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BRIEF REPORT

Conceptualisation of Neighbourhood Regeneration Office as an innovative model for stimulating participatory urban regeneration

[version 1; peer review: 3 approved with reservations]

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Abstract

A Neighbourhood Regeneration Office (NRO) is one of the core approaches developed in REGEN project (REGENeration of neighbourhoods towards a low-carbon, inclusive and affordable built environment) co-financed by the Horizon Europe programme (Built4People Partnership). It is being deployed in four demonstration sites: Beckerich (Luxembourg), Dublin (Ireland), Milan (Italy) and Laredo (Spain). The NROs are meant to be the cornerstone of REGEN's enactment of lasting behavioural change, but what exactly are they? The main objective of this brief report is to summarize an attempt to conceptualise NRO as an innovative type of physical urban space dedicated to urban regeneration. The has involved extensive research of both literature and practices of related models of One-Stop Shops and 'third places'. It was followed by collaborative discussions between technical and scientific partners. The resulting insights were subsequently reviewed and refined in consultation with the four demo sites. These sessions allowed to propose the key activities of the NROs, ultimately leading to a practical and tailored operational framework for their implementation within and beyond the REGEN project. Our preliminary results suggest that Neighbourhood Regeneration Offices combine two key functions: 1) support to boost rehabilitation and 2) community-building. By merging these two concepts, NROs aim to provide both practical tools and social

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interaction opportunities, creating a unique model for urban regeneration. They serve as a bridge between technical support and community engagement, making neighbourhood transformation a shared, accessible, and sustainable in the long-term. The proposed definition of an NRO proposed in this brief report is complemented by the description of NRO's value proposition and key activities. Presentation of NRO's clear alignment with the New European Bauhaus principles further contributes to proposing NRO as an attractive and replicable model for urban regeneration in Europe.

Keywords
Neighbourhood Regeneration Office, NRO, neighbourhood regeneration, third places, One-Stop Shops, REGEN, New European Bauhaus, NEB

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Introduction

REGEN (which stands for REGENeration of neighbourhoods towards a low-carbon, inclusive and affordable built environment) is an EU-funded project that aims to decarbonise EU neighbourhoods by employing a toolbox powered by digital technologies and sustainability assessments, complemented by social science practices to ensure inclusivity and community engagement. A Neighbourhood Regeneration Office (NRO) is one of the core approaches developed in the REGEN project. The NROs are meant to be the cornerstone of REGEN's enactment of lasting behavioural change, being identified as the physical places where regeneration actually happens. NROs aim to provide advice and promote citizen engagement in regeneration interventions (Urra Uriarte et al., 2025). NROs are being deployed in four demo sites: Beckerich (Luxembourg), Dublin (Ireland), Milan (Italy) and Laredo (Spain). But what exactly are NROs? The main objective of this brief report is to summarize an attempt to conceptualise NRO as an innovative type of physical urban space integrating key elements from both 'One-Stop Shops' and 'third places', but with distinctive activities compared to existing neighbourhood offices, as they aim to create a participatory and interactive environment that strengthens collective urban regeneration efforts. This brief report also aims to establish conceptual groundwork for a replicable model that could be applied to future urban regeneration initiatives in other locations.

Methods

The approach of conceptualising the NROs has involved extensive research of both literature and practices of two (sub) populations (Yin, 2009) at both ends of the service spectrum, from regeneration advisory (One-Stop-Shops - OSSs) to diverse community-building functions ('third places') from which the actual cases were drawn, controlling extraneous variation and helping define the limitations for generalizing the findings (Eisenhardt, 1989). We then applied theoretical sampling as relevant for case selection method for our inductive approach (Denzin, 1978). The cases were thus chosen purposefully rather than randomly, aiming at refining ideas iteratively rather than increasing the total sample size (Harmaz, 2000). Specifically, we aimed at high diversity in terms of organisational models, sizes, thematic focus and financing options. Together, our analysis has covered 11 OSSs (some spanning multiple locations) and 19 'third places'. Analysed aspects included the scope, scale, objectives, and type of activities implemented.

