

THE WORK PLACE RE LOADED

DREES &
SOMMER

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Where did
everyone go?
And will they
ever come
back?



04



**Planning successful
construction projects during
the new normal**

08



**THE NEW NORMAL:
WE STILL NEED OFFICES, BUT NOT
AS WE KNOW THEM**

11



**More than just a
building with desks**

25



**“In the future, there
will be an extra focus
on hygiene”**

- 03 Foreword – Steffen Szeidl
- 04 Planning successful construction projects during the new normal – Dierk Mutschler
- 08 The new normal: we still need offices, but not as we know them – Harald Czycholl-Hoch
- 11 More than just a building with desks – Klaus Hirt
- 15 A smart home for the new workplace – Klaus Dederichs
- 20 Wanted: innovative offices for the new normal – Martin Becker
- 25 “There will be an extra focus on hygiene” – Prof. Christian K. Lackner
- 28 The next generation: healthy, renewable, circular – Peter Möhle
- 33 Fresh ideas – and new business models – Martin Pietzonka
- 36 Why having an ecosystem is better than going it alone – Michael Aechtler, Nathanie Ursinus-Vasiliadis
- 38 Quartier Heidestrasse: smart, connected and future-ready – Simon Dietzfelbinger, Sissi Al-Sheikh
- 42 In summary: rethinking the workplace – Steffen Szeidl
- 44 Imprint



Steffen Szeidl

Dear reader,

Are you a bit tired of all the coronavirus office-related discussions too? It seems to me like every possible trend has done the rounds over the last few months – whether it's about needing less office space in future as a result of people working from home because of the coronavirus or whether social distancing rules will mean that we'll be left needing about the same amount of office space as before. But what if all this is missing the point? What if it's not about the sheer number of square meters, but rather whether the spaces themselves will be flexible, digital, sustainable and valuable enough to meet the requirements of the future? At the heart of it all lies a dilemma: workers are craving to return to the office and work alongside their colleagues yet are also afraid of missing out on the positive aspects of the giant pandemic home office experiment.

The coronavirus has suddenly brought us face to face with issues – such as digitization and sustainability – that the construction sector would have had to address sooner or later anyway. Whilst it's clear that the office itself is still relevant, what will it actually look like? That's the question that we'll try to answer in this "The Workplace Reloaded" dossier, by taking a look at the most important aspects of the workplace of the future and how they affect the people who work there.

Crisis is often the catalyst for change, but it can also be a turning point. What can we learn from the enforced downtime of the past few months? If anything, the coronavirus has only made abundantly clear what was starting to emerge before the crisis: there's no such thing as a single workplace anymore. In this dossier, we don't want to just explore the minefield of risk; we want to make the case for optimism. In a nutshell: let's view the crisis as an opportunity.

Happy reading!

Yours, Steffen Szeidl
Member of the Executive Board, Drees & Sommer SE

PLANNING SUCCESSFUL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS DURING THE NEW NORMAL

With delivery delays, quarantine regulations and insolvencies, the coronavirus pandemic has had a noticeable impact on the construction industry. Building projects are in danger of remaining unfinished and many constructors have unanswered questions: Can I finish my construction project on time without enormous additional costs? Is there any point in building new office buildings if working from home will win out in the long term? What safety measures will need to be observed on the construction site? There's no avoiding it: the coronavirus is impacting the way in which building projects are planned and managed.

*By Dierk Mutschler,
Member of the Executive Board, Drees & Sommer SE*



Space is the new quality

Today, if you built an office building with enough room for 500 desks in pre-coronavirus times, that number would have to be revised due to the current measures being taken – such as new social distancing rules and hygiene regulations that apply to desk-sharing arrangements. At the same time, some plans for conference rooms in office buildings will have to be redesigned to incorporate new audio-visual equipment.

As the above examples show, new and ongoing construction projects no longer have the right specifications. Constructors would be well advised to rethink any decisions made prior to the coronavirus and re-evaluate every project. The main question that needs to be answered is: is my building equipped for the new normal and will it be pandemic-ready in future? Another positive aspect of this period of downtime is that the coronavirus has put a new spotlight on digitization and sustainability. It forces us to ask: what is my digitization strategy? How can I implement sustainability initiatives under these new circumstances?

Business and work tasks are moving into the digital space, a fact that needs to be taken into account when planning office buildings. Future workers will expect digital services, which means that companies who don't ask themselves what digital infrastructure and processes are needed well before construction kicks off – or fail to integrate them into plans or roll them out properly – risk getting themselves into expensive and time-consuming extra rounds of work. And the same goes for areas like health and safety. The employees of the future will assign more importance to things like having a sustainable and healthy working and living environment. In other words, digitization and sustainability will be key for any future-proof construction.

Now it's time for a break

That's right. If you're currently planning or doing a construction project, you should take a moment to apply the "Soulware Software Hardware Programming" principle. At its core, it asks constructors to look at their building project through the lens of a holistic business strategy.

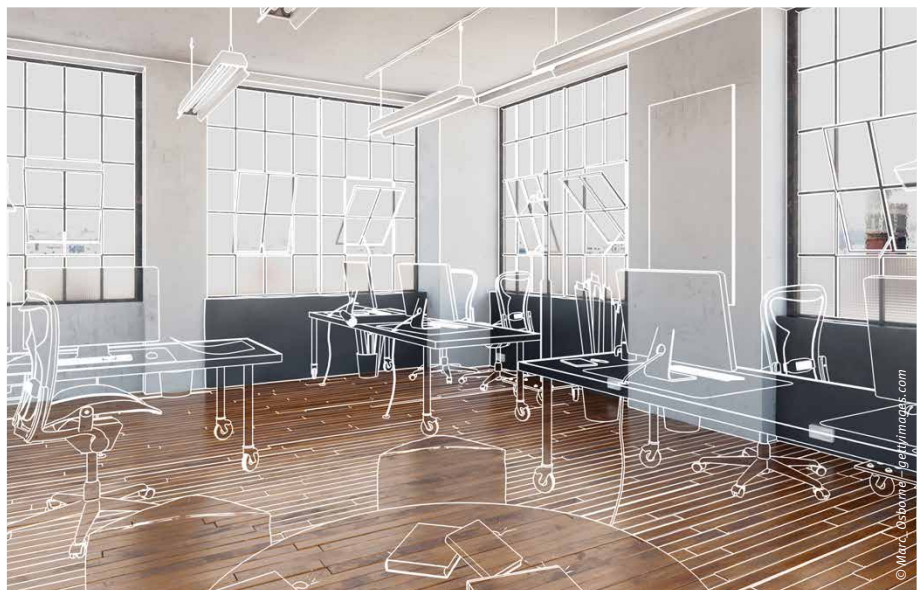
'Soulware' means: in what specific ways will core business processes change in the new normal? How can the construction industry adapt to implement this in the best way? For example, the coronavirus has fundamentally changed people's habits, mindset and priorities.

'Software' means: people are practising social distancing, working from home – and increasingly using digital tools – and using more video conferencing. So, a constructor building a new office might need to provide more video conferencing capability as well as installing fewer desks. Once these issues have been thought through, the next step is to establish what software is needed to meet requirements.

'Hardware' means: do our network connections need to be more powerful? Or do we need a new ventilation system because of the reduced number of desks? Once these issues have been properly assessed, the hardware and technology should be adapted accordingly.

'Programming' means: if it turns out that 40 per cent of workers work from home – or express a preference for working from home – will workstations need less technical equipment?

"Is my building equipped for the new normal and will it be pandemic-ready in future?"





Conversely, employers will need to ensure that employees can do their work just as well from home. It's therefore crucial to set aside time before each project begins to work through these scenarios. Doing so will ensure that the building specifications and layout are suitable for the new normal, setting you up for a successful project.

