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TOP TASKS FOR 2025

INVESTMENT MARKETS RETAIL REAL ESTATE IS BACK ON THE MENU

INTERVIEW ADVANCING POLARIZATION IS A KEY ISSUE WHEN RETHINKING RETAIL AND LOCATIONS

DATA SHARING WHILE BENEFITS ARE OBVIOUS, DATA EXCHANGE IS STILL IN ITS INFANCY

DEAR READER,


IMAGE: ACROSS


IMAGE: ACROSS

“We have to hold on until the end of 2024; after that, things will pick up.” That was the message at the beginning of last year. As a matter of fact, the beginning of 2025 has given us a much clearer view of the future. The turnaround in interest rates and the like have ensured that we can, once again, look towards the future with more confidence. Most importantly, we have become more experienced in dealing with unforeseeable challenges. The second half of 2024 demonstrated retail real estate's extreme long-term resilience. Steffen Hofmann, Managing Partner at ambas, describes it as follows in his nuanced view of the investment market: “Retail real estate is back on the menu and continues to qualify as a significant portfolio component in the portfolios of institutional real estate investors.” (page 6). The fact that large assets proved capable of being transactional in a challenging investment market environment as early as 2024 makes us optimistic about market developments in 2025.

2025 will be a year dedicated to tackling and focusing on the core issues and trends in the retail real estate sector. In our opinion, those issues include: increasing polarization in retail, efficient data usage and data sharing, as well as a consistent focus on best practice examples. Not only are those topics on the agenda for this issue of ACROSS, but they are also on the agenda for the entire year.

Our interview with Joachim Stumpf, Managing Director of BBE Holding and IPH Handelsimmobilien, makes one thing clear: Ongoing polarization is a key issue when it comes to what we can do to counteract the changes in the retail sector. In light of that, we also need to rethink retail as well as locations (page 10). David Blumenfeld, Co-Founder of NextRivet, analyzes the potential of data sharing between tenants and landlords for us (page 16). He clearly explains what is needed, above all, to generate real benefits: the right mindset. Mallcomm (page 21), Coniq (page 24), HyperIn (page 27), and ROS (page 30), among others, show how data sharing works in practice. Thanks to our spotlight on Ingka Centres (page 38) and Kaufland (page 42), this issue highlights companies that are not only best in class in their respective fields, but also demonstrate one thing, in particular: Those who think and act internationally, but implement every project regionally, are on the road to success.

This issue concludes with an outlook for the entire industry. We asked a wide range of players in the industry, what was on their to-do lists for 2025. While their responsibilities may differ, they are united by fundamental optimism and the will to shape and further develop the retail real estate sector.

This first issue of ACROSS 2025 lays the foundation for the rest of the year. We are committed to staying on top of these issues and invite you to take part in the discussion: How do you feel about the issue of polarization? Is it a blessing or a curse? Where do you think the greatest challenges lie when it comes to sharing data? In your opinion, which retail real estate project stands out from the crowd, and why? In short, let us know what's on your mind, and we’ll discuss it on one of our many journalistic platforms.

Yours sincerely,

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“RETAIL REAL ESTATE WILL REMAIN A SIGNIFICANT PORTFOLIO COMPONENT OF FINANCIAL INVESTORS”

Retail real estate is back on the menu and continues to qualify as a significant portfolio component in the portfolios of institutional real estate investors, says Steffen Hofmann, Managing Partner at ambas. Even very large assets have proven eligible for transactions in the challenging investment market environment. Therefore, he is rather optimistic about the upcoming months. In this interview, he takes a look at the 2025 investment market.

IMAGE: UNION INVESTMENT

2024 saw some pretty impressive retail deals: Union Investment, for instance, sold the Fünf Höfe in Munich to the Athos family office.

***ACROSS:* AMBAS CELEBRATED ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2024. WHAT WERE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THAT ANNIVERSARY YEAR?**

STEFFEN HOFMANN: For us, the biggest highlight was, indeed, the widespread positive response to our anniversary. It is not about the sheer number of years, but what has been accomplished together by the team for our clients. We were overwhelmed by the positive feedback from business partners, customers, competitors, and long-time companions. 2024 was a good year for the company, which we see as confirmation that we are on the right track in terms of our strategy. We took a significant step forward in the internationalization of our business activities. Our focus is on Germany. However, we have been active in 12 countries since our foundation. In 2024, ambas advised on projects in six different European countries. The team delivered some exciting transactions in the field of shopping centers, designer outlet malls, and in the high-street retail sector.

Our company's field of activity ranged from straightforward property transactions to complex share deals and corporate M&A.

ACROSS: ***WHICH TRANSACTION WERE YOU PARTICULARLY PROUD OF?***

HOFMANN: We can't discuss all projects, but one remarkable transaction we worked on in 2024 was certainly the sale of ROS Retail Outlet Shopping to FREY. Supporting two great companies in the formation of their partnership was a great mission. It was also fascinating to see how such a strategic takeover could impact the competitive landscape in a sector with respect to the future. A second project worth mentioning is the successful sale of Espai Gironès from Commerz Real to Lighthouse. That center, located north of Barcelona, was sold for just under 170 million euros, making it one of the Iberian market's most significant shopping center deals in 2024. Both transactions mentioned were outside of Germany and involved very international capital partners.

ACROSS: ***THIS DEMONSTRATES YOUR EXPERTISE AND IS ENCOURAGING FOR 2025.***

HOFMANN: Absolutely. Regardless of our own trajectory, I am encouraged by recent market evolutions in the area of real estate as an asset class – especially for retail real estate. Interest rates have lowered, while acquisition yields have reached a peak. Prime rents have bottomed out, and collection rates in retail don't have to hide behind any other real estate sector, except, perhaps, for residential. The outlook for a wider market recovery in the next cycle is positive. With the current yield spread between government bonds and retail real estate, this setting should make the asset class look very attractive to financial real estate investors, in particular, when they have the right operators by their side.

ACROSS: ***WHAT DRIVERS HAVE REVIVED THE TRANSACTION MARKET APART FROM THE INTEREST RATE LEVEL?***

HOFMANN: At the beginning of last year, I told ACROSS Magazine that we would see the gradual resurgence of the retail transaction markets from the second half of 2024 on. That has proven to be true. Fundamentally, the conditions of the debt-financing market have improved in two

IMAGE: COMMERZ REAL

ambas has accompanied the sale of Espai Gironès to Lighthouse for Commerz Real in 2024.

respects. Firstly, swap rates have come down to a moderate level, and secondly, lenders have formed a much more positive view of retail real estate. That's not only true for debt funds and expensive mezzanine lenders, but even conservative senior lenders are returning to the sector. During the next phase, we expect lenders to compete for margins within reason, which would help to further reduce the overall costs of debt. These are two crucial drivers. However, securing debt-finance for large-scale transactions with investment volumes of 150 million euros or more still takes longer than in previous cycles.

ACROSS: ***DOES THAT MEAN THAT WE CAN ONLY EXPECT SMALLER TRANSACTIONS THIS YEAR?***

HOFMANN: Not necessarily. As a matter of fact, 2024 saw some pretty impressive retail deals. Union Investment, for instance, sold the Fünf Höfe in Munich to the Athos family office at a reported deal volume of around 700 million euros, which was a huge transaction. Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield disposed of the Pasing Arcaden shopping center in Munich to Ingka Centres for just under 400 million euros. As already mentioned, our team sold Espai Gironès to Lighthouse for Commerz Real. Klepierre picked up the RomaEst shopping center from GIC in Rome – another transaction worth more than 200 million euros. Nepi Rockcastle bought two prime shopping malls in the CEE market from Union Investment and PIMCO in Poland. Both transactions were worth

IMAGE: AMBAS

Steffen Hofmann is a Managing Partner at ambas over 400 million euros. Just before Christmas, Redevco acquired a British retail park portfolio from Oxford Properties worth around 600 million euros. In short, a lot happened in retail in 2024.

***ACROSS:* WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE RETAIL PROPERTY ASSET CLASS ON THE INVESTOR SIDE?**

HOFMANN: One realization stands out: Retail real estate is back on the menu and continues to qualify as a significant portfolio component in the portfolio of institutional real estate investors. Even very large assets have proven eligible for transactions in what was considered to be a rather challenging investment market environment. Interestingly, the above transactions are geographically spread across Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, and the UK – which, in a way, also suggests that the asset class is rated as appealing across different regions.

***ACROSS:* WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR FUND MANAGEMENT?**

HOFMANN: In a season where other asset classes, such as the office sector, have also started to undergo their own phase of structural change, good retail properties keep proving their resilience in many places and continue to convince with solid, in some cases, even impressive, KPIs. The international fund management industry seems to be paying attention to this fact, especially when deciding on new allocations. The risk-return profile is deemed attractive. On the defensive side of fund management, being able to dispose of a large retail asset in such a market frees up a lot of liquidity in one go, which can be deployed elsewhere. It gives you options.

***ACROSS:* WHAT IS YOUR GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF THE GERMAN RETAIL REAL ESTATE MARKET?**

HOFMANN: Since the summer of 2024, we have noticed rapidly growing interest through many inbound inquiries from foreign investors coming from the US, the UK, the Middle East, as well as from some European countries, such as France and the Netherlands. These groups have examined historical data and consider the current yield profile for retail properties in Germany to be really interesting. They have also gathered that some traditional domestic core buyers may not be in a position to move with their usual pace and clout. Indeed, there seems to be a window of opportunity for new market entrants to get their hands on pipeline opportunities that would be pretty difficult to access in other seasons.

***ACROSS:* ON THE LEASING SIDE, TWO TRENDS INTENSIFIED IN 2024: ENTERTAINMENT CONCEPTS MOVED INTO LARGE SPACES AT CENTERS AND MORE DISCOUNT CONCEPTS OPENED. BOTH PAY COMPARATIVELY LOW RENTS. WHAT IS YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THIS SITUATION FROM AN INVESTOR'S PERSPECTIVE?**

HOFMANN: Those are two very different issues. Leisure and entertainment concepts can have synergies with surrounding retail uses, present solutions to prevent structural vacancies, and help attract new customer groups. Shaping truly attractive entertainment destinations requires expertise – and, if of a decent size and quality, meaningful financial commitments as well. More often than not, such ventures are a little experimental. Rental covenants may not be reassuring, and the tenants tend to prefer shorter leases, or leases with break options just in case the concepts don't fly. Operational requirements need to be well thought through. Planning permits and restrictions on operating hours can interfere with the business model of the operator. Once successfully established, the asset profile will benefit from a valuable USP.

***ACROSS:* WHAT IS THE SITUATION WITH DISCOUNT CONCEPTS?**

HOFMANN: The situation is different for some expanding food, fashion, and department store discount concepts, for instance. They follow a different expansion logic. Those concepts find it challenging to maintain their aggressive price levels through online distribution, because online retail is costly and usually a loss-maker for such concepts. Due to optimized value chains and efficient store operation, such discount concepts can run very profitable physical store operations. These players are usually keen to penetrate a market and benefit from economies of scale. They are interested in securing locations for long periods and are, therefore, willing to conclude long-term leases. The credit rating is strong. The risk of defaulting on rent payments is much lower. In many aspects, such concepts are an easier choice.

IMAGE: ROMAEST

IMAGE: OXFORD PROPERTIES

Two more landmark deals from 2024: Klepierre picked up the RomaEst shopping center from GIC in Rome. Redevco acquired a British retail park portfolio from Oxford Properties worth around 600 million euros.

ACROSS:* *WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR THE LONG-TERM IMAGE OF A LOCATION?

HOFMANN: Nothing drags a shopping atmosphere down more than a permanent void. Clearly, those who have the choice between different occupiers, should not undermine their own positioning. The arrival of discount stores, the emergence of entertainment concepts, and the increased mixed-use orientation has, indeed, had an impact on the profiles of locations. The core task of a skilled shopping center manager is to put an offer mix together that caters to the relevant catchment area and suits his or her target groups. Retailers, in turn, are free to decide in which environment they wish to sell their products and showcase their brands. They have a wide choice nowadays. Certain premium brands may simply not accept discount retailers settling within 100 meters walking distance to their own units, or on the same trading floor, to avoid negative spillover-effects on their image. Through the right clustering approach within the asset, a trading down effect can often be prevented. Shopfronts of modern discount stores can look surprisingly appealing.

ACROSS:* *UNLIKE THE SHOPPING CENTER INDUSTRY, THE OUTLET SECTOR DOES NOT HAVE VACANCIES OR RIGHTS ISSUES. ON THE CONTRARY, IT CONTINUES TO SHOW ENORMOUS MOMENTUM.

HOFMANN: The outlet sector is fascinating and has a different trajectory from more traditional shopping formats. It's a niche sector with a few players that dominate the ecosystem. Footfall and sales show that European shoppers have learned to integrate a couple of outlet mall shopping days into their calendars. Customers are willing to travel further distances to get to them. Some premium outlets have been expanded several times due to their enormous success. However, there are limits when it comes to developing new projects – not only from a planning law perspective; there is also tough competition in that area. Working with specialized operators is even more important than in other sub-sectors. Brand mix is key. Deep marketing pockets are a necessity. Income streams have dynamic components, which are more difficult to grasp for outsiders.

ACROSS:* *WELL, WE HAVE COVERED A LOT TODAY, HAVEN'T WE? AND, THERE IS STILL SO MUCH MORE FOR GOOD CONSULTANTS TO DO. IN CONCLUSION, WHAT ARE AMBAS' PLANS FOR 2025?

HOFMANN: We are committed to continuity. The business formula will remain the same, and we will remain available to our market partners for independent sector specialist advice. The company's track record is strong. We love what we do, and we are going to expand our team further as we are convinced that the market is moving in our favor.

"THERE IS A VIABLE SOLUTION FOR EVERY PROPERTY"

In an interview with ACROSS, Joachim Stumpf, Managing Director of BBE Holding and IPH Handelsimmobilien, analyzes the role of retail real estate in light of the current economic and social situation. His conclusion: "Advancing polarization is a key issue when it comes to discussing what options we have to counter the transformation in retail. Against that backdrop, we also need to rethink retail and locations. Despite all of the challenges, good and individual types of use can be found for all properties – but getting there can be painful."

ACROSS: YOU HAVE BEEN WORKING IN RETAIL CONSULTING FOR OVER 30 YEARS AND HAVE SEEN A LOT OF CHANGE. IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE AT THE MOMENT?
JOACHIM STUMPF: We There is no question that we have enormous social and political hurdles to overcome. Multiple crises repeatedly lead to upheavals. Society and the economy are not used to dealing with them. Unfortunately, the political arena does little to calm the discussions, and it unsettles consumers. In addition, at the end of 2024, there was a wave of redundancies in the automotive industry in addition to Germany's already low economic growth. At the same time, however, consumers are seeing wage increases, and we are slowly getting a grip on inflation. Nevertheless, the propensity to save and the low willingness to invest show that uncertainty and negative factors still predominate.

Joachim Stumpf, Managing Director of BBE Holding and IPH Handelsimmobilien, has been a management consultant with BBE Handelsberatung since 1988 and its Managing Director since 2007. BBE Handelsberatung has been a leading consultancy in the retail and consumer goods sector for more than 70 years. As part of his role, he is also managing director and shareholder of IPH Handelsimmobilien and IPH Center-management, which specialize in retail pro-perty and centre management, since 1994. In 2024, he was appointed to the Council of Real Estate Experts of the ZIA Zentraler Im-mobilien Ausschuss e.V.


IMAGE: IPH CENTERMANAGEMENT GMBH

Joachim Stumpf is the Managing Director of BBE Holding GmbH / IPH Handelsimmobilien GmbH

ACROSS: WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU SEE AT THE RETAIL MANAGEMENT LEVEL?
STUMPF: The big challenge here is aligning business models profitably, utilizing suitable digital opportunities, and creating stationary experiences. Regarding digital possibilities, many players initially only see the opportunities. In practice, implementation is complex. Where do I use digital opportunities? Do I only use them in marketing and/or sales – or to improve channel interaction and organization? Then, there are the aspects of artificial intelligence (AI), process optimization, customer service, etc. Every single aspect involves investment. Many retailers keep investing in digital pro-

cesses without foreseeing whether they will be profitable and accepted by consumers. Bringing these aspects together profitably is what makes a retailer competitive.

***ACROSS:* WHICH RETAILERS ARE PARTICULARLY WELL POSITIONED?**

STUMPF: We are observing clear polarization between luxury and discount, as well as between experience and meeting demand. The luxury and discount segments are growing. However, there is also polarization between strong and weak retailers; surviving mediocrity is becoming increasingly difficult.

***ACROSS:* WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THOSE IN THE MIDDLE?**

STUMPF: We are losing many suppliers here. In addition to the textile sector, in general, this mainly affects medium-sized specialist retailers located in the city centers of small and medium-sized towns. Internationally expanding retailers and manufacturers are moving their stores and showrooms to large cities and conurbations. Overall, we are also seeing polarization between strong and weak locations. Advancing polarization is a key issue when it comes to discussing the impact of the transformation in retail and what options we have to counter it.

***ACROSS:* BEYOND THE RETAIL LEVEL: WHAT LEVELS OF POLARIZATION ARE THERE IN TERMS OF LOCATIONS?**

STUMPF: We have a level of polarization with the so-called macro-locations. Behind this are cities and regions that are resilient and less resilient. The resilient ones have more opportunities to compensate for the loss of retail. They attract international retailers and can replace lost space with hospitality or entertainment. Whether a location is strong or resilient is not only determined by its size. Factors such as catchment area, economic growth, purchasing power, tourism, or whether there is a university are at least as important.

***ACROSS:* WHAT WOULD BE AN EXAMPLE OF A SMALLER BUT RESILIENT CITY?**

STUMPF: In Germany, one example would be the Bavarian city of Rosenheim. With its 65,000 inhabitants, Rosenheim is much more resilient than cities of the same size or larger in North Rhine-Westphalia, where there are many city centers but hardly any catchment areas. Rosenheim is a shopping city between Munich and Salzburg and, therefore, has a high degree of centrality in retail. In addition to the macro level mentioned above, the micro-location determines whether a location is attractive. This is also becoming polarized. For example, there are sections of a high street that have good footfall and stable rents, although overall rents on this high street are falling, particularly along the edges.

ACROSS: ***LET'S EXAMINE THE POLARIZATION AT SHOPPING CENTERS. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT DISCOUNT STORES EXPANDING INTO LARGE RETAIL SPACES?***

STUMPF: We are intensively discussing this topic internally. Yes, I fear that there could be a trading-down effect. However, discussions with our center managers show a different picture, at least in part. Discount formats are strong footfall generators at locations where shopping centers have a local supply function, and the neighboring tenants appreciate that. At centers with an upmarket offering and supra-regional appeal, such offers are only suitable to a limited extent.

ACROSS: ***HOWEVER, THOSE CONCEPTS PAY LESS RENT.***

STUMPF: That's true, but you accept that. What is the alternative? There would be vacancies, high conversion costs, and a gap in footfall. It is clear that integrating discount concepts is a viable alternative overall. When we discuss discounters in general, we often neglect one aspect. Rapidly expanding concepts such as Woolworth or Action are not comparable with the 1-euro-store concepts we know from the 1990s. They are more ambitious in their store design and, with their mix of permanent and changing product ranges, remain attractive to consumers, who may even be higher earners.

ACROSS: ***THE TRIUMPH OF DISCOUNT CONCEPTS NATURALLY ALSO FITS IN WITH THE CONSUMER CLIMATE OF RECENT YEARS. HOW DO YOU ASSESS THE CONSUMER CLIMATE IN 2025?***

STUMPF: The consumer climate and sentiment were much more positive at the turn of the year than in previous months. This is related to the dampened fears of inflation. For the first time, we are also seeing a slight decline in savings. I have already mentioned wage growth. Although consumer sentiment is picking up again in Germany, as I mentioned at the beginning, Germans remain more pessimistic in an international comparison.

ACROSS: ***IN FACT, THE FIGURES DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY ACROSS EUROPE. IN EASTERN EUROPE AND TURKEY, PEOPLE ARE MUCH MORE WILLING TO BUY.***

STUMPF: There are simply differences in mentality. We Germans have a deep-rooted tendency to save, which increases out of caution during crises. Germans' sense of security has suffered lately. Added to that is the aforementioned feeling of not experiencing strong political leadership. The fact that the centrist parties in Germany are constantly at loggerheads is the opposite of confidence-building. The retail environment is always a reflection of the social situation.

ACROSS: ***IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ROLE DOES RETAIL REAL ESTATE, PRIMARILY SHOPPING CENTERS, PLAY AGAINST THIS BACKDROP?***

STUMPF: A study we conducted with Savills showed that a quarter of shopping centers are stable cash cows. However, those properties' achievable prices are so low that sales are only initiated for individual reasons. In addition, there are hardly any core products on the market. Those that would sell do not achieve the book value. We expect the transaction market to pick up in 2025 as prices have bottomed out. In 2024, we saw substantial transactions with the Fünf Höfe and the Pasing Arcaden, but few in total, carried out by non-institutional investors. I believe value-added products will become very interesting in the years to come. We see movement here, and the interest rate cut will reinforce that. However, the buyers are not institutional investors but specialized, risk-averse, opportunistic investors. The situation in Germany is still too uncertain for risk-averse investors.

ACROSS: ***NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE PROPERTIES IN GERMANY THAT HAVE ENORMOUS POTENTIAL.***

STUMPF: Yes, undoubtedly, but in most cases, considerable investments have to be made in the properties. For the seller, this means that they are prepared to accept depreciation.

ACROSS: ***OVERALL, HOWEVER, THERE IS TOO MUCH SPACE.***

STUMPF: Yes, that applies to shopping centers and high streets. Almost everywhere where space is lost, less new retail space is created. Exceptions include top locations or large national shopping centers. This can already be seen in the refurbishment of department stores. Here, we often only have 20 percent of the original space, with retail on the first floor and a maxi-

IMAGES: IPH CENTERMANAGEMENT GMBH

The Gerber in Stuttgart is an example of a successful refurbishment under IPH's management. Designed as a city department store with several uses (retail, residential, office), an entire retail floor was recently eliminated, and the hotel and co-working asset classes were harmoniously integrated.

mum of the second floor. The remaining uses are then all kinds of mixed uses, from residential to office to fitness or even kindergartens and medical care. When we create revitalization concepts, there is a gradation. The first interesting use after gastronomy and leisure is health, followed by other uses that bring in the public. They include, for example, public authorities or adult education centers. All of these are footfall generators that have high synergies with retail. Office and, finally, residential uses come after that. This is a balancing act in the discussion. On the one hand, there is a desire to increase residential space in city centers. However, residential space poses challenges in terms of construction and building regulations, does not generate its catchment area, and is associated with high construction costs.

ACROSS:* *ULTIMATELY, THIS MEANS THAT THE DOMINANCE OF RETAIL IS ABOUT TO END.

STUMPF: We must rethink a wide range of spaces and the positioning of large retail properties. The issue of project development or refurbishment is becoming more complex. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. The market potential, competition, catchment area, building law situation, market and rental potential, investment requirements, property quality, and other factors must be considered and evaluated individually for each location. This is hard and creative work with very individual results for each property. Each property comes to a different conclusion. It is complex, and implementing such concepts involves considerable investment, but we also see that many market participants are no longer willing to invest.

ACROSS:* *WHAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE RETAIL SECTOR MIX, IN ADDITION TO THE GENERAL CHANGE IN THE TYPES OF USE IN CITIES AND AT SHOPPING CENTERS?

STUMPF: That's the decline in the shoe and fashion segment. Fashion is the main reason people come to city centers and shopping malls. Recently, the fashion share of both has been between 45 and 50 percent, with a clear downward trend. In most cases, more space from the fashion sector is being lost than added in subsequent lettings.

ACROSS:* *THE GROWING SEGMENTS ARE HOSPITALITY AND ENTERTAINMENT.

STUMPF: Yes, eating out has increased enor-

IMAGES: IPH CENTERMANAGEMENT

Huma used to be a typical city center-based shopping center in St. Augustin, North Rhine-Westphalia. The center was transformed into a new shopping world in two phases, from 2013 to 2017, in order to present the latest trends in a modern environment. Since its opening in autumn 2017, the newly built, light-flooded center has set high standards on an area of 50,000 sq m. With the newly planned HUMA WORLD, the owner is focused on a unique concept of shopping, gastro, experience, freshness, and outlet shopping.

mously across all age and income groups. This has led to very differentiated concepts, which have also moved into vacant and sometimes large retail spaces. My neighborhood in Munich has a former Mango, where Five Guys now operates over three floors. Shopping centers are even more advanced here than city centers because they can act faster. The proportion of restaurants has increased across all centers in recent years.

***ACROSS:* HOWEVER, THE SHOPPING CENTER SECTOR HAS LONG DEBATED WHETHER CATERING AND ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDERS SHOULD PAY LESS, LIKE THE DISCOUNTERS WE PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED.**

STUMPF: The textile sector has always paid the highest rent for large spaces. If, as a result of market developments, I then lose space where the highest rent payers were, I can't manage without losses. Even if I charge the same rent, I still have to invest heavily in converting the space. It is evident that with the current development of retail, rents tend to fall as the quality of locations and properties falls, which puts pressure on rents. However, top locations can still be described as stable or slightly growing. In addition to purely stationary sales opportunities, they also offer strong tenants the potential to increase online sales and enhance the attractiveness of the multichannel experience. As crucial as this additional benefit is, it has not been possible to agree on an additional rental share for almost 20 years.

***ACROSS:* THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT REDUCED RETAIL LEADS TO MORE COMPLEXITY AT ALL LEVELS.**

STUMPF: Yes, but despite all the challenges, I have a relaxed view thanks to my many years of professional experience: Viable solutions can be found for all properties, even if the path to them is sometimes economically painful.

***ACROSS:* THAT IS AN ENCOURAGING STATEMENT.**

STUMPF: We must constantly rethink, reinterpret, and reimplement retail and its space. What always remains true, however, is that retail has been synonymous with encounters across all centuries and cultures. This is even more evident in city centers than at shopping centers. We are social beings. Technology brings simplification and fun but not human closeness. As simple as it sounds and as often as this statement has been made – meeting someone and experiencing something with all your senses makes a difference. Despite all the polarization and narrowing, shopping centers, if they are well managed, and city centers will remain interesting locations.

DATA SHARING BEGINS WITH THE RIGHT MINDSET

Data exchange in the shopping center industry is still in its infancy, states David Blumenfeld, Co-founder of NextRivet. While the benefits of data sharing between landlords and tenants are obvious, retailers are not enthusiastic about giving their landlords more insight into their business. For efficient data sharing, an honest and good lease relationship is essential. In this interview, Blumenfeld explains why data sharing is so important, but it requires a change in collaboration. Landlords are in the driving seat when it comes to data sharing. They have to prove the value of the data before demanding anything in return. The value of data is always the driving force.

IMAGE: NEXTRIVET

David Blumenfeld is Co-founder of NextRivet.

ACROSS: YOU LIVE AND WORK IN SILICON VALLEY. HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THE TECHNOLOGICAL DISCREPANCY BETWEEN WHAT YOU EXPERIENCE DAILY AROUND YOU AND THE REALITY AT SHOPPING CENTERS?

DAVID BLUMENFELD: Without a question, I live in a technology bubble. Self-driving cars drive through my neighborhood, and this is where most of the tech companies' beta tests take place. We see new technologies every day and everywhere. However – and this is where it gets exciting – this does not necessarily apply to the shopping center sector. Even here in the Bay Area, most malls are not particularly technology-oriented. Of course, a few examples of the use of technology in the shopping center sector stand out – but overall, the shopping centers here are not notably different from those in the rest of the USA.

ACROSS: IS THERE A DIFFERENCE COMPARED TO EUROPE?

BLUMENFELD: Europe is very diverse in that respect. The United Kingdom has always been very progressive in terms of retail technology. During my time at Westfield, especially in London, we drove super innovative and exciting projects. At the same time, we talked to our industry colleagues from other countries, and they were just starting to outline roadmaps or set up basic websites. My experience with Europe, in general, is that when it comes to technology in the shopping center sector, there is a lot of testing, but the results are mixed. The United Kingdom, France, and Germany are probably the leading nations, but innovation is happening everywhere.

ACROSS: YOUR COMPANY FOCUSES ON INTEGRATING DIGITAL PROCESSES AT SHOPPING CENTERS. WHERE DO YOU SEE THE GREATEST NEED?

BLUMENFELD: About 10 years ago, everyone started to try to figure out what the customer's experience should look like and stand out. Locations started to implement digital signage and digital advertising. In addition, of course, there were websites and apps, some of which were consciously used and others very deliberately not implemented. Either way, companies have created a certain digital foundation. Now, the focus is on topics that are rather unsexy for consumers. It's about building operations, leasing, tenant management, and tenant communication. Data exchange plays a fundamental role here. So, the focus is not on the consumer but on how companies can take advantage of things like building management systems, thereby increasing the efficiency of their buildings.

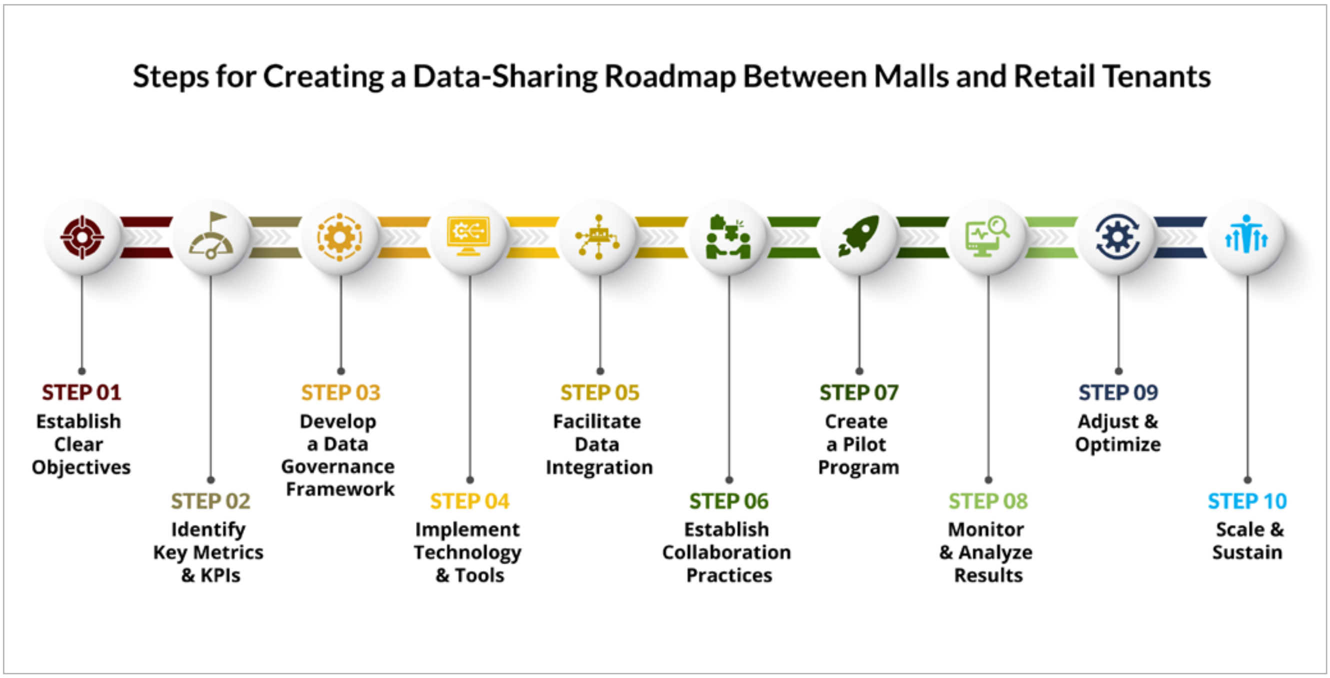


IMAGE: NEXTRIVET

ACROSS: ***WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC THINGS THAT INTEREST YOUR CUSTOMERS?***
BLUMENFELD: One important point is that they must comply with all the GDPR rules and get the data protection perspective right. Furthermore, many clients are curious about people tracking and understanding how people move around. The traditional counting of people walking through the door has been around for a long time. However, people want to determine where customers are and how they get from the public area to the stores. This opens up a lot of opportunities not only for the design of the center but also for the tenant-landlord relationship. If a landlord can see that 10% of the people who walk past a particular store go there, he can take a completely different approach to the tenant if the latter complains about a lack of sales. It's much easier to see if there are problems with customer flow or issues with the products or services on offer. Conversations about actual data lead to essential insights into leasing.

ACROSS: ***BUT, SUCH INSIGHTS CAN ALSO HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT.***
BLUMENFELD: Of course, but at least where the problems are becomes clear. If we stick with the example of declining sales at a store, it becomes clear where the primary responsibility lies in terms of overall traffic being driven to the store or something happening inside the store. Many in the shopping center industry tend to lean into the principle of "what I can't measure, I don't have to take into account" regarding data. However, I am firmly convinced that all industry players must get involved in data sharing, regardless of whether it brings them advantages or disadvantages in the short term.

ACROSS: ***IN ANOTHER INTERVIEW, YOU MENTIONED THAT THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE REGARDING DATA SHARING IS GETTING RETAILERS TO COOPERATE AND SHARE DATA AND TECHNOLOGY. WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS?***
BLUMENFELD: Landlords rent out space and try to maximize turnover. Retailers try to maximize sales and pay as little as possible for space. This situation automatically creates a conflict of interest. For landlords, it would be ideal if they could understand retailers' sales data in real-time and not just based on sales reports at the end of each month. Tenants don't want to immediately show increased sales, because they fear a rent increase. Generally speaking, tenants do not want landlords to be involved in their busi-

ness. They want to decide for themselves how they run their businesses.

***ACROSS:* THERE IS AN UNDERSTANDABLE CONCERN ABOUT TRANSPARENCY. HOWEVER, THIS TRANSPARENCY ALREADY EXISTS IN THE RETAIL SECTOR, NAMELY IN E-COMMERCE.**

BLUMENFELD: Open data sharing between tenants and landlords provides the overall data we know from the online sector. Online retailers can track every time someone visits the website, where they click, what motivates them to stay on the website, and finally, what products they buy and when they return. This transparency can only be achieved offline if tenants and landlords share their data. The technology to do exactly that is there. So much data can be collected, obviously not broken down to the individual, but on a much more aggregated basis that explains the true purchase motivations and purchase impulses. From a mall perspective, understanding that purchase funnel dramatically improves the ability to market more efficiently.

***ACROSS:* WHAT IS A CONCRETE EXAMPLE IN WHICH THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TENANT AND LANDLORD IS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED THROUGH DATA SHARING?**

BLUMENFELD: The marketing fund, in particular, is a sticking point in the relationship between tenants and landlords at many shopping centers. This is where data delivers the most important arguments for spending money wisely. Another example is the operational benefit. Let's take the example of a restroom located next to a food court that is cleaned every three hours based on an estimated number of 500 people using the restroom during that time. If you have camera-based technology that can more accurately track actual usage, you can set an automated trigger when those 500 visits are reached and send out a cleaning team. It's a basic example, but one that demonstrates a more efficient use of resources that also improves the visitor experience.