OSS selection and analysis

The selection prioritized residential energy renovation initiatives embedded in larger urban renewal programs, as standalone projects may not capture the challenges related to integration into comprehensive urban development strategies. One-Stop Shops analysed include:

- Europa One-Stop-Shops,[1] various regions, IT/DE/FR/PT/LV
- HolaDomus[2], Olot, ES
- Opengela,[3] Basque Country, ES
- Basque Urban Rehabilitation Societies (SUR),[4] Basque Country, ES
- Lourdes Renove,[5] Tudela, ES
- Coronación,[6] Vitoria-Gasteiz, ES
- Office of Proximity and Promotion (OPI),[7] Madrid, ES
- Integrated Network of Management Offices,[8] Aragon, ES
- Mobile One-Stop Shop,[9] Frederikshavn, DK

[1]https://europaonestop.eu/; https://europaonestop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/English-FINAL-BROCHURE-DESIGN.pdf
[2]https://www.fundacioeuropace.com/programa-domus; https://www.garrotxadomus.cat/
[3]https://opengela.eus/what-is-opengela
[4]https://www.euskadi.eus/bopv2/datos/textosconsolidados/200207429_vigentea.pdf
[5]https://www.nasuvinsa.es/en/node/1659; https://www.nasuvinsa.es/en/node/1363
[6]https://smartencity.eu/about/solutions/vitoria-gasteiz-retrofitting-package/
[7]https://www.nasuvinsa.es/ficheros/Rehabilitacion/200228_3_Guiadance%20Deployment%20Desks_Annex.pdf
[8]https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2008-6701
[9]https://vb.nweurope.eu/media/10168/ace_fiche_frederikshavn_v2.pdf

- Reimarkt,[10] various cities, NL
- Electric Ireland Superhomes,[11] various cities, IE

'Third places' selection and analysis

'Third places' were predominantly selected for their variety in terms of services provided, size and domain of activity. The analysed 'third places' include:

- Third Floor, Lisbon,[12] PT
- Biblioteca Sociale Espinasse,[13] Milan, IT
- fabULIS,[14] Sarreguemines, FR
- Èlectrolab,[15] Nanterre, FR
- FerroForum,[16] Esch-Schifflange, LU
- VEWA,[17] Dudelange, LU
- Collectif Abbal,[18] Toulouse, FR
- Bouillonnante,[19] Soupetard, FR
- Maison Malepère,[20] Toulouse, FR
- Digital Village,[21] Marseille, FR
- Baobab,[22] Durban, ZA
- L'Oasis,[23] Niamey, NE
- La REcyclerie,[24] Paris, FR
- L'Hermitage,[25] Autrêches (Oise), FR

[10]https://proretro.eu/reimarkt-a-one-stop-shop-for-the-netherlands
[11]https://electricirelandsuperhomes.ie/
[12]https://www.the3rdfloor.net
[13]https://www.milanoweekend.it/articoli/biblioteca-sociale-espinasse/
[14]https://francetierslieux.fr/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Rapport-France-Tiers-Lieux-2021-complet.pdf; www.fabulis.org; https://cop-demos.jrc.ec.europa.eu/eu-makerspaces/fablab/france/fabulis
[15]https://francetierslieux.fr/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Rapport-France-Tiers-Lieux-2021-complet.pdf
[16]Gryszkiewicz, L. (2023). Rapport final du tiers-lieu culturel FerroForum, Oeuvre Grande-Duchesse Charlotte, Luxembourg; https://ferroforum.lu/en/
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[18]https://www.citego.org/bdf_fiche-document-3337_en.html; https://agence-intercalaire.com/nos-projets/sites-actuels; https://www.facebook.com/CollectifAbbal/about
[19]https://actu.fr/occitanie/toulouse_31555/toulouse-comment-cet-ancien-batiment-d-un-grand-groupe-de-telephonie-va-totalement-changer-de-fonction_54816316.html; https://agence-intercalaire.com/nos-projets/sites-actuels
[20]https://www.maisonmalepere.fr/
[21]https://www.digital-village.com/
[22]https://www.veolia.com/en/quality-life/inclusion-solidarity/third-places-devoted-sustainability; https://www.africa.veolia.com/en/newspublications/veolia-and-themakerspace-inaugurate-baobab-durban-third-place-dedicated-circular
[23]https://www.veolia.com/en/quality-life/inclusion-solidarity/third-places-devoted-sustainability; https://www.fondation.veolia.com/en/oasis-women-entrepreneurs-and-protectors-environment; https://www.veolia.com/en/newsroom/news/entrepreneurship-women-oasis-niamey-niger
[24]https://www.larecyclerie.com/
[25]https://francetierslieux.fr/publications/rapport-tiers-lieux-2021/; https://www.convergences.org/en/lhermitage-a-model-for-local-implementation-of-the-3zero/; https://www.hermitagelelab.com/

- L'Effet Papillon,[26] Baud (Morbihan), FR
- PING,[27] Nantes, FR
- La Parcheminerie,[28] Rennes, FR
- Fabryka,[29] Dabrowa Górnicza, PL
- Wijkbedrijf Selwerd,[30] Groningen, NL

Literature and practice review were followed by collaborative discussions between technical and scientific partners of the REGEN project. The resulting insights were reviewed and refined in consultation with the representatives of the four demo sites to propose the key activities of the NROs, ultimately leading to an operational framework for their implementation within and beyond the REGEN project.