Rely on tried-and-tested knowledge

Whether you're working on an ongoing project or a brand new one, some things are just as relevant as they were before the coronavirus. For example: if possible, you should invite tenders as early as possible, avoid awarding short-term contracts and allow enough time for the trades in between awarding the contract and the start of work. The more detailed the planning during the tendering process, the more certainty you have over costs. It's also helpful to publish the key requirements during the tendering process so that the firms and service providers doing the work will at least have them on their radar from the start. Another useful thing to do at this point is to start strategic procurement. The instrument that Drees & Sommer has developed for large-scale construction projects combines market knowledge about building prices, building processes, company capacity or bidding behaviour with procurement knowledge from experts in large companies in the sector. That includes assessing clients of upcoming projects on their ability to adapt to the way that the coronavirus has changed the workplace and the economy as flexibly as possible.

Like an engine where the cogs fit together seamlessly

If you want to successfully manage a building project in the 'new normal', it's more important than ever to have basic risk management in place to help identify what the project-specific coronavirus risks are. Taking concrete preventative measures can reduce the risk of the disease entering the site and spreading. These include on-site precautions such as maintaining social distancing rules, mandatory mask-wearing, doing digital meetings and hygiene regulations for construction or sanitary containers. Outlining what the specific risk scenarios are in advance and providing instructions on what to do will ensure that everyone on the site will be confident in handling the risk.

If a case of the coronavirus does occur despite the precautionary measures, there needs to be a clear system for reporting and passing information on. Everyone working on the project has to be clear about what tasks they need to cover and what system is in place regarding replacement workers and compensation. There also has to be a plan B in case borders are closed again, foreign workers can't travel to the site and deliveries of materials can't be made. In this situation, it's important to be able to adapt quickly because the different trades working on a building site operate in close collaboration like interlocking cogs in an engine. Otherwise, there's a risk of bottlenecks disrupting the entire project.

Search and find with the Capacity Check app

To avoid disruptions, Drees & Sommer has developed an app called Capacity Check, which connects available manpower to staffing gaps in a quick and easy way. Employers looking for workers can register their requirements on the digital platform, whilst construction companies can register their free capacity. Capacity is therefore efficiently allocated without wastage, enabling the construction project to proceed smoothly.

Digital construction management as a key tool

A well-configured digital construction management system can help prevent delays. Alongside this, lean construction management and agile planning and construction management methods will enable constructors to react more quickly to the changing coronavirus situation.



***"Capacity Check
is a quick and easy
way to fill capacity
gaps with available
manpower."***

Another tool that will help increase the quality and efficiency of work during the planning and construction phases is the digital planning method: Building Information Modelling, or BIM for short. BIM is proving particularly useful during the pandemic, helping bring projects to completion when so many restrictions are in place.



Using BIM to simulate meetings, construction and assembly processes

Before a single stone has been laid on a construction site, BIM enables a digital model of the future building to be created – at incredible detail if need be. The model doesn't just include geometric data but also keeps track of a whole range of specifications, such as materials and fire protection. In an ideal world, all parties involved in the construction will have round-the-clock access and can log their progress. Or, to put it another way, the building being worked on will have a twin that lives in the digital world. This is especially useful during the coronavirus, as it removes the need for constant person-to-person interactions by enabling all the trades to reach agreements in a smooth, natural way.



For example, if a planner using the model needs to change a building component – which might be down to delivery problems caused by the coronavirus – then it is automatically applied across all components of the same type. If the plans no longer fit each other, any discrepancies are picked up before the construction phase, where they could lead to expensive delays. The testing results of the models will display planning errors, which makes the planning process as watertight as possible.

However, the bottom line is: even the smartest construction project won't go anywhere if there are countless software interfaces, tedious procedures for reaching agreements and acquiring approval, and opaque communications processes.

In a nutshell: it's all about finding the right mix. The keys to successful construction projects in this brave new world of coronavirus working will be solid specialist knowledge and knowing how to combine analog with digital methods and tools.

“BIM is proving particularly useful for completing projects during the pandemic, when so many restrictions are in place.”



Dierk Mutschler
Partner and Member of the
Executive Board,
Drees & Sommer SE

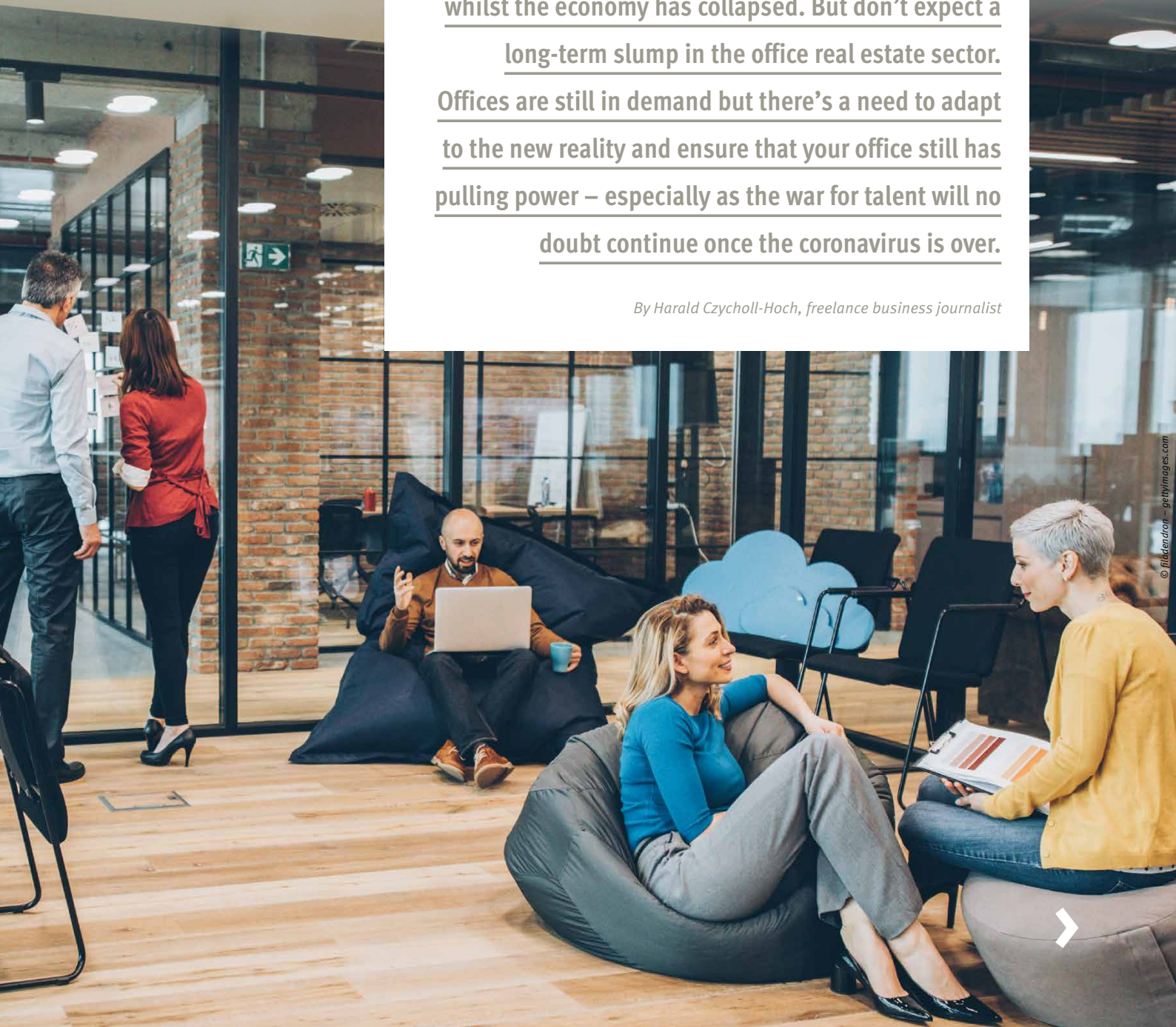
After completing a civil engineering degree at the University of Stuttgart, Dierk Mutschler joined Drees & Sommer as a project manager in 1991. Using his expertise in cost planning and control, he worked over a long period to develop Drees & Sommer's advanced systems in that area. Since joining the board in 2008, Dierk has been responsible for the global project management and consulting business and for the operational business of the Drees & Sommer group. In his position as Member of the Executive Board, he is responsible for the areas of building performance, infrastructure and strategic acquisition and is working intensively to grow Drees & Sommer's business into other sectors.