***ACROSS:* ONE EXAMPLE IN EUROPE IN WHICH TENANTS AND LANDLORDS ARE ALREADY WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER AND EXCHANGING DATA IS THE OUTLET SECTOR.**

BLUMENFELD: Outlets follow a different business model. Turnover-based rents and data sharing are often part of the leasing contract. Therefore, tenants and landlords act in the same ecosystem. If the retailer wins, the landlord wins, and vice versa. Generally speaking, the more data that can be shared, the smarter the decisions will be. Of course, historical data has its value, and many smart decisions can be made without data. However, companies will benefit if they have the information and can act on it in real-time. Data sharing, however, is a question of a certain mindset.

***ACROSS:* WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?**

BLUMENFELD: Both parties must be open to it and recognize the benefits that result from it. That was also the case 10 to 15 years ago. Shopping center operators can create so much high-quality data when a customer enters a store that it is comparable to the online equivalent. The question now is how that data should be used. Some operators use it primarily for their leasing teams and share the data with the tenants. Others take the approach of charging the tenants for this data. The latter approach is very risky for the relationship until the data has been validated over time. This is the only way to persuade the retailer to share more data and use the shared data effectively.

***ACROSS:* IT SOUNDS LIKE THE LANDLORD HAS MORE RESPONSIBILITY REGARDING DATA SHARING, ESPECIALLY AT THE BEGINNING.**

BLUMENFELD: It's more about a fair value exchange. The retailer must also show that it wants to be transparent. The example of e-commerce returns is often used. Retailers offering something like click-and-collect at their stores is the last step in fulfilling an e-commerce order. Most lease agreement clauses do not consider these types of sales; therefore, most retailers do not count them in their sales, especially if they have some kind of percentage lease agreement. On the other hand, if an e-commerce purchase is returned in the store, they are happy to deduct that return from their sales figures. This may be technically permissible due to vague or legacy contract language, but it doesn't reflect the spirit of the partnership. For efficient data sharing, an honest and good lease relationship is essential.

***ACROSS:* IS THERE A ROADMAP WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING A PERFECT DATA EXCHANGE MODEL?**

ABOUT NEXTRIVET

NextRivet is a consulting firm focused on digital innovation and implementation for shopping centers and mixed-use real estate. With a commitment to delivering hands-on, practical solutions, NextRivet helps clients achieve measurable results through expertise in technology implementation, operational efficiency, and customer experience optimization.
www.nextrivet.com

BLUMENFELD: As I explained, it starts with malls being willing to share more data, even if retailers are initially hesitant. So, it has to begin with center managers making the initial investment. Unfortunately, that step takes time because nothing happens quickly in the mall industry, especially when there’s a bit of a leap of faith in order to prove the ROI. Ultimately, data sharing is a mindset shift. By providing the initial data and explaining the opportunities that can be gained from it, the landlord can have a data-driven conversation with a tenant about their leasing relationship. Ideally, once data is shared and additional trust is built, tenants get to the point of actually sharing data in return.

ACROSS: THAT'S WHEN THE ACTUAL DATA SHARING STARTS.
BLUMENFELD: Yes, that's the roadmap, but it doesn't happen overnight. Mall owners are savvy business owners. The core of their business is to monetize everything they do. However, when it comes to data, they must learn to give to get. The first step is an investment in what you're not getting back. The most crucial point in that discussion is establishing trust in the relationship. Data exchange in the shopping center industry is in its infancy. Everyone is talking about it, but if we look at examples, it rarely goes beyond data from tracking tools or communication platforms between tenants and landlords. However, the opportunity to make progress here is great.

ACROSS: IN TERMS OF DATA SHARING: DO ANY KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS ALREADY EXIST?
BLUMENFELD: It depends on what you're trying to do. If we think about today's data exchange platforms, which are primarily used for monthly sales reports, tenant communications, and work orders, the simple KPI is whether all of a mall’s retailers are participating in the platform. Are they using it – whether from a communications perspective or a sales reporting perspective? When we look at tracking information, for example, can you confidently confirm that 90-95% of traffic was captured? Then comes the question of deeper information, such as the conversion rates of people who walked from the common areas into stores. As discussed in the previous example, if processes have been implemented that feed into the building management system, the questions are different. There is a whole range of operational metrics that can be mapped.

ACROSS: TEN YEARS FROM NOW, WHAT DATA SHARING TOOLS MIGHT BE IN USE?
BLUMENFELD: The industry will undoubtedly have a range of technological solutions in 10 years. However, this is of secondary importance. In the upcoming years, it will be more about creating awareness and trust on one side and improving and further developing existing solutions on the other. The most remarkable progress will be making data usable, which requires optimization. In the world of technology, perfect products never come onto the market; they are developed while used.

IMAGE: NEXTRIVET

ACROSS: ***WILL THERE BE ANY EFFECTS ON THE RETAILER SIDE?***
BLUMENFELD: They will better understand their sales, inventory, merchandising, and customer patterns, and they will be better able to connect the dots. And, of course, whoever gets into data sharing will set themselves up for better sales. Nevertheless, establishing an accurate data-sharing model between tenants and landlords will take years, but if we start now, building the initial trust to exchange the first data sets can be done within a year. In parallel, AI and machine learning will speed up the processes as well.

ACROSS: ***ARE THERE ENOUGH EXPERTS ON THE SHOPPING CENTER SIDE WHO UNDERSTAND AND CAN TACKLE THE ISSUE?***
BLUMENFELD: Most shopping center companies lack proptech experts. When we worked for Westfield, we invested in Westfield Labs, and at its peak, we had 70 employees, which was far more than any of its peers at the time. Even today, most shopping centers have one person who is dedicated to digital transformation. In reality, instead of hiring or outsourcing the work to dedicated experts, the marketing and/or IT departments end up being responsible for these initiatives. It's not that these people aren't intelligent or capable, but it's just not their area of expertise, and they have their "day jobs" to do as well. "Data" is not a side project – it has to be a core issue. By and large, people understand the need, but help from outside is necessary in the vast majority of cases.

ACROSS: ***WHAT ARE THE GENERAL STANDARDS FOR DATA SHARING?***
BLUMENFELD: There's no standard as of yet. There is a lot of competition between the companies trying to set the standard. However, a standard is unnecessary for a landlord to invest in data sharing today. The technology is there, and the data can be generated now. While landlords are generally risk-averse when it comes to making investments that don't immediately generate a tangible ROI, at a certain point, they have to make the leap. The good news is that they're not alone. There are many companies, like NextRivet, that can provide hands-on expertise to prioritize the roadmap, select the right vendors, and get these projects off the ground.

DATA SHARING – PUTTING COMMUNITY FRONT AND CENTER

"First, ask why!" That is the most important piece of advice that Mark Bruce, Data & Insights Director at Mallcomm, can give. As data begins to redefine the retail experience, a key question that we must ask ourselves is: "Why should we share data?". To many the idea of sharing data is clouded with questions around how it will be used, and what the implications will be. However, as businesses shape and implement their data strategies, there is a real opportunity to use data for good, especially in the landlord-tenant relationship and in order to maximize ROI.

BY MARK BRUCE

As retail continues to evolve, the onus is placed on creating destinations that provide experience rather than utility. The more attention that is paid to how that experience is curated, the more important the conversation around data becomes – whether it involves footfall, sales collection, or sustainability metrics, for example.

As data begins to redefine the retail experience, a key question that we must ask ourselves is: "Why should we share data?" That question can be applied as much to our personal lives, as consumers, as it can to business. As data acquisition becomes easier, the "why" must be understood to ensure that data sharing is both safe and that some benefit is gained from the activity. The idea of collecting data for data's sake continues to be an issue, as we are increasingly seeing data collected with no discernible way to gain any insight from it. That leaves those who have shared data in the dark as to how it is being used, with uncertainty raising questions around outcome and efficacy.

To many the idea of sharing data is clouded with questions around how it will be used, and what the implications will be. However, as businesses shape and implement their data strategies, there is a real opportunity to use data for good – to enhance experiences and empower communities to be successful. The challenge remains for commercial real estate owners, retailers, and consumers to be reassured that data is being used for good, thereby building trust in a community.

We have already seen guardrails begin to be put in place around data, through the introduction of the enhanced GDPR in 2018, which ensures that

Mark Bruce is the Data & Insights Director at Mallcomm. *Bruce joined Mallcomm last September with over 20 years of operational experience in retail. He joins from British Land, where during his 12 year tenure, he implemented new methods of data acquisition and footfall analytics at Meadowhall, before expanding the data and insight programme across the British Land retail portfolio. In the newly created position at Mallcomm he is supporting Mallcomm's customers to understand the data currently being collected and support the development of industry benchmarks.*

IMAGE: MALLCOMM

it is acquired, managed, and used for the right purposes. In principle, if data is used for genuine reasons, with the right governance, and the "why" is defined, it can be significantly beneficial to both the acquirer and the end-user.

Commercial real estate has transformed a lot over the years. Perhaps most significantly, landlords have shifted to viewing their tenants as customers, building partnerships rather than maintaining more transactional relationships with companies leasing space. Creating strong partnerships ensures an environment of collaboration, where the success of one benefits the other. This shift has led to the creation of retail destinations, where the entire community of landlords, property managers, and retailers all come together to ensure that a destination is successful, as the success of the whole benefits the individual.

The collection and sharing of data requires trust and transparency from both operators and retailers. Historically, this has been a challenge due to poor tenant-landlord relationships, high-profile data breaches, and cases of misuse. Putting the "why" at the center of this relationship ensures that all parties are involved in what they are trying to achieve and can work together to reach a common goal. It is not uncommon to hear that a retailer is reticent to share data, asking: "Why should I give my data away? How does it benefit me?" If you've already established the "why" and created transparency around it, with shared outcomes, then that barrier is removed.

Working in silos is counterproductive and cannot benefit any commercial destination, creating differing goals between landlords and tenants. This is especially true when you think of the value of data in terms of the cost of acquisition versus the derived value attained through insights. If goals are shared, then costs are shared; then, shared data becomes richer, and insights become mutually beneficial. Rich data can inform leasing, marketing, customer service, and operational strategies for landlords, while providing tenants with data to help improve operational performance, product inventories, resourcing, and to highlight trading opportunities.

In today's modern real estate environment, the role of landlords should be to support tenants and ensure that they proactively thrive at a destination – and they should provide them with the tools to do so. Ensuring service charge budgets are spent in areas that will make the biggest impact on tenants is much easier when the impact of initiatives can be evaluated through data and insights. Using data has become essential when it comes to informing decisions, minimizing risks, and maximizing ROI. Furthermore, data has become increasingly important in reaching sustainability targets, helping to inform joint initiatives and to ensure everyone is reaching their goals. With both consumers and investors continuing to put a premium on sustainability, this is a shared benefit made possible through data.

DATA FOR ENHANCED PERFORMANCE

As commercial real estate evolves and prime location increases in importance, data provides tenants and landlords with the opportunity to maximize ROI. Operating a physical retail unit or managing a destination has become more challenging as margins are continually squeezed by increasing labor and supply costs, along with energy and property costs. Against that backdrop, landlords will, undoubtedly, continue to explore new services, products, and facilities to attract consumers. That, in turn, requires accurate and timely data to understand demographics, sales metrics, footfall, market size, and ROI to generate de-risked decision-making strategies and to pilot concepts. Accordingly, tenants are eager to gain insights that can enable them to pinpoint more strategic locations; it isn't always about having the most stores, or the biggest stores, but having the stores that perform the best.

The industry has come a long way from simply making sure void rates are minimized and the lights are on. Assets and destinations portfolio-wide are being looked at through a more holistic lens. Data is impacting decisions ranging from leasing to understanding the efficiency of entire buildings for regear or redevelopment, creating smarter more efficient spaces. By understanding the "why", landlords and tenants can engage on the same level, and data sharing becomes a must, rather than a topic of conversation peppered with who owns what and: “Why should I give up my data to serve you?”. It becomes a mutually beneficial undertaking that cements relationships focused on success.

CONSUMER DATA FOR COMMUNITY GROWTH

The acquisition of data and how it is shared has most commonly been seen in the capture, analysis, and application of consumer data. We often hear the term “Big Brother” used concerning consumer data; it evokes a sense of intrusion and control. However, that is only the case when neither party has been brought into the “why”. As a consumer, when you understand that the use of your data can be beneficial to creating a better consumer experience, it becomes easier to opt into that symbiotic relationship.

For landlords and tenants, consumer data is highly anonymized, deriving value by understanding how we (the consumer) interact with products, services, buildings, and locations. Through innovation, this ability to quickly analyze large amounts of data not only allows for the reduction of costs and the increase of revenue, but, more importantly, it results in better experiences for the consumer, creating landscapes that people want to be in and interact with.

Trust and transparency are key here: Consumers need to understand how their data is going to be acquired, how it is going to be used, and to what benefit. Creating shared goals and interests ensures that the lens of privacy violation is removed as an undertone to the conversation. As consumers become increasingly time-poor, more informed, and more selective, higher expectations arise. These expectations put more pressure on landlords and tenants to not just meet, but to exceed their expectations. The only way to understand these expectations is through data sharing.

Retailers are also seeing ever-increasing costs; therefore, anything that can be done to ensure that the right product is in the right place at the right time, that resourcing is efficient, and that a successful retail experience is delivered for the right target market decreases the costs that have to be passed on to the consumer.

Data comes in many guises. Data acquisition is not just about obtaining marketable email addresses; instead, perhaps more importantly, it is about understanding the needs of the consumer. That enables brand trust and loyalty to be built by delivering value to the consumer. Understanding consumer spending habits, movement, visitor analytics, demographics, and preferences not only ensures better operations through understanding security and staffing levels, but impacts many other areas, such as transport initiatives, customer services, community outreach programs, and facilities, to deliver the best possible experiences. Consumers often think that their data matters on an individual level, but that is not the case. The habits and movements of one individual are not important; it is the sharing of many people’s data that enables a full picture to be painted of what people want and need.

Having mass information then enables benefits to be passed on to the individual by delivering a better retailer mix, thereby creating a halo effect for everyone at a given destination. It also allows for the creation of loyalty programs and rewards tailored to the individual, providing the consumer with incentives that increase visitation and spending, while allowing the consumer to access the rewards he or she demands.

ACT WITHOUT EGO

Whether it is B2B or B2C data, both businesses and consumers alike must act without ego. Data sharing is incredibly powerful. We've seen the benefits in our business with the launch of our new data platform, which helps our customers deliver better experiences to their tenants, and, in turn, to consumers, thereby driving increased performance.

Removing personal motivations and looking at the whole, and uniting through joint goals and purpose, will ultimately benefit the individual business or person. Taking a connected community approach creates destinations and experiences that work for everyone. That creates better spaces in which to be, more efficiently run assets, access to better products, services, and facilities, and it builds brand trust.

DATA SHARING = DATA CARING?

In today's digital age, with AI advancing at an unstoppable pace, consumers are becoming increasingly aware of both the incredible power and the significant risks of sharing their data with businesses. As a global leader in CRM and loyalty solutions, Coniq-CEO Ben Chesser has seen, firsthand, the profound impact data sharing can have – not only on businesses but on customers as well.

BY BEN CHESSER

While governments have made significant strides in regulating data usage and cracking down on bad actors who misuse data without transparency or consent, businesses also have a critical role to play. We need to be more transparent, responsible, and considerate when it comes to data sharing – not just for consumers (B2C) but also for businesses (B2B).

Yet, let's not forget that sharing, analyzing, and processing data presents huge opportunities for all stakeholders. When done right, data sharing empowers businesses to create better products, deliver more personalized services, and make marketing more relevant – moving away from the old "spray and pray" tactics. Importantly, it also eliminates inefficiencies, reduces waste, and ensures resources are allocated toward what customers genuinely want and need. At the end of the day, everyone benefits – as long as we strike the right balance between responsible use and irresponsible abuse of data.

So, how can businesses achieve this balance? Let's break it down by exploring the advantages and challenges of data sharing for both B2C and B2B contexts.

B2C DATA SHARING: THE PROMISE AND THE PERIL

Advantages for Consumers

1. **Hyper-Personalization:** When businesses have access to consumer data, they can deliver tailored offers, promotions, and services that resonate with individual preferences. For instance, instead of receiving generic marketing emails, consumers might get personalized recommendations based on their shopping habits or loyalty program participation.

2. **Better Products and Services:** Data allows companies to understand what consumers truly want. This means fewer irrelevant products and more focus on creating high-demand, high-quality offerings.

3. **Reduced Waste and Smarter Inventory Management:** In fast-paced industries like fashion, where trends and seasons shift rapidly, success hinges not only on creating great designs but also on ensuring the right quantities, colors, and sizes are available in the right locations at the right time. By leveraging advanced customer analytics, brands can accurately forecast demand for specific products at each location, significantly reducing overproduction, logistics inefficiencies, and waste, while optimizing costs.

4. **Convenience and Efficiency:** Sharing data enables seamless experiences. Think about how retailers use purchase history to enable one-click reorders or how apps leverage location data to provide real-time updates on nearby stores.

5. **Transparency and Control:** Responsible businesses are now empowering consumers by giving

them clear choices about what data to share, how it's used, and how it benefits them.

6. Transparent Value Exchange: Loyalty programs offer a powerful way to create a mutual value exchange between businesses and consumers. When consumers join a program, there is a clear and explicit agreement: They share certain data about their preferences and behaviors in return for tangible benefits, such as improved service, personalized offers, and exclusive discounts. This transparency fosters trust and ensures both parties gain value from the relationship.

Challenges for Consumers

1. Privacy Concerns: Despite advancements in regulation, many consumers still worry about how their data is used. Concerns around data breaches, misuse, and surveillance continue to impact customers perspectives.

2. Over-Targeting: While personalization is a benefit, it can sometimes cross the line into intrusiveness. No one wants to feel like they're being watched 24/7.

3. Lack of Understanding: Many consumers still don't fully understand the implications of data sharing, leading to mistrust. Transparency and education are key to addressing this.

B2B DATA SHARING: A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

While B2C data sharing gets most of the attention, B2B data sharing holds immense untapped potential. At Coniq, we've seen how collaborative data-sharing initiatives can foster innovation, improve margins, and unlock new revenue streams for both retailers and their brand partners. Coniq has been leading this approach for almost 15 years in the mall sector.

Advantages for Businesses

1. Improved Collaboration: Data sharing fosters stronger relationships between businesses. For example, retailers and brands can work together to analyze sales performance, optimize inventory management, and understand customer preferences.

2. Accurate Demand Forecasting: By pooling data, businesses can gain a more accurate picture of market trends and consumer behavior, leading to smarter production and distribution decisions.

3. Enhanced Marketing Effectiveness: Collaborative data sharing enables businesses to measure the success of advertising campaigns and promotions more effectively. It also opens the door to co-branded campaigns that drive mutual success.

4. New Revenue Streams: Retailers can create and monetize new data products, such as insights on category sales or branch performance, providing brands with valuable intelligence.

5. Loyalty Programs as Data Catalysts: Loyalty programs are essential for unlocking the potential of data. By implementing thoughtfully designed programs, mall operators can connect consumers with all their favorite brands through a single, integrated platform, creating a seamless and engaging experience.

6. Driving Shared Value Through Loyalty: Similar to providing a centralized physical shopping destination, loyalty programs unify consumer interactions, simplifying the process of gathering and sharing valuable insights with participating brands. These insights empower brands to improve their offerings, while the resulting value is returned to shoppers in the form of rewards, discounts, and exclusive perks. This creates a mutually beneficial ecosystem for consumers, brands, and mall operators alike.

Challenges for Businesses

1. Trust and Security: Businesses need to trust that their partners will handle shared data responsibly and securely. Without robust agreements and safeguards, data sharing can feel risky.

2. Technical Barriers: Sharing insights requires the right platforms and tools to analyze and process data effectively. Without the right technology, businesses may struggle to unlock the full potential of shared data. This underscores the importance of partnering with a reliable technology provider who can centralize and manage data


IMAGE: CONIQ

Ben Chesser is the CEO & Founder of CONIQ within a secure, scalable platform, ensuring seamless and efficient utilization.

3. Competition Concerns: In some cases, businesses may be hesitant to share data for fear of giving competitors an edge. This highlights the importance of clear boundaries and mutual benefits in data-sharing agreements.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY: UNLOCKING THE POWER OF DATA SHARING

One of the biggest enablers of effective data sharing is technology. At Coniq, we've developed a platform to help businesses maximize the value of their data partnerships. For example, our tenant reports provide retailers with detailed insights into sales performance, product trends, and customer demographics. This not only helps individual retailers but also opens up opportunities for collaboration with other brand partners.

Some of the key benefits of advanced technology in data sharing include:

- **Granular Insights:** Technology allows businesses to delve deeper into data sets, uncovering insights like category performance, conversion rates, and customer journey patterns.

- **Improved Decision-Making:** With real-time analytics, businesses can make faster, more informed decisions.

- **Streamlined Collaboration:** Platforms like ours make it easier for retailers and brands to share data in a secure, organized way, ensuring everyone benefits.

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE: RESPONSIBLE DATA SHARING

As businesses, we have a responsibility to treat data with care and respect. Here are some guiding principles for responsible data sharing:

1. Be Transparent: Clearly communicate to consumers and business partners how their data will be used and what benefits they'll receive in return.

2. Give Control: Empower data owners (whether individuals or businesses) to make informed decisions about what data they share.

3. Ensure Security: Invest in robust data security measures to protect shared information from breaches or misuse.

4. Focus on Value: Use data to deliver tangible benefits – whether it's a personalized customer experience, a more efficient supply chain, or a smarter marketing campaign.

LOOKING AHEAD: THE FUTURE OF DATA SHARING

At Coniq, we believe that the potential of data sharing is still largely untapped – especially in the B2B space. By fostering collaboration and leveraging collective intelligence, businesses can achieve remarkable results. Some possibilities include:

- **Co-Branded Marketing Campaigns:** By pooling data, retailers and brands can create targeted campaigns that drive engagement and sales.

- **New Product Development:** Shared insights are a powerful driver of innovation, enabling the creation of products that align closely with market demands. Loyalty programs play a pivotal role as the mechanism that brings this process to life. By seamlessly integrating B2C and B2B data sharing in an open and transparent manner, loyalty programs facilitate collaboration and ensure the value generated from these insights is shared across all stakeholders.

- **Sustainability Gains:** Data sharing can reduce waste by enabling more accurate demand forecasting and inventory management.

The key is to approach data sharing with the mindset of a partnership. When businesses and consumers work together – sharing data in a responsible, transparent way – everyone wins.

So, is data sharing the same as data caring? It can be, but it's up to us as businesses to prove it. By prioritizing transparency, trust, and technology, we can unlock the full potential of data sharing while earning the confidence of consumers and partners alike.

DATA SHARING – THE CURRENCY OF TRUST IN COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Shopping centers have evolved beyond physical spaces into dynamic digital ecosystems where every interaction generates valuable insights. The challenge isn't just collecting data—it's about using it responsibly to drive tenant success, states Jean Carlos Delgado, the Brand and Marketing Director of HyperIn. In this guest article, he explains the benefits and conditions of data sharing on the B2B and B2C levels and why trust is most important in all aspects.

There was a time when real estate decisions were made based on hunches, intuition, and legacy experience. Those days are gone. The commercial real estate industry is now an intricate web of real-time data, algorithmic insights, and predictive analytics. We no longer speculate; we measure. But just as we begin to unlock the full potential of data-driven intelligence, we find ourselves held back—not by technological limitations but by overly strict regulations and a misguided obsession with compliance over innovation.

Welcome to the paradox of the digital age: we have more data than ever before, but we are increasingly afraid to use it.

WHAT DOES 'DATA SHARING = DATA CARING' REALLY MEAN?

The phrase 'Data Sharing = Data Caring' is more than a catchy slogan—it's a call to action. It represents a fundamental shift in data management—transforming information from a transactional commodity to a strategic asset of shared value. In commercial real estate, the divide is clear:

• Data sharing is transactional. It involves providing stakeholders with access to insights—foot traffic, tenant sales, occupancy rates—so they can use them to make better decisions.

• Data sharing is strategic. It ensures that data is available, ethical, secure, and mutually beneficial, empowering businesses and consumers while maintaining trust. This means implementing robust data governance frameworks that protect individual privacy while enabling collaborative innovation.

This distinction is crucial in B2B and B2C contexts, where how data is collected, stored, and utilized directly impacts innovation, privacy, and business success.

THE EVOLUTION OF DATA IN RETAIL REAL ESTATE

Shopping centers are no longer static retail hubs but living, breathing ecosystems. Foot traffic, tenant sales, dwell times—each transaction, each movement generates valuable insights that could revolutionize property management. Yet, instead of seamlessly integrating this wealth of data into smarter business strategies, many in the industry hesitate, bound by fear of misstepping in the regulatory minefield.

The reality is simple: data sharing fuels growth. The challenge? The laws designed to 'protect' consumers are often the very barriers that prevent meaningful progress.


IMAGE: HYPERIN

Jean Carlos Delgado is Brand and Marketing Director at HyperIn Inc.

IMAGES: HYPERIN

Consider the absurdity: A mall owner can install state-of-the-art occupancy sensors to ensure safety. However, when they try to use that same data to optimize tenant mix or enhance visitor experiences, they encounter compliance road-blocks and legal ambiguity.

The result? Retail stagnation. Landlords are left in the dark, retailers are deprived of actionable insights, and consumers continue to suffer from subpar, generic shopping experiences.

B2B: STRATEGIC DATA COLLABORATION VS. THE RED TAPE REALITY

B2B data sharing should be a no-brainer. Retailers and shopping centers stand to gain when they pool their insights—improving leasing strategies, optimizing staffing, and refining marketing tactics. And yet, many companies refuse to engage in even the most basic data exchanges due to a climate of legal paranoia.

- Optimizing tenant mix through performance insights? Too risky.
- Sharing footfall trends with retailers? Better lawyer up.
- Integrating smart building data to enhance operations? Compliance teams say no.

Instead of fostering an environment where businesses can responsibly leverage data for growth, we've created a bureaucratic maze that stifles innovation in favor of legal self-preservation.

This is where big tech thrives. They own the playing field, write the rules, and ensure that regulatory scrutiny lands hardest on small and mid-sized businesses. Google, Amazon, and Meta dictate how data flows—yet small retailers, landlords, and service providers are forced into compliance purgatory.

B2C: THE TRUST REVOLUTION—OR TRUST EROSION?

Consumers have never been more demanding of personalized experiences or more skeptical about how their data is used. The promise of seamless, tailored retail environments is at odds with an increasingly aggressive regulatory framework that assumes every company is a lousy actor.

And here lies the absurdity: while consumers willingly hand over personal data to big tech platforms like Meta and Google, the businesses providing them with in-person experiences are left navigating compliance purgatory.

Forward-thinking shopping centers have tried to counter this narrative by making data collection transparent, beneficial, and opt-in-driven. However, the regulatory climate still treats all data collection with suspicion, burdening businesses to prove they are not exploiting their customers—even when the customers themselves actively opt-in.

As Markus Porvari, CEO of HyperIn, puts it: "Instead of burdening users with complex legal jargon, we must offer smarter, more intuitive interfaces that make data sharing seamless and transparent. This helps consumers maintain control and allows service providers to understand their needs better, creating a more meaningful and efficient exchange of information for all parties."

However, when government-mandated privacy policies prioritize legal coverage over consumer experience, businesses are forced to abandon personalization altogether or risk a regulatory backlash.

BEYOND COMPLIANCE: THE GDPR BLOCK ROAD

GDPR was sold as a gold standard for privacy, but in practice, it has become an innovation killer.

A regulation that forces a startup to comply with the same rules as a tech giant like Microsoft is not a fair system—it's an economic handicap. While the U.S. and Asia surge ahead with AI-driven personalization and real-time data services, Europe remains in a legalistic nightmare where compliance costs outpace innovation budgets.

"Data privacy matters, but a law that strangles progress is not protection—it's regression."

The consequences are becoming painfully clear:

- Apple's AI-powered Apple Intelligence will roll out in the U.S. but not Europe because complex regulations make it impossible to implement without massive legal hurdles.
- Retail tech companies must spend millions on compliance rather than product development, leading to stagnation in the sector.
- European businesses fall behind in data-driven decision-making, while competitors in less regulated regions leap ahead with AI-driven insights and automated efficiencies.

If the EU does not adapt and recalibrate its stance on data, it risks rendering itself digitally irrelevant. The irony? The companies most affected by these regulations are not the tech behemoths GDPR was designed to rein in—but the small and mid-sized businesses that drive Europe's economy.

A NEW DATA TRUST FRAMEWORK: MOVING BEYOND FEAR

Regulation should empower, not suffocate. The future of commercial real estate demands a smarter, more balanced approach that acknowledges the need for data security while allowing businesses to thrive.

Imagine a reality where:

- Consumers' preferences are remembered without exposing personal data.
- Retailers can access actionable insights without facing legal paralysis.
- Property owners make real-time decisions based on anonymized, valuable data.

The solutions already exist. What's missing is the political will to implement them.

BRIDGING THE TRUST GAP: THE BUSINESS CASE FOR COMMON SENSE

Shopping centers and retailers who have embraced ethical, transparent data-sharing models are already seeing the benefits:

- Retailers with access to anonymized consumer insights report a 27% increase in engagement.
- Shopping centers using intelligent data-sharing solutions see a 70% increase in retailer satisfaction.
- Consumers engaging with transparent opt-in models show higher retention and brand loyalty.

FINAL THOUGHT: INNOVATE OR FALL BEHIND

Data is the new currency, but trust is the economy that supports it. Shopping centers that embrace smart, ethical data usage will dominate the future. Those who let regulatory fear dictate their strategy will fade into irrelevance. The question isn't whether we should share data—it's whether Europe is ready to embrace the future or will remain stuck in the past.

The tools exist. The frameworks are in place. The only thing standing in the way is hesitation. So, the real question is: Are you ready to move beyond compliance and into innovation?


IMAGE: HYPERIN

Markus Porvari is CEO of HyperIn

HOW DATA DRIVES OUTLET CENTER PERFORMANCE

In today's fast-paced retail landscape, data is no longer just a luxury – it's the foundation for staying competitive and future-ready. At ROS Retail Outlet Shopping, we understand that success isn't just about collecting data; it's about how we use that data to address challenges, boost performance, and spark growth.

BY THOMAS REICHENAUER

IMAGE: ROS RETAIL OUTLET SHOPPING

Customers using the loyalty program at Premier Outlet Budapest

The outlet industry, distinct from traditional retail, thrives on collaboration. While shopping centers focus on fixed rents, outlets operate within a unique ecosystem in which success depends on shared goals between operators, investors, and brand partners. This collaborative approach turns data into more than just a tool – it becomes a catalyst for innovation, trust, and mutual success.

As one of Europe's leading outlet operators, three core principles shape our data-driven approach. First, we prioritize full compliance with GDPR, treating data with the utmost care to maintain integrity and trust. Second, we leverage retail and property data to drive center performance, supporting and motivating our brand partners toward retail excellence. Finally, we use customer insights to drive traffic and create tailored shopping experiences. By understanding consumer behavior and preferences, we deliver targeted marketing, boost footfall, and foster lasting loyalty.

At ROS, our focus goes beyond property management. We use data to deliver measurable results for our partners and create richer, more engaging experiences for our customers. Let's take a closer look!

EMPOWERING PERFORMANCE THROUGH DATA AND COLLABORATION

Across the ROS portfolio, data is much more than just a metric – it's the engine powering performance and partnership. Unlike traditional shopping centers that often focus on rental yields and occupancy rates, outlet centers thrive on a performance-based model. Retail performance KPIs – including rankings and benchmarks – are central to the success of the outlet industry. We utilize retail-specific KPIs, such as UPT (Units Per Transaction), ASPV (Average Sales Per Visitor), conversion rate, effort ratio, and density comparison to gain deeper insights into store performance.

But data is only as good as the conversations it sparks. That's why our Business Review Meetings are a game-changer. These collaborative sessions bring our local retail teams and brand partners together to analyze performance, pinpoint opportunities, and map out growth strategies. Initiatives like Meet & Greet and Mystery Shopping take this approach further, challenging our brand partners to aim higher and strive for retail excellence. The information flow, however, isn't one-sided. Brands bring their own key takeaways to the table, sharing customer survey results, learnings from other shops, and actionable feedback. The result? Data-driven decisions that make an impact swiftly and effectively.

To further streamline collaboration, the ROS Tenant Portal acts as a digital bridge. This platform connects us with our brand partners, providing real-time performance updates, valuable insights, and essential resources for strategic decision-making.

ENHANCING CUSTOMER UNDERSTANDING

While B2B data builds strong partnerships, B2C data redefines the customer experience. At ROS, we go beyond traditional marketing strategies that rely on mass campaigns to drive foot traffic. Instead, we use customer insights to craft targeted, engaging experiences that resonate with individual shoppers.

Understanding our customers is at the heart of everything we do. Initiatives like the VIP Club and loyalty programs enable us to gather invaluable data, refining customer segmentation and delivering highly personalized communications and promotions. By ensuring the right message reaches the right audience at the right time, we enhance relevance and engagement, while avoiding oversaturation. This approach not only drives repeat visits but also boosts average basket sizes – a win-win for both customers and our brand partners.

Take Premier Outlet Budapest's Premium Club program as an example. During its 2023 Summer VIP Event, spending by loyalty program members skyrocketed by an unbelievable 721%. Exclusive offers tailored to Premium Club members not only boosted engagement and sign-ups but also unlocked insights into customer preferences and behavior.

We don't stop there. From onsite traffic tracking systems, like ShopperTrack and Reveal, to Google Analytics and benchmarking tools, we monitor customer behavior to adapt marketing strategies with precision and agility. Consumer and non-consumer surveys provide additional qualitative insights, rounding out the picture of who our existing and potential customers are, how they shop, and what inspires them to return.

And, because customer trust is everything, we've made data protection a priority. ROS has implemented the Cookie Bot, giving users complete control over their data. In collaboration with Tel Aviv-based start-up PlaceSense, we have taken our approach a step further. Their advanced analytics solutions enable us to collect and analyze anonymized user data across our portfolio while strictly adhering to GDPR standards.

DATA-DRIVEN INNOVATION: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF RETAIL

As the retail world continues to evolve, data isn't just a tool – it's the heartbeat of progress. Artificial Intelligence is the pulse driving this progress faster than ever. As AI technologies like ChatGPT continue to advance, collecting and analyzing data has become easier. Every day, new AI tools emerge, and it's crucial to stay ahead of the curve, adopting the ones that will become industry standards.

But innovation doesn't stop with AI. At ROS, we're just as committed to sustainability as we are to growth. Across the ROS portfolio, we track key ESG metrics – such as energy consumption, carbon footprint, and operational efficiency – to drive responsible resource management. Tools like Predium and Measurabl not only help us monitor and improve building efficiencies but also allow us to meet environmental goals. This seamless fusion of data-driven insights with sustainability practices creates a dynamic model where innovation and responsibility go hand in hand.

