

Inspiring Examples for Inner-City Development

Reactions to vacant department stores

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 can be decisive 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*).

As an aid for the local initiatives, but also beyond them, a total of 40 local projects were screened and seven examples were selected from them to serve as inspirations for the SONa pilots. Three exclusion criteria (spatial reference to the central shopping street, functional reference to the supply and trade function of city centres, project already completed or running for at least one year) and the focus on the complex problem situations described above were decisive for the selection.

When large department stores' chains become insolvent, major challenges follow, not only for the individual employees, but also for the municipalities. One challenge is the wise and future-oriented re-purposing of the vacant buildings. Two inspiring approaches for the re-purposing of vacant department stores are described below.

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1 „NochMall – alles außer neu“ (NochMall – everything but new) in Berlin-Reinickendorf

In 2020, Berlin Waste Management, known as "Berliner Stadtreinigung" or BSR, introduced NochMall, a second-hand department store located in Berlin-Reinickendorf.

This venture aligns seamlessly with BSR's overarching corporate strategy, placing a strong emphasis on fostering reusability as a pivotal waste prevention measure. It thus makes a substantial contribution to the objectives outlined in the State of Berlin's new waste management concept for the years 2020-2030 (Senatsverwaltung Berlin 2021). The roots of the NochMall project can be traced back to 2018 when it first appeared within the framework of the "Zero Waste Berlin" initiative. Its viability was tested in a pilot project, conducted at the Ruppiner Chaussee recycling centre, where materials were collected and subsequently redistributed via social department stores and other institutions over a five-week period. This pilot suggested that a substantial potential for reuse of materials existed.

The concept development and the search for a suitable property took place in the first half of 2019. In 2020, the lease was signed and conversion of the department store began. Concurrently, locations for accepting second-hand goods were established at two BSR recycling yards. The grand opening of NochMall took place in August 2020. At the same time of NochMall's opening, a pop-up shop was opened in September 2020 within the Karstadt department store at Hermannplatz as part of the Re-Use Berlin B-Wa(h)renhaus on the 3rd floor.

„NochMALL – alles außer neu“ (everything but new)

"Department shop, platform, workshops, and events - Nochmall is becoming synonymous with re-use and sustainability." Frieder Söling (Managing Director NochMALL)

Duration:	2018 – ongoing
Spatial focus:	District and cross-district
Project sponsor / Lead:	Berlin Waste Management (BSR), NochMall GmbH is a subsidiary owned entirely by BSR
Funding:	Self-financed by BSR until the start of the project; currently financed by NochMall incomes. The NochMall business model is not profit-oriented. It is only intended to cover the costs of running the department stores.

NochMall envisions itself as a place for embracing the principles of the circular economy and actively promoting waste prevention. Its extensive offering currently spans ten product groups (furniture, clothing, electrical appliances, household goods, toys, books, etc.) with a total of about 15,000 items within an area covering more than 2,000 square metres. It employs just under 20 members of staff.

The goals of the NochMall are:

- ▶ Conserving resources by extending the life cycle of products.
- ▶ Avoidance of CO₂ through the reuse of second-hand goods.
- ▶ Creation of up to 20 permanent jobs in the second-hand department stores.

- ▶ Offering a wide range of goods at affordable prices that allow people with lower incomes to shop.
- ▶ Cooperation with institutions from Berlin's reuse and waste prevention scene (social institutions, start-ups, etc.) for example by temporarily subletting space for their services in the form of pop-up stores.
- ▶ Creating a tangible place by setting-up a repair café, upcycling workshops and environmental education programmes to promote awareness of waste reduction, reuse, and recycling among Berlin's citizens (NochMall GmbH n. d.).

During the Corona pandemic and the lockdown, digital solutions for "remote shopping" - chat, click and collect – were explored and tested. Currently, customers have the opportunity to select products via WhatsApp, chat or (video) call, which are then made available for collection. In addition, online tutorials, for example on the topic of upcycling, are published on YouTube.

2 Urban redevelopment in Lünen

Lünen, the largest city in the Unna district within the administrative district of Arnsberg, North Rhine-Westphalia. Belonging to the Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe and the Regionalverband Ruhr, Lünen presents itself as a mid-sized urban centre, characterised by a unique blend of industrial and rural influences owing to its location. In addition to the Datteln-Hamm Canal running along the south of the city, the Lippe River, flows directly through the city centre, and is the cityscape's main feature. In some places, the built-up area is strongly influenced by the former mining industry, which is why mining damage is also apparent in these areas. This is particularly the case in the southern parts of Lünen. In addition, Lünen is characterised by a polycentric settlement structure, with the city centre being the largest agglomeration area.

The city of Lünen was and still is strongly affected by structural change and the withdrawal of the coal and steel industry. Lünen also experiences population decline, an unemployment rate above the state average, a high proportion of residents with a migration background, and a retail-relevant purchasing power index below the national average, as well as a vacancy rate of 10% in the city centre (Stadt Lünen 2020).

In response to these challenges, the city initiated the integrated urban development concept "Perspektive Innenstadt Lünen 2012 - Impulse für einen starken Kern" (Prospects for Lünen City Centre 2012 - Impulses for a Strong City Core). This comprehensive plan aimed to bolster the retail sector, make leisure and cultural activities more abundant in the city centre, enhance the cityscape, create welcoming spaces, and improve the city's orientation. Concurrently, urban residential development was also improved. In parallel to these activities, to address the specific needs of the retail sector (e.g. better use of retail spaces) and tackle persistent vacancies, a retail master plan for Lünen was developed.

In the urban redevelopment of Lünen, the transformation of the former Hertie property stands as one of the flagship projects, representing one of the largest transformations. Since 2009, following the departure of the Hertie retail chain, the city of Lünen has grappled with the challenge of how to repurpose the vacant building. Right from the outset, it was clear that a lasting transformation could only be achieved with a comprehensive strategy for inner-city development. Over a three-year period, this strategy took shape, involving property negotiations, interim design proposals, and numerous expert workshops. During this period, "Bauverein zu Lünen," a local housing cooperative, emerged as the vacant property's new owner.

Progressively, beginning in 2014, the building underwent a profound transformation, including extensive interior renovations, height reduction, and the creation of a rooftop terrace to enhance natural lighting for the integrated apartments.

In total, this conversion reclaimed approximately 5,000 square meters of retail space from the market. The objective of this endeavour was to establish a sustainable multi-use space mixed with urban housing. After partial demolition and extensive conversion efforts, the property now contains the following features:

- ▶ Retail area: approx. 730 m²
- ▶ Gastronomy: approx. 800 m²
- ▶ Banking institution premises: approx. 520 m²

- ▶ Two medical practices: approx. 1.200 m²
- ▶ Residential units: around 2.200 m² hosting 24 barrier-free, high-quality rental flats (50 m² - approx. 100 m²) and underground parking in the existing basement for the tenants.

Completion took place in 2017 and was marked by a large city centre festival celebration.

„Stadtimpulse“ (City Impulses) Lünen

Conversion of an inner-city department stores' property

Duration:	2009-2017
Spatial focus:	City centre
Project sponsor / Lead:	Lünen Municipality and Bauverein zu Lünen
Budget:	approx. € 14 million

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