THE NEW NORMAL: WE STILL NEED OFFICES, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW THEM

In the coronavirus crisis, the home office is booming whilst the economy has collapsed. But don't expect a long-term slump in the office real estate sector. Offices are still in demand but there's a need to adapt to the new reality and ensure that your office still has pulling power – especially as the war for talent will no doubt continue once the coronavirus is over.

By Harald Czycholl-Hoch, freelance business journalist



Desks and conference rooms have been abandoned, office chairs lie empty and the canteen is closed. At the height of the coronavirus pandemic, bustling office buildings turned into ghost towns practically overnight. When social distancing rules were applied, companies sent their employees to work from home and people communicated via online conferences, or by chat and email. Never before had so many people been simultaneously working from their home offices, yet, for the most part, the technology coped. Companies like Siemens have reacted by moving around 140,000 employees from a five to a two-day week in the office.

Will the coronavirus pandemic lead to the much-discussed 'new normal', where workers no longer commute into the office – collaborating with their colleagues virtually from their desks at home instead? And if so, will we even need these large, prestigious office buildings anymore? Real estate experts have long been chewing over these questions, yet there isn't really any consensus. Some predict a long-term fall in demand for the office real estate market, with lower buy prices over the medium and long term and lower premium rents, while others expect a swift return to normal once the coronavirus crisis is over. In reality, we'll probably fall somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. There will surely be a greater amount of working from home, which will mean that demand for office space in the next few years won't rise as steeply as it has done in the years before the crisis. This won't spell out the end for office buildings but they will have to adapt to meet a new set of requirements.

"There's no doubt that we'll be working in offices in 2030," says Klaus Hirt, Partner at Drees & Sommer, which specializes in planning and consultancy for the real estate and construction sector. But there will be a shift in purpose: "It will go from being the sole place of work which physically requires employees to be on-site to a location where people can meet in person. It will become a hub for human contact, where employees, business partners and clients meet face to face." It follows that the office will need to foster unity and be a pleasant and dynamic environment.

The coronavirus pandemic will definitely affect the office real estate market – at least in the short term. "Coronavirus will be impacting the real estate economy and property companies over the next few years," explains Klaus Hirt, who is based at the Frankfurt office of Drees & Sommer.

The crisis hasn't fully filtered through to the jobs market and construction projects yet. Current projects are still under way and new projects are being reviewed. Demand may potentially be falling, but new spaces are still coming onto the market. That puts pressure on existing properties and could result in a rise in vacant properties and falling rents. If rents decrease, that could lead to an even larger collapse in prices since rent expectations are factored into purchase prices. It's likely that Class B and C properties would be affected most, with average rents and prices becoming unsustainable.

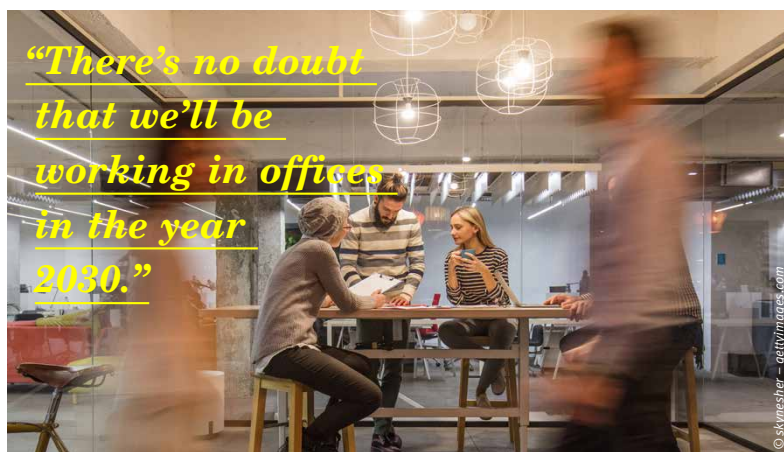
Many workplaces can't switch completely to working from home

According to analytics firm Realxdata, given the increasing popularity of the home or mobile office, no additional large office spaces are being bought or rented at the moment. However, it's hard to imagine that working from home will completely supplant the office: "It could be challenging to put together new teams and onboard new employees from a distance," predict analysts at Deutsche Bank. In addition, there will be a need for effective two-way communication between employers and employees directly after the coronavirus crisis.

"So we are only expecting sporadic increases in home-working for 2020, with no direct impact on the demand for office space."

Indeed, many workplaces can't switch completely to working from home because of legal or regulatory requirements.

In addition, surveys taken by employees have revealed that their health has suffered as a result of home working, especially because there is no clear separation between



working hours and leisure time – and they miss the regular contact with their colleagues. There are also structural reasons that might get in the way of a large shift towards working from home, like Germany's large manufacturing sector. The data shows that regions with a smaller manufacturing industry have higher numbers of people working from home. Compared with other EU countries, Germany has a slightly below-average proportion of home workers – a statistic that has remained very stable for the last 30 years. The proportion of people who work from home occasionally or regularly is about 12 per cent (the EU average is approximately 14 per cent). By contrast, most of Germany's neighbouring countries have a higher number, with the Netherlands leading the way with 36 per cent.



If home working could potentially reduce the demand for office space, a more severe threat is the deep economic crisis that has been unleashed in Germany by the coronavirus pandemic. We have seen a substantial 12 percent contraction in the first two quarters of the year. The Institute for the World Economy in Kiel has published a prognosis for the whole of 2020 this summer that puts it at 6.8 per cent. This massive decline has not yet filtered through into the jobs market in Germany, but it may still do so. Short-time work and state aid have so far prevented mass redundancies in countries like the US, but experts predict a wave of insolvencies in the second half of the year, with a total loss of around a million jobs. When companies cease to exist or operate with a reduced headcount, demand for office space will fall swiftly.

More premium office spaces will be needed in future

Then again, perhaps it's not that simple. After all, those employees returning to work might actually need more space because of social distancing measures. In offices with more cubicles, and larger offices with less densely packed desks and spare space, there will be a greater need for space. In other words, companies needing to change their office space may not necessarily be looking to downsize. "We're going to need more premium office spaces in future," explains Klaus Hirt, the Drees & Sommer office expert. "Only developers and proprietors who set themselves up properly and bring the right products to market will stand a chance of succeeding."

With the office facing renewed competition from the home office, it needs to be attractive enough so that workers prefer it to working from home. "The office of the future needs to be somewhere to meet people in person. It actually needs to be cooler than working from home, so that it's a draw in its own right," Klaus Hirt explains. After all, the much-talked-about war for talent will doubtless continue once the coronavirus subsides. Increasingly, it looks like that battle will be decided by non-monetary factors such as how nice the office is. "It's especially at times when there's a lack of skilled workers that companies need to differentiate themselves from the competition," Klaus Hirt continues. "If employers want to increase employee loyalty and satisfaction, they need to channel their efforts into redesigning their office spaces."

Brighter rooms, relaxation zones and personal climate control will become increasingly more important in future. Businesses will be able to retain their appeal by bringing in fresh ideas, such as allowing workers to come and go more freely and providing infrastructure that facilitates interaction and communication. This will become even more pressing when the economy recovers from the shock caused by the coronavirus. And potentially that could happen sooner than we think: The Institute for the World Economy estimates that the economy will grow by 6.3 per cent next year, which would largely offset the coronavirus losses.