Results

Key characteristics of One-Stop Shops

One-Stop Shops (OSSs) are service providers that consolidate complex processes—such as energy renovations or building projects—into a single, integrated offering, streamlining decision-making for non-expert users (Bertoldi et al., 2021). They emerged to address the fragmented and technically demanding nature of renovation projects, which traditionally require coordination among engineers, legal advisors, banks and multiple specialists, often overwhelming homeowners or small businesses. By centralizing responsibilities, OSSs reduce client burdens. This contrasts with conventional approaches, where asset owners must independently navigate disjointed supply chains and manage multiple service providers.

The concept gained traction in Europe through policy initiatives such as the **2016 Clean Energy for All Europeans package** and the **2020 Renovation Wave**, which encouraged member states to establish OSSs to accelerate energy-efficient renovations (European Commission. Joint Research Centre., 2021). Today, OSSs operate globally, offering tailored advice and financing to support sustainable building upgrades while addressing systemic inefficiencies in the process.

OSSs have been extensively studied, with their categorization often reflecting the **approach or context of implementation**. For example, the **INNOVATE programme** (Cicmanova et al., 2020) classifies OSSs into four operational models based on the level of support they provide:

- **Facilitation**: Provides free, user-focused advice to introduce clients to energy renovation benefits.
- **Coordination**: Connects customers to vetted suppliers and financiers but does not assume responsibility for project outcomes.
- **All-inclusive**: Acts as a full-service contractor, managing advice, coordination, and financing while often guaranteeing energy savings.
- **ESCO (Energy Service Company)**: Finances projects through post-renovation energy savings.

Conversely, the **TURNKEY RETROFIT** initiative (Volt et al., 2019) categorizes OSSs by their **business model drivers**, highlighting their underlying motivations and value propositions:

- **Industry-driven**: Manufacturers and installers expand their business scope.

[26]https://francetierslieux.fr/publications/rapport-tiers-lieux-2021/; https://effetpapillon.bzh/
[27]https://info.pingbase.net/que-faire-dans-nos-lieux/
[28]https://cartographie.francetierslieux.fr/?_ga=2.138127536.1649890544.1651669894-1589735040.1651669894&h=&hp=cHJldmlldz1vcmdhbml6YXRpb25zLjYzMTFkYjJlMzg1NWIyNjA2MTIzMWIyOQ%3D%3D#?preview=organizations.6311db2e3855b26061231b29
[29]https://soclab.org.pl/blog/dabrowa-gornicza-inspiruje-fabryka-pelna-zycia-jako-trzecie-miejsce/; https://fabrykapelnazycia.eu/wydarzenia/
[30]https://www.wijkbedrijfselwerd.nl/missie/

- **Consultant-driven**: Focuses on customer-centric advisory services.
- **ESCO-driven**: Emphasizes value-added solutions tied to guaranteed energy savings.
- **Local government-driven**: Aligns with climate or energy policy goals.
- **Cooperative**: Prioritizes societal benefits beyond energy or cost savings.

These frameworks illustrate how OSSs adapt to diverse contexts, balancing user needs, market dynamics, and sustainability objectives to address the fragmented energy renovation landscape.

Key characteristics of 'third places'

'Third place' is a term coined by Ray Oldenburg (Oldenburg, 1999) that refers to places where people spend time between home ('first' place) and work ('second' place). 'Third places' are locations where people meet to exchange ideas, have a good time, and build relationships (Butler & Diaz, 2016). It is where people can gather, put aside the concerns of work and home, and hang out simply for the pleasures of good company and lively conversation, making 'third places' the heart of a community's social vitality and the grassroots of democracy (Oldenburg, 1999). They 'serve as equalizers, transcending distinctions of status, class, and race.' (idem). Indeed, Oldenburg 'advocates for the immense social value they bring and points out their historical role, amongst others:

- the American *tavern* in the American Revolution
- the French *café* in the French Revolution
- the London *coffee house* during the Enlightenment
- the *agora* in Greek democracy' (idem)
- the imperial Chinese *teahouses*
- or even the German *bierstube* and the Italian *tabern.*

Modern-times 'examples of third places include churches, cafes, bars, clubs, libraries, gyms, bookstores, hackerspaces, stoops, parks, theatres,' community centres like YMCAs and YWCAs, or senior centres, among others.' (Wikipedia, 2025).