The future of retail belongs to those who embrace change. As we look ahead, we're excited to continue refining our approach – adapting to new technologies, staying agile amidst market shifts, and driving both success and innovation.

IMAGE: ROS RETAIL OUTLET SHOPPING

Thomas Reichenauer is Co-Founder & Managing Director at ROS Retail Outlet Shopping

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN RETAIL: HOW WILL TRADITIONAL STORES REMAIN RELEVANT?

Opportunities for mutual growth and improvement are made possible by data sharing with tenants at shopping centers or multi-retailer locations, states Uroš Blagojević, Property Management Director at MPC Properties. Retailers and their tenants can synchronize strategies and develop complementary offers by sharing insights, such as aggregate customer demographics, peak shopping times, and purchase trends.

BY UROŠ BLAGOJEVIĆ

IMAGE: MPC PROPERTIES

Uroš Blagojević is Property Management Director at MPC Properties.

Digital transformation has become a key driver of change across all industries, and the retail sector is no exception. As a market leader in commercial real estate, we can observe, on a daily basis, how digital innovations are shaping the market and impacting traditional stores within shopping centers. Our portfolio includes the Ušće, BEO, Delta City, Mercator, and Immo Outlet shopping centers, which gives us a unique opportunity to gain insights into the behaviors of different target groups within the context of various brands.

If I were to briefly answer the question of whether traditional stores were still relevant in a world in which online sales are becoming increasingly attractive, I would certainly answer in the affirmative, making sure to note that their role is changing as they adapt to the new digital environment.

WHAT'S NEXT?

How do modern technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR), enable brands to provide more personalized and interactive experiences for customers within retail stores?

In short, augmented reality can help you see how a new piece of furniture fits into the existing setup of your home, while artificial intelligence analyzes consumer data and offers personalized recommendations. Both brands and individuals benefit. Through enhanced shopping experiences, brands can gather valuable data on consumer behavior at traditional stores, which is significantly valuable when it comes to future marketing activities.

"Both landlords and tenants can attain operational efficiency and optimize foot traffic to maintain competitiveness in the changing retail scene."

Opportunities for mutual growth and improvement are also made possible by data sharing with tenants at shopping centers or multi-retailer locations. Retailers and their tenants can synchronize strategies and develop complementary offers by sharing insights, such as aggregate customer demographics, peak shopping times, and purchase trends. This co-

IMAGES: MPC PROPERTIES

Left: Marketing in the digital age is no longer about promoting products through traditional channels, but about creating unique experiences for customers at physical stores.

Right: Human interaction, such as events, still plays an important role in decision-making while shopping.

operative strategy promotes a more seamless purchasing experience, increasing client loyalty and engagement. Both landlords and tenants can attain operational efficiency and optimize foot traffic to maintain competitiveness in the changing retail scene by incorporating such shared data into decision-making. Messages to consumers come from all directions. How? It is mostly through the implementation of an omnichannel strategy. Indeed, consumers are increasingly researching and purchasing products online, but a large percentage of shoppers still want to try and see products in person before making final decisions. As a result, traditional stores have become places for interaction with products and brands, while payments can be made digitally.

Furthermore, marketing in the digital age is no longer about promoting products through traditional channels, but about creating unique experiences for customers at physical stores. This is where the collaboration with property management opens its door, serving as support for marketing in the experiential segment. Shopping centers have long ceased to be mere places for shopping and have become spaces where customers can experience brands in unique ways. They not only can but also expect and desire to move beyond the mere shopping experience.

FOR A GREAT SHOPPING EXPERIENCE, THE HUMAN FACTOR IS ESSENTIAL

Human interaction, as our experience shows, still plays an important role in decision-making while shopping. Traditional stores, despite all of the digital innovations, remain spaces in which deeper (emotional) relationships are established between the brands and the consumers. Salespeople offer advice, provide personalized service, and participate in the experience itself. In this context, traditional stores undoubtedly have an advantage over e-commerce, which, while convenient, cannot offer the human component.

THE FUTURE IS HYBRID

The answer to our key question is affirmative: Traditional stores have remained relevant due to the changes that have been made in their functionality. The same goes for shopping centers. Therefore, physical stores are no longer exclusively places for shopping, but have become an integral part of the omnichannel experience, offering additional value. In this regard, traditional stores are not disappearing but evolving and transforming. Their role remains crucial, and with the support of digital technology, they have become a key element of a broader retail strategy that combines the best of the digital and physical worlds.

SHOPPING CENTER GIFT CARDS: PERSONALIZATION MEETS PROFITABILITY

Jurij Triller is the CEO of Smart Octopus Solutions. Together with a co-founder, he has developed a smart gift card solution that offers a closed loop to customers and partners, unlike comparable products. He talks to ACROSS about the advantages of being independent from a major player like Visa or Mastercard, what data insights he can ensure as a result, and why personalization and customization are key.

IMAGE: SMART OCTUPUS SOLUTIONS/BARBARA REYA

Jurij Triller is the CEO of Smart Octopus Solutions.

ACROSS: THERE ARE A GROWING NUMBER OF GIFT CARD PROVIDERS ON THE MARKET. IN A NUTSHELL, WHAT IS THE GENERAL BENEFIT OF GIFT CARDS FOR SHOPPING CENTERS?

JURIJ TRILLER: Firstly, gift cards carry significant emotional value. Gift cards allow people to express thoughtfulness when giving presents, while offering recipients the joy of choice – picking something they truly want or need. This personalizes the gift experience and strengthens the connection between the giver, the recipient, and the shopping center. Gift cards are an extremely efficient marketing tool for shopping centers, allowing them to work more closely with brand partners and to provide insight into sales. At the same time, they also increase visitor return rates, generate new customers, and offer opportunities to adapt the marketing plan. Last but not least, they are a source of income for shopping centers. Around 5% of money remains on the card. Of course, it also works the other way around: Anyone who receives a gift card worth 50 euros will usually spend more than those 50 euros.

In summary, gift cards are more than just a convenient gifting solution – they combine emotional resonance for customers with tangible business advantages for shopping centers, making them a crucial tool in today's competitive retail landscape.

ACROSS: WHAT IS THE USP OF YOUR SOLUTION, SMARTGIFTY?

TRILLER: The key USP of our product is its powerful marketing toolset and simplicity. It is web-based fully digitalized process; to begin, you only need internet access, a username, and a password. The most critical USP is the closed loop, which fully complies with e-money regulations. Around 80% of other solution providers are connected to Visa or Mastercard. The closed loop ensures that the funds from gift card sales are in the center's bank account all the time. The center management team has complete control and a complete overview of all transactions. The center is the issuer of the gift cards and make the rules regarding the usage of the cards. Transactions are 100% transparent for the shopping center management team, and our solution provides 24/7, real-time insight into all data generated by gift card usage. Additionally, we offer e-gift card solutions that cater to the growing demand for digital options, adding flexibility and convenience for both the shopping center and its customers. SmartGifty combines simplicity, security, transparency, and flexibility to deliver a best-in-class gift card solution tailored to the unique needs of shopping centers.

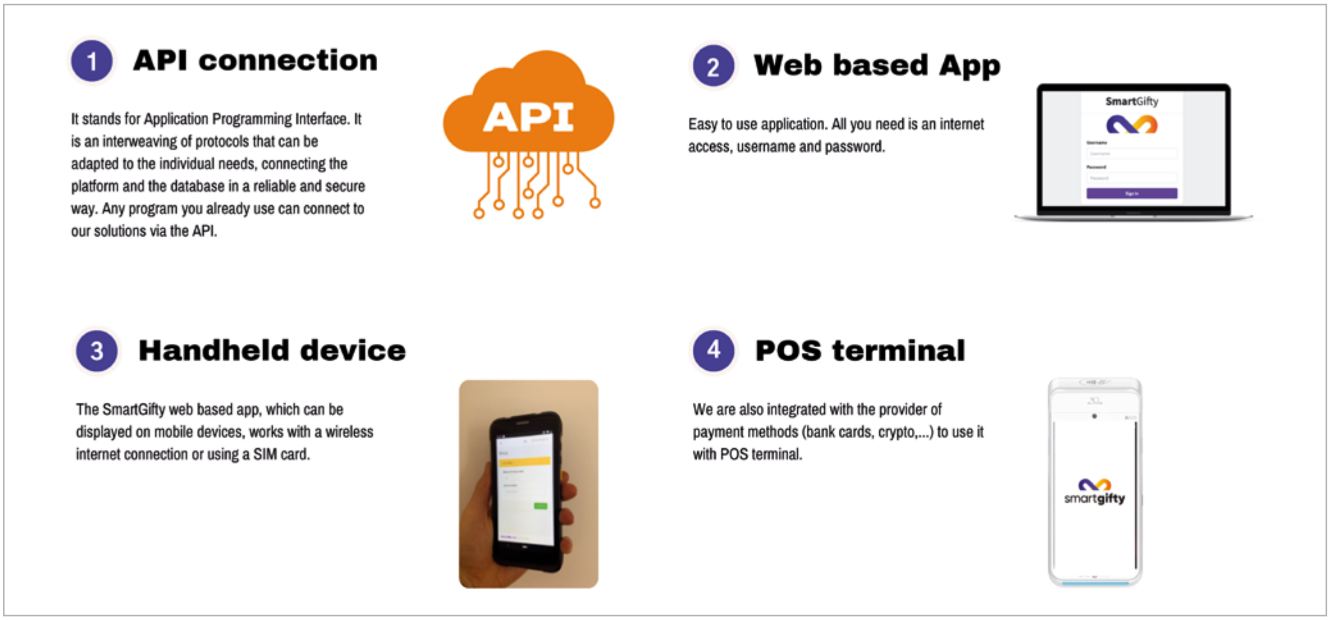


IMAGE: SMART OCTUPUS SOLUTIONS

ACROSS: ***RETAILERS, HOWEVER, ARE USED TO VISA AND MASTERCARD.***

TRILLER: That's a valid observation, and at first glance, it might seem like a drawback of our system. However, what the value SmartGifty provides far outweighs this initial perception. While onboarding may seem slightly more complex and take a bit longer – primarily due to the need for a tailored setup – the benefits of our closed-loop system are unparalleled. In fact, besides the internet, the only thing a shop needs to start using SmartGifty is a barcode scanner. Our system can be launched independently or integrated with the existing software via an API connection (cash register, POS payment terminal). Once implemented, the shops will have no extra work related to reporting gift card transactions, because the input of all purchases will be automatic, eliminating manual input and additional administrative tasks. This means that while onboarding is a one-time effort, the ongoing benefits – such as automation, ease of use, and the security of a closed-loop system – make SmartGifty an optimal and rewarding solution for retailers in the long run.

ACROSS: ***HOW DOES SELLING AND REDEEMING YOUR GIFT CARDS WORK AT SHOPPING CENTERS?***

TRILLER: Issuing and selling gift cards can be done in a fast and straightforward manner via an info counter, a gift card machine, or a webshop. We offer the development of simple or customized gift card webshops, or we offer API connections to clients, thereby allowing them to do it on their own. Redemption at shops, cafes, and restaurants is easy with barcode readers, mobile devices, and POS terminals.

ACROSS: ***DOES THE CENTER MANAGEMENT TEAM SEE HOW MUCH MONEY IS USED?***

TRILLER: As mentioned, all data is transparent to management. At any time, the amount of money invested, spent, and left can be shown for each card, shopping center, and store. This can be evaluated at a given time or over a longer period.

ACROSS: ***AT THE CORE, YOUR PRODUCT IS A DATA-DRIVEN MARKETING TOOL.***

TRILLER: Absolutely. As I said, the centers' management or marketing departments have complete access to all of the data for all of the shops and centers in their chains. They can analyze several statistics to plan effective marketing activities, maintain control over the gift card stock, etc. However, you have to understand and believe in the importance and efficiency of data to benefit from a service like ours. Just imagine if shopping centers also used BI; that data could be used for various marketing purposes.

ABOUT SMARTGIFTY

SmartGifty is a web-based gift card management solution, specifically designed for use at shopping centers.

THE CLIENT:

Supernova Group is a leading private real estate company with a buy-and-hold investment strategy focused on high quality retail properties in Central and Eastern European countries with strong macroeconomic fundamentals. Supernova Group broadly divides its portfolio properties into Single-tenant properties and multi-tenant properties. Single-tenant properties comprise almost exclusively do-it-yourself stores located in Austria and leased under long-term agreements to OBI. Our multi-tenant properties operated under the Supernova Group brand include shopping centres, shopping parks and retail parks, and these are primarily located in Croatia, Slovenia, Romania and Slovakia. The total portfolio of Supernova Group encompasses over 110 properties with a total value exceeding 2.2 billion euros.

IMAGE: SUPERNOVA GROUP

"The ability to offer our customers a unique personalized experience, on physical cards or on e-cards, is something that truly stands out and gives our shopping centres another competitive edge."

MARKUS PINGGERA, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF SUPERNOVA GROUP.

THE REQUEST:

Supernova Group started with a gift card voucher and because of their requirements, Jurij Triller and his team provided a solution to change their system to an online platform, SmartGifty. Supernova Group now uses the SmartGifty in 35 shopping centres in Slovenia and Croatia, with more countries and locations on the way.

THE SOLUTION

A mobile and user-first web shop for customers with a 24/7, real-time, complete product overview in several shopping centres and markets, in which the client can optimize administration as needed. This results in a detailed overview of sales and redemption for each market, stock monitoring, and easy tenant transaction management.

RESULT

The Supernova gift Card is the most popular Shopping centre Gift card in its regions – collection double digit growth rates every year – it is the perfect gift for customers and companies for employees alike – usable in hundreds of shops in 35 shopping centres all across Slovenia and Croatia.

Learn more about the significant growth of the digital gift card market:

***ACROSS:** IS SMARTGIFTY AN ISOLATED SOLUTION THAT CAN WORK INDEPENDENTLY OR BE INTEGRATED INTO AN EXISTING DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT, SUCH AS A LOYALTY PROGRAM?*

TRILLER: Yes, and we also offer different loyalty program options. The gift card provides new clients, and the loyalty solution makes the clients stay. A loyalty module can include cash back, point collection, and more. It provides insight into customer behavior and allows better and more personalized customer communication. Let's take a closer look at the challenge of loyalty cards first. The significant advantage of loyalty programs is that you know exactly what customers buy, what their preferences are, where they usually go, etc., and you can segment them. Shopping centers are specific because every shop has its own POS. If we want to have all the data mentioned, everyone would need to be connected to the same POS system to do so at a shopping center. That, however, would be too expensive, and I don't think tenants would share their receipts with shopping centers. Therefore, shopping center managers need to encourage retailers to scan their invoices in order to see the transactions. We don't have that part, nor do we offer mobile application yet, but we are already in discussions with other providers to connect with them. Ideally – and this is what we would like to offer – loyalty programs and gift cards will be connected to get the best data insights.

***ACROSS:** WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS IF A LOYALTY PROGRAM ALREADY EXISTS AT A CENTER?*

TRILLER: We see existing loyalty programs as complementary to SmartGifty, not as competitors. In fact, we actively encourage providers of loyalty solutions to collaborate with us to generate deeper and more actionable insights together. Shopping centers want retailers to scan their invoices and offer incentives or points. Our cards can work as such an incentive. One option could be that when a retailer reaches a certain number of points by scanning invoices, he receives a gift card. Furthermore, we can connect and integrate our system with another loyalty program.

ACROSS: WHAT ARE OTHER LEVELS OF PERSONALIZATION OR CUSTOMIZATION THAT YOU OFFER?

TRILLER: Our product is versatile – we offer both offline and online options. Clients can customize the designs as much as they like, including adding photos or changing the design entirely. This flexibility applies to both physical cards and online versions, ensuring we meet a wide range of needs and preferences. This level of personalization and customization is critical in our field and makes a big difference for customers. Imagine you need to give a gift to someone special in just an hour, but you've forgotten. Simply select a meaningful photo that reflects your shared memories, upload it during your online purchase, and you're all set.

ACROSS: WHAT ARE SOME OTHER SPECIAL FEATURES?

TRILLER: We offer connection with digital wallets. You can quickly put the gift card in your digital wallet; when it's there, you have no risk of forgetting it. That is another unique selling point. Visa or Mastercard-connected solutions cannot offer this. Furthermore, it is much more expensive to hand out gift cards that are connected to Visa or Mastercard, because they must be in line with banking regulations, etc. From a marketing perspective, our key strengths lie in our individuality, flexibility, and ability to adapt quickly to specific client needs. As a smaller company, we are much more agile and responsive, which allows us to deliver highly personalized and unique solutions.

STATISTICAL ARGUMENTS FOR GIFT CARD SOLUTIONS

66.7% *of consumers normally spend more than the gift card value*

38.4% *consumers say they have bought digital gift cards*

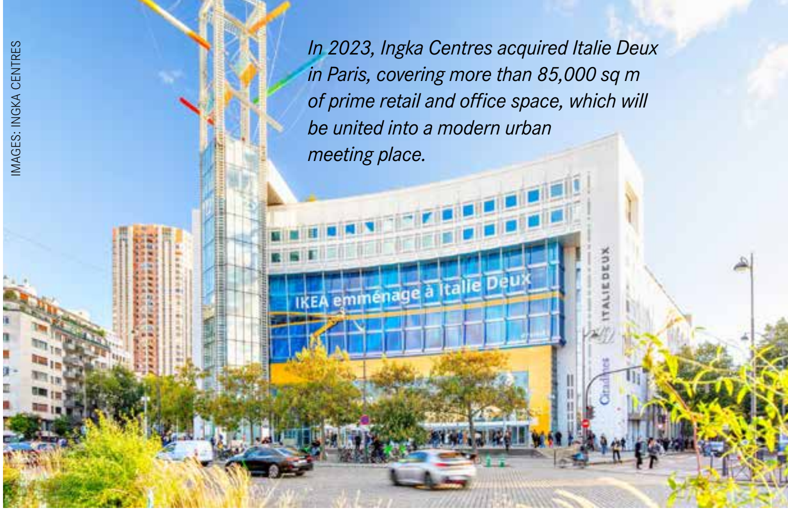
21.7% *of customers said they had become regular customers after receiving gift cards, increasing from 2019*

30% *of gift cards expire before the funds are fully redeemed.*

optimization.

Pasing Arcaden in Munich, Germany, was one of the main acquisitions of Ingka Centers in 2024.

IMAGES: INGKA CENTRES



In 2023, Ingka Centres acquired Italie Deux in Paris, covering more than 85,000 sq m of prime retail and office space, which will be united into a modern urban meeting place.

INGKA CENTRES: RETAIL IS AND WILL BE THE CORE OF WHAT WE DO!

"We are a growth-minded company," states Vasco Santos, Global Sales & Leasing Director at Ingka Centres. The Scandinavian-rooted, globally active company operates in Europe, China, the US, and is establishing its presence in India. Its main goal is to create meeting places that go beyond shopping and provide real, meaningful value to the community. Despite the company's success, especially in China, Santos expresses its continuous commitment and appetite for the European market but also stresses that the local market can learn a lot from international examples.

ACROSS:* *INGKA CENTRES IS PRESENT WORLDWIDE, FROM SAN FRANCISCO TO SHANGHAI, AND HAS A GROWING EUROPEAN PORTFOLIO. ALTHOUGH THE MARKETS ARE DIFFERENT, DO YOU SEE AN OVERALL CONSUMER TREND?

VASCO SANTOS: We see different consumer habits across regions. Factors like market maturities, local preferences, and macroeconomic conditions drive this. However, there is one big common trend: People want to meet and spend time together in physical spaces. The Ingka Centres Life in Communities report shows that 57% of the respondents from Europe, China, and the US would like to meet more in person. Therefore, we aim to create places in which people truly love to shop, eat, live, work, and play every day. Our focus is on making these spaces affordable, sustainable, inclusive, and community-friendly while fostering connection, experience, playfulness, and relaxation – all in response to the evolving needs and dreams of local communities.

ACROSS:* *WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES REGARDING CONSUMER HABITS ACROSS THE REGIONS IN WHICH YOU ARE ACTIVE?

SANTOS: Europe is characterized by three main points. First, from a consumer perspective, affordability is paramount. Second, different products and services are accessible, and there is an increasing demand for sustainable products and authentic experiences. On the other hand, in the US, the emphasis is on convenience and affordability. US consumers are looking for a balance between new forms of entertainment and new ways to enjoy dining out.

ACROSS: ***IN COMPARISON, CHINA IS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT MARKET.***
SANTOS: Absolutely. China is the most advanced market when it comes to digitalization. Consumers have been shifting their spending and purchasing power to more engaging elements like entertainment and leisure and have a high affinity for social connections and outdoor activities. They are discovering new ways of spending time and money. The remarkable thing about China is the pace. Technology acceptance in China is very high and far ahead compared to other markets. Our newest market, India, is at an entirely different stage. Consumers have an appetite for global brands. Purchasing power is growing with the demand for access to solutions they did not have before. In addition, consumers are strongly influenced by their cultural heritage and the focus on family. Therefore, the issues of entertainment and leisure are coming into focus.

ACROSS: ***IN WHICH REGION DO YOU SEE YOUR BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FUTURE?***
SANTOS: We are and will continue to be a global company. Therefore, we are growth-minded. Our focus is not fixed on a single market. Last year, we developed mixed-use projects in China. That alone shows our commitment to the Chinese market. We are delighted with our results there. Nevertheless, the Chinese market is facing challenges on a macroeconomic level. India has enormous potential for new quality projects. In the capital region of Delhi, we have two projects that combine shopping, work, leisure, and gastronomy. North America and the US are very competitive markets with significant challenges, but we are continuing to examine opportunities and want to grow there as well. However, the further development of existing assets is just as important as new projects. The Saluhall concept in San Francisco is one such example. In Europe, we have recently made essential acquisitions with the Pasing Arcaden in Germany, Italie Deux in France, and Churchill Square in the UK. We have tremendous confidence in Europe, a central pillar of our growth strategy.

IMAGE: INGKA CENTRES

Since its acquisition in 2023, Ingka Centres has developed Churchill Square's (Brighton, UK) strong retail fundamentals by adapting its retail offer to community needs and has invested in Churchill Place's infrastructure.

ACROSS: ***GIVEN THIS GLOBAL APPROACH, HOW SCANDINAVIAN ARE YOU WITH RESPECT TO YOUR PROJECTS?***
SANTOS: Our Scandinavian roots inspire strategy and design that make life simple, beautiful, and sustainable – the most important aspects that shape every project. It is about clean lines, the efficient use of space, community engagement, creating a welcoming, inclusive environment, and acting sustainably at every level. We define this attitude as our Scandinavian ethos. It is important to us that the customer also experiences this. They should feel that, no matter where a project is located, they are entering a place that values them, the community, and the planet.

ACROSS: ***DO THOSE VALUES ALSO DETERMINE PARTNERSHIPS WITH BRANDS?***
SANTOS: We have very loyal brand partners who are eager to grow with us worldwide. Honestly, for retailers, entering markets like India can be complex, but our partners know what we stand for. They believe in our values and experience, and they trust us. They know how much we care about asset management, how we engage with consumers, and how that is reflected in our performance. Uniqlo, H&M, and the Inditex group are very close partners; they have grown with us across all regions.

IMAGE: INGKA CENTRES

Vasco Santos is the Global Sales & Leasing Director at Ingka Centres

ACROSS: ***YOU FOLLOW A CLEARLY DEFINED COMMUNITY AND MIXED-USE APPROACH FOR ALL YOUR ASSETS. HOW DO YOU DEFINE COMMUNITY, AND WHY ARE MIXED-USE ELEMENTS SO ESSENTIAL IN THIS CONTEXT?***
SANTOS: We define community very broadly, so it's not just about the people who live in a specific area. We consciously include all stakeholders and everyone who cares about improving the

IMAGE: INGKA CENTRES

Xi´an is set to become an ideal meeting place.

community, including authorities, organizations, and social institutions, in our definition. Our approach is based on the belief that we can offer a better life to the people around us. We want to provide people with spaces that bring them joy. We mean it when we say that a given space is not ours but the community's. We aim to create lively, mixed-use spaces where people can shape the community through work, shopping, and leisure. Local entrepreneurs play a key role in fostering connections and showcasing their vision. This approach encourages social interaction and supports economic growth.

ACROSS:* *WHAT IS INGKA CENTRES' SELF-IMAGE? ARE YOU A PLATFORM PROVIDER FOR CONSUMERS AND RETAILERS, OR DO YOU WANT TO BE A VISIBLE ACTOR?
SANTOS: We are both a platform and an actor. Initially, we were undoubtedly more of a platform. However, in recent years, we have become more of an actor. The best example is our Saluhall Foodhall in San Francisco, where we serve plant-based food, raise awareness about the benefits, and involve the community. We put our effort into creating a space that is more than just a "dining room" but a place that creates community. So, in that sense, we are an actor. Another example can be found in our Hej!Workshop concept, with which we offer places to work and, above all, share our knowledge about flexible workspaces.

ACROSS:* *IN WHAT SENSE ARE YOU A PLATFORM?
SANTOS: We connect customers to our partners. Take our Circuit initiative, for example. The concept aims to make circular economy solutions accessible to many people. It offers a curated community hub for visitors to learn how to repair, reuse, rent, and recycle all kinds of products. Consumers are extending the lives of their products. Retailers can get involved and prove that they are focused on the value of the products. We bridge the gap between consumers and retailers, focusing on building lasting connections. Another example is our One Planet concept in China, where we only welcome brands with sustainable offerings. Some brands are tiny companies with outstanding products and exciting business ideas. We give the brands a stage and connect them to people seeking healthier and more sustainable lifestyles. That's why we are a platform. At the same time, however, we are actively involved in the relationship between customers and brands.

ACROSS:* *YOU HAVE ALREADY EMPHASIZED THAT SUSTAINABILITY IS ONE OF THE CORE VALUES, AND YOU HAVE JUST GIVEN THE EXAMPLE OF ONE PLANET IN CHINA. HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO ENFORCE A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY IN NEW MARKETS? HOW IMPORTANT IS THE SUSTAINABILITY TREND, ESPECIALLY IN CHINA?
SANTOS: That trend is growing everywhere. We have created a database of companies that focus on sustainable products and are active in the circular economy. That database is growing and growing. Of course, every region is at a different stage, but the issue is important everywhere. In China, in particular, the speed at which they are tackling sustainability issues is enormous when it comes to other topics, such as digitalization. I believe that China will develop consistently and at a fast pace in terms of circularity and sustainability, because once China has set a path, it will follow it consistently.

ACROSS:* *LET'S EXAMINE THE EUROPEAN MARKET IN GREATER DETAIL. PLEASE BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR EUROPEAN PORTFOLIO AND SHARE YOUR PLANS FOR YOUR NEWEST ACQUISITIONS.
SANTOS: We are convinced that our three most recent acquisitions, Pasing Arcaden in Munich, Germany, Churchill Square in Brighton, UK, and Italie Deux in Paris, France, are of central importance to their communities, but they have not yet reached their full potential. By integrating them into our network and implementing our values, we can add value to the locations. They are attractive shopping centers that we are trying to develop

into meeting places. While retail is and will always be the core of what we do, those assets also have some components, besides shopping, that are relevant to their communities. In Paris, for example, we have 17,000 sq m of office on top of the retail building. Pasing Arcaden also has some office and residential components. The profile of an asset we are enthusiastic about includes: locations that are already involved in the community and that promote public transportation.

ACROSS: ***DO YOU HAVE PLANS FOR FURTHER ACQUISITIONS IN EUROPE?***

SANTOS: As mentioned earlier, we believe Europe is a critical region for our portfolio. People appreciate the value of physical spaces in Europe, not just at shopping centers – especially after the pandemic; it is visible across the entire industry. We feel reassured by the fact that people show up and say these places are essential for daily life. We do not research specific countries in Europe. Europe offers the same opportunities in all countries, even though the fundamentals of microeconomics might differ at a particular moment. We are there for the long run and can overcome difficulties with our partners if we believe in a project.

ACROSS: ***GIVEN YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE, WHAT CAN THE EUROPEAN RETAIL REAL ESTATE MARKETS LEARN, ESPECIALLY FROM CHINA?***

SANTOS: There is a vital transfer of knowledge within our organization. The markets' organizations are in close contact, and our experiences must be shared. China is a market from which we can learn a lot, especially regarding agility and openness to technology. The ease with which the market accepts technological change, embraces innovation, and participates in it must serve as a model for Europe. What is of similar importance is learning how China integrates experiential elements like leisure, entertainment, edutainment, and gastronomy into our meeting places. The percentage of those elements in China is massive. In Europe, we are still on our way to increasing the footprint of these elements. China, on the other hand, is doing so well when it comes to creating multi-dimensional spaces that go beyond shopping.

TOP RULE OF KAUFLAND EXPANSION: THE QUALITY OF THE LOCATION IS DECISIVE

Kaufland's success story is characterized by the balance between the advantages of standardization within a large group and regional integration. In an interview with ACROSS, Michael Hiese, Chief Real Estate Officer at Kaufland International, discusses the company’s growth strategy, his optimistic outlook, why location is more important than asset class, and what makes a Kaufland store truly distinctive.

IMAGE: KAUFLAND

Left: In 2024 Kaufland opened a new store in Tuttlingen, which was redeveloped using a large proportion of recycled building materials.

***ACROSS:* AT THE BEGINNING OF 2024, THE INDUSTRY WAS UNANIMOUS IN SAYING THAT THE YEAR WOULD BE DIFFICULT – THAT YOU SIMPLY HAD TO HOLD OUT UNTIL 2025. HOW WAS 2024 FOR KAUFLAND?**

MICHAEL HIESE: We got off to a good start in 2025 and remain optimistic about current market conditions. The situation is different to the beginning of 2024. Of course, we also started 2024 cautiously, but inflation pressure soon eased, and the interest rate environment improved. Market sentiment continued to brighten over the course of the year, making 2024 successful for Kaufland.

***ACROSS:* WHAT WERE THE HIGHLIGHTS?**

HIESE: We’ve been pursuing an ambitious expansion strategy. We opened 45 new stores last year. We established projects with numerous new partners and strengthened our presence, particularly in major cities. We celebrated significant milestones in three countries: our 250th store in Poland, 50th in Croatia, and 80th in Slovakia. Overall, it was a very good year in terms of real estate. One of the highlights was our project in Sofia, Bulgaria, where we opened a highly customized store in a historic market hall. The challenges were enormous, particularly in terms of monument protection, dealing with space constraints, and redeveloping existing buildings. The result is fantastic and is a real highlight of our portfolio. Furthermore, visitor numbers are strong nine months after opening, so the store has also proven to be a very successful retail location.

***ACROSS:* WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT IN YOUR HOME MARKET IN GERMANY?**

HIESE: Another highlight was our Tuttlingen store, which we redeveloped using a large proportion of recycled building materials. The project exemplifies our commitment to sustainability. We were able to utilize some items, particularly the roof membrane, through our in-house recycling program. Our waste management division collects building materials for manufacturer reprocessing and reuse. In view of the major challenges facing the entire industry, in terms of ESG and sustainability, projects like this are simply fantastic. As part of the Schwarz Group, Kaufland naturally has advantages here, as we're able to take advantage of many opportunities due to our size and, more importantly, due to our conviction that sustainability drives profitability rather than simply increasing costs.

***ACROSS:* KAUFLAND HAS LONG BEEN COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABILITY. CAN YOU GAUGE YOUR EFFORTS IN THIS RESPECT?**

HIESE: That is my third highlight of 2024: At the end of the year, we managed to have all stores that we own EDGE-certified in six of our eight national markets, validating our compliance with the latest sustainability standards. That makes us proud. We'll complete certification for Germany and Poland this year, which will make our entire store portfolio certified.

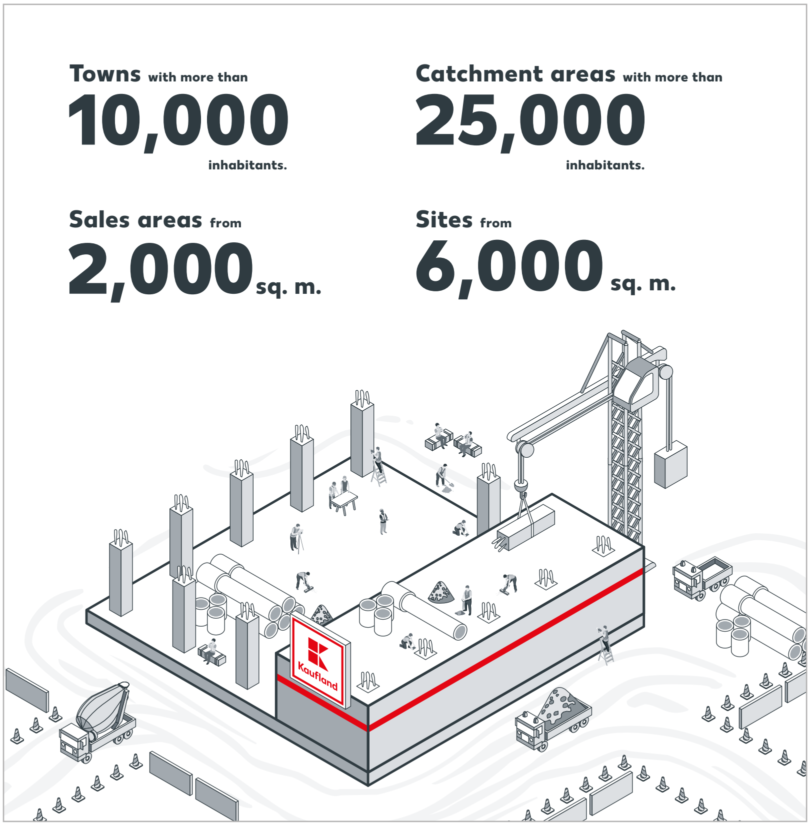


IMAGE: KAUFLAND

***ACROSS:* WHICH MARKETS LED YOUR EXPANSION IN 2024?**

HIESE: Germany and Romania showed the strongest growth. In Germany, integrating the Real stores has remained a priority, with several locations still to open. That's why we have seen very strong store growth in Germany for three consecutive years. Romania offers significant growth potential in terms of our target store count.

***ACROSS:* ARE YOU CONSIDERING ENTRY INTO ANY NEW MARKETS?**

HIESE: We always evaluate opportunities. As things stand, we don't plan to enter new markets in 2025. However, we are keeping our eyes and ears open and will be ready to act if the right opportunities arise.

***ACROSS:* HOW DO DIFFERENT MARKETS COMPARE IN TERMS OF PROFITABILITY?**

HIESE: Overall, we are satisfied with performance across all markets. There is no country that we can emphasize in particular. Ultimately, this is a question of the intensity of competition. In some markets, we have a very high market share, while others involve intense competition with a large number of retailers.