MORE THAN JUST A BUILDING WITH DESKS

By Klaus Hirt
Partner at Drees & Sommer SE

The coronavirus crisis has accelerated certain trends in the real estate market, turning assets that were perfectly viable in the past into liabilities. For property companies, it's time to take stock and rebalance their portfolios in order to protect themselves against and prepare for any potential outside shocks in the future.



There was a time when real estate prices in Germany were only going in one direction – upwards. As demand increased more and more, investors, mutual funds and property companies saw their range of options becoming squeezed. This resulted in many of them making concessions in terms of the location, condition or price of their real estate investments. At the same time, the long property boom was leading to bottlenecks in terms of capacity and rising prices in the construction sector as a whole.

And then along came the coronavirus pandemic, triggering a severe economic crisis and catching the industry – which had not been expecting an external shock – completely unprepared. It's too early to say how serious the impact of the crisis will be on the real estate market, but the impact will certainly be felt. With the pandemic acting as a catalyst that has accelerated certain trends in the property market, properties that were perfectly rentable assets in the past are now doomed to vacancy. And although some companies will come out of it relatively unscathed, others will be bitterly regretting some of the dud investments they made in boom times.

For property companies, it's time to take stock and make the right decisions – time to reinvent themselves, adapt and galvanize themselves against any future shocks like the coronavirus pandemic. To do that, they need to align short and medium-term priorities, make sure they can react quickly and invest in future-proof technologies and sustainability.

Moreover, it means that even in boom times, every investor, developer or proprietor should be asking themselves how future-proof and attractive their building projects and existing properties are. Only then can they guarantee full occupancy of properties and ensure that their properties are equipped with sufficient digital technology to meet the needs of renters. At the same time, it's worth keeping an eye open for any other potential revenue streams that can help offset income lost due to political and social developments such as the Berlin rent freeze.



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Property as an investment

Property companies try to achieve added value and growth through the purchase, management and sale of real estate. Their objective, and the challenge that all property companies face, is to earn secure profits and increase their profits. They need to know what property fulfils all the criteria best, and how competitive their property or property portfolio is. Indeed, there is a wide range of things to bear in mind: from user requirements, how future-proof and cost-effective is a property and facility management on the other, to identifying what kind of opportunities there are from a development or repurposing point of view.



The future belongs to intelligent, eco-friendly buildings and districts

Looking at the medium to long term, it's already clear that real estate will need to be intelligent, eco-friendly and sustainable in order to meet the needs of users. The future belongs to the digital natives, a generation that is becoming ever more climate-conscious. The categories of 'life' and 'work' will become ever more closely intermeshed, and we can see signs of that already in terms of how work, life and home life are becoming connected. With space being at a premium in urban districts, mixed-use high-rise developments will become more and more widespread.

Companies whose main business is real estate will not be able to rely on rent yield categories exclusively, but will instead have to become platform operators and service providers in their own right. As they ride the tide of digital transformation, they can exploit technology for their own core business and to develop digital business models of their own.

The winners in the real estate market of the future will be those property companies or mutual funds that diversify out of renting and selling office space and start providing services for property users; and who are capable of evaluating data analytics, artificial intelligence, usage and capacity data generated by users of buildings. Besides usage data, operating and environmental data will need to be gathered and evaluated to gain insights and extract

value. Here, the objective will be to compare the occupancy, capacity and usage of space of individual buildings and then generate recommendations on how they should best be managed.

Property owners, asset and portfolio managers already have a wealth of information at their disposal – such as data on buildings, the surrounding area around them, the way they are used, their energy consumption, and client invoicing or market developments. However, the data is often only available in isolation. The tricky thing is to be able to join up the dots. Any investors, proprietors or management companies that want to generate income from these data streams need to be able to gather all the information onto a property platform and process it strategically, so as to extrapolate bespoke solutions from individual buildings and their users and exploit these insights across the entire property portfolio. In this way, the property company of the future will be a kind of full-service provider, both renting office space and providing new services.

A spotlight on the property user and their needs

The challenge for property companies is to focus more on the property user of the future so that they are not so dependent on the rental and capital markets. Instead, renters can be locked in with additional services that can also earn higher profits at the same time. One example of this is having flexible, space-as-a-service models instead of long-term rental contracts.



The renter(s) can move in instantly and get working straight away without worrying about anything. They can book office furniture, IT, a network connection, a cleaning service and an office drinks service for a specific period of time – but there is total flexibility. This provides attractive add-on revenue streams for investors and property management companies, and if the renter's company needs to grow, they can simply book additional office space. The knock-on effect of this will be that long-term rental contracts of 10 years or more and needing to rent additional office space in advance will go extinct. Flexibility will be the name of the game and property companies will need to adapt accordingly.

And how is it possible to allow for that level of flexibility? By employing data to optimize for every need, including property and facility management requirements. If data can be used to eliminate inefficiencies, the cost saving is potentially huge. The fact that many software companies have flocked to the property market with their solutions and expertise is a clear sign that a big opportunity exists.



Lastly, we need to address sustainability, and not least because we know that the European Commission is eyeing up a “Green Deal” to make the entire European continent carbon neutral by 2050 – with the biggest capital investment being made in the construction sector. It is therefore well worth beginning to think about the environment and sustainability-focused investments. And since we're on the subject of sustainability, the abbreviation ESG is becoming more and more prevalent in the real estate sector. It stands for the three pillars of Environmental, Social and Governance standards that companies will have to meet. As such, new business models like space-as-a-service and innovative mobility concepts will have a clear role to play in the near future. And so, finally, we return to our theme: the office building of the future is much more than just a building with desks in it. It is a place where people can meet in person, and where the services are completely tailored to the needs of users.



Klaus Hirt (BSc. Civil Engineering)
Partner at Drees & Sommer SE

Klaus Hirt joined Drees & Sommer in 2007 after finishing his studies in civil engineering at the Darmstadt Technical University and at WU Vienna. Based at the company's Frankfurt offices, he advises German and international clients on projects around the entire property life cycle. His expertise includes developing property and portfolio strategies, creating feasibility studies and renovation surveys, and doing due diligence on properties, all the way through to transactional consulting and technical/commercial project controlling.



A SMART HOME FOR THE NEW WORKPLACE

With sensors in office buildings that collect user data to optimize building operations, Customized Smart Buildings are revolutionizing the property sector. What's more, pilot projects are showing that they are reliable too.

*By Klaus Dederichs
Partner and Head of ICT at Drees & Sommer SE*

In the middle of Berlin, you'll find a modern cube wrapped in a glass façade. This is cube berlin, a building that opened in February this year. Developed by CA Immo and with planning and consulting support from Drees & Sommer and the PropTech Thing-it, it's certainly a stand-out piece of architecture. But the really innovative thing about it isn't visible from the outside. In fact, it's literally packed with intelligence and smart technology – in full compliance with the highest safety standards. cube berlin has about 3,750 sensors and 750 beacons (transmitters with antennae running on Bluetooth Low Energy), which collect a wide range of data that enables the building to be controlled by computers.



A central control unit equipped with artificial intelligence (AI) – the so-called “Brain” – connects and processes many of the technical systems, sensors and planning, operating and user data. Once the information and data have been analysed and evaluated, it makes recommendations about how to optimize processes within the building. For example, the system can identify unused spaces within the office and can switch off heating, ventilation, air conditioning or lighting in these areas. This helps to increase energy efficiency whilst also making the office more comfortable for users. As such, smart buildings create a fusion of technology, architecture and environment to enable a smarter future for both workers and their surroundings.