These community venues are perfectly suited for discussion and relaxed social interaction, oftentimes creating a lively atmosphere and a sense of camaraderie, distinguishing 'third places' from other public places. Moreover, they help unify the neighbourhood by bringing diverse people together and fostering a sense of community.

In summary, third places display the following eight characteristics (Oldenburg, 1999):

- Accessibility (easy to access),
- Accommodation (time-available outside of the 1st and 2nd places),
- Playful mood (enjoyable, entertainment by participants themselves),
- Low profile (homely and comfortable),
- Home away from home (well-integrated into daily life),
- Neutral (everyone free to come and go),
- Levelling (no importance on an individual's societal status),
- Regulars ('regulars' play a role in integrating new visitors), and

- Conversation (as the main activity).

As such, they can serve as a good base for any broadly seen neighbourhood regeneration efforts.

Towards the definition of Neighbourhood Regeneration Offices

Our REGEN-driven approach proposes that NROs can be seen as community-focused spaces that blend technical support for sustainable urban renewal with social initiatives to strengthen neighbourhood ties. They aim to provide expert guidance on energy-efficient upgrades, eco-friendly building practices, and accessible funding options while creating spaces for residents to connect, collaborate, and shape their environment together.

The key features of NROs are:

- Technical Support: They offer advice on energy retrofitting, green building solutions, public funding and simplification of sustainable renovations.

- Social Engagement: They act as community hubs to spark conversations, organise workshops, and mobilise residents for collective action.

- Inclusive Planning: They ensure that all voices—especially marginalised groups—are included in decision-making to co-design solutions that meet local needs.

By combining practical tools with people-centred collaboration, NROs are meant to empower neighbourhoods to become more sustainable, resilient, and socially connected. They are designed to help residents turn ideas into action, ensuring urban renewal is both environmentally smart and community-driven.

Crucially, NROs are anchored in physical spaces within the neighbourhood (e.g. repurposed community areas, revitalised sites), creating a focal point for interaction and serving as as tangible gathering points for citizens, reinforcing the sense of ownership and collective action.

Indeed, our preliminary results suggest that an effective NRO should combine two key functions: 1) support to boost rehabilitation and 2) localised community-building. By merging these, NROs would be well-positioned to provide both practical tools and social interaction opportunities, creating a unique model for urban regeneration. They would serve as a bridge between technical support and community engagement, making neighbourhood transformation shared, accessible, and sustainable in the long-term. This dual nature of NROs and their conceptual and empirical underpinnings are presented in Figure 1[31].

Neighbourhood Regeneration Offices' value proposition, core activities and alignment with New European Bauhaus

NROs offer a dual focus: technical expertise to advance urban rehabilitation and community-driven initiatives to foster social cohesion. Unlike conventional One-Stop Shops, which prioritize administrative support, NROs specialize in urban renewal by guiding residents through energy-efficient renovations, sustainable building upgrades, and neighbourhood revitalization. They simplify access to expert advice, ensuring these processes are user-friendly and inclusive. Simultaneously, they transcend traditional service centres by functioning as collaborative hubs like 'third places,' yet with a mission to bring together residents, stimulate dialogue, and mobilize collective action. This dual role bridges technical solutions with social engagement, transforming neighbourhoods into resilient, participatory spaces.

To foster citizen engagement, NROs in the context of REGEN project transform complex expert datasets and infrastructure plans into accessible formats for public dialogue. The project leverages advanced tools for built environment regeneration alongside an open GIS environment that supports data delivery to NRO managers for organising community workshops. Furthermore, REGEN introduces MUST, a tangible interactive device designed to help citizens understand neighbourhood conditions, collectively formulate requirements, and comment on development projects. By combining open data, expert tools, and interactive technologies, NROs aim to bridge the gap between professional planning and community participation (Yilmaz et al., 2025).

[31]Collectif Abbal: https://www.facebook.com/CollectifAbbal/photos



Figure 1. Neighbourhood Regeneration Offices as a combination of One-Stop Shop and 'third place' approaches. Sources used with the Figure: 1) Butler & Diaz, 2016; 2) Oldenburg, 1999; 3) based on Bagaini et al., 2022; credits of One-Stop Shops graphic: Innovate project[32]; photo 'third places' Collectif Abbal (Toulouse, France)[33].