***ACROSS:* WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES THIS YEAR?**

HIESE: As I said, we have two reasons to be optimistic. Firstly, our business performance remains strong. Secondly, market conditions, especially interest rates, support our development. Market sentiment is generally strong, as discussions with market participants show, and confident partners are, of course, necessary for investment. Naturally, political conditions, such as the upcoming elections in Germany and the change of leadership in the USA are of particular economic relevance. However, we need to wait and see what the actual effects of those situations will be as well. I take a critical view of Germany's economic development, as one of the most important countries in the European Union, and I can clearly see that the mood in Germany is still comparatively poor, although it has improved somewhat. At the same time, we are seeing more promising development, particularly in Eastern Europe, and therefore greater optimism.

***ACROSS:* WHAT INSIGHTS HAVE YOU RECEIVED FROM YOUR EASTERN EUROPEAN PARTNERS?**

HIESE: In addition to the improved consumer

IMAGE: KAUFLAND

Michael Hiese is Chief Real Estate Officer at Kaufland International sentiment in Eastern Europe, discussions with regional market participants have revealed the following: They are more optimistic about the situation in Eastern Europe than their Western European counterparts. That is also reflected in their willingness to invest. Increasingly more Eastern European investors have become active in the investment market and have become increasingly involved in major deals, while Western European or Anglo-American capital remains cautious.

***ACROSS:* SOUTHEAST EUROPE IS ALSO VERY DYNAMIC, ESPECIALLY COUNTRIES SUCH AS SERBIA, MONTENEGRO, BOSNIA, AND ALBANIA? DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS IN THAT AREA?**

HIESE: Our only Balkan presence is in Croatia, where we are experiencing strong growth. Even the introduction of the euro has not slowed things down. This is undoubtedly due to tourism, and we are certain that we'll continue to expand there. As far as the other countries mentioned are concerned, we have no immediate plans, but as I said, we are monitoring all European markets.

***ACROSS:* YOU PURSUE A ONE-STOP SHOPPING APPROACH. IN OTHER WORDS, YOUR STORES ARE DESTINATIONS THAT PROMISE CUSTOMERS EVERYTHING FROM A SINGLE SOURCE.**

HIESE: That is clearly our USP and sets us apart, particularly from discounters, which have a strong market position in the CEE region and are continuing to grow. We offer comprehensive product ranges and strong non-food expertise across larger stores. A component of our strategy is to strengthen local presence through partnerships, particularly in concession areas, where we create regional and market-specific concepts.

***ACROSS:* WHAT IS THE FOCUS IN THAT REGARD?**

HIESE: We prioritize food and beverage operators, health, and services. One example can be found at our second store in Split, which opened just before Christmas. We were able to attract a local fishmonger for the concession area, which is a real institution in Split. We can clearly see that sales have increased as a result of such partnerships, and the feedback has been very positive. It is precisely this mix of large-group advantages, individualized retail concepts, and regional integration that resonates with customers.

***ACROSS:* HOW DO YOU DEVELOP AND ALLOCATE THESE SPACES?**

HIESE: Each space is unique and sized according to architecture. Regional leasing teams provide local expertise to identify and attract the most important and promising local players. We aim for a mix of strong, individualized concepts that are then deliberately complemented by regional partners. We're also expanding our partnerships with operators with whom we already work well in other markets, such as Eat Happy sushi, which entered the Slovakian market with Kaufland last year. Both sides are very satisfied with the result, and we look forward to expanding that partnership in other locations.

***ACROSS:* WHAT ROLE DOES REGIONALITY PLAY IN THE PRODUCT RANGE BEYOND THE CHECKOUT AREAS?**

HIESE: While regionality is important, it presents challenges within our centralized store network concept in terms of purchasing and logistics at the national level. Nevertheless, we incorporate regional specialties and tastes into our product range, for example in the selections at the meat and deli counters. We are particularly keen to work with regional farmers and producers when it comes to fruit and vegetables. Regional products vary depending on location and are coordinated between the stores, the purchasing departments, and regional suppliers.

***ACROSS:* WHEN YOU EXPAND: DO YOU PREFER SHOPPING CENTER INTEGRATION OR STAND-ALONE CONCEPTS?**

HIESE: There is only one rule: We favor the best location. Kaufland's strength has always been a high degree of flexibility in terms of space and format. That allows us to thrive at shopping centers, retail parks, or stand-alone sites. When we find an appealing location, we collaborate with partners on optimal store planning and the right type of contract. There really is no preference.

***ACROSS:* HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR COOPERATION WITH SHOPPING CENTER MANAGEMENT?**

HIESE: While each location differs, we always find constructive ways to work together. In Germany, we sometimes manage centers ourselves and can, therefore, contribute our own expertise. In 2023, for example, we provided intensive support for the revitalization of a center in Warsaw, Poland. We have an intrinsic interest in ensuring that the locations work. Though we maintain a confident position as a tenant with specific requirements due to our size, such as the need for separate entrances, we are better placed to achieve our vision than many other tenants. However, no matter how well we perform in a given space, we also recognize that overall center performance affects our success.

***ACROSS:* DESPITE THE DIFFERENT FORMATS: WHAT DOES THE AVERAGE STORE LOOK LIKE?**

HIESE: We basically start at 2,000 sq m of retail space. Our average sales area is just over 4,000 sq m. However, for historical reasons, we sometimes have stores with sales areas of up to 8,000 sq m. We feel most comfortable between 2,500 and 3,500 sq m of retail space. That is also the size we are aiming for in our expansion in Central and Eastern European markets.

***ACROSS:* WHAT'S YOUR FOOD TO NON-FOOD RATIO?**

HIESE: Food certainly dominates, and we clearly define ourselves as a food retailer. Historically, non-food has been significant at Kaufland as we come from a hypermarket background in which the non-food share has reached up to 50 percent. However, we've steadily reduced that over several years to a fixed product range. This also sets us apart from discounters' seasonal or promotional approach.

***ACROSS:* HOW ARE YOU DEVELOPING IN THE DIGITAL AREA? AMONG OTHER THINGS, YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED A CUSTOMER CARD SYSTEM.**

HIESE: The customer card was successfully launched in all our markets. The Kaufland Card is one of the most popular benefit programs in European food retailing. In our eight countries, over 25 million customers have already become Kaufland Card members, and more than 60 percent of them are active users. A customer card is an important instrument for customer loyalty. Having your own customer loyalty program enables you to address customers

IMAGE: KAUFLAND

In Sofia, Bulgaria, Kaufland opened a highly customized store in a historic market hall.

personally, receive direct feedback, and use the resulting data to react more quickly to trends and design the product range. The possibilities that the card offers in terms of interaction and communication with customers are far from exhausted. We will continue to invest in that area and expand our services.

***ACROSS:* IN ADDITION TO THE STORE BUSINESS, YOU HAVE AN ONLINE MARKETPLACE. WHAT IS YOUR STRATEGY THERE?**

HIESE: The Kaufland marketplace currently operates in five countries and is distinct from our physical retail store range. We expanded this offering to Austria in September 2024, despite having no physical presence there and no plans for any stores. The Kaufland brand enjoys a very high level of recognition in Austria, which really surprised us when we analyzed the market. That was one of the reasons why we decided in favor of the country. So far, the decision has paid off. We are very satisfied with both the launch and Christmas business.

***ACROSS:* FINALLY, IS THERE A GENERAL TARGET FIGURE IN TERMS OF STORE GROWTH FOR 2025?**

HIESE: We currently have over 1,550 stores and aim to open 40 to 50 stores every year across all countries. We will reach 1,600 stores by 2025.

SHAPING THE FUTURE: HOW KAUFLAND IS DRIVING THE PROPERTY MARKET FORWARD WITH FLEXIBILITY AND PARTNERSHIP

Inflation, geopolitical crises, and a weakening economy have dominated the European markets for the past two years. While EU economic growth slightly increased in 2024, Germany, the largest economy, recorded a marginal decline. Despite persistent economic challenges, there are signs of cautious optimism: Slightly higher growth is expected in the EU in 2025, with strong momentum from the CEE and SEE regions, where countries such as Poland and Croatia are expected to achieve strong growth.

IMAGE: KAUFLAND

Innovative digital services enhance the shopping experience: With the Kaufland Card, customers benefit from extra discounts and exclusive coupons, for example.

The real estate sector benefits from this momentum. It requires stable, sustainable investments, reliability, and clear legal requirements, without creating location disadvantages for European companies. This is a balancing act that demands considerable sensitivity. Kaufland views itself as part of the solution, aiming to provide economic stimulus through real estate investment while also promoting sustainable and socially responsible solutions.

The food retail sector and its associated real estate have once again demonstrated resilience during the economic downturn. Even during the pandemic, food retail proved stable in uncertain times and fulfilled its responsibility as a systemically relevant area. However, this stability should not overshadow intense competitive pressures. Takeovers and aggressive price wars characterize the competitive landscape, while rising costs – including energy prices, logistics, and digital integration in the purchasing process – challenge companies.

The primary beneficiaries are players offering competitive price-performance ratios, high quality, and numerous own-brand and private labels in different price segments. Kaufland's price expertise stands out: Over 7,000 branded and own-brand products are consistently low-priced, complemented by weekly special offers and price advantages.

In addition, long opening hours, spacious parking, including electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and innovative digital services enhance the shopping experience. The integration of analogue and digital offers enables customers to shop seamlessly between the two. The Kaufland app combines receipts, shopping lists, recipes, loyalty programs, and personalized offers. With K-Scan, customers can scan and pay for purchases directly through K-Pay – quickly, efficiently, and conveniently. Those who skillfully navigate such complex interrelationships create positive customer journeys, foster loyalty, and maintain success.

Retail real estate plays a fundamental role within retail groups in achieving this, serving as essential spaces for customer transactions. Unlike digital solutions or flexible pricing, real estate inherently possesses long-term, static characteristics. This might explain the persistent misconception regarding Kaufland's real estate and development schemes – the notion that the company only develops large hypermarkets on greenfield sites, preferably owner-occupied. In reality, Kaufland is flexible, versatile, and adaptive.

Our real estate portfolio is as unique as its locations, encompassing standalone stores, mixed-use concepts, integration within retail parks, and revitalization of existing assets with sales areas of 2,000 sq m or more on sites spanning 6,000 sq m or larger. There's no standard solution. Each project is customized to the location and its requirements – from small towns with 10,000 residents to urban centers: We find the right solution for the right location, whether we own or lease.

MORE THAN JUST REAL ESTATE: OUR PATH AS A PARTNER AND TENANT

Kaufland's approach has evolved significantly. Originally focused on real estate ownership and in-house development, we now strategically operate as tenants. In Germany, this has been characterized by numerous takeovers. In existing CEE/SEE markets, this flexibility allows us to react to market conditions and create customized solutions together with property developers.

IMAGE: KAUFLAND

Kaufland is represented in eight countries.

Why change the approach? Leasing premises can expediate building right acquisition and development times, facilitating our continued growth across all countries. This approach requires partnerships, and by working closely with investors, we use our expertise to transform assets into contemporary, future-proof shopping locations, whether they are new builds or existing properties.

One example of Kaufland's versatility is its acquisition of a large number of stores from former competitor REAL in Germany. Over the last few years, over 100 of these, which vary in concept and age, have been integrated into our existing portfolio and are operated both as owner-occupied and leased premises.

Our outstanding planning expertise and efficient team management enabled the largest integration in the company's history. The transformation was swift: REAL locations were handed over, closed, fitted-out, and reopened for customers within just three days, complete with Kaufland's product-range, branding, technology, and infrastructure.

The Kaufland store in Leipzig Lindenau is an example of successful inner-city revitalization.

IMAGE: KAUFLAND

Extensive modernization measures, partly addressing a long-standing investment backlog, were scheduled and implemented after intensive examination of the properties. This expertise in implementing complex projects in an efficient and customer-oriented manner extends across all eight of our portfolio countries, where Kaufland collaborates with owners, to revitalize shopping centers, hybrid malls, and retail parks into modern, high footfall shopping locations.

Successful revitalization projects outside Germany include Fort Wola in Warsaw, the Danubia Center in Bratislava, and our 250th store in Poland, in Bielsko-Biala. These examples demonstrate how existing retail properties can be converted into modern and future-proof shopping centers through strong cooperation and how Kaufland's role as an anchor tenant can boost the appeal of retail real estate regain.

How is Kaufland able to achieve this? Our many years of experience as a large-scale operator provides us with the expertise to create a new, successful perspective on retail. Beyond price-performance and seamless digital customer journeys, a more comprehensive approach is often necessary to revitalise retail assets. When acquiring premises, the existing real estate concept can be challenging: a large anchor tenant – usually a hypermarket – and numerous small-scale retail units that do not meet customer needs. By redesigning the property and tenant structures as well as reducing hypermarket space, Kaufland generates footfall while creating space for complementary, customer-relevant retailers. This specialisation and diversification create location-specific, modern one-stop retail destination, managed by Kaufland or in partnership with the property owners. The spectrum ranges from compact checkout zones to retail parks or shopping centres with up to 35,000 square metres of leasable space.

OUR EXPERTISE: KNOW-HOW FOR EVERY CHALLENGE

With 40 years of accumulated expertise, Kaufland successfully operates 1,550 locations across eight countries. Continuous strategy adaptation to market conditions, flexible real state concepts, and innovative operational approaches have been crucial to this growth.

THE PATH IS CLEAR: WE ARE COMMITTED TO GROWTH

As a reliable partner, Kaufland creates strong footfall anchors even in challenging times, aiming to actively shape the future of retail and retail real estate alongside existing and new partners.

READY FOR FITNESS

Indulge in a unique shopping experience at the Designer Outlet Parndorf that provides you with everything you wish for. From exclusive designer brands featuring fashion, accessories, interior products and sportswear perfect for outdoor activities, there's something for everyone.

ADIDAS

SPYDER


NAPAPIJRI


NIKE

Discover 160 amazing designer brands at even more amazing prices. Always up to 70 % off, your new favorite pieces from **Armani, Calvin Klein, Swarovski, Michael Kors**, and many more await you at the Designer Outlet Parndorf - with extended shopping hours from Mo-Wed until 8 PM, Thu-Fri until 9 PM.

Sport Essentials

Refresh your wardrobe with sporty looks from Designer Outlet Parndorf. Shop signature pieces and essentials from top brands such as **adidas, Nike, The North Face, Spyder**, and many more. This way, you can embrace your activities with high-performance gear and trendy sportswear. Whether you're gearing up for outdoor adventures or updating your active wear, you'll find everything you need to step into the season in style.

Located just 40 minutes from Vienna, Designer Outlet Parndorf offers excellent accessibility for all visitors. Convenient shuttle buses connect the center with Budapest, Bratislava, and Vienna, while an e-bus service ensures a smooth journey from Parndorf train station straight to your shopping destination.

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WESTFIELD SHOPPING CITY SÜD: AT ITS BEST, A SHOPPING CENTER IS PEOPLE'S FIRST PORT OF CALL

Westfield Shopping City Süd has a clear mission: The center, located on the border of the Austrian capital of Vienna, will continue to be transformed into a true destination that expands its expertise in terms of brands, gastronomy, and entertainment while striving for the highest sustainability goals. Zsolt Juhasz, General Manager of Westfield Shopping City Süd, and his team have recently taken significant steps. At the same time, however, they still see potential for development, particularly in the area of service. In an interview with ACROSS, he explains how modern shopping center development can work successfully and why the most critical task will be to attract customers to centers in the first place.

***ACROSS:** LET'S START BY TAKING A LOOK BACK AT 2008, WHEN UNIBAIL-RODAMCO BOUGHT SHOPPING CITY SÜD. WHAT WAS THE SELLING POINT BACK THEN, AND IS IT STILL THE USP TODAY?*

ZSOLT JUHASZ: The Austrian entrepreneur Hans Dujsik built a visionary shopping center in 1976. He set new standards and built the center in a way that we still benefit from today, which is unique in the industry. For example, SCS is built in a way in which customers can enter the center from every side at the ground level. They park their cars and are just a few steps away from the shopping level. The good starting point, the large catchment area comprising 3.3 million people within a one-hour radius, as well as the generally promising location, which is situated at one of the most important traffic junctions in Central Europe – with 150,000 cars passing through every day, and the associated development opportunities were decisive arguments for Unibail-Rodamco to purchase the center in 2008.

***ACROSS:** THAT WAS FOLLOWED BY AN EXTENSIVE REFURBISHMENT IN 2011, IN WHICH AN INVESTMENT OF 100 MILLION EUROS WAS MADE, AND FINALLY, THE REBRANDING TO WESTFIELD SHOPPING CITY SÜD IN 2021. WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FOCUS SINCE THEN?*

JUHASZ: We are focused on further developing and constantly adjusting the tenant mix. We have also wholly reorganized the entire gastronomy and entertainment area. The third major topic that resonates with every step we take is sustainability. As part of our Group-wide sustainability initiative, Better Places 2030, we have implemented concrete environmental and climate protection initiatives for several years. However, we want to go further as an individual location. Our declared goal is to become Austria's climate champion by 2032, and we are on the path to achieving that.

***ACROSS:** WHAT ARE SOME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES?*

IMAGES: WESTFIELD SHOPPING CITY SÜD

Communicating sustainability: As part of the Westfield Good Festival, visitors were able to use the "smoothie bike" to start a blender using physical exertion

The new leisure and entertainment area at Westfield Shopping City South offers, among other things, a mini golf course featuring three different courses and 9 holes

Scotch and Soda is just one of the new stores that opened at SCS in 2024.

JUHASZ: One current example is the roofing of one of our parking decks with photovoltaic systems. 1,300 PV modules will generate almost 450,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per year and complement the large-scale system that was installed on the main roof in 2021, resulting in a capacity of 4.3 MWp. That will give existing areas a dual use, which directly contributes to our sustainability goals. Another example comes from the event sector. We organize the Westfield Good Festival every year. Sustainability is exemplified at the event. We organize panel discussions, offer workshops where visitors learn how to recycle, and provide information about local sustainability projects. All of that is done to show how easy and fun sustainability can be. We are honest: Building a shopping center is the opposite of being sustainable, but operating one can be very sustainable, and SCS is the best example of that. However, sustainability events are not customer magnets, which is also part of the reality, but we will keep organizing such events and will strengthen our commitment.

ACROSS:* *THAT ILLUSTRATES THE FACT THAT EVEN THOUGH CONSUMERS DEMAND SUSTAINABILITY, IT HAS NOT YET BECOME A PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

JUHASZ: That's right, but it does not change our strategy. Sustainability is not an option and certainly not a marketing strategy – it is a core task that will have a decisive impact on the future of our location. We have precise requirements that we have to implement. That's unavoidable, especially when it comes to financing. Buzzwords such as EU Taxonomy and the Green Deal ensure that we will not receive any more funding without the proven implementation of sustainability targets, such as reducing our carbon footprint. However, we have set ourselves the goal of going far beyond the requirements of investors and legislators. We want to take our customers with us and continue to shape the future together through events such as the Westfield Good Festival. However, this is a priority that we are pursuing in addition to our sustainability strategy.

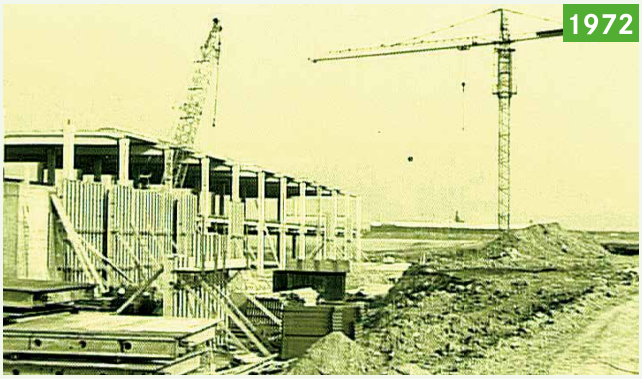
ACROSS:* *THE CONNECTION TO SCS IS ONE POINT THAT TOUCHES ON SUSTAINABILITY. THE VAST MAJORITY OF VISITORS STILL COME TO THE CENTER BY CAR.

JUHASZ: That's due to its location. Eighty percent of visitors still come by car. We continuously work on making attractive public transport connections more accessible to customers. We cover the costs of tickets from the city limits for both the bus and train lines from Vienna. Furthermore, we have developed an app for our employees that promotes carpooling, which is part of our broader app used for all communication with our tenants. The expansion of e-charging points ensures that visitors can travel in a more environmentally friendly way.

ACROSS:* *LAST YEAR, YOU COMPLETELY REDESIGNED THE ENTERTAINMENT AREA. THE ENTIRE SOUTHERN SECTION IS NOW ALMOST ENTIRELY RETAIL-FREE.

JUHASZ: The transformation of the Westfield SCS Multiplex marks a new chapter for our center as Austria's largest shopping and entertainment destination. Together with our partners, we have invested 25 million euros to reposition the Multiplex as a vibrant leisure and entertainment hub. The result is a state-of-the-art Cineplexx cinema, featuring 11 screens, premium formats, and the most advanced movie experience in Austria. This expansion is a milestone for the Westfield SCS Multiplex, reinforcing our commitment to redefining entertainment in Austria. By combining cutting-edge social gaming attractions with a high-quality

MILESTONES IN THE SCS HISTORY



1972 At the beginning of the 1970s, Austrian entrepreneur Hans Dujsik began planning a shopping city in the south of Vienna.

1976 Opening of SCS on an area of 19 hectares and with a sales area of 100,000 sq m across 160 stores.

1977 The first IKEA furniture store in Austria opens on the SCS site. SCS reached a visitor figure of 7.5 million this year and a total turnover of 2 billion schillings (145 million euros today), exceeding all expectations.

1988 With the opening of the expansion building, SCS takes a major expansion step towards the south: 70 additional stores and restaurants move into SCS on an additional 40,000 sq m of retail space. The IKEA furniture store is thus directly connected to the SCS mall.

1994 The SCS Multiplex opens a cinema center with nine screens and a total of 2,200 seats – the first of its kind in Austria – 24 bars and restaurants, a club, and 29 stores.

2002 A closed mall connection from the SCS main building via IKEA to the SCS Multiplex is completed. This creates a closed building with a length of nearly one kilometer and a sales area of 225,000 sq m.

2008 Takeover of SCS by new owner Unibail-Rodamco.

2013 Extensive refurbishment has been completed. Over 100 million euros is invested in design, building services, and the renovation of the outdoor facilities.

2021 Rebranding: Shopping City Süd becomes Westfield Shopping City Süd.

IMAGES: WESTFIELD SHOPPING CITY SÜD

2022 Largest photovoltaic system on a shopping center in Europe is completed.

2023 Opening of the new Cineplexx Westfield SCS – Austria's most modern cinema.

2024 Opening of the DSTRCT Entertainment Center on around 5,000 sq m in the multiplex.

design and hospitality-driven atmosphere, we have created a space that brings generations together and offers visitors a completely new way to experience leisure and entertainment. Moreover, we have enhanced the culinary landscape of the Multiplex with a selection of premium food & beverage concepts, ensuring that guests can enjoy a complete day-out experience – all under one roof. The high hospitality standards of hotels clearly guided us. Whether celebrations, company events, or individual visits, the booking figures clearly prove this concept was missing. With the exception of individual retail units, the southern part of SCS is now a pure gastronomy and entertainment unit, which is directly connected to our open spaces, where our outdoor events and concerts take place, especially in summer.

***ACROSS:* WHAT ROLE DOES THE ISSUE OF REGIONALITY PLAY IN GASTRONOMIC OFFERINGS IN PARTICULAR?**

JUHASZ: Regional concepts are a key focus in our redesigned area and in the food court in the heart of the center, complementing the classic international offering. These concepts are what make the location unique. Prominent examples include Ebi Asian Fusion Kitchen, which opened its first branch in Lower Austria at SCS, and Zushi Market. Both are Viennese gastronomy concepts and have been very successful in their general expansions and locations at SCS. The focus is based on a particular tradition. For example, L'autentico was one of the first gastronomic tenants at the redesigned SCS.

***ACROSS:* TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE FOCUS ON ENTERTAINMENT AND GASTRONOMY CHANGED THE LENGTH OF STAY AND THE CUSTOMER PROFILE?**

JUHASZ: We clearly focus on families from the direct catchment area of Lower Austria and Vienna. We want to be a destination where people can spend the whole day, with every family member finding something that suits his or her needs. Our efforts to enhance the experience beyond traditional shopping have been particularly well received, especially by women, who make up the majority of our visitors and often come with their friends or children. At the same time, we have a strong base of loyal older customers, which is why we aim to create a well-rounded experience that caters to all generations.

Beyond that, we have also noticed a significant increase in shopping tourism. Visitors from Burgenland, across Austria, Hungary, and even Germany are choosing our center as a destination. In an effort to further support that trend, we actively promote group travel offers for bus tours and provide a dedicated shuttle service from Vienna's city center, making it even easier for tourists to visit.

***ACROSS:* ARE THERE ANY PLANS FOR A HOTEL IN THIS CONTEXT?**

JUHASZ: The possibility of a hotel is currently under discussion and is being thoroughly evaluated. Such an addition would further enhance the location and strengthen its appeal to tourists. There is both potential and available space for such development.

***ACROSS:* WHAT OTHER AREAS NEED TO BE EXPANDED IN THE FUTURE?**

JUHASZ: Another important area of focus for the future is the expansion of our range of services, and we are intensively working on that – especially in the field of medical care. Our sister center, the Donau Zentrum, serves as a great example, offering a wide variety of doctors, a registry office for weddings, and even funeral services. Shopping centers have the potential to be more than just retail destinations; they can evolve into key hubs that support different aspects of people's daily lives, making them even more relevant and convenient for visitors.

***ACROSS:* LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE TRADITIONAL RETAIL TENANTS. ONCE AGAIN, A LOT HAS HAPPENED LATELY.**

JUHASZ: SCS continues to be the go-to location for international retailers entering the Austrian market. In 2024 alone, we welcomed a variety of exciting new brands, strengthening our position as a top-tier shopping destination. A standout moment was the launch of Austria's first and only monobrand adidas store, which opened in October, alongside the debut of Austria's first New Balance monobrand store. The premium fashion segment at SCS also continues to grow, with Scotch & Soda and Joop! among the latest additions, and we are thrilled to soon welcome a Ralph Lauren store. Beyond fashion, we have also enriched our home & interior offerings with Le Creuset and Karaca. With each new opening, we reinforce our vision of creating a shopping destination that

IMAGE: WESTFIELD SHOPPING CITY SÜD

Zsolt Juhasz began his career in the tourism and hotel industry. He gained international hospitality experience in London, Glasgow, and Vienna. Before joining Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, he was the managing director of a Hamburg-based hotel group, responsible for the development, acquisition, and operational management of hotels in Vienna and Budapest. Before taking over the management of Westfield Shopping City Süd, he was the Center Manager at Westfield Donau Zentrum in Vienna.

THREE EXAMPLES OF ELEMENTARY AND FORWARD-LOOKING ADJUSTMENTS

1. COMMITTED ACTION FOR ESG GOALS: EXTENSIVE INSTALLATION OF PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS

With the recently completed PV roofing of parking spaces, Westfield Shopping City and the state of Lower Austria have executed an innovative project. The topic of sustainability has been a central component of the URW “Better Places” corporate strategy for many years. The new photovoltaic site on parking deck 8, equipped with more than 1,300 PV panels and a capacity of almost 500 kWp (kilowatt peak), complements the large-scale system that was installed on the main roof in 2021, which is still the largest system on the roof of a shopping center in Europe. Both projects send a visible signal of SCS's commitment to renewable energy. The system on the parking deck alone is expected to produce around 450,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, making a significant contribution to reducing the carbon footprint. In terms of net zero emissions, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield has set itself ambitious targets and plans to reduce CO2 emissions along the entire value chain by 50 percent by 2030 and by 90 percent by 2050.

IMAGE: WESTFIELD SHOPPING CITY SÜD

2. STATE-OF-THE-ART CONVERSION OF THE ENTERTAINMENT AREA

With the “DSTRCT Entertainment Center”, a new state-of-the-art leisure and entertainment area opened at the Westfield SCS multiplex at the end of 2024. The new, 2-level concept, which SCS has implemented with the internationally experienced Austrian company Elite Experience EC GmbH, is a further milestone in the repositioning and modernization that began with the new Cineplexx cinema in December of the previous year and pays tribute to the “social gaming” megatrend.

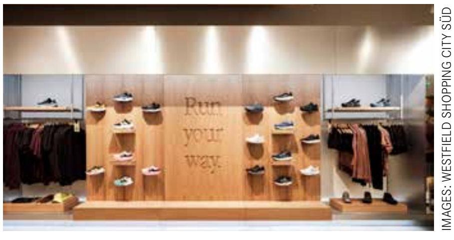
The offer includes:

- 5 “NoWayOut” escape rooms
- 12 “StrikeCity” bowling lanes
- 3 stylish bars and a restaurant
- Interactive highlights such as steel darts, shuffleboard, and private party rooms with a karaoke option
- 3 “Balls&Clubs” adventure mini-golf courses from
- Over 100 arcade games from classic pinball machines to modern slot machines

IMAGES: WESTFIELD SHOPPING CITY SÜD

3. OUTSTANDING BRAND EXPERTISE OF THE CENTER

The established brand mix, the constant opening of many excellent brands, and SCS’s decision on brand market entries, in particular, demonstrates the strong market position of Westfield Shopping City Süd and its appeal, which stretches beyond national borders. National and international brands see the center as the ideal location to enter the Austrian market, expand with flagship stores, or launch completely new retail concepts. In 2024, in particular, the already impressive lineup of tenant brands was expanded by several brand debuts in Austria, including the country’s first adidas monobrand store, which, alongside New Balance, enhances the activewear offering as new partners. In premium fashion, Joop!, Scotch & Soda, Rinascimento, and Brax add variety and distinction. Furthermore, the center has also expanded its brand mix with the addition of Le Creuset, DJI, Karaca, and Modern Asia Market. In terms of dining and culinary delights, the internationally renowned burger restaurant Five Guys and the French PAUL Bakery will open in 2025. Cinnamood recently opened its doors as well.



IMAGES: WESTFIELD SHOPPING CITY SÜD

combines global brands, premium retail, and innovative concepts. Our goal is to continuously elevate the shopping experience and solidify SCS as a benchmark for the Austrian retail landscape.

ACROSS:* *WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU GENERALLY SEEN ON THE RETAILER SIDE?

JUHASZ: A clear trend towards polarization is shaping the retail sector, and that is reflected at our center as well. To provide the best possible experience for our visitors, we have structured SCS into distinct clusters for different segments. Concepts like Primark continue to attract a strong customer base, with visitors traveling from far and wide – a dynamic that also benefits the surrounding stores.

When looking at the broader retail landscape, we see that brand positioning and marketing are becoming increasingly important, particularly in the premium segment. Differentiation and compelling storytelling are key factors when it comes to standing out, and some industries – especially those focused on sustainability – are excelling in that regard. At SCS, we actively support our brand partners by creating an environment in which they can thrive, while also ensuring that the center as a whole remains an attractive and dynamic destination.

ACROSS:* *WHAT MAKES THE COMPOSITION OF THE TENANT MIX AT SCS SPECIAL?

JUHASZ: The tenant mix at SCS is carefully curated to offer visitors a diverse and high-quality shopping experience. However, what truly sets SCS apart is the consistent quality and aesthetic appeal of its retail spaces. A key aspect of this is shopfitting. Every brand – regardless of its size or global recognition – adheres to our shopfitting guidelines, which are integral parts of the lease agreement. These guidelines ensure that each store aligns with the overall design vision of the center, creating a visually harmonious and inviting atmosphere. To maintain this high standard, we have an in-house concept studio that defines specific interior design principles. We work closely with our tenants throughout the planning process, helping them bring their store concepts to life in a way that fits both their brand identity and the aesthetic of SCS. Ultimately, every store design must receive final approval from our designers to ensure a cohesive and premium shopping environment for our visitors.

ACROSS:* *ARE THERE ANY LIMITS WITH RESPECT TO THE TENANT MIX?

JUHASZ: Rather than limits, we see constant evolution in the tenant mix, with boundaries shifting and expanding in exciting ways. Retail is transforming, and shopping centers must adapt by embracing new concepts and services. This dynamic development keeps our industry fresh and allows us to offer visitors an even more diverse and engaging experience.

A great example can be found in the BYD store, the first of its kind in Austria. Bringing an e-car showroom to a shopping center was an unconventional idea that required innovative thinking and close collaboration with the authorities to find the right regulatory framework. It's exactly these kinds of forward-thinking projects that drive us – pushing the traditional boundaries of what a shopping center can be and creating spaces that go beyond shopping.

ACROSS:* *FINALLY, WHAT IS THE TOP PRIORITY WHEN IT COMES TO MANAGING A SUCCESSFUL LOCATION?

JUHASZ: The key to success is ensuring that people actively choose to visit the center. A shopping center thrives when customers come – not just once, but regularly. That's why we focus on reaching them where their journeys begin, whether it's at home through digital engagement or through seamless navigation to and within our center. At SCS, we follow a double-loop approach, optimizing both the external and internal customer journeys. That means making every step seamless, whether it's ensuring that individual entrances and key locations are accurately mapped online or creating a welcoming and intuitive environment once visitors step inside. Another example came from the Donau Zentrum, where we reassessed various aspects of the customer experience following the energy crisis. A simple measure like adjusting ambient music in certain areas initially seemed practical, but we recognized that a sense of comfort and security was just as vital as efficiency. These subtle details significantly contribute to the overall well-being of our visitors and influence their decision to return. Our 4-star concept ensures that every detail is designed to enhance the visitor experience, making SCS not just a place to shop, but a destination where people feel at home, enjoy their time, and are eager to return.

SCS AT A GLANCE

Location:
Vösendorf, Lower Austria, on the border of Austria's capital, Vienna

Catchment Area:
3.5 million people

Leased Area:
225,800 sq m

Number of Shops:
330

Parking Spaces:
10,000

E-charging Stations:
currently 11, but an expansion to 100 is planned for 2025

Visitors per Year:
20.4 million

Average Dwell Time:
142 minutes on average / prior to the pandemic in 2019: 140 minutes

HOW WE SHOP – FROM PLAY TO PURPOSE

With ever-changing customer expectations and increasing competition, brands need to evolve with consumer behaviors and trends to drive loyalty and engagement. Especially experiential retail is gaining momentum. Westfield Rise, the in-house retail media agency of Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, examines in its report "How we shop – from play to purpose" the new world of explorative and consumer-centric retail solutions. The How We Shop report reveals that shoppers seek escapism, wellness, and eco-education from retailers and brands and shows how retailers should respond to those trends.

ABOUT THE REPORT:

"How we shop—from play to purpose" reveals insights into the changing dynamics of shopping and leisure through the eyes of 2,000 UK consumers. It examines the macro-trends defining the future of retail, hospitality, and leisure. Westfield Rise covers a broad spectrum of topics, from how consumers shop, work, and socialize to the heightened focus on health and sustainability. It reveals three dominant trends: Play-tail, Retail Surgery, and Eco-Fluency.

Looking into the transformative changes reshaping retail, media agency Westfield Rise has released a new report outlining the key trends set to transform retail in 2025 and beyond.