Occupancy, maintenance and consumption – under precise control

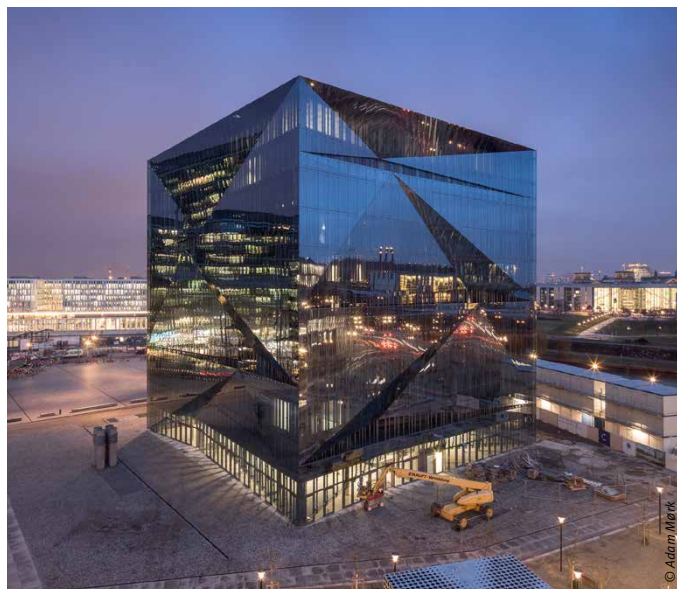
The Internet of Things and smart technology are fundamentally changing the way in which buildings are managed and controlled. Examples such as cube berlin, Cologne’s The Ship and Hamburg’s Hammerbrooklyn are part of a wider trend – more and more buildings are being controlled by a digital brain that reacts to individual needs. Sensors and data gathering enable detailed user profiles of buildings and annexes to be generated in real-time.

Intelligent, connected motion sensors send information about which rooms are being used frequently. An app displays which desks and rooms are empty when you enter a building. The heating, air conditioning and ventilation of rooms can be tailored to what is needed at any time. The temperature of a room self-regulates depending on the number of people in the room and if nobody is there, the heating level will fall. At the same time, these data sources can be connected in such a way that potential problems are signalled on dashboards or intuitive visualizations, helping identify issues before any disruption occurs. With a more targeted approach to maintenance, downtime and repairs can be kept to a minimum.

A smarter approach to the coronavirus

The trend for smart buildings shows no sign of stopping and could even receive a boost due to the coronavirus pandemic. Since sensors can recognize when people are in a room, smart technology can help to ensure that hygiene measures are being observed by checking on the number of people per room.

As well as controlling conventional building systems, customized smart buildings can also control other on-site technology like access authorization, fire alarm systems or sensors around the building. Because of this, smart buildings can significantly reduce the workload for asset management, property management and facility management.



cube berlin
www.cube-berlin.de

Construction of cube berlin, developed by CA Immo and designed by Copenhagen-based 3XN Architects, began at the start of 2017. From the outside, the four-sided building sitting in front of Berlin’s central station looks like an abstract modern sculpture. The office building consists of 17,000 m² of rentable office space.

The rentable spaces are flexible and can be extended, as well as being able to accommodate any type of modern organization. Drees & Sommer provided expert support to CA Immo during the implementation of the office’s entire digital infrastructure, and consulted on its façade technology, energy design and green building certification.

CA Immo designed cube berlin as a smart commercial building. The two main objectives were to support tenants and their employees by providing smart technology, networking all the technology using artificial intelligence (the so-called “brain”) developed by the PropTech Thing-it and using sensors to optimize the functionality of the building. Renters will be able to access a full menu of settings in cube berlin via an app designed by Thing-It. This ranges from things such as controlling room temperature and access for employees to having a post service, room bookings and hot desking.



A spotlight on the user's needs

Because the office of the future will have to compete with working from home, it will need to take more account of users and their needs. It's important that workers feel at ease in their office environment and enjoy coming into work, which is where technology comes in that can optimize the ventilation, room temperature and light settings for maximum comfort.

As an investor or lettings agent, it's key to implement digital platforms across an entire portfolio instead of reaching for one-off digital solutions for each building. And whilst it's tempting to focus on new builds, existing properties should be assessed to see if they can be digitalized and modernized. To do this, you can use a Digital Ready Check. This employs a set of testing criteria to see if it's possible to integrate existing buildings within a property portfolio into a property platform. The AI on the property platform then uses all the data relating to the property usage, the users and the environment to compare different occupancy, capacity utilization and land utilization variables across properties and provide recommendations on how buildings should be operated. This enables the portfolio to be continuously optimized.

Smart, joined-up analysis of operating and usage data

The building of the future won't simply be collecting data – it will be learning from users, adapting to meet their needs and “thinking” about how to optimize things using a digital brain. Using an array of sensors and a range of planning, operating and user data, fully-integrated artificial intelligence optimizes the office environment. As a result, AI can help reduce costs related to energy consumption, repair and maintenance, and property management.

Meanwhile, property owners will be able to analyse data from motion and occupancy sensors to optimize how the building is operated.

Of course, none of this will be possible without the explicit cooperation of the tenants: firstly, because a certain amount of understanding is needed in the early stages of any pilot project where new technology is being tested, and secondly, because you need their consent in order to put sensors into office spaces and collect data in the first place. After all, smart buildings are predicated on the idea of being able to collect data and in Germany, at least, there are strict regulations around data privacy.

Observing data privacy laws

To avoid legal problems, you need to factor in data privacy early in the planning phase and integrate it into planning across all construction projects. When it comes to new buildings, there are basically two different types of data being collected: personal and non-personal. Personal data describes data that enables you to identify people using patterns of behaviour and because of this, it is given strong protections by the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and German law. Non-personal data includes information like energy consumption data, technical data or data relating to room occupation plans.

During the planning phase, consideration needs to be given about how to prevent people from being identified through their data. Where the gathering of personal data is unavoidable – such as when controlling access to buildings – pseudonymization is a tried-and-tested method to comply with privacy laws. And since all new buildings need to be compliant with GDPR, it's also advisable to nominate a data protection officer and involve them during the planning process.



THE SHIP in Köln
www.shipcologne.com



THE SHIP, based in the Ehrenfeld district of Cologne, is a pioneering example of digitization in a German building. The project combines revolutionary technology with a highly liveable environment, with employees able to choose when and where they do their work from. It offers over 13,000 m² of gross floor area, accommodating more than 500 desks as well as numerous quiet spaces, lounge areas, think-tanks and garden offices. Situated next door to the Alte Wagenfabrik building, the new arrival has given the area something of a campus character. Tenants have begun moving into the building since the end of 2019 including FOND OF GmbH and the start-up accelerator xdeck. The founders of FOND OF GmbH built THE SHIP, employing Drees & Sommer as their digital and fit-out partner.



Ensuring cyber security

The large pools of data that buildings are now capable of generating are potential targets for cyber criminals, which means that property owners, letting agents and investors interested in intelligent buildings need to adopt a comprehensive cyber security strategy. To prevent security flaws, the safety of software and hardware needs to be addressed at the planning stage through the use of penetration tests. This involves IT experts using hacking methods to test how vulnerable the systems are to outside attacks. As well as having a firewall, an antivirus program and regular updates, it's also advisable to divide the IT system up into network segments with clear access rights and permanent safety monitoring. A redundant IT network should be installed as a backup to avoid IT outages.

Security was an important issue for cube berlin too. Before the building was finished, Drees & Sommer helped model and test various digital hardware and software components at the on-campus demo centre at the Smart Logistics Cluster of RWTH Aachen. Penetration tests were used to test the vulnerability of the hardware and software against hacker attacks. Since the building has been commissioned, a team from a cyber security organization has been providing digital security.

