

Inspiring Examples for Inner-City Development

Reactions to the (impending) desolation of shopping streets

Many municipalities in Germany are already actively working on the remodelling of their inner-cities and central shopping streets. In their preliminary work, the researchers at the Wuppertal Institute and adelphi have identified three complex problem areas that are crucial to consider for the development of city centres:

1. multiple vacancies of shop spaces
2. vacant department stores
3. competition due to e-commerce

The aim of the R&D project "Designing city centres as places of sustainable consumption" (SONa) is to test, in three local pilot projects, to what extent the creation and strengthening of sustainable consumption opportunities in central shopping streets and their surrounding area are an antidote to the decline and desolation of inner-city centres (i.e. the *trading down effect*).

To assist not only the local initiatives but also offer broader insights, a total of 40 projects were screened and seven examples were selected from them to serve as inspirations for the SONa pilots. The selection process was guided by three exclusion criteria, namely a spatial reference to central shopping streets, a functional link to the supply and trade functions of city centres, and the projects being either completed or ongoing for at least one year. The complex problem areas described above were also decisive for the selection.

The vacancy of several shop spaces in the inner-city spaces of towns and cities can be a sign of the dreaded 'trading-down effect', that is, the decline and desolation of inner-city areas, particularly within the context of retail and shopping. Presented below are three projects that are successfully combating the trading-down effect.

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1 ALWIN – „Aktives Leerstandsmanagement Wittlicher Innenstadt“ (Active Vacancy Management of Wittlich City Centre)

Wittlich, located in Rhineland-Palatinate, is the district town of Bernkastel-Wittlich. Situated along the Lieser River, a tributary of the Moselle, Wittlich is often referred to as the 'entrance to the Eifel,' making it a prominent medium-sized town in the region."(Stadtverwaltung Wittlich n. d.). With a catchment area of up to 100,000 people and a workforce larger than its residential population, Wittlich stands as a significant economic hub within the region. (Stadtverwaltung Wittlich n. d.). Wittlich has achieved significant economic and industrial growth by designating eight industrial zones outside the town's boundaries (Stadtverwaltung Wittlich n. d.).

In an article for the magazine „Informationen zur Raumentwicklung“ (Information on Spatial Development) the head of Wittlich's Economic Development Department describes the backstory of the Alwin project, tracing its origins to the gradual decline of Wittlich's centre amid the retail crisis that unfolded from the 1990s onwards (Wener 2022). In 2009, Wittlich became a beneficiary of the federal and state urban development funding programme known as 'Aktive Stadt- und Ortsteilzentren' (Active Town and District Centres). The funding Wittlich received was primarily invested in the renovation and repair of buildings in Wittlich's old town (Bundesministerium für Wohnen, Stadtentwicklung und Bauwesen 2018). Prior to embarking on these redevelopment initiatives, an integrated inner-city development plan was crafted through a round table collaboration, serving as a guiding compass for investment and renovation efforts in the old town (Stadtverwaltung Wittlich 2011). Alongside the restoration and modernization of the building stock, the project entailed the rejuvenation of public squares and spaces within the old town, repurposing brownfield sites, the demolition of outdated structures, and enhancing quality of life by unsealing previously inaccessible courtyards (Bundesministerium für Wohnen, Stadtentwicklung und Bauwesen 2018).). In 2012, the city further expanded its efforts by developing a retail and centre concept, later revising it in 2014 to accommodate unexpected changes in the urban structure (ISU Immissionschutz, Städtebau, Umweltplanung 2015).

„ALWIN“

ALWIN promotes "new settlements of innovative and sustainable businesses from the areas of retail, crafts, creative industries, and gastronomy in the old town of Wittlich [, the] reduction of inner-city vacancies [and the] revitalisation of the inner city and increase the frequency of visitors of the area". (CIMA Beratung + Management GmbH n. d.).

Duration:	since 2016 – ongoing (as of Sep 2023)
Spatial focus:	Centre / old town
Project sponsor / Lead:	Office for Economic Development Wittlich
4 project pillars:	alwin direkt, alwin genial, alwin pop up, alwin experte
Budget:	75 % from the urban development funding programme „Aktive Stadt- und Ortsteilzentren“; total of up to € 50,000
Implementation partners:	Retail, associations, chambers, federations, real estate owners and financial service providers
Formal committees:	Round table consisting of one representative from each of the city council groups and representatives of Stadtmarketing Wittlich e.V.