TREND 1: PLAY-TAIL

The future of retail is Play-tail. Savvy shoppers demand more significant interaction beyond transactions. Spaces must work harder to promote social connections and provide environments for spending time with friends and family.

The report reveals a clear shift from traditional shopping as consumers demand more engaging experiences, innovation, and excitement. Nearly half of shoppers are looking for more immersive, entertainment-driven retail options. Shopping center locations and brands are responding to the trends and trying out concepts in the market. "Entertainment-led experiences are emerging as the new anchor attractions, replacing the traditional dominance of department stores," states Candice Mayer-Gillet, Managing Director of Westfield Rise. "The demand for innovation and excitement is propelling the need for brand experiences that seamlessly integrate exploration, play, and gamification, both in-store and online."

Some key observations:

- 96% of Gen Z want more fun: Younger shoppers seek more gamified and experiential spaces and activities in their free time.
- 47% are excited about 'smarter' shopping experiences enabled by AI technology, but just as many, 47%, fear wider adoption of AI will lead to job losses in retail.
- 52% want to see more F&B concepts and dining experiences focusing on fun and joy.

TREND 2: RETAIL SURGERY

The Westfield Rise research demonstrates that consumers want to be in the driver's seat regarding their health, taking control over treatments with healthcare services that are more personalized to their needs and goals.

The desire for easily accessible and convenient services drives openness to nontraditional settings for health, wellness, and beauty services, such as wellness hubs in shopping centers and retail areas. 66% of Londoners opt for non-emergency healthcare in retail settings, including shopping centers.

"Health and wellbeing are priority areas, but surprisingly, consumers are shunning traditional medical settings for more convenient and welcoming surroundings. Consumers are increasingly seeking personalized services that blend real-life interaction with the convenience of technology, all while prioritizing safety and privacy", argues Mayer-Gillet. "The brands that succeed will master this delicate balance."

Some key observations:

- 68 % of UK adults want personalized healthcare.
- 1 in 4 turn to digital tools for wellbeing support.
- 52 % favor wellness hubs over GP clinics.

TREND 3: ECOFLUENCY

Concerns about mounting environmental challenges and cost-of-living pressures influence consumer attitudes about consumption. Clear education is required to foster an eco-fluent future.

Providing informative, easily accessible sustainability content and education is crucial for maintaining consumer loyalty. Shoppers want businesses to be more transparent about how their products are made by adopting better technology or a universal sustainability grading system. 54% of under-35s are turning away from brands that don't offer environmentally friendly options.

In comparison, 48% of all consumers are willing to spend more on brands and retailers communicating their sustainability practices. "As expected, sustainability is no longer an optional consideration; it has become a significant factor in consumer decision-making; however, insight and transparency on sustainable practice is something that shoppers want more of from brands," says Mayer-Gillet. "At Westfield destinations, we are collaborating closely with our retailers and brands to meet the growing consumer demand for sustainable practices, driving meaningful change across the retail landscape."

Some key observations:

- 65% of UK consumers want more reuse and repair options in the next five years.
- 77% of respondents recognize AI as a valuable resource for making sustainable shopping decisions.
- 25% expect brands to offer more education and training related to sustainability.

IMAGE: WESTFIELD RISE

Candice Mayer-Gillet is the Managing Director of Westfield Rise

Read the full Westfield Rise report:

TRINITY CAPITAL BULGARIA: "WE ARE DEVELOPING NOT ONLY AN OUTLET, BUT A POWER-SHOPPING DESTINATION"

Trinity Capital is one of Bulgaria's most prominent developers and owners of retail real estate. After developing retail parks and acquiring shopping centers, the company is now entering the market for designer outlets and planning Bulgaria's first outlet village in Sofia, which will be in the direct vicinity of the largest retail park in the Balkans, which belongs to Trinity as well. Stoyan Kolev, CEO of Trinity Capital, explains why Bulgaria is ready for an outlet, his plans for the location, why the combination of outlet and retail park makes sense, and why entertainment and gastronomy are essential keys to more footfall.

IMAGE: TRINITY CAPITAL

Stoyan Kolev is CEO of Trinity Capital

ACROSS: ***TRINITY CAPITAL HAS QUICKLY BECOME AN IMPORTANT PLAYER IN THE BULGARIAN RETAIL REAL ESTATE MARKET. PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR COMPANY'S ACTIVITIES.***

STOYAN KOLEV: We are a relatively young company that was established to invest in commercial real estate in strategic locations in Bulgaria. In 2020, we had the opportunity to acquire the most extensive retail park in the country, Jumbo Plaza (today XOPark Sofia). This asset was, at that time, a typical retail park that was highly underdeveloped. Therefore, we added another 25,000 sq m to enrich the existing tenant mix – and to add food and services. Today, XOPark Sofia offers a comprehensive solution for its clients – shopping, dining areas, and future supplementary functions. After the first upgrade, the park experienced significant growth, which influenced the general development of our company. We currently own a national chain of retail parks and operate four assets, and another five are in project phases. Furthermore, we own two shopping centers and small residential and vacation recreational projects. Within the next 18 months, we will have more than 200,000 sq m of leasable area, consisting of nine retail parks, two shopping malls, and one outlet village.

ACROSS: ***THAT MAKES YOU ONE OF THE BIGGEST PLAYERS IN YOUR COUNTRY.***

KOLEV: Yes, we are one of Bulgaria's biggest commercial real estate players – perhaps the biggest one. More importantly, the company continues to develop and operate its assets and build new ones. And, we do all of this with fully independent in-house teams and project managers.

ACROSS: ***UNTIL RECENTLY, YOU FOCUSED ON FULL-PRICE LOCATIONS. YOU HAVE ENTERED THE OUTLET MARKET WITH YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT PROJECT, THE OUTLET VILLAGE SOFIA. WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVATION BEHIND THIS STRATEGIC STEP?***

KOLEV: There are powerful market signals for this investment. However, the idea was born two years ago when the competition within Sofia increased significantly, and we discussed how the existing concept of the Jumbo Plaza retail park could be strengthened, which we recently rebranded to XOPark Sofia. Back then, we discussed new features, new brands as part of the tenant mix of an expansion, and new formats, including the idea of an outlet center. Retailers immediately validated this idea by expressing strong interest in entering an outlet concept, and we started to explore the outlet idea. We conducted extensive research with Ecostra and contacted Michael Haslinger to serve as the consultant of this new endeavor for us. While our core focus has been on full-price retail locations, namely retail parks and shopping malls, we recognize the market's evolving needs and changing consumer behavior. Our decision to build an outlet center has followed the fundamental retail principle: First, understand the market, and then offer the right product.

***ACROSS:* BULGARIA IS RELATIVELY LATE WHEN IT COMES TO OUTLETS. WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THAT?**

KOLEV: It's true that the retail landscape in Bulgaria has traditionally focused on full-priced retail formats within the limited offering of a discount-driven shopping experience. Historically, there was a lack of sufficient demand for the outlet concept. Bulgarian consumers, who are more accustomed to traditional retail models, have only recently begun shifting towards a value-oriented mindset. A project in the outskirts of Sofia opened approximately 15 years ago, following a Western European outlet model. However, the owners had difficulties enforcing the policies of consistent discounts for all stores. Therefore, some of the retailers have moved out over time.

***ACROSS.* WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE TODAY?**

KOLEV: The economic environment and the population's purchasing power were not favorable to the outlet model in the past. Outlets tend to thrive in markets with a certain level of consumer affluence and a robust middle class that has an appetite for premium brands. Bulgaria was still in the phase of developing its retail infrastructure and consumer behavior. In addition, the retail sector was dominated by traditional shopping centers and full-price stores, which made introducing a new retail model that would appeal to local and international consumers a complex task. The outlet concept does not require significant investments in a large-scale retail environment. The right location, accessibility, and complementary services ensure many visitors and long-term success. However, the lack of experience with successful outlet developments and the limited number of international retailers opening stores in Bulgaria meant fewer proven success stories to inspire the confidence of developers and investors. However, as the Bulgarian market has matured, the demand for outlet shopping has also grown. We firmly believe and are confident that the market is ready to embrace this new retail format.

OUTLET VILLAGE SOFIA AT A GLANCE

In 2026, the first Outlet Village in Bulgaria will be inaugurated within the precincts of the XOPark Sofia retail park. Although the outlet village concept is a novelty in the local market, it has been a tried-and-true model across Europe for many years. The village will house 40 stores across a 7,000-sq m leasable area, providing the park's patrons with international fashion brands at attractive prices.

Developer/Operator: Trinity Capital

Retail Consultant: Haslinger Retail Real Estate Company

Location: Located at the northern entrance of Sofia, in the immediate vicinity of XOPark Sofia (formerly Jumbo Plaza Retail Park) and at the intersection of the A1 and A2 motorways on Sofia's Ring Road, which, with 24 million vehicles per year, is the busiest junction in Bulgaria.

Accessibility: In addition to its highway connections, two public bus lines run every 15 minutes, and a new subway line is planned to open by 2026.

Catchment Area:
30-minute drive – 1.3 million residents
60-minute drive – 1.6 million residents
90-minute drive – 2.5 million residents

Size: 7,000 sq m of great fashion deals; regular shop sizes between 80 and 170 sq m; anchor shop sizes up to 400 sq m.

IMAGE: TRINITY CAPITAL


IMAGE: TRINITY CAPITAL

Outlet Village Sofia will be the first Designer Outlet in Bulgaria.

ACROSS: ***SO, THE TIMING IS RIGHT, AND YOU HAVE AN OPEN WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITIES.***

KOLEV: The market signals are the most important. We can see the added value of these concepts in the European retail market. Finally, the market research indicates that the national market is ready for this concept.

ACROSS: ***THE LOCATION OF YOUR OUTLET IS ALREADY A PROVEN SHOPPING DESTINATION.***

KOLEV: The location itself is the biggest argument for the project. As mentioned, Outlet Village Sofia will be close to XOPark. As you've said, this is an established and essential shopping destination in Bulgaria. With 30,000 sq m operating since 2011 and another 25,000 sq m just introduced to the public, this retail park is the largest one in the Balkans. The destination attracts an annual footfall of more than six million people. This number is expected to increase to eight million when the outlet village opens. The project will be at the northern entrance of Sofia, the capital city of Bulgaria. It is a 10-minute drive from the airport and a 20-minute drive from the city center. It is exceptionally well-connected to one of the main highways in the country and the ring road of Sofia, with more than 26 million cars passing by the location each year.

ACROSS: ***DO YOU ALSO EXPECT VISITORS FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES?***

KOLEV: We expect guests, mainly from Serbia, North Macedonia, and Romania. Next to our retail park, there is excellent transit traffic from Central Europe to Turkey and from Romania to Greece. Those travelers love to stop at our place, and that is what we call the cherry on top when it comes to footfall.

ACROSS: ***WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE FOR THE PROJECT?***

KOLEV: We already have a building permit for the outlet. Initial construction work is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2025, and we plan to open in Q4 of 2026. We have already leased out about 70% of the leasable area. I firmly believe that in the next three to four years, we will start phase two of the development, creating an additional 5000 – 6000 sq m. We already have the land banking for it.

ACROSS: ***WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU RECEIVED FROM INTERNATIONAL BRANDS REGARDING YOUR PROJECT?***

KOLEV: The Bulgarian market is generally run by local brand distributors (franchising companies). They are willing to invest and partner with us in this outlet shopping concept, with the help of international consultants. Our strategy was to start with the parent company driving the local franchisors. Our project has been well received by the parent companies. As recently as December, we had very good discussions and received motivating feedback at MAPIC, where we presented our project for the second year in a row.

ACROSS: ***THE PROJECT'S UNIQUE FEATURE IS THE COMBINATION OF AN EXISTING RETAIL PARK AND AN OUTLET. ALTHOUGH THIS COMBINATION IS WELL ESTABLISHED IN THE EUROPEAN OUTLET INDUSTRY, THE SAME COMPANY RARELY DEVELOPS AND MANAGES BOTH ASSETS. WHERE DO YOU SEE THE GREATEST SYNERGIES BETWEEN A FULL-PRICE AND AN OUTLET CONCEPT?***

KOLEV: I firmly believe combining retail parks and outlet villages is an effective strategy. This integration naturally leverages the strengths of both formats and results in a dynamic retail ecosystem that appeals to a diverse customer base.

Retail parks offer convenience and accessibility and cater to essential and practical shopping needs, while outlet villages attract price-conscious shoppers looking for branded items at discounted prices. Combining these two elements creates a true power-shopping destination that offers variety, value, and accessible customer experience. The most crucial synergy is obvious: increased footfall. Both retail parks and outlet villages drive footfall, significantly increasing overall traffic and improving the customer experience. Operational efficiencies, shared infrastructure, parking, and services are added to this. We will reduce costs and improve sustainability. The combined format is also highly attractive to brands and retailers. The tenant mix is strengthened.

***ACROSS:* WILL THE MANAGEMENT OF BOTH – OUTLET AND RETAIL PARK – BE HANDLED IN-HOUSE?**

KOLEV: We plan to implement everything with our in-house teams. Of course, they will specifically devote themselves to the individual assets and target marketing, retail management, property management, letting, etc., for the outlet village and the retail park. Additionally, we have also examined the market and have international operators in mind – just in case. But the current plan is to handle everything in-house.

***ACROSS:* DO YOU HAVE ANOTHER EUROPEAN PROJECT IN MIND WHEN IT COMES TO ROLE MODELS FOR YOUR PROJECT?**

KOLEV: One of my favorite European destinations is Outlet Center Parndorf. I visit the asset regularly and am always amazed by its development. This shows the advantages of this great outlet for consumers, which is managed by McArthurGlen, as well as the neighboring shopping center and retail park.

***ACROSS:* YOU HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED THE EXPECTED INCREASE IN DWELL TIME. WHAT ROLES DO GASTRONOMY AND ENTERTAINMENT PLAY IN THAT REGARD?**

KOLEV: Significant roles. We are developing a feature within the retail park called Agora. It is a 2000-square-meter leasable area that serves as a central place between the outlet and the retail park. There will be cafes, restaurants, and gourmet shops serving national and international food. It will be built in the style of an amphitheater, offering ample space and opportunities to rest and spend social time. Furthermore, we have bought an adjacent plot of 10,000 sq m to create one of the most prominent entertainment concepts in Sofia – likely in a joint venture with an international operator.

IMAGE: TRINITY CAPITAL

XOPark Sofia and Outlet Village Sofia are located right next to each other. XOPark Sofia offers a comprehensive solution for its clients – shopping, dining areas, and future supplementary functions.

***ACROSS:* ASIDE FROM THE OUTLET AND THE EXPANSION OF THE XOPARK RETAIL PARK CHAIN, WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER PRIORITIES IN 2025?**

KOLEV: We are developing five more retail parks in Bulgaria's major cities. We already have the plots and permits and will open these five locations in the next 18 to 24 months. We also have some projects near the Black Sea coast, including recreational and vacation homes. Of course, we are focusing on our two shopping centers and will continue to upgrade them.

***ACROSS:* SO FAR, YOU HAVE FOCUSED ON BULGARIA. IS A STEP TOWARDS THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET EXPECTED?**

KOLEV: We're looking south and west, but we will see what happens. North Macedonia and Greece might be options because of their historical paths and connections. Nothing is concrete, and we are very relaxed about this since we currently have many big, ongoing projects in Bulgaria.

THE EFFECTS OF TOURISM ON DESIGNER OUTLET VILLAGES IN EUROPE

Understanding the interplay between tourism and designer outlet villages can reveal the broader economic, social, and cultural effects of these retail hubs on local and regional economies. Giles Membrey, Managing Director, Rioja Estates, explores the current state of outlet villages in Europe as well as future prospects, with a specific focus on how tourism has shaped, and continues to impact, this retail sector.

BY GILES MEMBREY

IMAGE: RIOJA ESTATES

Giles Membrey is Managing Director of Rioja Estates

Designer outlet villages in Europe have grown substantially over the past few decades, becoming a popular shopping format for both local customers and international tourists. Offering discounted branded goods, these outlets attract a variety of shoppers and serve as a significant part of the retail landscape in regions across Europe. The outlook for outlet locations is nuanced, with both opportunities for growth and concerns about market saturation.

MARKET SATURATION

In Western Europe, particularly in the UK, Italy, France, and Germany, designer outlet villages have seen considerable development, and many of these markets may now be approaching saturation. Market saturation refers to a point at which the number of outlets meets or exceeds consumer demand, resulting in increased competition between outlets for both customers and brand partnerships. This level of saturation presents challenges, as new entrants struggle to differentiate themselves, and existing outlets must constantly innovate to retain market share.

As a result of saturation, outlet villages are facing intense competition that impacts not only their ability to attract foot traffic but also their appeal to luxury and high-demand brands. Saturation also diminishes the unique appeal that outlet villages once had, as frequent shoppers may lose interest due to the repetitiveness of brand offerings and the familiarity of the shopping experience.

CONSOLIDATION TRENDS

To combat market saturation, many investors and brands are opting for consolidation rather than expansion. This shift involves enhancing existing outlet schemes rather than opening new ones. Consolidation strategies often include improving the shopping environment, upgrading amenities, refining marketing approaches, repositioning the brand mix, and optimizing operational efficiencies to create a more attractive and sustainable shopping experience. For instance, many outlet villages are investing in high-quality facilities, upgrading accessibility, and incorporating advanced services to attract and retain a loyal customer base.

This trend of consolidation can be seen as a strategic response to changing market conditions and reflects the need for outlets to innovate continually. Consolidation also aligns with the rising consumer demand for experiential retail, in which the shopping journey offers not only products but a memorable experience.

CHANGING CONSUMER PREFERENCES

Another key factor shaping the current outlet landscape is the shift in consumer preferences. Modern shoppers increasingly value experiences, sustainability, and a sense of connection to local culture. This evolution necessitates that outlet villages adapt to these preferences, integrating sustainability initiatives, offering localized products, and creating immersive experiences that engage customers beyond transactional shopping. For instance, outlets that host events, exhibitions, and culturally themed shopping days can attract visitors seeking more than just discounts on branded goods.

"As a result of saturation, outlet villages are facing intense competition that impacts not only their ability to attract foot traffic but also their appeal to luxury and high-demand brands."

The influence of tourism is particularly evident in how outlets adapt to evolving consumer preferences. Tourists often look for distinctive and memorable shopping experiences that reflect local customs and culture, encouraging outlet villages to incorporate regional themes or products and foster unique identities that stand out in the global retail landscape.

EMERGING MARKETS

Despite signs of saturation in Europe, opportunities for outlet village development remain in emerging markets, and those where planning restrictions have limited the opportunities. Countries such as Slovenia, France and Germany have lower levels of outlet development compared to other European countries. With less saturation, these regions present a unique opportunity for developers to introduce outlet shopping and attract both local and international visitors. There are also areas for development in new markets further afield, i.e., Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco.

TOURISM-DRIVEN LOCATIONS

One of the most significant growth areas for outlet villages is in tourism-driven locations. Outlet villages near major tourist destinations, attractions, or airports can draw substantial foot traffic from international visitors. Tourists, especially those visiting from Asia, North America, and the Middle East, are often attracted to designer outlet villages as part of their travel experience, providing a dependable stream of high-spending shoppers. The presence of tourists allows these outlet villages to thrive even in otherwise saturated markets by creating unique value through proximity to major travel hubs and landmarks.

The tourism-driven growth model is particularly effective in regions with well-established tourism industries. In Italy, for example, outlets located near Florence and Milan attract both local and international shoppers who appreciate the opportunity to purchase luxury goods at a discount while enjoying Italian culture and lifestyle. The strategic placement of outlets near tourist hotspots helps to leverage existing travel infrastructure and increases convenience for visitors seeking a luxury shopping experience.

LUXURY SEGMENT GROWTH

A further area of expansion for outlet villages lies in the luxury segment. Affluent tourists are increasingly seeking discounted luxury items, creating demand for high-end outlet experiences. This has led developers to focus on creating designer outlet villages that cater specifically to luxury shopping needs. By incorporating premium brands and elevated service offerings, luxury-focused outlets provide an exclusive environment that appeals to high-net-worth shoppers.

The luxury segment also benefits from the loyalty of international visitors who are keen to acquire products from European brands that may be more difficult or expensive to obtain in their home countries. For instance, outlet villages featuring brands like Gucci, Prada, and Burberry are popular among visitors from Asia, where such goods are highly desirable but often come at a premium price due to tariffs and import costs. As such, luxury-oriented outlet villages cater not only to domestic shoppers but also to international tourists who view outlet shopping as a distinct and valued part of their travel experience.

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS

Mixed-use developments represent an emerging trend in the evolution of outlet villages, where retail is integrated with residential, dining, and entertainment options. By creating a more versatile destination, these developments appeal to both locals and tourists seeking diverse experiences. Mixed-use outlets can become day-trip destinations, where visitors can shop, dine, and engage in leisure activities all within the same location. This approach helps to sustain higher foot traffic and offers a more resilient business model that relies less on retail sales.

DIGITAL INTEGRATION

In an increasingly digital retail environment, outlet villages are recognizing the value of integrating e-commerce with physical shopping locations. Digital initiatives, such as click-and-collect services and exclusive online promotions, can enhance the customer experience and attract tech-savvy tourists who seek seamless and convenient shopping options. Digital integration also allows outlet villages to engage with customers before, during, and after their visits, fostering loyalty and encouraging repeat purchases.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM ON OUTLET VILLAGES

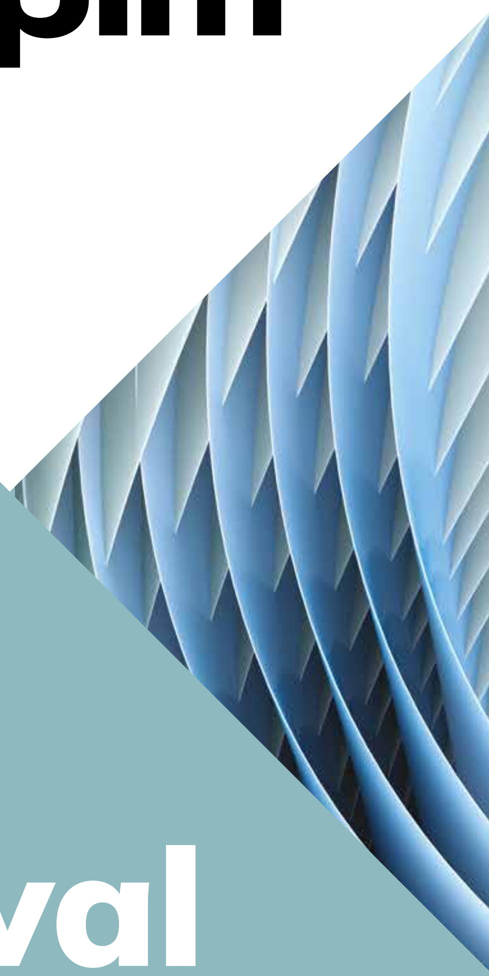
Designer outlet villages create employment opportunities in the regions in which they are located, contributing to the respective local economies. Tourism further amplifies this effect by generating demand for additional services such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation, which creates more job opportunities. Moreover, tourists often spend beyond the outlet village, benefiting local businesses and helping stimulate economic activity in surrounding areas.

REAL ESTATE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The presence of an outlet village can have a positive impact on local real estate values and infrastructure. As outlet villages become tourist attractions, there is often an increased demand for nearby accommodation, improved transportation, and other amenities that benefit both tourists and residents. However, this effect may vary depending on the level of tourism and the economic conditions in each region.

> *"The presence of an outlet village can have a positive impact on local real estate values and infrastructure."*

The influence of tourism on designer outlet villages in Europe is substantial, offering a source of growth in both saturated and emerging markets. Outlet villages near tourist attractions and travel hubs benefit from high foot traffic and increased spending by international visitors, particularly affluent shoppers seeking luxury brands. Market saturation, shifting consumer preferences, and economic pressures necessitate that outlet villages continue to adapt to maintain relevance and appeal. Through a combination of consolidation, experiential retail, luxury offerings, mixed-use developments, and digital integration, outlet villages can continue to capitalize on tourism and remain a vibrant part of the European retail landscape. By understanding the economic and social impact of tourism on designer outlet villages, stakeholders can make informed decisions that support sustainable growth and deliver value to local economies and the broader retail market.



THE NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND COMMISSION: CONSEQUENCES FOR RETAIL REAL ESTATE

There was high pressure to regulate during the previous EU Commission's term. The newly elected EU Parliament focuses on implementation and investment, which Julien Bouyeron says should positively affect our sector. In this column, the Secretary General of the ECSP explains the new European Parliament and Commission and what the sector's next five years will look like in Brussels.

First, the most crucial conclusion after last summer's European election is that the composition of the European Parliament has shifted to the right. The European People’s Party group (EPP - center-right) is by far the largest in the European Parliament now, with 188 seats out of 720 and the radical right also won big.

IMAGE: ECSP

JULIEN BOUYERON

Julien Bouyeron, Secretary General of the ECSP: Julien Bouyeron is an “explainer” by nature. After graduating, he studied literature and worked as a French teacher before starting to work for trade associations. In various positions, including at the French Retail Association, FCD, and the European DIY Retail Association, Bouyeron has not only helped shape the retail world but has also become familiar with the perspectives of political decision-makers. He has over 10 years of advocacy experience in Brussels. The Frenchman has been the ECSP’s representative since May 2023.

Now will this affect the balance of power in the European Parliament? A parliament functions with a majority. Up till now, laws in the European Parliament have been adopted by a liberal, centrist majority. However, despite the fact that the European Parliament is now shifting to the right, the probability that the "standard majority" will remain centrist is high. Nevertheless, there may be other coalition scenarios in the future, depending on the respective issue and a right-wing coalition may occasionally emerge due to strong ideological proximity on topics such as agriculture and immigration.

In short, there will not be a centrist majority that passes all draft laws in this new legislative period, as in the past, but there will be several majorities. But what does that mean in practice and for our industry?

LESS REGULATORY PRESSURE

The good news is that the adoption of green policies will likely be significantly slowed down.

Since 2019 and the adoption of the Green Deal, the EU has adopted many ambitious green measures ranging from consumer law to product policy. This is the consequence of several factors such as the significant seat loss of the Green parties and the fact that almost all the EU legislation have already been revised to become environmentally friendly. So, it is expected that instead of introducing additional green measures, the priority will be to implement and enforce properly the newly adopted rules and finance the green transition.

This is a positive development for our industry, as the level of ambition of the EU green policy has been extremely high over the last five years and has posed significant challenges for the retail real estate sector.

WHAT WILL BE THE PRIORITIES OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS?

Several official EU documents have already given us a flavor of the Commission's intentions. The first is the EU Strategic Agenda, written and adopted by the European Council in June 2024. Although this agenda is very general and does not constitute not a work program, it reflects some fundamental choices. In this document, EU leaders announced for instance that EU priorities will remain supporting Ukraine and achieving the green and digital transition. However, the most relevant document to define lobbying priorities is the political guidelines of the President of the Commission. They were published early July 2024 and contain a more detailed plan of the Commission's intentions for the coming 5 years. The most relevant policies for our industry are the following guidelines:

- Focus on implementation of EU policies, including EBPD, CSDDD, and Taxonomy Regulation).

- Strengthening the enforcement of the Digital Services Act, including "tackling challenges with e-commerce platforms".

- Exploit the data potential, including building a European Data Union Strategy to help companies make use of data.

- Fighting organized crime, including the adoption of a new European Internal Security Strategy and turning Europol into a genuinely operational agency

- Tackling the housing crisis, including the appointment of a Commissioner whose responsibilities will include housing and the adoption of a first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan

- Acknowledgement that the social fabric has been damaged

The focus on implementation and investment is positive, as regulatory pressure during the previous Commission's mandate was intense. The sector can now focus on compliance. Based on these guidelines, ECSP must focus on:

- Energy: Implementation of the EBPD, CSDDD, and Taxonomy Regulation. Our task is to help members comply with these bills.

- Financing: To comply with EPBD, the retail real estate sector needs to be highlighted in terms of financing. Our task is to determine these needs and share them with the Commission.

- Digital: Push for vigorous enforcement of the Digital Services Act. Our task is to collect evidence of the uneven playing field between omnichannel retailers and online marketplaces and share it with the Commission

- Security: Fighting organized crime is one of our challenges. Our task is to draw attention to this problem during discussions on the Internal Security Strategy.

- Social: supporting the housing agenda. Our task is to highlight our role as builders of residential buildings as part of the discussions on the housing agenda and highlight our social impact as part of debates on security and social matters.

The ECSP at a Glance

The ECSP is the voice of the retail real estate sector in Brussels. It defends the interests of our industry to EU lawmakers and shares knowledge and expertise with members at a European level. ECSP members include companies such as Unibail Rodamco Westfield, ECE, SES, Eurocommercial, and Union Investment, as well as national Councils such as the French Council (FACT), the Italian Council (CNCC), the German Council (GCSP), and the Austrian Council (ACSP).

Following the European elections in June 2024, the EU set several priorities that shape the political and policy agenda until 2029. Discover the Commission's 2024-2029 priorities:

EVENTS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

APRIL 29, 2025
LONDON, UK

IMAGE: CRMARKETPLACE

COMPLETELY RETAIL MARKETPLACE

One day, one market, unlimited possibilities: Completely Retail Marketplace is where retailers meet commercial landlords for a day of discussing shop and space acquisitions. This is Europe's most diverse network of retail brands, landlords, agents, operators, property developers, franchise operators, and shopping center owners. Completely Retail Marketplace offers retailers the chance to meet commercial landlords for a day of discussions about stores and space acquisition. Completely Retail Marketplaces is the country's largest network of occupiers and landlords and offers an environment in which retail professionals and retail and leisure brands can share opportunities and insight about the market. A second event in London, UK, is scheduled for September 30 and October 1.

APRIL 8 – 9, 2025
LONDON, UK

IMAGE: LONDON PROPTECH SHOW

LONDON PROPTECH SHOW

Building on the prolific developments in the PropTech sector, the London PropTech Show aims to become the most important gathering for global proptech professionals to help capitalize on the sector's massive new opportunities. As Europe's leading trade show and conference, it showcases the latest innovations in real estate technology. Join us for a dynamic event featuring cutting-edge proptech solutions, expert-led seminars, and tailored networking opportunities. Be it a real estate developer, investor, or proptech entrepreneur, everyone is offered a place to discover the future of real estate at the third annual London Proptech Show. From April 8-9 at ExCeL London, the PropTech Show will assemble leading international proptech industry experts, policymakers, investors, entrepreneurs, etc., for two days of exclusive industry insights, seamless networking, and a world-class showcase of innovative products and services.

MORE INFO: HTTPS://PROPTECHSHOW.COM/

MAY 8, 2025
ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

SHOPPING CENTER FORUM SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Shopping Center Forum takes participants on an exciting journey on the topic of "Satisfaction." Various pillars characterize a successful shopping center: The location at a transportation hub, interesting architecture, unique selling points in marketing, and a diverse tenant mix. The Shopping Center Forum closely examines this relationship with the tenant: Are the needs of landlords, tenants, and customers equally satisfied? Or are there differences? Among others, leading national and international experts from the fields of market and future research, shopping centers, and retail real estate, as well as from the retail trade, will present current topics from theory and practice. The congress allows you to meet the most important decision-makers in the shopping center and retail industry and hold expert discussions. The big "family reunion" is the leading congress in Switzerland with over 350 participants.

MORE INFO: WWW.SC-FORUM.CH.

MAY 14 – 15,2025
MILAN, ITALY

MAPIC ITALY

Over 2 days, retailers, leisure operators, restaurant chains, shopping centers, developers & owners connect to expand and develop their business in Italy. MAPIC Italy 2025 is the "unmissable rendezvous" for property players and in-vogue retailers looking to build the perfect retail mix and create complete lifestyle destinations. Retail, real estate, leisure, and hospitality are at a crossroads, with the need for constant evolution in a rapidly changing world, learning how to fast-track adaptation and agility as the industry's players work out 'The new retail equation.' At the center of this are customer expectations, a key element of the equation. People need a sense of place, social interaction, and experience. Retail builds new links between customers and citizens, strengthening bonds and creating deeper connections for destinations and brands. This new mixed-use will also support the growth of towns and cities and meet the needs of communities..

MORE INFO: HTTPS://WWW.MAPIC-ITALY.IT/EN-GB.HTML

APRIL 9 – 10, 2025
SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

REPEX RETAIL & PROPERTY EXPO

REPEX 2025 is, for the second consecutive year, organized as the leading event for the retail industry in the Balkan Region. The event is dedicated to revolutionizing the world of retail and property. It is where innovative products meet decision-makers, and exhibitors can showcase to an audience eager for the next big thing. Repex aims to be the catalyst for change in the retail and property sectors of the Western Balkans. The expo envisages a future where businesses, regardless of scale, can find success, foster collaborations, and lead with innovation. Joining Repex means embedding your brand in the minds of industry leaders. It's not just about showcasing: It's about engaging, growing, and leading in the retail and property sectors. Here, every interaction can lead to significant partnerships, and every showcase can lead to unparalleled breakthroughs.

MORE INFO: HTTPS://REPEX.BA/EN/

IMAGE: REPEX RETAIL & PROPERTY EXPO

WE SPOKE WITH THE REPEX-CEO ERNAD KOVACEVIC ABOUT THE SPECIALTIES OF THE BALKAN MARKETS.

WHAT IS, IN YOUR OPINION, UNIQUE ABOUT THE MARKET IN THE WESTERN BALKANS?
ERNAD KOVACEVIC: International players often have little access to the Western Balkans. Some countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania are emerging markets and less developed than Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, and Croatia, which offers new opportunities for development and expansion.

WHAT SHOULD ESPECIALLY INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS BE MORE AWARE OF REGARDING THIS MARKET?
KOVACEVIC: There is no such thing as the Balkans. In some countries, retail is much more developed than in others. Generally, international retail brands are lacking in the markets below. This is mainly because some countries are not yet part of the EU. This prevents brands from choosing to expand there. At the same time, some of these countries are superior to EU countries in terms of economic data. A non-EU country in a Balkan region does not necessarily have less purchasing power, but expansion means customs and taxes for brands.

WHAT IS THE REGION'S GREATEST ASSET?
KOVACEVIC: The most significant advantage is the above-mentioned disadvantage: the lack of more substantial and well-known retail brands leaves a gap in the market that represents an excellent opportunity for those wanting to expand. There is also a problem in our region of getting enough employees, but this is a cross-border problem in retail.

ONE OF YOUR MAIN FOCUS AREAS FOR REPEX 2025 IS FACILITATING INTERACTION. WHAT FORMATS HAVE YOU DEVELOPED TO FACILITATE THIS INTERACTION AND NETWORKING?
KOVACEVIC: There has been no retail event in the Balkan region so far. There are two main reasons for this. One is the relevance for retailers or shopping center owners, as the Balkan markets have often not been relevant. The second reason is the cost versus benefit. Therefore, with REPEX, we focus on bringing these markets and key players together in one place and connecting them. REPEX is a B2B event and exhibition whose primary focus is to bring relevant people and decision-makers together so they can meet and take something away from here. We have created an interactive B2B event that includes B2B meeting points, retail pavilions, innovation stages where retail service providers, brands, or even investors present their projects, a panel discussion, and a podcast studio where we encourage participants to introduce themselves to the region.