Such approach aligns closely with the New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles, emphasising sustainability, inclusion, aesthetics, and active participation. By integrating environmental, social, and design considerations, NROs aim at fostering holistic regeneration. Key domains include energy-efficient architecture, renewable energy systems, sustainable mobility, circular economy practices, and inclusive urban planning.

Table 1. Key activities of the Neighbourhood Regeneration Office and their alignment with NEB values.

Key activities	Type of actions	Together	Beautiful	Sustainable
Technical advice for refurbishment	Sustainability advice (energy, energy bills, residues, mobility, etc,.)			
	Provide advice on existing materials and components in buildings that can be reused or recycled			
	Gather direct information from suppliers			
	Make agreements with potential suppliers			
	Provide financial & funding information			
	Manage aggregation possibilities between building interventions, group purchase of works, project management and/or coordination of a general contractor as single point of contact			
Showcase of new technologies	Demos of innovative renovation materials, processes and players			
	Organise visits of most performing or original renovations			
	Market place for offer and demand in different fields, commerce, construction (Showcase for local contractors)			
Stakeholder dialogue hub	Updated stakeholder focal point			
	Contact & discussion between technicians, agents and all stakeholders			
	Mediation between professionals			
Foster neighbourhood cohesion	A place for social interaction			
	Collaborative (and/or co-working) opportunities & meeting place for associations			
	Exchange place for residents concerns regarding neighbourhood			
	Time bank: offer and demand to promote citizen support networks			
Raising awareness of the community	Dissemination of regeneration process to citizens			
	Communication activities, socially engaging events, exhibitions ... on environment, sustainable development and decarbonization.			
	Workshops for school classes			
	Social networks in local media			
Capacity building	Co-creation workshops using participatory technologies, e.g. MUST			
	Guided social innovation development processes			
	Ecosystem building and networking events, talks, workshops ...			
	Specific capacity building activities for deploying the LED (local economic development)			

Table 1. *Continued*

Key activities	Type of actions	Together	Beautiful	Sustainable
Engage the community in city decision-making	Direct feedback from citizens and other stakeholders (gather local knowledge) to improve city planning initiatives			
	Participatory urban diagnosis (social, economic, ...)			
	Participatory budgeting for public space			
	People-centric urban design (City acupuncture, Placemaking, Tactical urbanism ...)			

Central to this vision is the NRO's role as a catalyst for collaboration. It unites residents, businesses, and experts to co-create regenerative strategies. By embedding the NEB's core values—sustainability (climate-resilient neighbourhoods), inclusion (equitable participation and community-led stewardship), aesthetics (functional, inspiring public spaces)—it turns abstract principles into tangible, neighbourhood-scale change.

The NRO model redefines urban renewal by merging technical innovation with grassroots engagement, ensuring transformations are not only sustainable but also socially enriching. Through this approach, it contributes to a future where neighbourhoods are vibrant, inclusive, and environmentally conscious, embodying the NEB's vision of a more beautiful, equitable, and sustainable Europe.

In concrete terms, this means a broad range of actions and services that NRO should be able to offer to the neighbourhood, in alignment with NEB values, as presented in Table 1.

Discussion

While NROs are a new proposed concept, their ongoing implementation in the REGEN project provides promising outlook for such an innovative structure. Yet, at these early research stages, much remains unknown. Among these factors, the NROs' business model and financial viability constitute the most pressing avenues for future research.

Within the REGEN project, our preliminary findings indicate that no single, formalized business model currently exists. Each NRO is deeply shaped by its territorial ecosystem, local priorities, and socio-economic realities. For instance, Laredo's emphasis on cultural heritage differs significantly from Milan's focus on addressing energy poverty. Despite this variability, when looking at the NROs through the lens of Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010), one core aspect appears consistent across all sites: the Value Proposition. A clear, credible, and visible value proposition is crucial for driving user uptake and strengthening community ownership. If this delivered value produces measurable and positive impacts, we hypothesise that key stakeholders, particularly municipalities, would be more inclined to secure long-term sustainability by allocating financial support. Beyond the Value Proposition, several other aspects will require close attention. These include Key Partners, Channels and Community Engagement, and Revenue Streams and Financial Viability. The latter requires strengthened fundraising capacity and robust cost-benefit arguments to justify ongoing municipal co-funding. A resilient structure is expected to be a hybrid public-private model combining municipal resources, private contributions, and community-based mechanisms.