The active vacancy management of the city of Wittlich is based on four key areas that are primarily implemented using resources of the municipal economic development department:

- ▶ **„alwin direkt“** serves as an intermediary between owners and potential entrepreneurs in cases where the premises are in good condition and the start-up requires minimal support. There, favourable conditions are negotiated, especially in cooperation with the city.
- ▶ **„alwin genial“** focuses on spaces in need of renovation. For the initial six months, these spaces can be leased at the cost of utility expenses only. In the latter half of the year, the rent is reduced to half, with full rent charges commencing after a year. This approach ensures that renting remains financially viable for new businesses, encouraging their establishment.
- ▶ **„alwin pop-up“** is a cooperation between the Municipal Economic Development Agency and property owners who offer well-located vacant shops for a weekly fee of €75 for up to 12 weeks. Once these spaces secure long-term tenants, the project seamlessly transitions to another location, ensuring sustained occupancy.
- ▶ **„alwin experte“** is a partnership with external experts from diverse sectors, including banks and local government authorities, that provides valuable support and guidance to aspiring local entrepreneurs in their business endeavours.

Another successful ALWIN project is the "Genussmarkt", which is a market offering high-quality and regional products every Saturday during the warmer months of the year (Wener 2022). Within the first 3 years of the project, the vacancy rate in the city centre has almost halved from 12.8 % to 7.5 % as a result of the ALWIN projects (Portalavenue GmbH n. d.). The activities in the project focus primarily on attracting exclusive shops. The aim of the project is to make the inner city more appealing by attracting new businesses and fostering its development into a new, vibrant city centre. While considerations about quality and sustainability play a rather indirect role in the selection of the settlements, the overarching goal is to promote high-quality and unique settlements. Currently, the ALWIN project has now assumed a less central role in the city centre's development, primarily because there are no significant vacancies available for conversion.

2 Hanau aufLADEN

Hanau, situated in the Main-Kinzig district within the Rhine-Main metropolitan area, serves as both a regional hub and the largest city in Hesse belonging to a district. Following World War II, the United States assumed control of the former military installations of the German armed forces (Hanau Garrison). From the 1990s until 2008, the USA withdrew their stationed units from Hanau, gradually leaving behind an area of 340 hectares, the subsequent use and conversion of which became one of the largest urban development tasks in the region (Stadt Hanau 2023b). As an economic location, Hanau currently focuses primarily on materials technology (Stadt Hanau 2023c).

In October 2008, the city of Hanau was included in the **urban development programme „Aktive Kernbereiche in Hessen“** (Active Core Areas in Hesse), the funding of which was used to finance investments into public space and the building stock of Hanau's inner city. The inner-city redevelopment was implemented on the basis of an integrated action concept for the city¹ and a **design concept for “public space”**. The latter was awarded funding as a result of a competitive dialogue held in 2010. Consequently, five central squares and streets, as well as the Neustadt town hall and the Johanneskirchplatz were redesigned. Moreover, the historic chancellery building was repurposed and also redesigned, and part of the historic city wall was restored. Additionally, property owners in the city centre received support for enhancing facades, windows, doors, lighting, canopies, and other visual elements, courtesy of the City Economic Stimulus Programme, as part of these urban development efforts. Thanks to the implementation of this urban development programme, the visual appearance of Hanau's city centre underwent a profound transformation (Stadt Hanau 2023a).

The enactment of a **pre-emptive right statute** was decisive for the further development of Hanau's inner city (Stadt Hanau 2019). It grants the municipality a "special" right of first refusal in the demarcated area of the city centre and old town and in this way enforces a direct dialogue between the municipality and the real estate sector.

„Hanau aufLADEN“fu

„Thanks to proactive, on-the-go urban development, Hanau is a place for encounters, for lively retail, and for a broad-based gastro scene.“ (Stadt Hanau n. d.)