EVENTS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

WHERE THE INDUSTRY MEETS			
EUROCIS	FEB. 18-20, 2025	DUSSELDORF, GERMANY	HTTPS://WWW.EUROCIS.COM/
MIPIM	MARCH 11 – 14, 2025	CANNES, FRANCE	HTTPS://WWW.MIPIM.COM
FRANCHISE EXPO	MARCH 15 – 17, 2025	PARIS, FRANCE	HTTPS://WWW.FRANCHISEPARIS.COM/EN
SEE REAL ESTATE AWARDS	APRIL 3, 2025	BUCHAREST, ROMANIA	HTTPS://SEEREALESTATEAWARDS.COM/
LONDON PROPTECH SHOW	APRIL 8 – 9, 2025	LONDON, UK	HTTPS://PROPTECHSHOW.COM/
REPEX	APRIL 09 - 10, 2025	SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	HTTPS://REPEX.BA/EN/WHAT-IS-REPEX/
EUROPEAN SHOPPING PLACES SUMMIT	APRIL 10, 2025	INNSBRUCK, AUSTRIA	HTTPS://ECSP.EU/
COMPLETELY RETAIL MARKETPLACE, LONDON	APRIL 29, 2025	LONDON, UK	HTTPS://WWW.CRMARKETPLACE.COM/EVENTS/LONDON/
TUTTOFOOD INTERNATIONAL FOOD EXHIBITION	MAY 5 – 8, 2025	MILANO, ITALY	HTTPS://WWW.TUTTOFOOD.IT/EN/
27TH RETAIL SYMPOSIUM	MAY 7, 2025	VIENNA; AUSTRIA	HTTPS://WWW.RETAILSYMPOSIUM.EU/EN/HOME/
SWISS SHOPPING CENTER FORUM	MAY 8, 2025	ZURICH, SWITZERLAND	HTTPS://WWW.SC-FORUM.CH/DE/
IRX – INTERNET RETAIL EXPO	MAY 13, 2025	BERMINGHAM, UK	HTTPS://WWW.INTERNETRETAILINGEXPO.COM/
MAPIC ITALY	MAY 14 - 15, 2025	MILANO, ITALY	HTTPS://WWW.MAPIC-ITALY.IT/
SHOPTALK EUROPE	JUNE 2 – 4, 2025	BARCELONA, SPAIN	HTTPS://SHOPTALKEUROPE.COM/
PERE EUROPE SUMMIT	JUNE 10 – 11, 2025	LONDON, UK	HTTPS://WWW.PEIEVENTS.COM/EN/EVENT/PERE-EUROPE/
SIEC 2025	JUNE 11 – 12, 2025	PARIS, FRANCE	HTTPS://WWW.SIEC-ONLINE.COM/EN/
PROVADA 2025	JUNE 17, 2025	AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS	HTTPS://WWW.PROVADA.NL/EN

ACROSS

THE EUROPEAN PLACEMAKING MAGAZINE

ONLINE SPECIAL | JANUARY 2025

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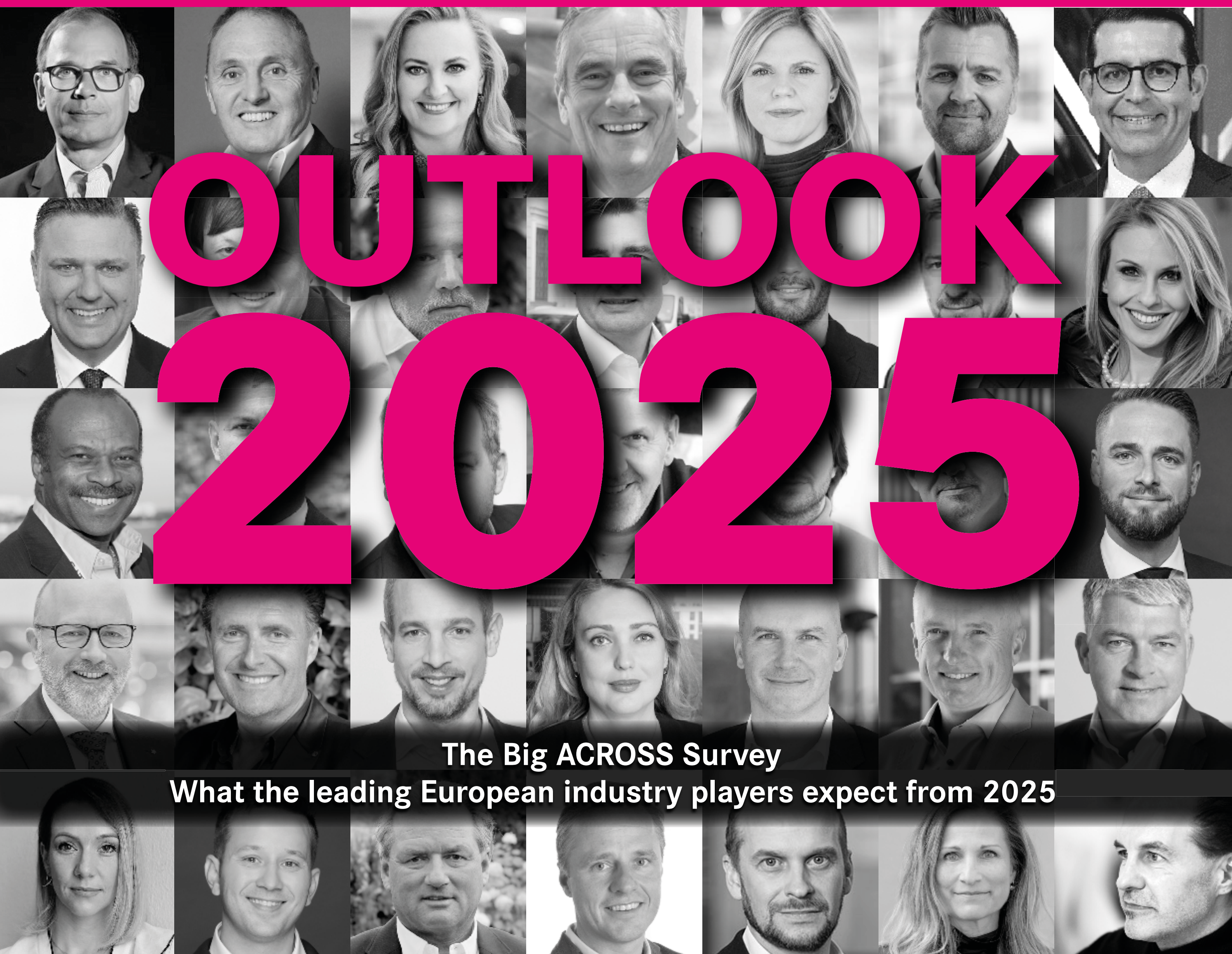

OUTLOOK 2025

The Big ACROSS Survey
What the leading European industry players expect from 2025

THE WAY TO MAKE GUESTS STAY IAN SANDFORD ON EMBRACING NEW CONCEPTS

MAINTAIN A HYPER-LOCAL FOCUS CINDY ANDERSEN ON BUILDING MEANINGFUL ENVIRONMENTS

STAY IN THE MINDS OF CUSTOMERS KLAUS STRIEBICH ON THE NECESSITY OF UNIQUENESS

OUTLOOK 2025

Even though 2024 was marked with numerous uncertainties and challenges that caused many players to still take it slow, by the end of the year, the sector still succeeded in lifting its head higher than in recent years. Moreover, it was also the year of stabilizing one's footing in the industry and adjusting to the changing environment. It is clear to all of us that 2025 will again be a year of hard work. However, we are also sure to hold on to the momentum we have gained these past months and make good use of the new opportunities that presented themselves along the way.

We have asked the leading industry experts across Europe to share their takeaway of 2024 and their approach to the new year. Common themes that the many retail experts recognize as crucial for the upcoming year include the speed of adaptability in this ever-changing consumer environment, the courage necessary to take on the sector's current challenges, and the decisiveness in recognizing and implementing the right technological, and sustainability trends. To stay on top of this year's changing industry environment, we need to continue shaping the road ahead in accordance with current and emerging trends, and the ever-changing customer needs.

The following experts share their expertise and insights on all these thrilling developments and much more.

IMAGE: RARE ADVISE

"Stay in the minds of customers."

KLAUS STRIEBICH (RARE ADVISE)

IMAGE: INGKA CENTRES

"It's about finding the balance between staying locally relevant and aligning with global goals."

CINDY ANDERSEN (INGKA CENTRES)

IMAGE: ECE MARKETPLACES

"Shape the process of transformation and adapt it to the needs of the specific locations"

JOANNA FISHER (ECE MARKETPLACES)

IMAGE: EUROFUND

"We have a lot of brains out there, but a lack of backbone to do things differently."

IAN SANDFORD (EUROFUND GROUP)

IMAGE: RARE ADVISE

KLAUS STRIEBICH
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF RARE ADVISE, HEAD OF ACROSS ADVISORY BOARD

"STAY IN THE MINDS OF CUSTOMERS"

The greatest challenge for our industry in the following years will be to stay in the minds of customers on a permanent basis. The intensity of competition will increase further, and consumer behavior is changing extremely fast; their demands and requests are becoming more and more specific and individual. Lifecycles of products and locations are shortened, which requires you to keep up with best-in-class operations and the latest technical investments, while reinventing your business and adapting to the customers' needs or desires.

The market for the placemaking industry is bouncing back. After several years of having fewer and fewer new developments and being the "bad boy" within the asset-classes, but currently facing increasing purchasing power, reawakened and new desires, and a better economic environment (higher income, lowered interest rates, etc.), "new places" will be developed and appearing in due time. The change of many department stores in several countries – as an important part of the former marketplaces – combined with the hunger of international brands to grow in new markets and lots of innovations and new brands in retail, create many opportunities for the industry. Cross-border developments and learnings from other markets will push this to a new level.

Having an offer different from your competitors and quickly adapting to changes have always been necessary to be unique, as they help in achieving a USP (unique selling proposition) and are key for success.

The range of offers has widened: from just retail and gastronomy (seen as the basic needs of customers when spending money) to leisure, entertainment, culture, music (with "spending time" becoming a priority) or education, living and working. As a result, everything depends on the individuality of the customers and their wishes and desires, the opportunity to get any product or service at any place, anywhere and anytime.

The main task will be how to manage this level of complexity (within a real estate asset) and ensure that all the different offers and uses are linked while creating a positive impact on the neighbors and partners.

My recommendation for our industry is: "Let's make it happen."

Professional analysis and preparation are necessary, but please, let's have fewer procedures, processes, internal hurdles or responses similar to ´maybe a problem´.

Speed and creativity are the beginning, flexibility is another important characteristic while courage in decision-making is a driver and the power of implementation will be the scorer.

"My recommendation for our industry is: Let's make it happen."

KLAUS STRIEBICH

IMAGE: EUROFUND

IAN SANDFORD
PRESIDENT AT EUROFUND GROUP

"WE HAVE A LOT OF BRAINS OUT THERE, BUT A LACK OF BACKBONE TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY."

What do you see as the main challenges for the placemaking industry in 2025?

The same challenges as in 2024, 2023, 2022 and for many years before that, which is a fundamental lack of inspiration in our sector. We need to think more outwards, we need to embrace new concepts, especially hospitality, and above all, think of our guests.

What opportunities and developments/trends do you see?

The introduction of different types of uses into centers is a key to success. It's vital to create motivation for people to visit our centers. We started at Puerto Venecia with leisure. It could be a hospital, as we've done at UBBO in Lisbon, which brings in over 1 million additional guests into our shopping center every year. It could be coworking. Furthermore, it could be education in the future. The shops are just the temptation we put in front of people, the leisure, the hospitals, etc. and what draws people in, and the food and beverage, is the way we get our guests to stay.

In your opinion, are there any fundamental and lasting changes that the placemaking industry will have to face?

So many centers have been run just for the cash. So management has been focused on financial returns rather than thinking about the guest experience. I believe if you lead with the guest experience, and you get that right, the money will take care of itself.

Your recommendation/wish for the industry and market participants

I have just read a book by David Ogilvy called The Eternal Pursuit of Unhappiness. It's a book that he wrote as a sort of bible for future generations working at his company. In it, he says, "Our industry does not have a shortage of brains, it has has a lack of spine." I think that's also true of the property and the shopping center industry in particular. We've got a lot of brains out there, but we've got a lack of backbone to do things differently. People are always saying to me "You can't do that because, because you know, no one's has ever done that". Well, I don't want to hear that and my team knows that. Are we at Eurofund going to do it a different way? Yes! Someone's got to do things differently in the industry now. Let's have the spine to do it.

"Someone's got to do things differently in the in the industry now. Let's have the spine to do it."

IAN SANDFORD

IMAGE:AMBAS

STEFFEN HOFMANN
MANAGING PARTNER AT AMBAS REAL ESTATE

“FOR THE PLACEMAKING INDUSTRY, FRESH CAPITAL PAIRED WITH THE RIGHT OPERATORS SHOULD OFFER MANY LONG HOPED-FOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR REAL ADVANCEMENT ON INDIVIDUAL ASSET LEVEL.”

Retail Real Estate has once again proven to be a stable and resilient asset class in 2024 For many physical marketplaces, the task at hand remains unchanged. Accelerating conceptual change for the better in a vibrant omni-channel retail environment. Good progress has been made in some locations already.

As an asset class, retail real estate appears in a much more favorable light again. Not everything is straightforward. However, the mood in the investment market has considerably shifted since summer last year. Quite a few cornerstone transactions have happened since. At this point in time, more and more investment managers and lending banks are seriously investigating opportunities to make new allocations towards the sector.

With entry yields for retail real estate being substantially above their historic long-term average, and still well-above those of alternative asset classes, the sub-sequent return of financial investors to the wider retail transaction markets can now be deemed a matter of time. Cap rates are commonly expected to come in again over the course of this year.

For the Placemaking industry, fresh capital paired with the right operators should offer many long hoped-for opportunities for real advancement on individual asset level.

“As an asset class, retail real estate appears in a much more favorable light again.”

STEFFEN HOFMANN


IMAGE: ECE MARKETPLACES

JOANNA FISHER
CEO OF ECE MARKETPLACES

"SHAPE THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION AND ADAPT IT TO THE NEEDS OF THE SPECIFIC LOCATIONS."

Retail Real Estate has once again proven to be a stable and resilient asset class in 2024 - and has gained further momentum in terms of leasing successes, investments and pro-jects for the further development and transformation of properties. At ECE Marketplaces, for example, we were once again able to build on our strong leasing result from 2023 this year, successfully driving forward important developments such as the Food Garden in the Main-Taunus-Zentrum in Sulzbach near Frankfurt am Main and the extensive modernization of Skyline Plaza in Frankfurt am Main in close partnership with the owners.

We want to continue these positive developments in 2025 and take advantage of the many opportunities in the retail real estate sector. For example, we can use the structural changes in the retail sector to shape the process of transformation and adapt it to the needs of the specific locations. In Germany in particular, there is an increasing trend towards mixed-use concepts and the integration of complementary uses that expand the retail offer to include services, non-retail concepts, leisure or residential. For this, it would be important for politics to work towards saccelerating the approval processes so that new stores can open more quickly.

Another increasingly important topic is ESG, which also concerns me in my role as Chairwoman of the ECSP. Stricter regulations on energy efficiency and CO_2 reduction, for example, require investments in environmentally friendly technologies and building management. But the "S" from ESG will also become an even greater focus in the future. And it is important that all parties pull together - owners, tenants and operators.

It would be important for politics to work towards speeding up the approval processes so that new stores can open more quickly.

JOANNA FISHER

IMAGE: RIOJA ESTATES

GILES MEMBREY

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF RIOJA ESTATES

“THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE COLLABORATION AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN BRANDS AND INVESTORS.”

The main challenges in 2025 will center on brand support and outlet saturation in Europe.

One or two brands think they've actually got enough outlet stores to serve their surplus stock requirements in Europe, and with the current macro-political situation in Eastern Europe, making decisions on new locations is particularly challenging. And, with the market in Europe showing signs of saturation, there is the challenge of prompting developers and investors to look beyond traditional borders for new opportunities.

With opportunities for new developments in Europe decreasing due to saturation, I see a big opportunity for the refurbishment of existing schemes, but these need to be greener. Green refurbishment is harder than when starting from scratch, but you can, for instance, look at materials that are more sustainable. For example, at Ashford Designer Outlet, “green walls” were incorporated as part of phase two, making it far more sustainable than phase one. Looking at entirely new power systems such as ground source heat pumps, more solar panels, more EV charging points, and even things like wormeries and beehives all help.

There are still brands coming into the outlet market, so there's the opportunity to introduce new brands into existing schemes. There are clearly still opportunities for new developments in countries such as Germany and France, and there are now more opportunities outside of Europe, particularly in North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. But a word of caution: GDP and population density are really important to be able to support a location outside Europe. And factors such as political stability are also important: look at the situation in Georgia, where there will hopefully be a new outlet opening in Tbilisi in April 2025, but the current political problems in the country may well delay the opening.

Moreover, new technologies that enable the mapping of customer profiles and customer requirements will come to the fore, especially with regards to online sales. We are already working with Wishibam, a business that focuses on transforming traditional retail by integrating online and offline experiences, on a number of our schemes, thereby adding value through online sales that contribute to the overall sales density.

Overall, I would love to see more collaboration between brands, investors, developers and agents because the time it takes to get some schemes pre-let is significant. In some cases, it’s taking 18–24 months to get to the level of pre-leasing that would give an investor the confidence to commit to €50–€60 million worth of development costs. So there needs to be more collaboration and understanding between brands and investors about their individual requirements.

“We need to see more collaboration between brands, investors, developers and agents.”

GILES MEMBREY


IMAGE: INGKA CENTRES

CINDY ANDERSEN
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF INGKA CENTRES

"THE REAL TEST IS MAINTAINING A HYPER-LOCAL FOCUS AS WE GROW AND EXPLORE NEW WAYS TO CONNECT PEOPLE, AND FOSTER CREATIVITY."

The main challenge for the placemaking industry in 2025 is to keep creating unique and meaningful experiences for the many people – spaces that are inclusive, sustainable, and bring communities together. It's about finding the balance between staying locally relevant in each market we operate in and aligning with global goals. We design spaces inspired by the needs and tastes of the local communities we serve, always with sustainability at the heart. But the real test is maintaining this hyper-local focus as we grow and explore new ways to connect people, foster creativity, and support work and play in these spaces. It's about building environments that are both meaningful and sustainable. Creating spaces that unite communities and drive sustainability - locally rooted, globally impactful – this is the essence of our work, where we stay true to the local while thinking globally.

The global expansions we've made in 2024 have set the stage for exciting opportunities in the coming years. Acting as learning platforms to test out different experiences and services, as well as new technologies and digital integrations in creating experiences and connecting with the many people. Examples include One Planet, a platform offering more sustainable choices, plus a green points loyalty program rewarding sustainable habits and activities, showing how we can meet people in new places and empower them to live more sustainably. Reimagining experiences that empower people to live more sustainably - where innovation meets responsibility. We see this as a chance to scale ideas that have a lasting impact across our global portfolio.

We know people will continue to value meeting places as part of their everyday lives, seeking out physical spaces as life becomes increasingly digital. Looking ahead to the next 15 years, I'm excited to explore how we can evolve our meeting places to become more than just spaces to shop - but spaces for life, where people come together to share experiences, learn, create, and simply be. This transformation ensures that our spaces remain vibrant, meaningful, and truly connected to the communities we serve.

My recommendation for the industry is to meet people where they are and become part of their everyday lives. This means being hyper-local and highly adaptive, co-creating destinations that local communities genuinely value - spaces where people can grow, businesses can flourish, and communities can thrive. Co-create spaces that inspire, elevate, and truly belong to the communities we serve - today and tomorrow. By listening closely and collaborating openly, we can shape spaces that are not only relevant today but continue to inspire and uplift for generations to come.

"It's about finding the balance between staying locally relevant in each market we operate in and aligning with global goals."

CINDY ANDERSEN

IMAGE: NEPI ROCKCASTLE

MAREK NOETZEL
COO AT NEPI ROCKCASTLE

"WE NEED TO REMAIN HIGHLY FOCUSSED TO SUPPORT THE MOMENTUM WE SEE IN OUR MARKETS."

The main challenges for the placemaking industry will be the slowing of major Western European economies, particularly Germany, and the political instability both there and in France. These factors could impact consumer confidence, which, in turn, may be negative for Central and Eastern Europe since there has been an historic correlation between the performance of the German economy and those of CEE. However, as certain CEE economies have grown, such as Poland, that correlation is diminishing. And the CEE consumer tends to be more resilient in the face of these types of economic and political uncertainties.

This may be beneficial for NEPI Rockcastle, since some Western European investors might need to reduce their exposure to retail real estate in CEE, presenting further buying opportunities for us.

Investor sentiment towards retail real estate improved throughout 2024. This is especially true of core assets, which have adapted and thrived post-pandemic and in the face of the competitive challenge of e-commerce. We believe that in 2025 we will see increased investor demand for these assets and consequently more capital flow into our markets, especially now that there is more stability in the markets (with lower interest rates and inflation). Furthermore, we have seen strong demand for modern retail spaces across our portfolio from international retailers, and operational costs have stabilized. This may drive yield compression, which would be positive for our business.

From an operational perspective, retailers are seeking large-format modern spaces so that they can offer con-sumers more experiences in stores. I call this 'retailtainment', and we expect this trend to continue. Our markets are also changing with the growth in off-price / discount retailers, a rebound in cinemas, and the strong performance in food and beverage operators.

ESG is the game changer for our industry and all that this will bring, especially any further sustainability regulation, which will affect the way we operate and have two major impacts on our market. First, major tenants might be unable to take space in a mall in the future because it doesn't comply with their ESG criteria. Second, either much more expensive capital or no capital at all for certain assets that don't comply with ESG criteria.

Given that retail is back in fashion after some very difficult years, I think we need to remain highly focused to support the momentum we see in our markets. A year of hard work beckons in 2025 to maximize the opportu-nities this positive sea change will bring in the attitudes towards retail real estate investing.

"Investor sentiment has improved towards core assets, which have adapted and thrived post-pandemic and in the face of the competitive challenge of ecommerce."

MAREK NOETZEL

IMAGE: FIBA CP

YURDAER KAHRAMAN
CEO AND BOARD MEMBER AT FIBA CP

"THE INDUSTRY IS WITNESSING A LASTING TRANSFORMATION IN THE FORM OF AI AND DIGITALIZATION."

In 2025, The placemaking industry must navigate growing consumer expectations for sustainability, personalization, and seamless digital integration while balancing rising operational costs and adapting to evolving regulatory landscapes. The challenge lies in creating spaces that merge innovation with community relevance, driving both commercial success and meaningful engagement.

Artificial Intelligence and smart technologies are shaping the future of placemaking. At Fiba CP, we've introduced Livia, an AI-driven character designed to serve as a companion for our visitors across Fiba CP's malls. For example, at M1 Adana, Livia will integrate with the mall's smart screens to guide visitors, enhance their experience, and create a personalized journey throughout the shopping center. This highlights the growing trend of data-driven, interactive environments that enrich visitor engagement.

Additionally, the rise of experiential retail – which blends shopping with entertainment, wellness, and community-driven initiatives – continues to gain traction, offering consumers a more immersive and memorable experience. Mixed-use developments that combine retail, leisure, residential, and office spaces are also emerging as key opportunities, creating dynamic, multi-functional destinations that cater to diverse needs.

The industry is witnessing a lasting transformation in the form of AI and digitalization. Smart technologies continue to set new standards for visitor interaction by combining real-time assistance with personalized engagement. Smart infrastructures, such as those deployed at M1 Adana, are redefining how malls operate –offering insights that optimize operations and ensure an enhanced customer experience. Sustainability will remain a cornerstone of placemaking as consumers increasingly demand environmentally conscious developments. Experiential and hybrid spaces will further transform the industry, creating destinations that go beyond transactions to foster connections and cultural significance.

Thus, my recommendations for the placemaking industry are:

Adopt AI and Smart Technologies

Incorporate innovative tools such as AI-driven characters and smart digital platforms to transform customer journeys and enhance visitor engagement. These technologies provide real-time insights, streamline operations, and deliver personalized experiences that align with modern consumer expectations.

Prioritize Sustainability

Focus on renewable energy projects, eco-friendly materials, and waste reduction initiatives to not only meet consumer demands but also adhere to ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) principles. Sustainability is no longer an option; but a necessity to remain competitive and responsible in today's market.

Enhance Customer Experiences

Create memorable and engaging environments by leveraging interactive technologies, experiential retail strategies, and personalized services. These elements foster customer loyalty and position retail spaces as more than just shopping destinations—they become hubs for connection and discovery.

Foster Collaboration

Work in tandem with sustainability experts, community leaders, and industry innovators to design impactful and forward-thinking spaces. Partnerships like these enable the development of projects that balance commercial success with cultural and environmental relevance.

Embrace Flexibility

Design adaptable spaces that can evolve alongside changing consumer preferences and market dynamics. Flexible layouts and hybrid usage models ensure that developments remain relevant and successful over the long term.

At Fiba CP, our vision of integrating AI and smart technologies drives meaningful engagement and innovation. By combining this approach with projects like M1 Adana's digital screens, experiential retail strategies, and our commitment to sustainability, we are positioning ourselves at the forefront of a rapidly evolving industry—where innovation, community, and customer-centricity take center stage.

> *"Smart technologies continue to set new standards for visitor interaction by combining real-time assistance with personalized engagement."*
>
> YURDAER KAHRAMAN

IMAGE: REDEVCO

THIERRY CAHIERRE
COO REAL ESTATE AT REDEVCO

"PROACTIVE ADAPTATION IS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE PLACEMAKING REACHES ITS POTENTIAL IN MEETING CONTEMPORARY NEEDS."

As we look toward 2025, the placemaking industry is undergoing profound transformation, presenting both challenges and exciting opportunities.

One key trend is the seismic shift in how people live, work, and shop. Traditional zoning practices that separate residential, commercial, and industrial spaces are increasingly being replaced by a demand for mixed-use developments that integrate diverse functions seamlessly into a cohesive urban environment.

The concept of placemaking itself is also evolving. We now not only need to consider the "hardware" of places – physical infrastructure – but also the "software" – human interactions, community engagement, and how spaces are experienced. A key transformation in logistics further underscores this shift, with a move away from large trucks toward sustainable, flexible solutions like cargo bikes and autonomous delivery systems.

While these trends offer exciting possibilities, they also bring challenges. Geopolitical uncertainties add complexity and risks to planning and investment; and accelerating societal change highlights the need for institutional and regulatory frameworks to adapt. Without this, a disconnection could emerge between evolving cultural expectations and the infrastructure supporting them, such as bike lanes and pedestrian zones. Proactive adaptation is essential to ensure placemaking reaches its potential in meeting contemporary needs.

Despite these hurdles, the European placemaking market offers substantial opportunities. Interest from international investors, particularly from Asia and the U.S., reflects confidence in Western Europe's long-term growth. Additionally, generational shifts are redefining demand. Millennials and Gen Z increasingly prioritize experiences, entertainment, and sustainability over material accumulation. Considering we spend 80% of our lives in buildings, placemaking projects that embrace these values and emphasize social responsibility and personal connection can create meaningful, lasting impact.

Looking ahead, the placemaking industry has a unique opportunity to lead in creating vibrant, sustainable environments that meet the needs of a rapidly changing world. By embracing societal value, addressing challenges with agility, and committing to community-centered investments, we can ensure our industry not only adapts but thrives in the years to come.

"The placemaking industry has a unique opportunity to lead in creating vibrant, sustainable environments that meet the needs of a rapidly changing world."

THIERRY CAHIERRE

IMAGE: BIG CEE

LEV WEISS
CEO AT BIG CEE

“THE HEIGHTENED EXPECTATIONS OF TODAY’S AUDIENCES PUSH US TO STAY AT THE FOREFRONT OF CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION.”

The need to continue exciting and moving our guests is what leads us. The main challenge for the placemaking industry in 2025 is keeping pace with the rapidly evolving world. With instant, on-demand access to everything and younger generations becoming more informed and demanding, staying relevant and engaging is increasingly difficult.

However, challenges are opportunities; the heightened expectations of today’s audiences push us to stay at the forefront of creativity and innovation, driving us to be more dynamic and compelling in our offerings. The placemaking industry must find innovative ways to remain relevant and appealing to these modern visitors, all while preserving the core values and timeless elements of classic retail.

It is widely acknowledged that entertainment, experience, and diverse gastronomic offerings are central to placemaking, and this trend will not go out of fashion anytime soon. There are still many untapped opportunities in these areas, allowing the industry to surprise visitors and attract families and younger generations to spend more time in shopping centers. Well-designed food halls in malls and a wide range of restaurants and cafés in retail parks are growing in popularity, showcasing their potential to shape the future of the industry.

Change is the only constant in the placemaking industry, too. Nothing remains permanent in this field except the fundamental need for people to feel engaged and enjoy their time.

As long as the industry continues to meet these needs, we remain on the right path. However, a more thoughtful approach is required when it comes to design, guest circulation, and the overall experience that the location provides.

Over the past decade, we have been deeply involved in Serbia and Montenegro, regions of countries that have undergone substantial changes and development. Despite this progress, the area remains somewhat under the radar for some key tenants. Therefore, I’d recommend every industry player to visit Serbia, as now is the perfect time to come and explore what we've been discussing for so long. The current and future growth potential here is unparalleled.

“Entertainment, experience, and diverse gastronomic offerings are central to placemaking, and this trend will not go out of fashion anytime soon.”

LEV WEISS

IMAGE: WECONSULT

ORTAÇ ÖZORTAÇ
PARTNER AT WECONSULT

"WE HOPE TO SEE AN INDUSTRY THAT NOT ONLY ADAPTS TO CHALLENGES BUT SETS NEW BENCHMARKS FOR INNOVATION, STRENGTH, AND MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY."

We predict that the placemaking industry in 2025 will face challenges as well as opportunities for both retailers and developers. Increasing construction costs, economic volatility, and the need for sustainable developments are the main concerns. Moreover, the industry must keep pace with shifting consumer preferences and integrating technology-driven experiences into physical spaces. Balancing community needs with business goals will be a defining test for creating spaces that are both profitable and meaningful.

A potential exists in using technology to create smarter and more integrated spaces. Innovations such as AI-driven design and immersive technologies can revolutionize the way spaces are created and how people interact with them. The focus on sustainability will also encourage innovative approaches, making eco-friendly spaces a priority. Additionally, mixed-use developments that seamlessly combine work and living environments will remain in high demand. Furthermore, gastronomy and gathering venues like entertainment zones, museums, and performance centers will also be the hot topics of 2025.

In general, the aftershocks of the pandemic have permanently shifted priorities, placing greater emphasis on wellness, health and designs that highlight community needs. Digital integration in placemaking, such as e-commerce partnerships with retail spaces and hybrid physical-digital environments, will reshape the traditional boundaries of the industry. These changes represent more than just trends; they are foundational transformations in how spaces will be designed and used.

Therefore, to navigate 2025 successfully, the industry must focus on innovation, concentrate on collaboration with others, and stay agile. Stronger partnerships between developers and technology providers will be crucial. We hope to see an industry that not only adapts to challenges but sets new benchmarks for innovation, strength, and meaningful contributions to society.

"To navigate 2025 successfully, the industry must focus on innovation, concentrate on collaboration with others and stay agile."

ORTAÇ ÖZORTAÇ

IMAGE: IGWE INTERNATIONAL

CHRIS IGWE
GLOBAL RETAIL EXPERT

"WE HAVE LOST THE ABILITY TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE AND MAKE THEM FEEL WELCOME."

We appear to have come to terms with accepting that there are fewer new projects being developed around the world, with the exception of a few regions, such as India. This means that owners are faced with the main challenge of how to repurpose existing spaces, both internal and external, to cater for the increased need to provide spaces where people can easily congregate, interact and enjoy community together. However, successful placemaking comes in a context of significant global and national economic uncertainty, along with the financial constraints of both the owners and visitors.

A key question is: How much should an owner invest in restructuring or creating a space that meets the expectations of today's consumer, who we know is looking for an even stronger sense of community today than they had before, and which can be delivered through a careful design that puts that person at the center?

With consumer behavior continually changing, how can a space remain fresh and refreshed? How can digital tools, including AI, be used seamlessly to engage the consumer, but without losing the human touch they need? In a world where hyperpersonalization is critical, how can we cater to a broader audience while still speaking to the individual in front of you?

One answer is through truly focusing on staffing and training. We have lost the ability to connect with people and make them feel welcome. We must move away from a "transactional" mindset looking for the consumer to buy something to one of making people "feel welcome." The purchase follows naturally. The big challenge today is that staff are not trained properly, so the human factor is lost.

Beyond training, designs should offer more in terms of arts, crafts, health and wellness, coffee shops, which connect with local businesses. This feeds well into the consumer's mind.

Let's not forget specialty leasing and pop-up stores, which enhance this feeling of community and vibrancy. This flexibility creates a sense of excitement that brings people together and brings them back, thereby increasing footfall, and as a byproduct, sales.

"We must move away from a "transactional" mindset to one of making people "feel welcome"."

CHRIS IGWE

IMAGE: SES SPAR EUROPEAN SHOPPING CENTERS

CHRISTOPH ANDEXLINGER
CEO OF SES SPAR EUROPEAN SHOPPING CENTERS

"WITHOUT SUSTAINABLE CHANGE, OUR INDUSTRY WOULD BE AT ITS END."

Our industry has currently many challenges that will continue to be present in the future as well. As such, I see three key issues that we at SES have been working on intensively for some time now. Firstly, we need to actively sort through the bundle of offers that we provide to our visitors and add even more inspiring and emotionally inducing factors. Above all, the basic requirement is that these offers are highly relevant to our customers. Secondly, it is important to keep costs under control in a truly challenging environment. And thirdly, above the first two issues mentioned above, there is the issue of sustainability in ecological, economic and social terms. We have to act in a way that future generations can build on.

Many challenges also present opportunities for the industry to develop new trends. We use the opportunities of digitalization to manage our malls in the best possible and most optimized way. Of course, we also use the technical possibilities in direct communication with our customers. However, we use all these IT-based tools in such a way that they support the core of our business, making it even stronger and more successful. This core - the creation of real, vibrant living spaces with maximum customer relevance - is, in my view, a thoroughly analog product. The more digitalization enters our daily lives, the greater the desire for an analog counterpart. This is a great opportunity for the retail real estate industry.

Moreover, without sustainable change, our industry would be at its end. Yet, the opposite is the case today: high-traffic locations are becoming even stronger. I am delighted that our malls are part of this group.