As an evolving process, each site's business model will continue to mature and adapt as NROs gain operational experience and refine their strategies. Ultimately, practice will show to what degree sustainable business models can be ensured for the NROs. Future research should track this empirical evidence to provide recommendations for suitable models for NROs.

Conclusions

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Office concept, developed within the REGEN project, is defined as a hybrid urban space that combines a One-Stop-Shop model for citizen and stakeholder support for sustainable renovation with the qualities of a 'third place' dedicated to community engagement. Its purpose is to foster holistic, socially rooted, and New European Bauhaus-aligned neighbourhood regeneration. By operating simultaneously as an accessible service hub and as a trusted community anchor, the NRO aims to create long-lasting behavioural, environmental, and social change within its neighbourhood. Practice and future research will verify if this concept will stand the test of time.

Ethics and consent

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

Data and software availability

This article is conceptual, so no data are associated with the article.

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The paper provides some aspects of the EU-funded project 'REGEN project – REGENeration of neighborhoods towards a low-carbon, inclusive and affordable built environment', and is intended by the authors as a brief report, so the text – perhaps also due to the editorial imposed words limit – presents the essential information to describe the assumptions, developments and outcomes of the project. Then, this short essay presents the experience of Neighborhood Regeneration Offices (NROs), proposed structures for building collective awareness among citizens that can then translate into positive behaviors for decarbonization and improved urban quality, enhancing the outcomes and impacts of urban regeneration processes underway in European cities. 4 NRO have been currently implemented according to the Eu-Funded project: Beckerich (Luxembourg), Dublin (Ireland), Milan (Italy), and Laredo (Spain). Before outlining the characteristics and functioning of NROs, the authors, focusing on other experiences launched in Europe, especially one-stop-shops (OSSs) and 'third places', according to a grid of indicators (chiefly: scope, scale, objectives, and kind of developed activities), try to understand the organizational model, the effectiveness and also the weaknesses of these experiences. The outcomes of this deep analysis push to a proposal for NROmore aligned to New European Bauhaus principles, able to strength cooperation among all the stakeholders and citizens to be more active; to support energically social cohesion and inclusion, evolving in a 'resilient structure is expected to be a hybrid public-private model combining municipal resources, private contributions, and community-based mechanisms', as 'replicable model that could be applied to future urban regeneration initiatives in other locations'.

The paper results interesting to an expert reader because it offers an interesting consideration on structures necessarily voted to promote bottom-up virtuous behaviors, aiming for decarbonization and environmental, economic, and social sustainability principles implementation.

NROs could provide an important support, especially in ongoing regeneration processes, so the proposal put forward for their creation and development in European cities is compelling.

The article, in my opinion, has two limitations, due to the authors' brief report nature, which can easily be solved by revising the text.

a) The methods and criteria for analyzing the experiences already underway in Europe are presented in a very concise manner, despite the authors' emphasis on how the development and functioning of these structures are profoundly linked to the contexts, local factors, and contingencies within which they develop.

b) The brevity of the text does not contribute to a clear understanding of the most relevant aspects for addressing issues related to National Regulated Organizations (NROs) or the methods for developing them and ultimately transforming them into permanent structures. The text relies on assertive statements without providing operational guidelines. The authors, in their brief report, were certainly not in the best position to more fully summarize the results of their research, the characteristics of the experiences conducted, and, consequently, provide comprehensive operational suggestions.

What do authors mean for “Italian tabern”?

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it engage with the current literature?
Yes

Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?
Yes

Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?
Partly

Are all the source data and materials underlying the results available?
Not applicable

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?
Partly

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?
Not applicable

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Planning, Urban regeneration, Urban Design, Social innovation in regeneration processes

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Reviewer Report 11 June 2026

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Paolo Grassi
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The research report synthesizes the concept of the Neighbourhood Regeneration Office (NRO) as an innovative type of 'physical' urban space dedicated to urban regeneration, drawing on research from both literature and practices related to similar models of 'One-Stop Shops' (OSS) and 'third places' across various European countries. The article is well-structured and, despite its brevity, proves to be comprehensive.

From a conceptual standpoint, however, I do not entirely understand the decision to focus solely on the two extremes of what is defined as a 'spectrum of services'—focusing on a 'service provider' (the OSS) on one end, and on a very broad category embracing highly diverse experiences on the other, that of ‘third place’. I would ask the authors to better justify this strategy, perhaps by considering some intermediate case studies within this spectrum. For instance, the literature review lacks references to the field of Urban Living Labs, which could potentially offer several valuable insights in this regard.