Duration:	since 2010
Spatial focus:	City Centre
Project sponsor / Lead:	Hanau Marketing GmbH (HMG)
4 key pillars of success:	Projects, real estate, accomplices, service
Budget:	€ 500,000 per year
Implementation partners:	Hanau Marketing Association, IHK Chamber of Commerce Hanau-Gelnhausen-Schlüchtern, Einzelhandelsverband (Retailers' Association) Hessen-Süd, Haus & Grund, City of Hanau, Economic Development Agency of Hanau, Sparkasse Hanau, Baugesellschaft Hanau; Forum Hanau/HBB (Hanseatische Betreuungs- und Beteiligungsgesellschaft mbH)
Formal committees:	Trade Steering Group of the City of Hanau

¹ The action plan is not available to the researchers.

According to information provided by Hanau, as a city and through Hanau Marketing GmbH (HMG), it has adopted a distinctive approach to inner-city development, setting it apart from many other municipalities. Instead of the often-lengthy process of concept development, the municipality already initiated a citizens' weekend in March 2019 based on its existing urban development concept. During this event, a collective vision for the future was developed.

This vision, named „Zukunft Hanau“ (Future Hanau) serves as the basis for the future endeavours of Hanau's city centre management. In January and February of 2020, just before the racist attack on February 19, 2020 and the onset of the global pandemic, concrete initiatives and the 'Hanau aufLADEN' campaign were developed. Due to the ensuing events however, the campaign's launch was postponed until September 2020, coinciding with the inauguration of the first pop-up shop. This marked the commencement of a dynamic transformation in Hanau, where HMG is, as they put it, "simply letting many things grow" (Hanau Marketing GmbH 2023, p. 5).

In a recently published brochure, HMG (Hanau Marketing GmbH 2023) outlines the framework of the Hanau aufLADEN project, based upon four key pillars of success:

1. First and foremost are the **projects** implemented in Hanau's city centre. HMG or the municipality supports these projects on the one hand by providing shop space and low-risk conditions for innovative shop concepts and on the other hand, since 2021, through a so-called newcomer start-up fund of €10,000. Notably, HMG actively operates shops such as KunstKaufLADEN Tacheles and temporarily continues the operation of a traditional toy store. In total, eight pop-up projects have been executed, with six of them becoming permanent fixtures since autumn 2020. Local government support plays a pivotal role in this endeavour.
2. The second pillar centres on **real estate** and is particularly bolstered by the municipal right of first refusal and the City Economic Stimulus Programme, launched as part of urban development funding. Proactive vacancy and settlement management for Hanau's inner city are also facilitated by the LeAn@-database², developed in a project funded by the Federal Ministry of Economics. The Hanau aufLADEN project website allows direct reporting of existing or forthcoming vacancies, supporting interested retailers in locating suitable spaces.³
3. In Hanau, the term "**accomplices**" refers to a network comprising individual and organised city players who actively contribute to the city centre's design, forming the third pillar of success for Hanau aufLADEN.
4. In addition to the start-up fund for new entrepreneurs already described, HMG also supports innovative prospective and existing businesses with further **services** as part of Hanau aufLADEN. These services include advice on digitalisation, for example to target hybrid consumers, on consumer loyalty measures, and on dealing with and complying with the design guideline for Hanau's city centre. Under the title '*HU's in action*', various events and markets are hosted throughout the year to boost foot traffic in the city centre.

Due to a lack of transparency surrounding the informal inner-city development concepts, a comprehensive analysis of the initiatives undertaken in Hanau's city centre pertaining to the predetermined areas for enhancing city centres as sustainable consumption hubs is somewhat

² For more information on the project „Stadtlabore für Deutschland“ (Urban labs for Germany) please visit: <https://www.stadtlabore-deutschland.de> (accessed: 07.05.2023).

³ Both services, the vacancy indicator and the space finder, can be found on the subpage „Ansiedlungsmanagement“ (settlement management): <https://hanauaufladen.jetzt/immobilien/ansiedlungsmanagement/> (accessed: 7.5.2023).

constrained. As per the information gathered during the interview, there is no explicit emphasis within settlement management on promoting **sustainable consumption** offerings due to budgetary constraints faced by the city. Nevertheless, it is still observable that many of the innovative shop concepts in Hanau - particularly the pop-up stores - at least have sustainability in mind, and in some cases even use it as a guiding principle. Notable examples include an urban gardening project, a temporary second-hand shop, the sustainable fashion store "Lotte im Glück," and the "Gaumenschmeichler" offering regional and sustainable food options. **Places of community** are created within the framework of Hanau aufLADEN primarily through the establishment of gastronomic offerings, as well as activities and events in the "Fronhof". However, the initiative does not specifically focus on creating such spaces without commercial incentives. Additionally, Hanau aufLADEN does not place a particular emphasis on urban planning measures geared towards **environmentally friendly** urban development.