Hammerbrooklyn

www.hammerbrooklyn.hamburg

Germany's biggest privately funded digital project is being built right at the old Holzhafen, sandwiched between Hamburg's central station and the Hafencity. It's a hub for pioneering digital transformation and innovation where companies, start-ups and brilliant minds from around the world will congregate to network, collaborate and do research.

The first Hammerbrooklyn building, the Digital Pavilion, opens in 2020. The 7,500 m² upcycling project – which was formerly the US Pavilion at EXPO 2015 – will be the centrepiece of the new Hamburg digital district. Drees & Sommer is the project's digitization consultant, and is also helping with project management.



**OWP 12 –
Obere Waldplätze 12
by Drees & Sommer
www.dreeso.com**



The OWP 12 office building at Drees & Sommer's headquarters in Stuttgart will provide space for around 200 workers. Costing around 22 million euros, standing 20 metres tall and extending 70 metres in length, the energy-plus building offers approximately 7,000 m² of gross floor area over four storeys, with a large conference space, a terrace, a cafeteria and a canteen for up to 1,000 people. The building was designed by SCD Architekten Ingenieure GmbH in Stuttgart. Drees & Sommer used its planning expertise to integrate Cradle to Cradle design in many areas, minimizing waste and saving resources. The building was planned and built using digital tools like Building Information Modelling (BIM) and Lean Construction Management (LCM) to streamline the construction process. Aside from its sustainability credentials, OWP 12 is also noteworthy for its use of cutting-edge digital technology.



Innovation Hubs from Drees & Sommer www.dreso.com

Located at Drees and Sommer's headquarters in Stuttgart, the DS HUB building is a former book binding factory that has been converted into a coworking space where the company's executive board has taken up residence. The site, which comprises approximately 2,000 m², is mainly a space for conducting research into digital business models and involves collaborations with lots of start-ups. Drees & Sommer also has an innovation lab in the town of Aachen – based on the campus of RWTH Aachen – which has become a unique hub bringing together business, science and young entrepreneurs around smart industrial buildings. Drees & Sommer works alongside industry and research partners to develop intelligent buildings as well as doing a lot of IT security testing.



© Christian Back



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Klaus Dederichs Partner and Head of ICT at Drees & Sommer SE

Klaus Dederichs started as Head of ICT at the building, property and planning consultancy Drees & Sommer in 2015, becoming a partner in 2019.

He is the managing director at the company's Aachen subsidiary and his remit covers ICT, digitization, business transformation, IoT, big data, industry 4.0 and data centres, preparation phases and planning phases. Klaus studied physical technology at FH Aachen and worked for several years in various engineering firms. In 1999, he joined an international consultancy and planning company – initially as a project manager and specialist – eventually becoming a managing director and partner working across the entire property life-cycle. He was the director for the company's data centre, overseeing its planning and development. He also founded the Building and Operating Data Centres Congress (at the Management Forum Starnberg), which he still organizes and moderates to this day. In addition, he became Chair of the ULI Product Council Future Cities – Smart Cities in 2019.





WANTED: INNOVATIVE OFFICES FOR THE NEW NORMAL

We may be some way off the new normal but there's never been a better chance to shape it. Although the requirements of our work environment are always changing, the coronavirus has accelerated the pace of that change and we are now beginning to see a different kind of office environment starting to take shape. Workers who choose to go into the office will need to be able to tackle their most urgent tasks efficiently – otherwise, there are more options.

By Martin Becker, Partner at Drees & Sommer SE and Managing Director of RBSGROUP – Part of Drees & Sommer

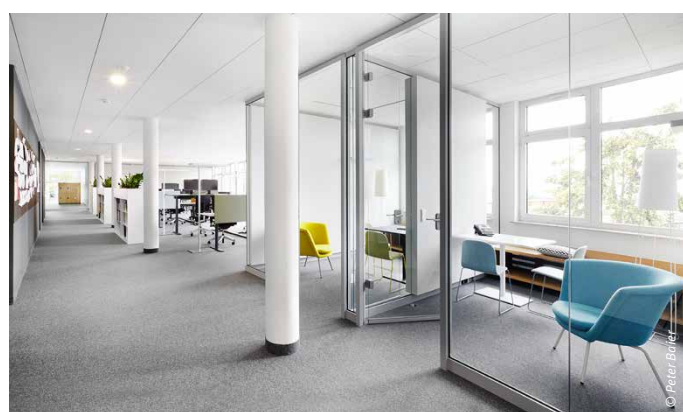


With our work and home routines having changed, the status of the office has also shifted. Working from home has become the new reality during the coronavirus. In this new work situation, we inevitably wonder what the office has to offer that working from home or mobile working – e.g. in a café, on-site with a customer or on the building site – doesn't.

A hypothetical new office would ideally have a stronger network connection than home or working off-site, be the best setting for analogue and virtual meetings and have cutting-edge ventilation, air-conditioning systems and real-time data on what desks, tools and equipment are currently available. Above all, this new kind of office would be a counterpoint to working from home and working off-site, providing a creative space for hybrid teamwork. It should also be presented to workers as a central hub.

A mix of options

The office of the future needs to offer what other sites lack – especially the home office – by making it the perfect place to concentrate, communicate and cooperate. Shared spaces (for multiple departments) can play an important role in facilitating chance meetings, which can have a positive impact on workers' psychological health as well as building trust and helping people to bond. This, in turn, creates the right kind of environment for creative problem-solving. In the new normal, we will be working from more than just one workplace so flexibility comes to the fore. Having the right mix of options for workers means being prepared for the future. The future-ready office needs to offer smart digital integration and be made with recyclable materials and products. Embracing Cradle to Cradle design will enable companies to navigate the trend towards healthy, safe and sustainable work environments.



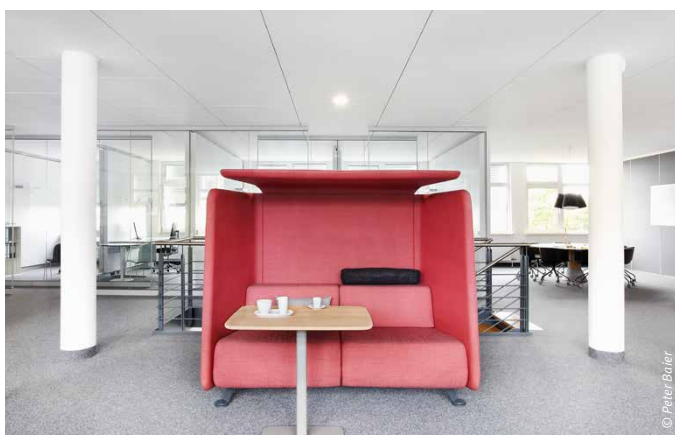
Flexible office concepts in Stuttgart and Berlin, implemented by RBSGROUP – Part of Drees & Sommer.

Sharing models and hybrid spaces

Rigid office set-ups with fixed seating have become outdated. Companies need intelligent sharing concepts with a mix of office and remote working. This kind of set-up requires multifunctional, hybrid rooms that enable people joining meetings by video to be equally “present” as those who are in the room, and facilitate communication and teamwork.

Resilience is needed

At the same time, modern office spaces need to be customizable: both in structural terms and on the surface so that they can adapt to changing needs. The office interior should be designed so that in an emergency – e.g. a new coronavirus outbreak – workers can move things around and make changes directly. Being future-ready means running a reliable and efficient workspace and being prepared to deal with new challenges. But first we need to get workers back in the office so that we can establish, evaluate and develop new ways of working.



Managing cultural change

A comprehensive change in office culture is generally accompanied by a change in company culture. And that requires effective change management. The first thing is to summarize all the learnings from the coronavirus lockdown period: what did we miss? What did we come to value? What things should we preserve from before and during the pandemic? Every organization needs to adopt a bespoke model for the new normal that is based on their own company culture, and which combines the benefits of different locations and ways of working. For a long time now, offices have been more than just places of work. They function as calling cards for businesses and are an important asset in the competition to attract the best talent. In a nutshell: they are a key pillar of the employer's brand.