A further observation concerns the definition of the NRO; while it is very thorough in itself, it could perhaps be enriched with concrete examples. While the article makes it very clear what an NRO does, it is not equally clear where it can be located, and through which kind of physical space.

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it engage with the current literature?
Partly

Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?
Yes

Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?
Partly

Are all the source data and materials underlying the results available?
Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?
Yes

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?
Not applicable

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: I am an urban anthropologist with strong expertise in participatory territorial

working methodologies, hybrid spaces, and urban living labs.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

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Luís Filipe Gonçalves Mendes
University fof Lisbon, Center for Geographical Studies, Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, Lisboa, Portugal

Review Report
Article Title: Conceptualisation of Neighbourhood Regeneration Office as an Innovative Model for Stimulating Participatory Urban Regeneration
Reference Number: Open Research Europe 2026, 6:149
DOI: 10.12688/openreseurope.22251.1

General Assessment
This brief report presents the conceptualisation of the Neighbourhood Regeneration Office (NRO) as an innovative framework for fostering participatory urban regeneration within the context of the Horizon Europe REGEN project. The manuscript addresses a highly relevant topic in contemporary urban studies, namely the challenge of integrating technical urban rehabilitation processes with citizen participation and community-building dynamics. The authors propose an original conceptual model that combines the operational logic of One-Stop Shops (OSSs) with the social and relational functions of “third places”, thereby seeking to create a hybrid structure capable of supporting both sustainable renovation processes and neighbourhood cohesion.
The topic is timely and aligns closely with current European policy priorities, particularly those associated with the New European Bauhaus, urban sustainability transitions, energy-efficient renovation, social inclusion, and participatory governance. The manuscript demonstrates a clear awareness of ongoing European debates concerning citizen-centred urban transformation and contributes to emerging discussions on place-based approaches to neighbourhood regeneration.
The article’s principal strength lies in its conceptual ambition and its effort to bridge two traditionally separate strands of literature and practice: technical support structures for renovation and community-oriented social infrastructures. The proposed NRO model offers a potentially valuable framework for future experimentation and implementation in urban regeneration initiatives across Europe.
Nevertheless, while the conceptual contribution is promising, the manuscript would benefit from greater theoretical depth, methodological clarity, and analytical rigour. As currently presented, the paper remains largely descriptive and exploratory. Several sections require further development

to strengthen the scientific robustness of the argument and to provide a more convincing justification for the novelty, applicability, and transferability of the proposed model.

Specific Assessment
The title accurately reflects the content of the manuscript and clearly communicates its central objective. It appropriately signals the conceptual nature of the contribution and its focus on participatory urban regeneration.
The abstract provides a concise overview of the article's objectives, methods, and principal findings. It successfully introduces the concept of the NRO and summarizes its intended functions. However, the abstract would benefit from a more explicit statement regarding the methodological approach employed in the conceptualisation process and a clearer articulation of the scientific contribution beyond the practical objectives of the REGEN project. Some minor language revisions would also improve clarity and readability.
The introduction establishes the policy and project context effectively and clearly explains the rationale for developing the NRO concept. The research problem is understandable and relevant. However, the introduction would be strengthened by a more substantial engagement with broader academic debates on urban governance, participatory planning, social innovation, urban living labs, and community-based regeneration. At present, the framing remains strongly project-oriented, which somewhat limits its theoretical positioning within the wider scientific literature.
The literature review is integrated into the manuscript through the sections dedicated to One-Stop Shops and third places. While these sections provide useful background information, the review remains relatively narrow and descriptive. The authors rely primarily on foundational references and selected practice examples. A more systematic engagement with recent literature on urban regeneration, collaborative governance, community resilience, social innovation ecosystems, neighbourhood planning, and participatory urbanism would significantly strengthen the conceptual foundations of the study. Furthermore, the manuscript would benefit from a clearer explanation of how the proposed NRO differs from existing neighbourhood offices, urban living labs, community hubs, local innovation centres, and similar intermediary structures already documented in the literature.
The methodology section represents one of the manuscript’s weaker components. The authors indicate that they employed literature review, case analysis, theoretical sampling, and collaborative discussions among project partners and demonstration sites. However, the methodological procedures are not described in sufficient detail to ensure transparency and reproducibility. The criteria used for selecting OSS and third-place cases are only partially explained. The analytical framework employed to compare and synthesise findings across cases remains unclear. Additionally, the process through which insights were transformed into the final NRO model requires further elaboration. More explicit information regarding data collection, coding procedures, comparative analysis, and validation processes would considerably enhance methodological credibility.
The case selection demonstrates considerable diversity across geographical contexts and organisational models. The inclusion of eleven OSS cases and nineteen third-place examples provides a broad empirical foundation for conceptual exploration. However, the manuscript does not present a systematic comparative analysis of these cases. Instead, the cases appear primarily as sources of inspiration for the proposed model. The scientific value of the case review would increase substantially if the authors provided comparative tables, analytical dimensions, or synthesis matrices showing how specific characteristics of the reviewed cases informed the development of the NRO framework.
The results section successfully identifies key characteristics of OSSs and third places and logically