3 „Eine Mitte für alle“ (a centre for all) in the city of Offenbach am Main

The city of Offenbach am Main is the fifth largest city in the federal state of Hesse and is an important regional centre in the Rhine-Main conurbation. Offenbach characterises itself as a relatively recent 'arrival city' for individuals relocating from abroad. An analysis of migration patterns, conducted in conjunction with the development of the Masterplan 2030 (Stadt Offenbach a. M. and Offenbach Offensiv 2015, p. 29) has shown that mainly young families and senior citizens with German citizenship are leaving the city, while many young families without German citizenship are moving in. With regards to the economy, the city of Offenbach underwent a "profound structural change from an industrial to a service location" (Stadt Offenbach a. M. et al. 2020, p. 6). This structural change was accompanied by the loss of several thousand jobs covered by social insurance contributions, coupled with a growth in freelance, scientific, technical, and various other economic service providers among the workforce. This transformation underscores the prominent role of creative industries within the city, which is home to an internationally renowned design university.

Since the mid-2000s, the city of Offenbach am Main has been actively working on visions, concepts and strategies for its future urban development, with the opportunity for its resident to also participate. During this time, a Master Plan 2030 and an Integrated Urban Development Concept have been developed, among others, together providing the strategic framework for current urban development in Offenbach. The master plan adopted by the city council in 2016 focuses on the topic areas of "housing" and "economy" and in this regard also addresses the "upgrading of the city centre" as a key project with predominantly urban development measures (Stadt Offenbach a. M. and Offenbach Offensiv 2015, p. 156). Adopted at the beginning of 2020, the integrated urban development concept "Green Ring Network in the Outer Core City", brings together existing concepts while focusing spatially on the so-called outer core city, that is, the "suburban transitional space between the inner core city and the city forest" (Quaiser 2019, p. 11).

For the core inner city, a separate process was carried out, engaging various stakeholders and collaborating with the urban planning agency 'urbanista', resulting in **the "Zukunftskonzept" (Future Concept) for the city centre** in 2020 (Stadt Offenbach a. M. et al. 2020), an instrumental concept adopted by the city council to be used as a guiding compass for future development. In preparation for the city centre Future Concept, the City of Offenbach cooperated with the *Offenbach Offensiv* association, as it did for the preparation of the Master Plan 2030. The costs for both development concepts were shared between the municipality, the association, and the master plan advisory board, which also supervises the development and implementation of the Downtown Master Plan (quality and target control), a project jointly chaired by the mayor of the city and the chairman of the association (Stadt Offenbach a. M. 2014; Stadt Offenbach a. M. and Offenbach Offensiv 2018). Furthermore, there is a steering group dedicated to the City Centre Future Concept which supports the Agentur Mitte (newly founded in 2021), with impulses and networking, as well as monitoring the project's progress. The steering group is made up of representatives of the relevant offices of the city administration (Office for Planning and Building & Economic Development), the local Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK Offenbach), the Offenbach Offensiv association and the Offenbacher Projektentwicklungsgesellschaft (OPG) (Niermann 2021).

The development of an additional Future Concept for the city centre was prompted by the observation that, despite previous efforts and positive developments in other quarters of the

city, the decline in the retail-focused core city persisted and that "in large parts (...) vacancies and uses with low quality standards (added) to existing urban space deficits" (Stadt Offenbach a. M. et al. 2020, p. 25). As in many other cities, Offenbach realised that the decline of a retail-centred quarter necessitated a new variety of uses and purposes according to the urban community's needs. Accordingly, the Future Concept was underpinned by a commitment to once again reinvigorate the core city centre into a fully-fledged quarter, capable of fulfilling five basic functions: commerce and supply, employment, participation and representation, culture and community, and housing. The city calls these functions its **five levels of inner-city commitment**.