The office is a place where a company's values and vision come to life in 3-dimensional space. A place that offers structure and direction. A place that creates a stronger bond between the employee and the employer. And so, flexible working models, a culture of trust and a high-quality office environment will continue to be an important and decisive factor in attracting and retaining talent in the future.

Space efficiency

During the lockdown, many firms were forced to embrace home working and leave their offices standing empty. The coronavirus is accelerating the trend towards mobile working and shared spaces. But we should resist the reflexive urge to downsize. Instead, it could be the perfect time to optimize in a different way by investing in higher-quality space and better equipment. For example: by introducing a sharing ratio of 1:1.4 (meaning one desk space shared between 1.4 employees), it's possible to gain 20 per cent more floor space per desk whilst saving 15 per cent per employee. Also, we do currently need space to comfortably adhere to social distancing regulations and add extra rooms for calls or quiet spaces.

The office will continue to play a decisive role in future

Whilst there's no such thing as a universal, one-size-fits-all solution, the basic premise is that anything that makes offices attractive to workers and creates a safe, healthy, highly attractive, sustainable and technically optimal workspace is a solid investment. And it's a both a monetary investment and an investment in employee satisfaction.



Martin Becker
Partner at Drees & Sommer SE

Martin Becker is a Partner at Drees & Sommer and the managing director of RBSGROUP – Part of Drees & Sommer, where he helps design future-ready office spaces. Martin has over 25 years of experience in helping businesses with innovation and change management, ensuring that new workplace designs fit the zeitgeist and are successfully implemented.



DREES & SOMMER'S EMPLOYEES PREDICT BIG CHANGES IN THE WORLD OF WORK

The results of a recent internal office survey suggest that offices will undergo significant changes in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Approximately 1,500 out of 4,000 employees at the Drees & Sommer group participated in the survey, with more than half of participants (52 per cent) predicting that the pandemic will have a significant, long-term impact on our society; including the way we work and the design of our offices. (At the time of the survey, 61 per cent of participants were working in the office, whilst 37 per cent were working from home.)

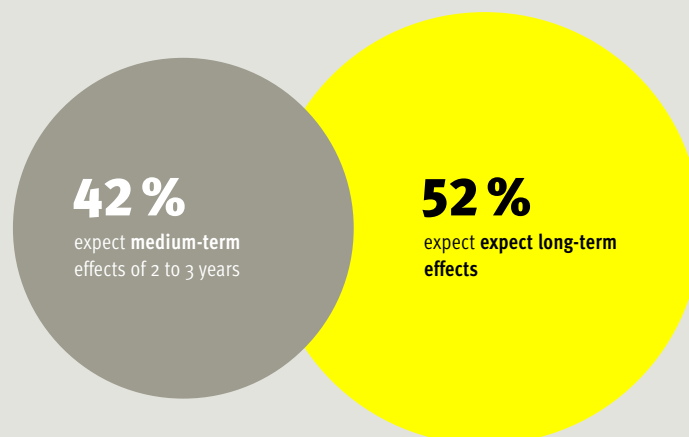
86 per cent of respondents thought that the amount of mobile working will rise in future, with 83 per cent saying they could see themselves spending one to three days per week working outside the office (mobile or at home). And what makes these numbers particularly interesting is that prior to the lockdown, 41 per cent of our survey participants had never previously worked off-site before.

There will be a change in what workers want from the office: an increase in mobile working will require more rooms for calls and meetings (according to 650 respondents). It's also important to bear in mind that many workers were unable or unwilling to concentrate whilst trying to work from home and that the office needs space to accommodate them as well.

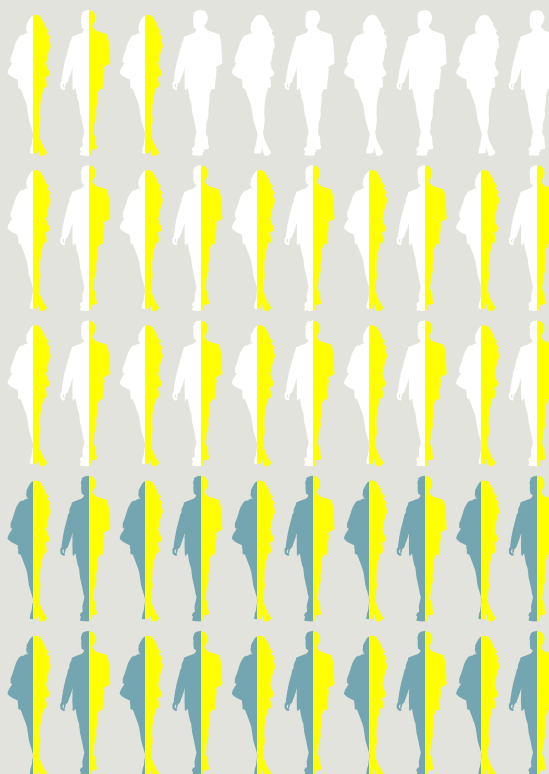
86 % believe that the amount of mobile working will increase from today's level

41 % had never done mobile working before the coronavirus

IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC



AMOUNT OF MOBILE WORKING: PRE-CORONAVIRUS VS. THE FUTURE

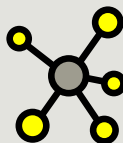


Furthermore, a shift towards mobile working two or three days per week would mean workers commuting into the office for the other two or three days. This, too, would lead to an increased need for meeting rooms (584 respondents) and rooms with proper audio/video conferencing facilities (594 respondents). The survey found that about the same (748 respondents) or less space (300 respondents) would be needed for office infrastructure such as printer rooms, storage areas and archive areas etc. The result was similar when people were asked to estimate the amount of space needed for standard desks, with 552 respondents thinking it would stay the same and 293 respondents predicting a fall.

If the way we work is set to change and we end up working from different locations (including mobile working), then the question naturally arises about how office spaces/space utilization will change too. According to those who took our survey, the role of the office is going to change for good. At the same time, it's clear that the kitchen table isn't a long-term solution either, so questions remain about how to set the home up as a viable workplace.

CURRENT WORK LOCATION

2 %



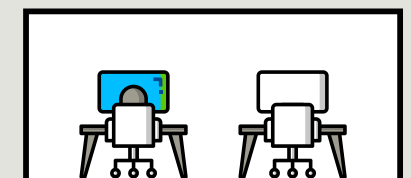
2 % working at
'third locations'

37 %



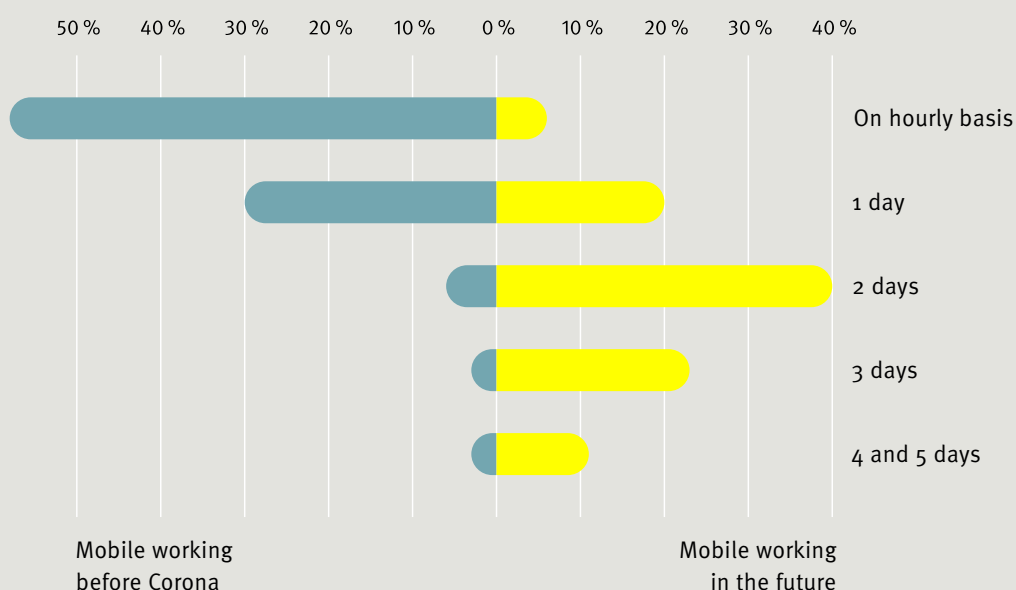
37 % working
from home

61 %



61 % working in a project office
or Drees & Sommer office

FREQUENCY OF MOBILE WORKING BEFORE CORONA AND IN THE FUTURE



“IN THE FUTURE, THERE WILL BE AN EXTRA FOCUS ON HYGIENE”