combines them into the proposed NRO concept. The resulting framework is coherent and intuitively persuasive. The dual emphasis on technical support and community-building constitutes the manuscript's central contribution. Nevertheless, the results remain largely conceptual and normative. Stronger analytical justification is needed to demonstrate why the selected characteristics are the most relevant and how they emerged from the comparative analysis. The discussion of Figure 1 would also benefit from greater analytical depth.
The section concerning the NRO value proposition and alignment with New European Bauhaus principles is particularly relevant and demonstrates the practical applicability of the model within current European policy agendas. Table 1 provides a useful operational overview of potential NRO activities. However, the analysis would benefit from a more critical examination of possible implementation challenges, trade-offs, governance complexities, and resource constraints associated with combining technical advisory functions and community-building roles within a single organisational structure.
The discussion section appropriately acknowledges the preliminary nature of the research and identifies future research directions. The focus on business models and financial sustainability is particularly important. However, the discussion could be strengthened through a more critical reflection on potential risks and limitations of the NRO concept. For example, issues such as stakeholder conflicts, governance fragmentation, participation fatigue, unequal representation, institutional dependencies, and long-term operational sustainability deserve consideration.
The conclusions are generally consistent with the objectives and findings of the manuscript. They effectively summarise the proposed conceptual framework and its intended contribution. However, the conclusions occasionally extend beyond the empirical and analytical evidence presented in the article. Some claims regarding future effectiveness and transformative potential should be formulated more cautiously given the early developmental stage of the NRO model.
The references are generally appropriate and relevant to the subject matter. Most cited works appear to be used within the text. However, there are several issues that merit attention. The reliance on grey literature, project reports, websites, and practice-oriented sources is relatively high. While understandable given the emerging nature of the topic, the manuscript would benefit from a stronger integration of peer-reviewed academic literature. Additionally, the citation of Wikipedia as a source for defining third places is not appropriate for a scientific publication and should be replaced with more authoritative academic references. A careful verification should also be undertaken to ensure consistency between in-text citations and the reference list. Furthermore, there appears to be a typographical inconsistency in the citation of Urra Uriarte et al. (2025), which should be checked and corrected.
From a writing perspective, the manuscript is generally clear and accessible. The language is understandable and suitable for an interdisciplinary audience. Nevertheless, there are several grammatical, stylistic, and typographical issues throughout the text that require editorial revision. Examples include occasional repetition, minor syntax inconsistencies, and a few formatting irregularities. A thorough language editing process would improve readability and presentation quality.

Final Assessment
Overall, this manuscript presents an original and potentially valuable conceptual contribution to the fields of urban regeneration, participatory planning, sustainable neighbourhood transformation, and community-based urban governance. The proposed Neighbourhood Regeneration Office framework offers an innovative synthesis of technical renovation support mechanisms and community-building infrastructures, responding directly to current European priorities regarding sustainability, inclusion, and citizen engagement.

The article's main contribution lies in proposing a new conceptual model capable of bridging technical and social dimensions of neighbourhood regeneration. The framework has practical relevance and demonstrates significant potential for future empirical validation and policy application. However, the current version remains predominantly exploratory and would benefit from substantial strengthening of its theoretical foundations, methodological transparency, analytical depth, and critical discussion.

For these reasons, I recommend:
Major Revisions
The manuscript should be reconsidered after substantial revision addressing the methodological, theoretical, and analytical issues identified above. With these improvements, the article has strong potential to make a meaningful contribution to the scientific literature on participatory urban regeneration and sustainable neighbourhood transformation.

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it engage with the current literature?
Partly

Is the study design appropriate and is the work technically sound?
Partly

Are sufficient details of methods and analysis provided to allow replication by others?
Partly

Are all the source data and materials underlying the results available?
Partly

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?
Partly

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?
Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Urban Regeneration, Gentrification, Housing Studies

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.