„Eine Mitte für alle“: implementation of the Future Concept for the city centre

„The aim is to maintain a lively and attractive city centre, which, as the core of an easily accessible city of short distances, takes on the role of the social centre and represents Offenbach with its energy, its internationality and also its diversity.“ (Stadt Offenbach a. M. et al. 2020, p. 9)

Duration:	2020 – 2030
Spatial focus:	Core city centre defined as "Offenbach Mitte" (centre of Offenbach)
Project Lead:	communal: agency Mitte, department I, economic development department of the city
16 Future projects:	5 key spatial projects, 6 impulse projects, 3 basic projects were developed for the city centre Future Concept "offen denken" (thinking openly). 2 further projects were added later; 9 projects are currently being implemented.
Project funding:	€ 200,000 for the preparation of the Future Concept
Project sponsor:	City administration and municipal companies, IHK Offenbach and Offenbach Offensiv e. V., Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach
Formal committees:	Steering Group on the Future Concept, Master Plan Advisory Board

The 16 projects of the city centre Future Concept (Stadt Offenbach a. M. et al. 2020, p. 70–35) address to varying degrees, the five levels of the city centre commitment, which substantially overlaps with **the thematic fields of places of sustainable consumption in a city centre** previously discussed. A noteworthy difference from the categorisation of topics in the previous chapter is the inclusion of the housing level as a commitment area. While housing is undoubtedly important for city centre development, it is not prioritised in the context of designing city centres as hubs of sustainable consumption, the core focus of this R&D project. Consequently, this case study did not delve into the two impulse projects ("Lückenfüller" and "Wohnen+") in greater detail. A similar situation applies to the commitment level of labour, which, while crucial for (inner) urban development, is not a primary focus within this R&D project. Another major difference from the previous chapter is the neglect of a dedicated area for **environmentally friendly urban development**. Although this is addressed in a separate key project "Grünes Band" (green belt) and in the basic project „Mobilitätssystem Innenstadt“ (mobility system inner city), it has been relatively subordinated compared to other areas. Another project, which was developed and supplemented after adoption of the Future Concept, aims to include ecological issues within education for sustainable development in cooperation with the Offenbach-based German Weather Service in the „Wetter- und Klima-Werkstatt“ (Weather and Climate Workshop).⁴

⁴ For more information on this project, please visit the website www.wetterwerkstatt.de

The commitment areas of participation and representation, as well as culture and community, are collectively addressed in this working paper under the objective of creating **places of community**. These places are to be created primarily in two key spatial projects, three impulse projects, one basic project and one further project added later.

Table 1 **Creating places of community in Offenbach's core city centre**

Project	Focus / Goal
Station Mitte	Realignment and relocation of the city library to the core city centre
Zukunftsfoyer im Rathaus	Exhibition and debate venue
Dachsteiger	public and semi-public roof uses
Urban Art Biennale	international festival on the creative use of vacancies and urban spaces
Feste-Programm	revitalisation of the city centre through events
Stadtraum-Offensive	Toolbox, manual, design framework for the development of public spaces
Rathaus-Pavillon	Creation of a third place: youth space, cycling space, urban space ⁵

The retail and supply area of Offenbach's inner-city commitment is examined in this conceptual handout within the domain of **sustainable consumption opportunities**. New consumption opportunities and jobs are to be created in Offenbach primarily through two key spatial projects and one impulse project:

Table 2 **Creation of new consumer opportunities in Offenbach's core city centre**

Projekt	Focus / Goal
Kaufhaus Kosmopolis	Regional products and international street food market
Made.of Designhaus	Design and exhibition centre with open workshops and temporary housing
Testraum-Allee	Innovation area in public space and support programme for new shop and retail concepts
Offenbach-Open	Open network infrastructure and platform for digital city experience also involving retail and industry ⁶

It is striking that, in the analysis of the projects for the future of the core city centre, the sustainability of consumption opportunities - beyond the reference to regional products and services - is not a key focus.

⁵ For more information on this project, please see the press release of the City of Offenbach: https://www.offenbach.de/unternehmen/zukunft_innenstadt/meldungen/rathaus-pavillon-stadtraum27.04.2023.php (accessed: 27.04.2023).

⁶ At the moment, the research team does not have any information about the prominence with which the retail and supply area will be addressed in the "Offenbach Open" project. Nevertheless, it is fundamentally assigned to the topic area of sustainable consumption opportunities here, since such a project naturally addresses hybrid users and thus consumers in particular.

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