I am an optimist and convinced that we have never had so many opportunities to design and curate good places for people. Emotion is and remains the decisive advantage over online retail, and therefore also the basis on which stationary concepts will continue to be successful in the future. The sector must tackle complex issues proactively. The key lies in a clear focus on customer needs, coupled with courage, a willingness to experiment, and a balance between the tried and tested and the new. My motto for 2025 is therefore: Boost your limits!

"The key lies in a clear focus on customer needs, coupled with courage, a willingness to experiment and a balance between the tried and tested and the new."

CHRISTOPH ANDEXLINGER

IMAGE: BBE RETAIL CONSULTANCY

JOHANNES BERENTZEN
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF BBE RETAIL CONSULTANCY

“RETAILERS MUST CREATE EXPERIENTIAL ENVIRONMENTS THAT GO BEYOND SHOPPING.”

In 2025, sustainability will remain a key challenge, with a focus not only on the environment but also on social inclusion and community engagement. The rapid rise of technology, including AI and smart city infrastructure, will require placemakers to integrate new digital experiences without losing human connection. Economic uncertainty will also impact funding for large-scale projects, especially as consumer behavior continues to shift toward digital spaces.

Among the many trends in the industry, the shift towards mixed-use developments is a very prominent one, as it will create vibrant, multifunctional urban spaces. Retailers, in particular, will benefit from spaces that integrate leisure, entertainment, and experiential elements, creating more immersive shopping environments. Green urbanism will also present opportunities for eco-friendly designs. Furthermore, smart cities and digitally enhanced retail will create new ways to engage consumers, making cities and retail environments more interactive and connected.

We can see that the role of retail spaces will continue to shift. Retailers must create experiential environments that go beyond shopping to include entertainment, culture, and community engagement. This evolution will require spaces that are not just transactional but experiential, transforming city centers into destinations rather than mere commercial hubs. Retailers must embrace this change to remain relevant in a post-pandemic, digitally driven world.

My wish for the industry is to create flexible, adaptable spaces that blend retail, entertainment, and community activities to meet evolving consumer demands. For retailers, the focus should shift from pure transactions to experience-driven retail. Customers today seek more than products – they want immersive, interactive environments. Retailers should create spaces that maximize experience per square meter, turning stores into destinations for exploration, engagement, and connection.

“Retailers will benefit from spaces that integrate leisure, entertainment, and experiential elements.”

JOHANNES BERENTZEN

IMAGE: EUROVEA

KATARINA PAULE
LEASING MANAGER AT EUROVEA

“SUCCESSFUL CENTERS WILL LIKELY STAND OUT THROUGH UNIQUE LOCATIONS WITH STRONG CONNECTIONS TO THE DAILY LIVES OF THE COMMUNITIES THEY AIM TO ATTRACT.”

I believe the greatest challenge for the placemaking industry in 2025 will be the increasing individualization of customer needs. People are seeking personalized experiences that go far beyond traditional shopping. Another key challenge is sustainability. Green initiatives and social responsibility are becoming increasingly important, not only for customers but also for investors. And, of course, there’s the ever-present competition – more and more shopping centers and other retail spaces are vying for customers' attention. The overwhelming abundance of choices, stimuli, and leisure offerings makes standing out and capturing the customer’s focus one of the most significant hurdles.

There is tremendous potential in merging the physical and digital worlds. Technology allows us to create interactive and personalized experiences that captivate customers. Another emerging trend is the focus on community. People are looking for spaces where they can gather and share meaningful experiences. At the same time, these spaces should meet their basic needs, such as shopping or accessing services, while also offering features that previously required visits to other locations, such as dental care, aesthetic medicine, physiotherapy, counseling, or education. Shopping centers have all the prerequisites to become such hubs. Those that succeed will likely stand out through unique locations with strong connections to the daily lives of the communities they aim to attract.

Lastly, sustainability is a massive opportunity that resonates with an increasingly broad segment of the population. Green technologies and sustainable materials not only benefit the environment but can also enhance customer appeal.

The placemaking industry is on the brink of fundamental change. Shopping centers will need to transform from purely transactional spaces into multifunctional destinations that offer experiences, services, and community activities. Eurovea, for example, is ahead of its time in this regard, with a concept that’s well-prepared for such a transformation. Personalization, technology, sustainability, and community engagement will be key drivers of success.

Shopping centers will also need to secure resources to fund and maintain spaces that serve the community, especially in regions like ours, where such initiatives often rely entirely on private investment without public funding. Combining multiple functions – such as cultural, retail, educational, and recreational spaces – or creating environments suitable for sports activities represents a promising path forward.

Going forward, I recommend all market players to place a stronger focus on customer needs and desires. Listening to customers and adapting offerings to meet their evolving expectations is critical. We should also concentrate on creating unique experiences that captivate and draw people in.

It’s essential to foster environments where visitors feel like they belong, where they feel safe, and where they are eager to bring their loved ones. Bridging generational gaps and encouraging physical interaction is widely recommended by experts for mental health and the "feel-good" factor, both of which suffered greatly during periods of isolation, such as the pandemic or increased dependence on technology.

Finally, sustainability must remain a priority. In a few decades, we want to look back with pride at what we’ve created. We must find ways to minimize our environmental impact while offering customers a pleasant and enriching shopping environment.

IMAGE: DESIGNER OUTLET PARNDORF

MARIO SCHWANN
GENERAL MANAGER AT DESIGNER OUTLET PARNDORF

"WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE ROLE MODELS AND DEMONSTRATE HOW PLACES CAN BE DESIGNED TO BE NOT ONLY ECONOMICALLY SUCCESSFUL BUT ALSO SOCIALLY AND ECOLOGICALLY VALUABLE."

In 2025, the biggest challenge for the placemaking industry will be to keep physical locations attractive and relevant in an increasingly digital world. Customers today expect more than just a shopping experience—they are looking for destinations that evoke emotions and offer added value beyond mere consumption. Shopping entertainment and services play a central role in this.

Today, one of the most exciting opportunities lies in combining shopping, leisure, and culture. Designer Outlet Parndorf benefits from being a place where shopping merges with a lifestyle experience. At the center, we offer our guests a balanced mix of designer, luxury, and lifestyle brands, a comprehensive gastronomic offering, highly trained and multilingual staff, childcare services, and numerous events. Features such as inviting cafés and restaurants, thoughtful landscaping, and relaxation areas contribute to extending the time guests spend with us.

Customers today seek places that not only offer consumption but also embody values like sustainability. For Designer Outlet Parndorf, this means expanding our role as a pioneer in responsible business practices. This summer, we opened Austria's largest e-charging hub and advanced the expansion of photovoltaic systems—already, 100% of the electricity used throughout the center comes from renewable energy. Additionally, guests can use the electric Train Station Bus to Parndorf station or take shuttle connections to Vienna, Budapest, and Bratislava.

Especially in retail, we have the opportunity to be role models and demonstrate how places can be designed to be not only economically successful but also socially and ecologically valuable. It is important to create spaces that inspire people, whether through unique experiences, a high-quality brand assortment, or an inviting atmosphere that encourages them to stay. Creativity, responsibility, and a clear commitment to a holistic approach should be our shared guiding principles.

"Today, one of the most exciting opportunities lies in combining shopping, leisure, and culture."

MARIO SCHWANN

IMAGE: KAUFLAND

MICHAEL HIESE
CHIEF REAL ESTATE OFFICER AT KAUFLAND INTERNATIONAL

"FOCUSING ON OUR OWN CORE COMPETENCIES AND STRENGTHS IS THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE, LONG-TERM GROWTH."

The placemaking industry faces a variety of challenges in 2025. The global political situation, such as the war in Ukraine, is also affecting the stability and predictability of investments. These geopolitical uncertainties can have an impact on the overall situation and, for example, affect investors' willingness to invest and make it more difficult to develop new projects. Within Germany, the macroeconomic situation also remains a decisive factor, characterized by recession worries or the development of energy prices. These elements represent significant challenges that the industry must take into account when planning and implementing new projects.

Despite the challenges, there are positive developments, particularly in the CEE region. This is characterized by solid economic development, from which the retail sector is benefiting. Returning investor interest and improved financing conditions offer additional opportunities for the industry. These trends make it possible to continue growth strategies and successfully implement new projects, which is crucial for the long-term stability and attractiveness of the market.

There are sustainable trends in the placemaking industry, particularly with regard to location selection. Attractive locations with strong frequency anchors, i.e. properties that attract many people on their own, continue to enjoy great popularity. These locations are crucial for long-term success, as they offer high customer frequency and stability, as well as a stable basis for long-term investments. The ability to identify and develop such locations will be key for players in the sector.

The past two years and the current macroeconomic situation present us all with major challenges. It is crucial that we face these actively and in a solution-oriented manner. Focusing on our own core competencies and strengths is the key to sustainable, long-term growth. For us, this means developing flexible concepts, implementing tailor-made locations together with our stakeholders and consistently driving forward our growth in all countries in which we are represented. With this clear roadmap, we are optimistic about a successful 2025.

"It is crucial that we face the current challenges actively and in a solution-oriented manner."

MICHAEL HIESE


IMAGE: VIA OUTLETS

OTTO AMBAGTSHEER
CEO OF VIA OUTLETS

“OUTLET CENTERS WILL CONTINUE TO OUTPERFORM FULL-PRICE RETAIL IF THEY KEEP EMBRACING INITIATIVES THAT SHIFT THE FOCUS FROM DISCOUNT-DRIVEN TO EXPERIENTIAL, GUEST-FOCUSED EXPERIENCES.”

In order to stay innovative, the placemaking industry must embrace good collaboration between brand partners, developers/investors, architects, local communities and governments. Balancing innovation with purpose while keeping the guest experience and the commercial aspect central will be key. To name a few:

- Outlet centers must provide engaging, experiential environments to attract guests, especially to have a clear point of differentiation vs. the pure online players. Brand partners and consumers expect stores tailored to their specific needs, adding pressure for unique designs.
- Centers will also need to set budget aside for more climate-responsive design. There is a growing emphasis on energy-efficiency, low-carbon, and climate-resilient infrastructures, as well as stricter environmental regulations to budget for.
- While consumer confidence is improving with easing inflation, political and economic uncertainties in countries like Poland and Germany temper optimism. Wage growth and stabilized inflation are expected to strengthen spending in 2025, though recovery to pre-pandemic levels remains gradual.
- And last but not least, attracting and retaining talent to work in retail remains challenging, particularly in outlets as these locations often face a competitive labor market due to their location on the outskirts of larger cities.

VIA Outlets’ challenge in 2025 will be to expand on this year’s momentum, which means focusing on the execution of our two main expansion projects in Landquart Fashion Outlet and Vila do Conde Porto Fashion Outlet while continuing the execution of our 3R remodeling, remerchandising, and remarketing strategy in our other centers to keep the brand and guest experience fresh and continue to deliver strong performance.

Outlet centers will continue to outperform full-price retail if they keep embracing initiatives that shift the focus from discount-driven to experiential, guest-focused experiences to remain relevant and be the preferred one-stop shop.

Also, the return of global tourism will remain a powerful growth enabler for the outlet industry. With more people traveling again, led by intra-European and American visitors, though Chinese tourist numbers lag behind pre-pandemic figures, outlets located near popular tourist spots or busy travel routes are seeing more tourists as they seek unique shopping experiences, premium brand offerings, and exclusive discounts.

The shifting consumer behaviors, technological developments, and sustainability priorities will be influential on how we need to adapt our commercial spaces. One is omnichannel retail, which is becoming a cornerstone in the strategy of tomorrow’s outlet centers. The centers will remain social spaces where guests can experience products in person, while leveraging digital services like click-and-collect or in-store returns for online purchases brings another layer of convenience and interaction with brands.

To drive success in the outlet shopping industry, focusing on the guest experience is paramount. This involves offering a curated mix of premium brands while embracing personalization and inclusivity to cater to everyone. Creating digitally enabled, community-focused spaces can enhance engagement and build loyalty.

IMAGE: BROOKFIELD PROPERTIES GERMANY

ROGER GOYK
DIRECTOR RETAIL AT BROOKFIELD PROPERTIES GERMANY

"ONLY BRANDS THAT MAINTAIN A CLEAR, COMPELLING IDENTITY WILL STAND OUT."

Placemaking is always a challenge because there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Each location demands a unique, carefully crafted strategy to transform it into a vibrant and memorable destination. Success depends on a deep understanding of the specific context, requiring significant resources and expertise. The main challenge lies in tailoring solutions that resonate with both local communities and visitors, which takes time, effort, and creativity.

Leisure operators now have a significant opportunity to move into city centers as cities embrace the "joy-conomy." Traditionally located out of town, they're now being welcomed as key elements of dynamic and exciting real estate. Landlords and investors increasingly recognize their ability to enhance the visitor experience and drive traffic, dedicating more space and attention to these concepts.

However, as leisure offerings expand, they risk becoming more homogeneous. What once thrived on unique selling points now often lacks distinctiveness, with many concepts blending together. Only brands that maintain a clear, compelling identity will stand out. Innovation and quality will be essential for sustained success.

Leisure concepts will leave a lasting impact on both street and mall landscapes. District developments, in particular, can no longer rely solely on traditional anchors like cinemas and fitness centers. Instead, social entertainment concepts—designed for families or adults—will play a critical role in attracting visitors, fostering connections, and creating lasting memories.

Moreover, developers will need to rethink conventional financial models, adopting more creative approaches to fund a diverse retail mix and support innovation.

To stay relevant, concepts must prioritize differentiation. Without a strong unique selling point, offerings risk becoming generic and forgettable. The industry must embrace creativity and innovation, ensuring every offering delivers something distinctive and exciting.

It's encouraging to see a renewed emphasis on "fun" in the sector, bringing vibrancy and joy back into placemaking. This focus on enjoyment is an exciting trend that can redefine the industry's future.

"Developers will need to rethink conventional financial models, adopting more creative approaches to fund a diverse retail mix and support innovation."

ROGER GOYK

IMAGE: UMDASCH THE STORE MAKERS

SILVIO KIRCHMAIR
CEO OF UMDASCH THE STORE MAKERS

"THE KEY CHALLENGE IS TO REDEFINE GROWTH: NOT IN SQUARE METERS, BUT IN ADDED VALUE."

The placemaking industry is experiencing profound change. Retail space in developed markets has been declining for more than a decade – a clear sign of transformation. The key challenge is to redefine growth: not in square meters, but in added value.

At the heart of this transformation lies a natural market adjustment within the placemaking industry. In saturated markets such as Austria, the sales area per capita is decreasing as oversaturation puts a strain on productivity. At the same time, digitalization is driving e-commerce. Nevertheless, bricks-and-mortar retail will remain relevant in the long term – thanks to unique experiences and direct product contact. As space becomes available, it will be redeveloped for food and beverage, leisure or multi-use concepts that meet the changing needs of society.

The industry is also increasingly moving towards the poles of the market: on the one hand, discount formats such as Action, Tedi and Primark are successfully scaling up through efficient processes and low prices. Especially in times of economic uncertainty, they offer an important way to meet demand. On the other hand, there are experience-oriented concepts that focus on exclusivity and the quality of the shopping experience, creating loyalty and driving additional sales through generous interior design, integrated gastronomy and digital interactions.

Brick-and-mortar retail's success hinges on its ability to evolve and leverage the strengths of physical shopping. Shoppers crave experiences – the opportunity to test and discover products in a way that online shopping cannot replicate. There is also the potential for impulse buying, which is almost impossible to achieve online due to the limitations and high costs of available technology. Face-to-face contact and on-site advice are also crucial: experiences created through personal interaction add value that cannot be replicated digitally.

Looking ahead, my wish for the industry is not only to preserve these core strengths of brick-and-mortar retail, but also to consistently build on them. By optimally linking the online and offline worlds, we can create experiences that inspire people and ensure long-term prosperity.

"Brick-and-mortar retail's success hinges on its ability to evolve and leverage the strengths of physical shopping."

SILVIO KIRCHMAIR


IMAGE: PLACEWISE

SUSAN BONSAK
CEO OF PLACEWISE

"INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY INTO THE CORE OF YOUR MARKETING AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES"

As we look ahead to 2025, the placemaking industry faces some clear challenges—and exciting opportunities. One key challenge is meeting customer expectations for seamless, personalized experiences. Shoppers want engagement that starts before they arrive, continues during their visit, and extends long after they leave. To achieve this, centers need to embrace digital solutions that connect all touchpoints—websites, mobile apps, loyalty programs, and in-person interactions. This kind of integrated approach helps drive foot traffic, boost dwell time, and build long-term customer loyalty.

Another ongoing challenge is sustainability. Consumers and investors increasingly expect shopping centers to demonstrate environmental and social responsibility. By leveraging digital tools to automate communication and personalize engagement, centers can reduce waste from traditional marketing methods while enhancing the customer experience. These efficiencies support more sustainable operations and resonate with eco-conscious audiences.

These challenges come with major opportunities. Digital engagement platforms offer the chance to turn data into actionable insights. Centers can better understand customer behavior, create targeted campaigns, and deliver personalized offers and rewards. This data-driven approach helps centers strengthen their relationships with visitors, increase conversions, and support tenant success.

A fundamental shift is happening toward experience-driven placemaking. Shopping centers are no longer just places to shop—they're becoming dynamic lifestyle hubs where retail, dining, entertainment, and leisure experiences come together. Using digital tools to personalize these experiences ensures that visitors feel valued and connected, encouraging repeat visits and deeper loyalty.

To succeed in 2025 and beyond, my recommendation is clear: integrate technology into the core of your marketing and engagement strategies. Digital platforms that connect your website, mobile apps, loyalty programs, and customer data are no longer optional—they're essential. The centers that can leverage these tools to offer seamless, personalized, and engaging experiences will be the ones that thrive.

"Using digital tools to personalize experiences ensures that visitors feel valued."

SUSAN BONSAK

IMAGE: MK ILLUMINATION

THOMAS MARK
PRESIDENT OF MK ILLUMINATION GROUP

"THE PLACEMAKING INDUSTRY STANDS AT A CROSSROADS – AN ERA OF UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES AND TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL."

The Placemaking industry faces mounting challenges in 2025, driven by societal shifts, economic pressures, and environmental demands. Growing social divisions, urban densification, and the need for sustainability call for inclusive and resilient strategies. Balancing economic efficiency with creating vibrant public spaces is particularly challenging as consumer expectations evolve.

Despite these challenges, significant opportunities lie in embracing technology, fostering community-building initiatives, and prioritizing sustainability. Shopping centers have the potential to evolve beyond retail hubs into modern agoras – multifunctional spaces fostering social interaction. Advances in digital placemaking and immersive technologies transform spaces into inspiring and engaging destinations. Among these transformative tools, light plays a pivotal role. Strategic lighting not only enhances aesthetic appeal but also profoundly impacts human emotions and behavior. By creating inviting, dynamic, and uplifting atmospheres, light has the power to transform ordinary spaces into vibrant community hubs.

Placemaking now extends beyond physical spaces to address emotional and societal needs. Concepts like "well-being architecture" and "social sustainability" shape the industry, promoting mental health and inclusiv-ity. Light amplifies these efforts, fostering safety, warmth, and connection. From sustainable daylighting to artistic installations, innovative lighting aligns with trends in green infrastructure and biophilic design, ensuring engaging and environmentally conscious spaces.

Placemakers must embrace optimism and innovation. Creating "feel-good" destinations that foster connection and positivity is essential. Investments in light installations, immersive experiences, and sustainable designs should be seen not as costs but as opportunities to build long-term value. Light, in particular, unites and uplifts, evoking joy and defining spaces. Collaboration among developers, planners, and stakeholders is vital to realizing these aspirations.

The Placemaking industry stands at a crossroads – an era of unprecedented challenges and transformative potential. By recognizing the emotional power of light and embracing a community-centric approach, the industry can ensure a thriving and impactful future.

"Significant opportunities lie in embracing technology, fostering community - building initiatives, and prioritizing sustainability."

THOMAS MARK

IMAGE: ROS RETAIL OUTLET SHOPPING

THOMAS REICHENAUER
CO-FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR AT ROS RETAIL OUTLET SHOPPING

"OUTLETS ARE NO LONGER JUST RETAIL HUBS, BUT VITAL COMPONENTS OF THE BROADER COMMUNITY FABRIC."

As we approach 2025, the placemaking industry stands at a crossroads, facing both challenges and opportunities that will shape its future. For the outlet sector, the key challenge lies in responding to a rapidly shifting retail landscape while staying true to the core promise of delivering value and experience. Consumers are increasingly selective, seeking not only attractive prices, but also memorable experiences that blend shopping, leisure and sustainability. The ability to transform outlet centers into fashion and lifestyle destinations will be critical, requiring creativity, innovation, and a deep understanding of evolving consumer behavior.

At the same time, digital transformation is redefining the industry. The integration of AI, data analytics, and hybrid retail concepts is no longer optional but essential. From personalized marketing to seamless omnichannel integration, technology will enable us to meet customer expectations while enhancing operational efficiency. Outlet centers have the unique advantage of being highly adaptable and forward-thinking, which positions them well to thrive in this dynamic environment.

Sustainability will continue to play a decisive role, not as a trend but as an imperative. Customers and brands alike are demanding higher standards of environmental responsibility, driving the need for energy-efficient designs and long-term ecological stewardship. The outlet format is well-placed to lead by example, showcasing how shopping destinations can integrate sustainable practices without compromising the customer experience.

Looking ahead, the most fundamental change is a shift in purpose: outlets are no longer just retail hubs but vital components of the broader community fabric. Success will depend on our ability to stay agile, embrace innovation, and prioritize collaboration—with brands, investors and local stakeholders. By embedding sustainable practices that deliver both economic and environmental value, the placemaking industry can ensure its relevance and resilience for years to come.

"The ability to transform outlet centers into fashion and lifestyle destinations will be critical."

THOMAS REICHENAUER

IMAGE: CONIQ

BEN CHESSER
CEO OF CONIQ

“THE CHALLENGE IS TO MEET CUSTOMERS WHERE THEY ARE—ON THEIR SCREENS, IN THEIR HOMES, AND AT THEIR CONVENIENCE.”

As we step into 2025, one thing is clear: we cannot swim against the tide. We live in a digital-first world. That might sound like a bold statement when the physical world surrounds us every day, but the reality is undeniable—when given the choice, people prefer digital interactions over in-person ones. And let's be honest, many of us would rather spend time at home with our screens (and dogs) than in large crowds.

This shift isn’t just a phase. It’s a fundamental change in how people engage with the world, and we must embrace it. For too long, industries have been led by brilliant minds who built their careers in a different era. But as leaders, we need to recognize the new landscape and adapt to it, not resist it. The question isn’t, "How can digital complement our physical spaces?" but rather, "How do we make physical places relevant in a digital-first world?"

In 2025, we will witness some of the largest mall operators fully commit to this strategy. Even those who have traditionally waited on the sidelines are preparing to dive headfirst into digital transformation. If you’re not engaging with shoppers, workers, or residents digitally, you risk losing them entirely. The challenge is to meet them where they are—on their screens, in their homes, and at their convenience.

Physical spaces must blend seamlessly with the digital world, rather than compete against it. While mixed-use projects such as coworking and residential units can offer some value, these are incremental steps. The heart of placemaking now lies in forging meaningful digital connections on a larger scale.

To move the dial, you need to be relevant in the digital lives of millions of people. Be on their screens; start conversations, don’t just send communications. Find ways to connect with them at the time and place they want and in a way they enjoy. A word of hope here—the live entertainment industry is now bigger than ever, despite predictions that MTV and YouTube would kill it. Figure out what people love and give it to them.

My advice: gather in a physical room, explore future possibilities, and determine how your places fit in. A platform for digital engagement and ongoing conversations with your audience will be crucial. The world has shifted, and we must too.

“The heart of placemaking now lies in forging meaningful digital connections on a larger scale.”

BEN CHESSER

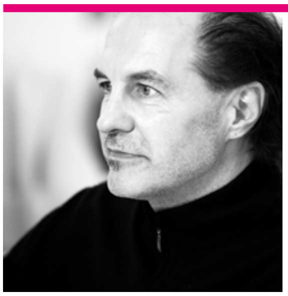

IMAGE: MOBIUS DESIGN

GREGORY FONSECA
ARCHITECT DIRECTOR AT MOBIUS DESIGN

"THE PLACEMAKING INDUSTRY STANDS AT THE INTERSECTION OF OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSFORMATION, DRIVEN BY SUSTAINABILITY, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS."

The placemaking industry is poised for significant opportunities and trends that reflect changing societal values and urban life dynamics. As society and the industry experience a shift from car-centric designs to pedestrian-first approaches, valuing human interactions over vehicular convenience is one of the primary trends for 2025. The rise of flexible, adaptable spaces that can easily evolve with community needs suggests a significant reimagining of traditional urban planning.

The industry will always face challenges, but by making informed choices through sensitive placemaking, we can separate the average from the exceptional. I believe the following five key elements need to be addressed, based on the emerging trends, to assure exceptional placemaking for the near term.

- Incorporate the growing demand for eco-friendly and sustainable practices in placemaking. Urban spaces are increasingly being designed with green infrastructure that promote biodiversity and reduce carbon footprints.
- Enhance community participation in the design and implementation of public spaces as a standard model. Through the use of digital tools and platforms, stakeholders can now provide diverse inputs and co-create spaces that reflect their community's distinct identity.
- Advance the hybrid work model. While returning to the workplace is increasing, remote work will continue to shape living patterns with an increased interest in mixed-use developments that combine residential, commercial and recreational spaces that promote vibrant, self-sustaining neighborhoods.
- Focus on public health benefits. The shift to incorporating aspects such as walkability, access to green spaces and public gathering areas promotes mental well-being and fosters healthier lifestyles.
- Deploy smart technology. Incorporating technology into the placemaking process allows for data-driven decision-making, improved user experiences, and the creation of interactive public spaces.

In creating places that prioritize people beyond the current outlook, I believe there are certain design considerations that are required to make them viable and future-proof. The emphasis on designs that cater to diverse demographics is fundamental to ensuring accessibility for all, including marginalized groups. Designs that reflect local heritage and culture promote a sense of belonging and identity and maintain their relevance over the longer term. Partnerships between government, businesses, and community organizations must be fostered to create holistic, well-funded placemaking initiatives. Urban planners and designers need to be equipped with skills in adaptive reuse and sustainability principles to respond effectively to changing contexts. Lastly, public spaces must withstand climate change impacts through innovative planning and robust infrastructure.

The placemaking industry stands at the intersection of opportunity and transformation, driven by sustainability, community involvement and technological advancements. Embracing these trends will cultivate vibrant, adaptable, and inclusive urban environments for the coming year and beyond.

IMAGE: HMJ INTERNATIONAL

HENRIK MADSEN

FOUNDER OF HMJ INTERNATIONAL

“THE SHARPER THE FOCUS THE WIDER THE APPEAL.”

2024 became a year with disruption 2.0 and controversy 3.0 being the main themes. Guess what – 2025 will be no different!

In what became the most successful year for our business, our partnership perfected how to be exceedingly distinct in our proposition, focused on what we are really good at, and accepted disruptions as a prerequisite for doing business, successfully.

We have all had to cope with the ever-changing impact of the business cycles. I believe, in 2025, these will become cyclone like. Storms will appear from everywhere, and out of nowhere. So, you could be forgiven by entering 2025 with some caution.

However, remain optimistic, yet realistic, as most successes or failures will be within your own control. While we will continue to be challenged in leading our day-to-day business operation, we must stay sharp, be distinct and focus on challenges/opportunities as they present themselves; be agile and adapt course-correction methods or accelerate as required. Most of all, be ruthless and deselect what you will not do.

Please do not bury your head in the sand, on matters which are out of our control. But worry only about those concerns you can control, and then work with the rest, rather than trying to resolve or combat these. If you do, you will lose battles you cannot possibly win.

Of the main 4 business disruptions/trends I see in 2025, 2 are really outside our control:

- Macroeconomics cannot easily be changed, but nor ignored, so spend time deliberating how it impacts you directly, and then decide how you adapt and make this work best for the business
- Geo-Political changes, of which I could mention many, will make us worry, but only task your business in finding alternate solutions, to those challenges, that directly impact the business
- Climate change is really happening, and while it is easy to consider your initiatives as immaterial in fighting the global challenge, you must persevere to make the required improvements across businesses and consider that any such investments will pay off. (Paul Polman at Unilever did it successfully, and we must replicate this success)
- Tech Innovations and Generative AI must be embraced rather than ignored. The faster we understand the capabilities of the tools, their faux and flaws, the smarter and more efficient we can become. Watch out for the opportunity to bring hyper personalization to life – it may make you more relevant that you possibly could imagine

In my letter in January ‘24 I recommended accepting disruption as a positive. I highlighted the need for constant business assessment course-correction and re-invention. In suit of having positioned your company to build a sustainable future and made most of the opportunities that emerged in ’24; 2025 must be the year of positive, disruptive, change. And ‘real focus’ will allow you to really get in the game:

- Respond to continued disruption by reassessing where to play and how to win
- Use AI/Digital as a positive disrupter and become the agent of the disruptive change
- Empower, Engage and Reward teams in the agile culture you have created
- Efficiencies and Expansions are not enemies. If you adapt a pragmatic approach to identify, protect, expand and grow value
- Prepare for more disruption, more change, more disruption, more change…

IMAGE: MPC PROPERTIES

JOVANA CVETKOVIĆ
DEVELOPMENT, TO AND INNOVATIONS DIRECTOR AT MPC PROPERTIES

"STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH POST-PANDEMIC TRENDS CAN DRIVE SUCCESS, FOSTER RESILIENCE, AND CREATE A COMPETITIVE EDGE."

Considering that we are living in VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) times, business models are experiencing changes driven by technological advancements and broader economic and environmental factors. Consequently, the Commercial Real Estate (CRE) industry is undergoing significant transformation, ruled by shifting market dynamics, evolving consumer preferences and emerging trends. The challenge lies in effectively aligning these occurrences with the company's business strategy.

Opportunities and Trends

Adaptive reuse, with the shift in consumer behavior and the rise of e-commerce, many traditional retail spaces are being repurposed for mixed-use developments, including residential, office and entertainment spaces, which allow both property owners and retailers to maximize the utility of their spaces and to empower placemaking, providing the community they gather with an authentic experience.

The line between online and offline retail is blurring as retailers adopt omnichannel strategies, integrating physical stores, e-commerce, apps, and social media to meet customers across their purchasing journey. Experiential retail focuses on food, entertainment, and family-friendly offerings.

Hybrid work models are transforming office spaces with flexible layouts, wellness-focused designs, and tech integration. Sustainability is also thriving, with energy-efficient buildings incorporating green building principles.

Post-pandemic, the emphasis on flexibility, health, and safety has accelerated in CRE. Strategic alignment with these trends can drive success, foster resilience, and create a competitive edge.

Recommendations for the industry

Promote authenticity through placemaking, drive innovation for a competitive advantage, and build resilience with sustainability and risk strategies.

Adopt ESG practices to meet sustainability demands. Enhance digitalization, use smart tech, IoT, and AR/VR to enhance operations, marketing, and retail experiences.

Prioritize flexibility in office and retail to align with hybrid work and experiential consumer trends.

"Promote authenticity through placemaking, drive innovation for a competitive advantage, and build resilience with sustainability and risk strategies."

JOVANA CVETKOVIĆ

IMAGE: HYPERIN

MARKUS PORVARI
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF HYPERIN

“THE INDUSTRY MUST EMBRACE ADAPTIVE PLACEMAKING, LEVERAGING REAL-TIME DATA AND USER FEEDBACK TO ENSURE SPACES REMAIN RELEVANT AND FUNCTIONAL.”

The placemaking industry is at a transformative crossroads, where challenges are opportunities for innovation. Looking ahead to 2025, I see the following as pivotal themes for the industry's evolution:

KEY CHALLENGES AHEAD

Navigating Hybrid Expectations

As the boundaries between physical and digital spaces blur, placemaking must fully embrace hybrid models. The future lies in designing environments that integrate smart technologies while preserving the core essence of human interaction.

AI-Driven Operations as a Necessity

Continuing without AI is no longer optional. Stakeholders expect AI powered operational tools that enable performance forecasting, energy-efficiency, sustainability metrics, and personalized visitor experiences.

OPPORTUNITIES AND TRENDS

Immersive Environments: Interactive technology like Augmented Reality (AR) can transform static spaces into dynamic, engaging experiences. This trend not only enhances visitor experiences, but also creates opportunities for differentiation and storytelling.

Monetization Through Data: Predictive Space Utilization: AI and analytics will optimize short-term rentals, advertising, campaigns and event programming, boosting ROI. Merging e-commerce with physical spaces opens untapped revenue streams for commercial properties.

Eco-Innovation: Sustainability and smart infrastructure—such as IoT-powered energy management – will define the future of profitable, responsible placemaking.

FUTURE-PROOFING PLACEMAKING

The industry must embrace adaptive placemaking, leveraging real-time data and user feedback to ensure spaces remain relevant and functional.

Design for Tomorrow: Think beyond today’s standards. Build spaces that anticipate future needs, from immersive technologies to green innovation.

Bridge the Physical-Digital Divide: Integrate physical and virtual worlds, fostering connected communities that extend beyond the boundaries of the property.

Lead with Purpose: Collaborate across sectors to align placemaking with societal and environmental goals. Purpose-driven spaces are the future of thriving communities.

The road to 2025 is an opportunity to innovate boldly, guided by technology, creativity, and sustainability. Together, we can shape a meaningful, profitable future that elevates communities and stakeholders alike.

IMAGE: HEARTATWORK HOSPITALITY CONSULTING

WILL ODWARKA
FOUNDER AND CEO OF HEARTATWORK HOSPITALITY CONSULTING

"HOLISTIC EXPERIENCES AND COMMUNITY BUILDING ARE BECOMING MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER."

From your point of view, what are the main challenges for the placemaking industry in 2025?

The same old doesn't work anymore. The last couple of years have shown us that we cannot continue doing what we always did and hope for a better outcome. Holistic experiences and community building are becoming more important than ever.

What opportunities and trends do you see?

Social competitiveness as new attractions and potentially lasting trends, more curated hospitality and entertainment community building in retail environments, shopping malls as social destinations, and the inclusion of the ever-growing online business. Finally, we must not forget the growing need to use AI more effectively to use the data we are collecting.

In your view, are there fundamental and lasting changes that await the placemaking industry?

The label "shopping mall" is no longer about shopping. The ever-changing and shortened attention span requires us to speed up our approach to our customers to remain relevant. AI is not a buzzword; it is the ability to plan and steer our assets.

Your recommendations/wishes for the industry and market participants

We are still not forthcoming enough when it comes to the challenges we are facing I would appreciate it if our exchanges at conferences and meetings would move from pretending to actual collaborations to overcome what we all are facing.

"The last few years have shown us that we cannot continue doing what we always did and hope for a better outcome."

