission as the primary catalyst. It emphasises empowering individuals and organisations within their local relationships, generating *movement*.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: ZWL provides a critical model for integrating the Food dimension with environmental sustainability and local job creation. This is particularly relevant in peripheral areas where waste management is inefficient and local economic vitality is low. Its focus on regenerative practices supports the development of resilient *daily ecosystems*.
- Non-conventionality: The initiative's non-conventional nature is its fusion of environmental policy (zero waste) with entrepreneurship and robust civic participation. It effectively turns environmental goals into a compelling catalyst for local economic activity and community organising, functioning as a market-driven, yet strongly mission-led, collaborative service.
- LDUA type: Socially-anchored hub-and-spoke. ZWL serves as an entrepreneurial social condenser, using a unifying philosophical approach (zero waste) to mobilise and anchor the community around shared environmental and economic goals.

Sam Rozkwit (Warsaw, POLAND)

Why selected: Provides comprehensive context on Sam Rozkwit as a 2017-established NGO focused on sustainable urban development through allotment

garden regeneration, emphasising the bridging of environmental stewardship with social cohesion across the Personal Well-being/ Outdoor Recreation and Education/ Culture dimensions.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: Sam Rozkwit addresses specific low-density urban area challenges relevant to Central and Eastern European contexts, including post-socialist urban morphologies, spatial fragmentation, and limited social infrastructure. It demonstrates how allotment gardens can be transformed into multifunctional community hubs that generate daily ecosystems through shared stewardship and intergenerational bonding.
- Non-conventionality: This is reflected through its systemic utilisation of allotment gardens as social condensers, integration of diverse activities (yoga, cooking workshops, art exhibitions, guided walks), and its hybrid proximity model combining physical gardening with digital and cultural engagement. It emphasises the collaborative, networked organisational model and commitment to centring local agency.
- LDUA type: Existing allotment gardens function as robust social condensers despite sparse density, anchoring proximity through shared values and structured community engagement.

Cartierul Creativ (Timișoara & Bucharest, ROMANIA)

Why selected: Cartierul Creativ provides comprehensive context on as an umbrella project initiated by The Institute initiative (https://institute.ro/) in 2017, focused on urban regeneration through the support offered to those in creative industries. It emphasises the holistic philosophy integrating multiple dimensions – Education and Culture, Personal Well-being, Employment – and recognition that the cultural-creative sector can serve as an instrument for social change and enables of proximity in diverse communities.

Fit in LDUA/PROWD context:

- LDUA relevance: The initiative operates in two cities (Bucharest and Timișoara) and responds to specific challenges of infrastructure deficits, weakened community relationships and addresses the need for access to art in a way that the whole community can enjoy. Although it the early stages, the focus was on the city of Timișoara, it now provides a strategic micro-zoning approach within Bucharest and it shows how creative industries function as social anchors generating proximity and cohesion.
- Non-conventionality: Cartierul Creativ's radical approach of using creative economy as the primary motor for urban regeneration (rather than traditional urbanism), its function as a decentralised collaborative network, dedicated communication tools (cultural newspapers, maps, radio), and hybrid public space activation programmes (Amzei Creative Corner with over 50 projects, weekend pedestrian zones, community workshops).
- LDUA type: It demonstrates spatial adaptability and scalability – from the initial Amzei micro-zone to macro-zoning in Bucharest, and contextual adaptation in Timișoara with projects such as "Shine your Light" and "Bright Cityscapes". Highlights the transferability of developed tools and methodologies (District Kit, micro-zoning guides) for other low-density urban contexts.

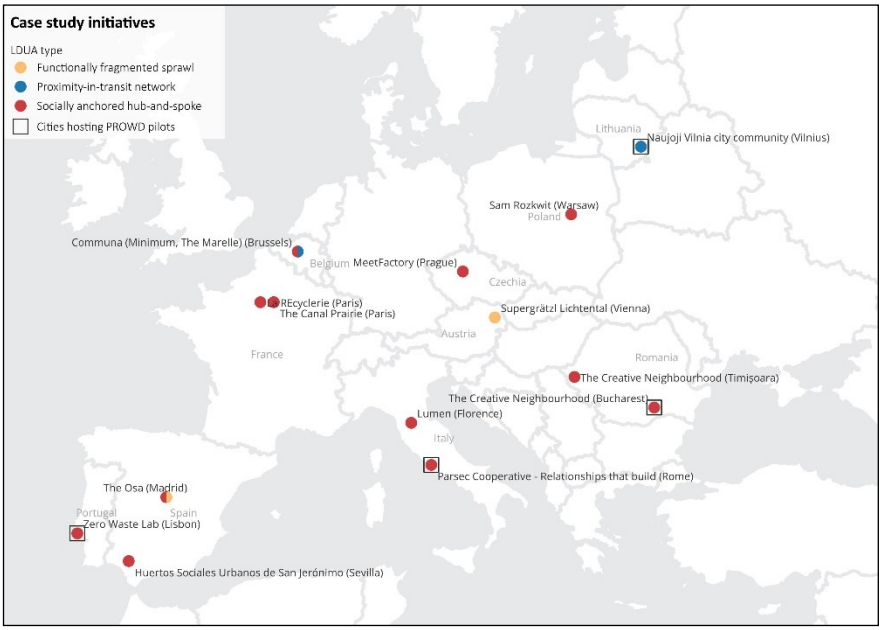

Figure 1: Shortlisted initiatives (15mC in LDUAs, demonstrating the value of Proximity without Density)

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