WILL ODWARKA

IMAGE: MPC PROPERTIES

NEMANJA BUĆINAC
RETAIL EXECUTIVE AT CBRE SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

“THE PLACEMAKING INDUSTRY IS GRADUALLY BECOMING ONE OF THE PIVOTAL ASPECTS WHEN SPEAKING ABOUT URBAN CITIES AND COMMUNITIES.“

One of the most important things in the placemaking planning process is actually local community engagement. Ensuring diversity, inclusivity and (pro)active participation from the local community could pose one of the biggest challenges. Funding could also be something we should monitor, as limited financial resources may impact the scope and scale of the project. From the investor’s perspective, striking a balance between economic viability and creating attractive spaces is crucial. With the increasing importance of sustainability, the ongoing challenge lies in mitigating the need for economic development with environmental sustainability. Placemaking initiatives need to prioritize eco-friendly designs, green spaces, and energy-efficient infrastructure.

Placemaking initiatives can contribute to economic development by attracting businesses, creating job opportunities, and boosting local economies. Well-designed public spaces can serve as catalysts for commercial and cultural activities. In addition, the trend towards mixed-use development, where residential, commercial, and recreational spaces coexist, provides opportunities for creating vibrant and self-sustaining communities.

In my view, the placemaking industry is gradually becoming one of the pivotal aspects when speaking about urban cities and communities. Urban spaces that consist of residential, leisure and a blend of work could attract more international companies and tourists and consequently boost the overall industry of the city/community. One of the best examples that reflect this approach is Time Out Market in Lisbon.

“Well-designed public spaces can serve as catalysts for commercial and cultural activities.”

NEMANJA BUĆINAC

IMAGE: STANDORT + MARKT

ROMAN SCHWARZENECKER
PARTNER AT STANDORT + MARKT

„IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS WITHIN 15 MINUTES ON FOOT OR BY BIKE."

In cities in particular, you have to serve many stakeholders. On the one hand, there are the locals and tourists, on the other, the residents and the people who work there; then there are the traders and restaurateurs, the law firms and surgeries, the offices and, of course, the living space. In addition, the whole area should be barrier-free and handicapped accessible, it must be possible to provide for delivery traffic and the infrastructural supply (electricity, water, gas, waste disposal) should function invisibly.

It is in the nature of things that it is difficult to create an ideal appearance here. The city administration has no direct influence on some things (such as the condition of the building or the color of the façade). This is much easier in the case of created spaces such as leisure parks or shopping centers.

The current trend is certainly towards unsealing, sustainability and fewer cars in cities. Due to climate change, completely sealed surfaces overheat much more than areas that also have a green component. On the one hand, trees provide shade, and on the other, unsealed surfaces act like sponges. They store moisture and precipitation, and the evaporative cooling also lowers the ground temperature.

Another trend is the smart city. Here, attempts are being made to keep resource consumption as low as possible using technical aids. One example of this would be street lighting that lights up when a pedestrian actually walks on the street and does not shine when no one needs it.

In addition, more and more public space is being used for cycle paths and parks and less and less for roads and car parking spaces. The "15-minute city" is the buzzword of the hour here. It should be possible to meet the needs of residents within 15 minutes on foot or by bike.

It is no longer enough for a square to function as a parking lot. It is also no longer enough to design a square just to make it look attractive. It also has to meet the requirements for sustainability, sealing, accessibility, etc. and ideally also be multifunctional.

In my opinion, far too few resources are used for urban planning in particular. The planning of public spaces, especially in district capitals and smaller administrative units, is done as a sideline and is supervised by the building authorities. It follows that a building expert cannot always be a creative designer. However, there are usually no permanent positions for the design of public spaces (except in larger cities) and unfortunately this is often the way they look.

My wish would be that clear responsibility structures are created here and that professionals take over the planning of a public space and that this is not done by someone who has nothing else or/and better to do.

IMAGE: REGIOPLAN CONSULTING

INES DELIC
HEAD OF RETAIL AND REAL ESTATE AT REGIOPLAN CONSULTING

"THE FUTURE OF PLACEMAKING LIES IN CREATING MEANINGFUL, SUSTAINABLE SPACES THAT RESONATE WITH THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE."

The placemaking industry faces several key challenges in 2025. First, adapting to changing consumer behavior and the increasing dominance of e-commerce will require shopping centers to rethink deeply their role in traditional retail. Secondly, the need for sustainability is intensifying, with both environmental and social factors gaining importance. Shopping centers must integrate green building practices and offer community-oriented spaces. Lastly, the rapid development of technology and digitalization creates pressure to enhance customer experiences through innovative digital solutions, while still maintaining a human touch. At RegioPlan, we help our clients navigate these trends with our detailed market analyses and insights, which are crucial to making informed, future-proof decisions.

Currently, an important trend is the further development of the "Omnichannel" approach, where online and offline shopping experiences merge. Digital infrastructures open new potential for the intelligent use and interactivity of public spaces. Retail places must offer more than just sales areas; they need to increasingly become destinations for experiences and leisure. Innovative usage concepts such as co-working spaces and gastronomy also play a larger role here. The biggest opportunity lies in creating mixed-use destinations that blend retail, leisure, and services into cohesive, community-focused spaces.

As the placemaking industry is undergoing fundamental change, sustainability and adaptability will be at the core of future developments. Shopping centers must and are evolving into multi-functional spaces that can respond to shifts in consumer needs and the broader socio-economic landscape. The focus is shifting to creating authentic, community-driven environments that prioritize long-term value rather than short-term profits.

I encourage industry players to embrace innovation and adaptability as core values. The future of placemaking lies in creating meaningful, sustainable spaces that resonate with the communities they serve. My hope is that the industry continues to foster collaboration and learning. At RegioPlan Consulting, we continue to provide valuable insights and foster dialogue through our Retail Symposium, where industry leaders can come together to explore the next steps in this dynamic field.

"I encourage industry players to embrace innovation and adaptability as core values."

INES DELIC

ACROSS ADVISORY BOARD

The body's declared aim is to offer its expertise on topic formulation. It identifies the challenges the industry faces as well as the opportunities, emerging trends, etc. it sees. ACROSS's Advisory Board currently has 31 members. These are:


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IMAGE: RARE ADVISE

KLAUS STRIEBICH
Managing Director of RaRE Advise


IMAGE: VIA OUTLETS

OTTO AMBAGTSHEER
CEO of VIA Outlets


IMAGE: DEFAMA

ANGELUS BERNREUTHER
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MD Viklari Consulting Ltd and Partner at Juniper Strategy


IMAGE: ECE

JOANNA FISHER
CEO of ECE Marketplaces

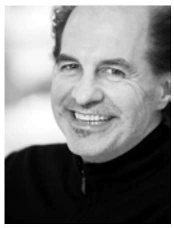
IMAGE: BDP

GREGORY FONSECA
Architect

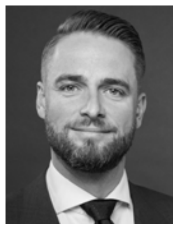
IMAGE: BROOKFIELD PROPERTIES

ROGER GOYK
Director Retail at Brookfield Properties Germany GmbH


IMAGE: PLACEWISE

SUSAN HAGERTY BONSAK
CEO of Placewise Group


IMAGE: KAUFLAND

MICHAEL HIESE
Michael Hiese, Chief Real Estate Officer, Kaufland International


IMAGE: AMBAS

STEFFEN HOFMANN
Managing Partner at ambas


IMAGE: PORTLAND

IBRAHIM IBRAHIM
Managing Director of Portland Design


IMAGE: CHRIS IGWE INTERNATIONAL

CHRIS IGWE
Global Retail Expert


IMAGE: FIBA

YURDAER KAHRAMAN
CEO and Board Member of FİBA Commercial Properties


IMAGE: UMDASCH

SILVIO KIRCHMAIR
CEO of umdasch


IMAGE: HERMAN KOK

HERMAN KOK
Associated Partner at DISCvision


IMAGE: NEINVER

DANIEL LOSANTOS
CEO of Neinver


IMAGE: PRIVATE

HENRIK MADSEN
Founder of HMJ International


IMAGE: MK ILLUMINATION

THOMAS MARK
President of MK Illumination Group


IMAGE: RIOJA ESTATES

GILES MEMBREY
Managing Director of Rioja Estates Ltd.


IMAGE: HEARTATWORK HOSPITALITY CONSULTING

WILL ODWARKA
Founder and CEO of Heartatwork Hospitality Consulting


IMAGE: HYPERIN

MARKUS PORVARI
Founder of HyperIn


IMAGE: ROS

THOMAS REICHENAUER
Co-Founder & Managing Director of ROS Retail Outlet Shopping


IMAGE: EUROFUND

IAN SANDFORD
President of Eurofund Group


IMAGE: SCSC

JAN TANNER
Managing Director Bredella AG for Implenia Switzerland


IMAGE: UNION INVESTMENT

HENRIKE WALDBURG
Member of the Management Board at Union Investment Real Estate GmbH

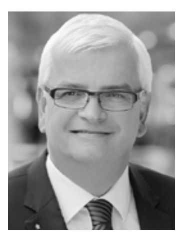
IMAGE: EVA TRIFFT

MARCUS WILD
Member of the Executive Board of Spar Group Austria

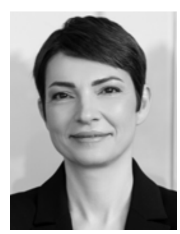
IMAGE: MPC PROPERTIES

PINAR YALÇINKAYA
CEO of MPC Properties

NEW MEMBER: IAN SANDFORD JOINS THE ACROSS ADVISORY BOARD

The ACROSS Advisory Board is happy to welcome its newest member, Ian Sandford, President of Eurofund Group.

Ian Sandford was one of the founding directors of Eurofund Group founded in 1994 and is now the group's President. Since qualifying in London as a Chartered Surveyor, he has spent most of his career working in the retail sector in Southern Europe. Ian pioneered in creating and managing leading living, retail and logistics destinations in the UK, Spain, Portugal, Germany and Italy.

"Ian Sandford stands for the courage to change like no other. He is always setting new industry trends and is not satisfied with the status quo. I look forward to learning even more from his view of the industry and his vision through his membership in the Advisory Board," says Reinhard Winiwarter Publisher, and Managing Partner of ACROSS Magazine.

IMAGE: EUROFUND

Ian Sandford is President of Eurofund Group.

ABOUT THE ACROSS ADVISORY BOARD

The ACROSS Advisory Board was established in mid-2016. From day one, the Board's stated goal has been to offer its expertise in topic formulation. Over the years, the board has not only grown, but it has also become more interdisciplinary, just like the retail real estate world itself. In addition to shopping center managers, the board includes architects, retail experts, financial experts, PropTech professionals, consultants, and outlet managers. The mix of expertise from the various areas that our industry has to offer makes the ACROSS board unique. That is not only due to the fact that the mixed-use asset class is on the rise, but also because we all know that collaboration and thinking outside of the box are essential to our business. The ACROSS Advisory Board is currently comprised of 31 members. That gives us the opportunity to closely monitor current trends and changes within the industry and to be able to classify them.

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ambas Real Estate is an independent retail investment and asset management advisory firm. The company advises owners and developers about retail assets and modern mixed-use properties. Its service portfolio includes tailormade transaction-related advisory and strategic asset management services. ambas is active in the European real estate markets, Germany being its core market.

BIG CEE
Omladinskih brigada 88/I
Airport City Business Park
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BIG CEE is the subsidiary of BIG Shopping centers Israel, based in Belgrade capital of Serbia, since 2007. Company was founded with a mission of developing the BIG brand in Balkan countries and with focus on implementing BIG Shopping Centers strategy and vision in Serbia and neighboring countries such as North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro.

BIG CEE holds and operates 11 active shopping centers – 10 in Serbia and 1 in Montenegro. In Serbia operates 7 Retail Parks which are branded as BIG, 2 Shopping Centers which are branded as BIG Fashion and the only Designer Outlet in the country branded as BIG Fashion Outlet.

With a focus on the company's core product – Retail Parks, BIG CEE has successfully became one of the leading retail real estate developers in Serbia and the Balkan region.

CHRISTMASWORLD
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Christmasworld – Seasonal Decoration at its best – is the leading international trade fair for festive decorations. Exhibitors from all over the world present the latest trends and products for all festive occasions of the year, including innovative concepts for decorating large spaces and outdoor areas, such as shopping centers in Frankfurt am Main.

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Coniq is the leading provider of customer engagement and loyalty solutions for the most advanced retail destinations in the world. Their innovative technology solutions enable mall operators to generate revenue faster, by understanding, anticipating, and engaging customers in real-time, across multiple channels. The Coniq platform powers over $1.2 billion in sales annually for its customers, with over 20 million consumers shopping from over 2,000 brands in 25+ countries worldwide. Our clients include Tanger Outlets, Mall of America, Bicester Village, VIA Outlets, AW Rostamani, and many others.

DFV CONFERENCE GROUP
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http://www.dfvcg.de

dfv Conference Group the event arm of dfv Media Group, develops, organizes and produces executive-level conferences and conventions about a variety of themes and across a wide range of sectors. As a relationship manager, it turns media and information into a hands-on experience, fostering professional exchange and networking throughout the business community. The majority of the delegates attending its events come from senior management and other top-ranking corporate positions.

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ECE was founded in 1965 and is still owned by the Otto family. The company provides all services related to properties from one source. The assets under management currently amount to 32.3 billion euros. With 195 shopping centers under management and activities in 12 countries, ECE is the European market leader in the shopping center industry. Approximately 20,000 retail businesses generate an annual turnover of 22.3 billion euros on an overall sales area of 7 million square meters.

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Eurofund Group is a real estate investment and development firm operating in Spain, Portugal, the UK, Germany, and Italy. It unlocks asset value through expertise, smart capital, and exceptional service. Key projects include Puerto Venecia, UBBO, Silverburn, Parma, Rhein Ruhr, and Islazul. It also expands into logistics, co-living (Tribu), and senior living (Luana).

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EUROVEA is Slovakia's largest shopping complex, part of a mixed-use project in the Eurovea City district near Bratislava's historic center and the Danube River. Connected to the first Slovak skyscraper, EUROVEA TOWER, it seamlessly integrates shopping, offices, leisure, culture, and residences. With a unique waterfront promenade, EUROVEA stands as a factual and dynamic destination, symbolizing modern urban living in the heart of Bratislava.

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GfK GeoMarketing is one of Europe's largest providers of geomarketing services and products, which include consultancy and research expertise, market data, digital maps as well as the software RegioGraph. GfK helps companies from all industries to answer critical location-related business questions in sales, marketing, expansion planning and controlling. GfK's geomarketing department promotes business success and thus delivers "Growth from Knowledge".

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As the market leader for networking in the form of events and business matching, Heuer Dialog has been accompanying the real estate industry in accessing all disciplines that deal with questions about the future of the urban and real estate worlds since the 1980s. With around 50 events per year, Heuer Dialog enables high-level executives to meet on physical and virtual platforms or even in both simultaneously, in a hybrid setting for sustainable urban, real estate and building development. Heuer Dialog builds networks with power, creativity and capital that secure the future of cities, regions and companies. As initiator and moderator, Heuer Dialog brings together minds from architecture, civil engineering, ecology, economics, sociology, technology and law in face-to-face dialogues. Over the past four decades, more than 100,000 personalities have taken part in lectures and discussions that have led to initiatives for current and future action. In association with the Immobilien Zeitung and the dfv Mediengruppe with more than 100 specialist titles, Heuer Dialog sees itself as the competence center for events related to real estate.

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HyperIn – The Mall Management Platform.

Our all-in-one solution streamlines shopping mall operations, offering advanced features for omnichannel communication, tenant collaboration, and specialty leasing monetization. We provide data-driven insights, including sales reporting and marketing analytics, to better connect with consumers and optimize campaign performance. As a Red Herring Top 100 Winner, HyperIn has been recognized as one of the leading private technology and innovation companies. Visit hyperin.com for more information.

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Kaufland is an international retail company with over 1,550 stores and about 155,000 employees in eight countries, namely: Germany, Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia, and the Republic of Moldova. Kaufland offers a large assortment of food and everything else for daily needs. The company is part of the Schwarz Group, one of the leading food retail companies in Germany and Europe. Kaufland is based in Neckarsulm, Baden-Wuerttemberg.

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Mallcomm is an award-winning 360 technology platform for asset and property management that streamlines everyday tasks, joins up stakeholders and generates new insight for more efficient and effective operations. The platform seamlessly connects all built environment communities: occupiers, operations, suppliers, consumers and other stakeholders. By transforming the users' experience of the space, Mallcomm creates loyalty by connecting people to places while delivering efficient operations, significant budget savings and valuable insights. By using the most established, advanced and cutting-edge technology, Mallcomm helps managers curate and promote their ecosystem and provides a suite of powerful data insight to efficiently measure and adapt the outputs of B2B and B2C engagement.

MAPIC
The international retail property market
Phone: +33 1 79 71 90 00
http://www.mapic.com

MAPIC is the key meeting point for retailers looking for partners, property developers, and owners looking for retailers to enhance their sites. MAPIC delivers 3 days of tailored meetings, expert-led conferences and a premium exhibition for industry leaders, targeting all types of retail properties, such as shopping centers, cities, factory outlets, leisure areas and transit zones.

MAPIC ITALY
The Italian retail property event
Phone +33 1 79 71 90 00
http://www.mapic-italy.it

MAPIC Italy is a deal-making event dedicated to the Italian retail property market. It gathers together Italian and international retailers and investors looking for retail properties and locations to expand their business in the Italian market. Retail property owners, shopping centers management companies and agents will have a unique opportunity to present their assets to a qualified public of clients and prospects.

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The McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Parndorf opened in August 1998 and is now the largest designer outlet in Central Europe and, with 2,000 jobs, the largest private employer in Burgenland. In the 160 or so stores selling designer, luxury and lifestyle brands, fashion l overs can find the latest trends from the current season and pre-season classics up to 70 percent cheaper.

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MEC with headquarters in Düsseldorf is a joint venture of METRO and ECE. As the German national market leader for retail parks, MEC has more than 280 employees and manages more than 65 retail properties. Its service portfolio includes customized services for all aspects of integrated center management, including commercial and technical management, leasing, marketing, development, commercial asset management and property management for smaller retail properties. The market value managed (assets under management) was € 3.8 billion in 2022. In all locations, approximately 1,200 rental partners generate an annual turnover of € 3 billion over a rental space of 1.55 million sq m.

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Messe Frankfurt is one of the world's leading trade fair organizers. 592,127 sq m of exhibition ground are currently home to ten exhibition halls and two congress centers. Events "made by Messe Frankfurt" take place at approx. 50 locations around the globe, and cover the fields of consumer goods, textiles & textile technologies, technology & production, mobility & logistics, entertainment, media & creative industries.

MIPIM
The world's leading property market
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http://www.mipim.com

MIPIM, the premier real estate event, gathers the most influential players from all sectors of the international property industry, for four days of networking, learning and transaction through premium events, conferences and dedicated exhibition zones.

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MK Illumination is the leading provider of year-round festive lighting solutions, which form the cornerstone of powerful marketing, engagement, and visitor attraction campaigns. The family-owned business was founded in 1996 and has presence in more than 44 countries. Each year, its independently-owned subsidiaries combine global experience with local knowledge to deliver upwards of 1200 projects worldwide for clients in a range of sectors including Retail Real Estate, Public Spaces, Travel Retail and Leisure. MK Illumination is known for its innovative full-service approach, its commitment to the highest quality products and services, and for creating extraordinary tailored solutions that deliver results.

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MPC Properties is one of the Southeast Europe's most experienced real estate companies. MPC has developed over 30 projects since its foundation in 2002. Its strategy is development of modern retail and office assets in accordance with the green building principles and the highest LEED and BREEAM standards. One of the main points of sustainability of company's business is implementation of ESG strategy across portfolio.

MPC possesses and manages different types of properties – retail network of six shopping centers and six A-class office assets, each of them representing the most important and recognizable landmarks on the market. It is the first company in Serbia to receive the WELL Health-Safety certificate for the portfolio of business and retail assets awarded by the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI).

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NEINVER is a Spanish multinational company specialised in managing, developing and investing in commercial properties. The leading manager of outlet centers in Spain and Poland, and the second largest in Europe, has two proprietary brands: The Style Outlets and FACTORY. Founded in 1969, NEINVER manages 17 outlet centers and 4 retail parks including active pipeline in six European countries: France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the Netherlands.

NEPI ROCKCASTLE
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NEPI Rockcastle is Europe's third-largest listed retail real estate company by investment portfolio value and the largest owner, operator and developer of shopping centres in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The company's €7.8bn portfolio is located across eight CEE countries and owns 57 retail properties. It is a market leader in Romania and Poland (NEPI Rockcastle's two largest markets) as well as having shopping centres in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, The Czech Republic and Lithuania.

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Redevco is a European real estate urban regeneration specialist with a clear ambition to create positive impact by helping cities become more sustainable and liveable. Our specialist investment strategies consider opportunities to re-purpose to mixed-use, in the segments of living and leisure & hospitality as well as in retail warehouse parks. Our highly experienced professionals purchase, develop, let, and manage properties, ensuring that the portfolios optimally reflect the needs of Redevco's clients. Redevco's total assets under management comprise around €9.7 billion.

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Rioja Estates is the leading UK-based specialist in the development of designer and factory outlets. Our expertise encompasses all aspects of planning, design, development, funding, pre-leasing, operational launch, and asset management. We are also adept at identifying institutional purchasers for finished schemes, and enabling property owners and investors to enter the market without taking on unnecessary risk.

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ROS Retail Outlet Shopping, headquartered in Vienna, Austria, is specialised in retail real estate consulting and centre management of Designer Outlets and innovative shopping concepts across Europe. Since 2024 ROS is part of the French listed property group FREY, located in Reims Bezannes. The ROS founders Thomas Reichenauer and Gerhard Graf are both committed professionals with many years of experience and knowledge in the European outlet market as well as recognized personalities in the industry.

The portfolio of ROS across Europe includes Designer Outlet Soltau, City Outlet Geislingen, Designer Outlet Warszawa, Designer Outlet Gdańsk, Designer Outlet Sosnowiec, Premier Outlet Budapest, Designer Outlet Algarve, Designer Outlet Croatia, La Torre Outlet Zaragoza, M3 Outlet Polgár, Designer Outlet Luxembourg, Designer Outlet Kraków, Malmö Designer Village and further new projects.

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SES Spar European Shopping Centers is specialized in the successful development, construction, marketing, and management of multifunctional retail properties and quarters of international standard. The company also works with strategic partnerships in the areas of art and culture, health centers and housing. In addition to shopping malls, retail parks and managed shopping streets also form part of our business. SES is No. 1 in Austria and Slovenia for large-scale shopping locations. Additional core markets include Northern Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Croatia.

THE HAPPETITE
The Global event for multi-site restaurant operators. Close deals with the best international food retail concepts!
Phone +33 1 79 71 90 00
https://www.the-happetite.com/

The Happetite (previously known as MAPIC FOOD) is the international event dedicated to multi-site restaurant operators looking to grow their business. This powerful business platform is a unique chance to find new international food retail concepts, and to meet restaurant industry decision makers. Key international restaurants, food chains & operators participate in this exhibition to meet private equity firms and property players to grow their business. The event brings together all the restaurant chains, restaurant operators, travel operators, franchise partners and restaurant industry suppliers to develop and create the food destinations of tomorrow.

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Trinity Capital is an investment company established in 2019 in Bulgaria. Its main mission is the acquisition, realization and management of investment projects. Throughout its operation, the company has acquired expertise in building and operating retail parks.

We build and manage assets that create opportunities for business growth for our partners and improve urban environment for local communities.

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21Media has been a leading Marketing & Advertising Agency for Shopping Centers for over 25 years. In its client list features some of the biggest names from the European retail including Meadowhall, Glatt, ALEXA, CentrO, and Fünf Höfe. Full-service B2B and B2C support is provided at every stage of a mall's life cycle: from strategic positioning through hands-on day-to-day Center marketing. The company's reputation as B2B specialists has been built on helping owners and operators to market their properties, with improved leasing tools, engineering a stronger tenant mix and growing a Center's asset value.

21Media's achievements have been recognized by 15 ICSC European Marketing Awards including the Global ICSC "Best of The Best" Viva accolade.

UMDASCH THE STORE MAKERS
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umdasch provides special retail solutions: rooted in craftsmanship, visionary in the digital world, always with a human touch and one goal – to realise successful stores. The Store Makers at umdasch create extraordinary worlds of experience for discerning customers, serving numerous areas of expertise ranging from Design Consulting & Value Engineering to Project Management, General Contracting and Shop Systems through to Digital Retail.

General Contracting – the all-round, care-free package from umdasch – has developed strongly in recent years. With a top network of professional experts and prudent management skills, the Store Makers ensure all the trades, such as lighting, floors, fire protection and much more, work to schedule – We take care of everything.

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CREATING SUSTAINABLE PLACES THAT REINVENT BEING TOGETHER – Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield is the creator and operator of unique, sustainability-driven retail, office and lifestyle destinations that connect people through extraordinary, meaningful shared experiences.

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Union Investment is a leading international real estate investment company specializing in open ended real estate funds for private and institutional clients. Union Investment has assets under management of some €51.0 billion. Active in the real estate investment business for more than 50 years, Union Investment operates today in 24 countries around the world. In addition to office space and business parks, the Hamburg-based company is investing in business hotels, logistics properties, residential buildings and retail properties. Union Investment's retail portfolio currently includes 83 assets in Europe and the US, with a market volume of some €10 bn.

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VIA Outlets was founded in 2014 to acquire existing outlet centres across Europe. VIA Outlets' vision is to create premium shopping destinations, and offer best-in class, beautifully located shopping experiences for visitors and brand partners. VIA Outlets are here to redefine the outlet shopping experience.

Guided by their three R's elevation (strategy, remerchandising, remodelling and remarketing) VIA Outlets ensures that premium fashion outlets are destinations attracting visitors from all over the world. By bringing together an exceptional mix of international and local premium brands, VIA Outlets have created unexpected and unforgettable shopping experiences, whilst also paving the way for sustainable shopping. Currently, VIA Outlets consists of 11 assets spread across Europe, offering over 1,100 stores across 290,000 sq. m GLA.

WESTFIELD SHOPPING CITY SÜD
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With a sales area of around 192,500 sq m, Shopping City Süd is the largest shopping center in Austria and one of the largest in Europe. Its 330 stores offer a very wide variety of brands and products and attract on average around 24.5 million visitors from all over Austria as well as from the neighboring countries of Hungary and Slovakia on a yearly basis. The center ensures that customers have 10,000 free parking spaces available, and can enjoy shopping regardless of the weather and the wide range of offers "under one roof."

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ACROSS is the international and independent trade medium for placemaking & retail real estate in Europe. The magazine covers topics through the entire value chain of modern retail properties. Interviews and experts' opinions are in the focus of the editorial coverage. The latest retail or development trends and news about the different markets, round out the magazine's content. The magazine is published entirely in English, with an exclusive circulation of 20,000 copies in 42 European countries, reaching the industry's decision makers directly.

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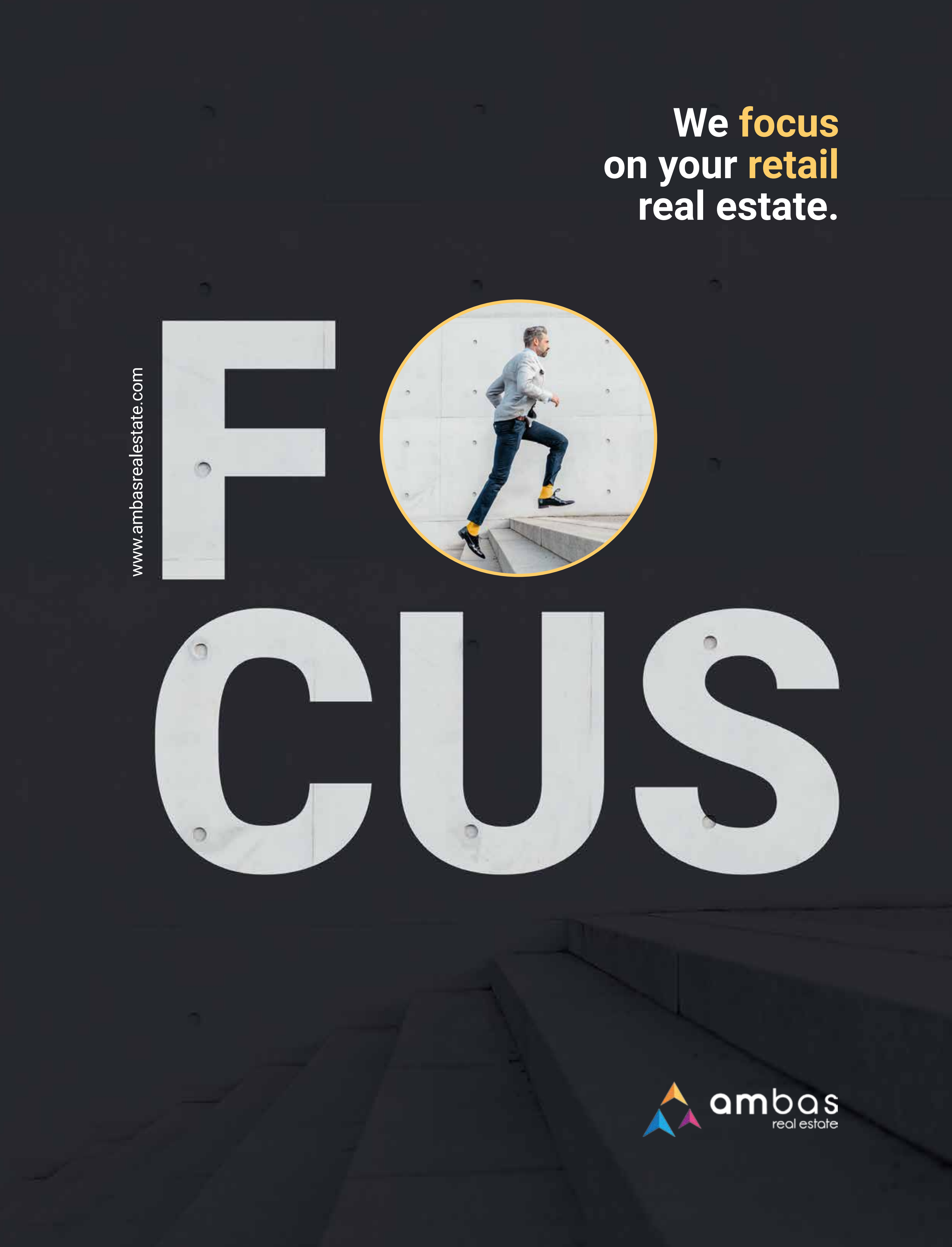
ACROSS Strategic Partners – Our direct line to the industry

Many industry players, experts, and leading companies in the retail real estate sector have supported us in word and deed in the preparation of this edition of ACROSS. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our strategic partners, guest authors, and suppliers of ideas, without whom it would be nearly impossible to create this informative magazine and make it so relevant to the industry.

NETWORKING PARTNERS: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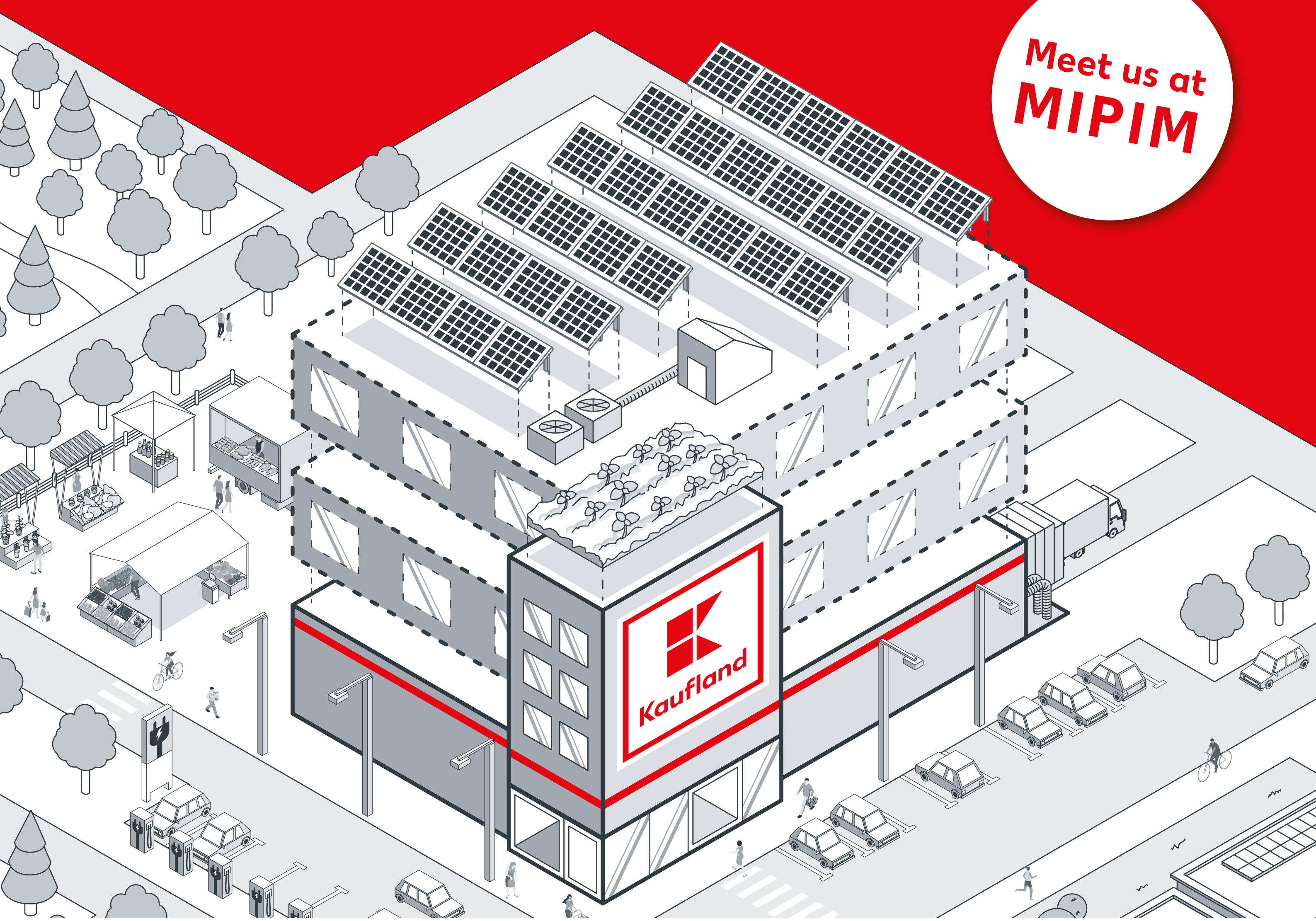

Flexibility has always been a given for us.

For us, flexibility encompasses the operation of both freehold and leasehold properties, from stand-alone supermarkets, retail parks and shopping centres to urban locations.

We continuously adapt our strategy to align with market conditions. In collaboration with our partners, we develop versatile property concepts and explore innovative ways to optimize property operations.

We are a flexible footfall anchor for sites starting from 6,000 sqm; catchment areas with more than 25,000 inhabitants; towns with at least 10,000 inhabitants and sales areas from 2,000 sqm.

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