Having previously been the head of the Institute for Emergency Medicine and Medicine Management at the University of Munich Medical Centre, it's safe to say that Prof. Christian Lackner, Director of the Healthcare Division at Drees & Sommer, knows his stuff when it comes to hygiene. Here, we talk to him about hygiene at work, best practices for employees and the future of work.

The interview was conducted by Harald Czycholl-Hoch, freelance business journalist

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the world in one fell swoop with millions of employees suddenly starting to work from home. Which means that comprehensive hygiene measures will need to be in place if they return to their offices. For example, social distancing measures and clear signposting systems are needed and office spaces need to be easy to clean. More automatic things, such as automatic doors, may also be necessary. At the same time, employees will have to change their behaviour in order to minimize the risk of outbreaks of the disease. In this interview, Prof. Christian Lackner, director of the healthcare division at Drees & Sommer, discusses health and well-being in the workplace – and predicts that some hospital hygiene practices may soon be adopted.

Professor Lackner, what lasting legacy do you think the coronavirus will have on the office?

Prof. Lackner: *It's something that has been largely ignored in the past, perhaps out of some mistaken sense of loyalty to employers. And it's: never come to work when you're sick! If you have any kind of flu-like symptoms such as a fever, cough, a headache or pain in your limbs, make sure that you stay at home to ensure that your symptoms do not worsen and that you're not exposing your colleagues to the risk of infection.*

Even if you've only got mild symptoms, it's still important to work from home because when you're busy on your typical office workday, it's almost impossible to ensure that you won't infect your colleagues.

What challenges do employers face with the imminent return of workers?

In the initial phase, there will need to be fundamental changes to ensure the safety of workers and mitigate anxiety. Although we have plenty of experience dealing with influenza viruses – like the common flu – this is the first time

that our generation has lived through a pandemic. We are all highly aware of the health risks, whether real or imaginary, and employers are particularly wary about the potential for liability if people get sick at work.

What do we need to do in the short term so that companies can get back to something approaching normality in the office?

The key thing is to make hygiene systemic. On the one hand, there should be a code of conduct in place for employees, with guidelines for things like hand sanitation, an etiquette for coughing and sneezing,



social distancing and wearing personal protective equipment. On the other hand, we need to be aware of the ways that the infection can spread at work, at home and in the community, so that the risk can be minimized. So, we need to offer basic webinar classes or brochures to employees that provide the relevant information in their preferred language. Next, to help enforce social distancing rules, it might be a good idea to use the stairs instead of lifts and to use floor markings. There shouldn't be any food in communal kitchens, which should be exclusively for making drinks like coffee or tea. Any cutlery should be put straight into the dishwasher after use. Finally, discussions need to be had with the cleaning company about how to safeguard hygiene over the long term.

In an acute outbreak, cleaning has to be much more frequent and may have to take place during regular office hours. Depending on the type of virus, the busiest areas may have to be cleaned several times a day.

Will we need to wear masks in the office in the future?

In areas where the minimum social distancing requirements can't be ensured with barriers, markings and access restrictions, it is necessary – and entirely reasonable – to ask all employees to wear masks. Since the upper nose is a key area where the virus replicates itself, it's essential to remember to cover the nose as well as the mouth. This may be a little uncomfortable if you're new to wearing a mask, and some masks are more comfortable than others, but you should get used to it pretty soon.

What organizational measures can employers take in order to ensure office hygiene?

Firstly, employers can make disinfectants available and put up reminders for people to clean their hands regularly. Next, if possible, they should minimize opportunities for contact in the offices; e. g. shift changes, breaks, meetings. In desk-sharing arrangements, surfaces should be cleaned regularly and thoroughly. Ensure that door handles, keyboards, mice and headsets are also cleaned frequently. The tables and seating in social spaces like canteens should be reconfigured to have a minimum of 1.5 metres of distance between people.

What about all the conferences and meetings that we typically have in a normal workday?

If possible, employees should be encouraged to use virtual conferencing tools instead of meeting in person. If the meeting has to be done in person, it should be limited to a maximum of 10 people and consideration should, of course, be given to the size of the room, and whether the seating and signage allow an appropriate level of social distancing. Since viruses tend to accumulate rather like an aerosol, it's important that the room is well ventilated as well as being regularly disinfected – ideally rooms should be ventilated for at least 15 minutes before being used, especially when other people were previously using it. Whilst the meeting is happening, a window should be opened every 15 to 20 minutes for at least five minutes. It would be even better to have the windows open throughout the meeting if the need for confidentiality doesn't preclude it.



What do we need to do from a construction viewpoint to meet these new requirements?

A pandemic-ready office will adopt short-term organizational changes, medium-term working patterns and a long-term design rethink that puts hygiene at the centre of building planning and office infrastructure. In the short term, permanent disinfectant dispensers and partitions are needed – not just the plexi-glass ones at the reception. We'll see the return of cubicles. In the past, they were employed for privacy and because the acoustics were better, but now they will help create a physical separation between employees. Until we have a vaccine, people will feel more comfortable with a physical barrier. Unsurprisingly, there is a trend where many companies have announced an end to the open-plan office and a return to small, private offices. Potentially spaces like "huddle rooms", which are small meeting rooms for up to six people, could also be used as offices until social distancing rules are relaxed. In addition, the seating areas at reception should be removed to get rid of any possibility of people coming into close proximity.

How will future office buildings be designed to meet these sorts of hygiene requirements?

Because of society's heightened awareness about infectious diseases, experts predict that in the long term, the office may share certain characteristics with hospitals. One important takeaway is to choose materials that are robust enough to be cleaned with corrosive cleaning products. That would mean avoiding porous surfaces like woods with natural oils and going for stone or laminate instead. I would also expect there to be carpets with moisture-resistant bases and colours that can deal with powerful shampoo treatments. These durable materials aren't necessarily more expensive than the better-known alternatives either, which is important in tough economic times when few companies have the budget for expensive refits. If there's little difference in terms of costs, it's more a question of deciding which of the options works best. Another feature of hospitals that may be adopted in the office is wash basins at reception and in public areas.

Will office life ever return to how it was before the coronavirus pandemic?

Probably not, because we need to be more prepared for future pandemics and certain hygiene measures that were put in place because of COVID-19 are a good idea anyway. In the medium term, we need to design a completely new type of office. Some innovative companies are already interested in the idea of distributed offices. In this model, instead of having a crowded central hub, groups of staff are based out of smaller offices that could potentially be closer to home for those employees. This could also help to reduce traffic and reduce the risk of infectious diseases spreading on public transport. By working together in smaller groups, we can satisfy our need for connection and maintain positive mental health without the risk of everyone in the company needing to self-isolate if someone gets the virus. In order to avoid rush hours on transport, staggered working times could become the norm, with smaller groups of colleagues coming to the office on alternating days, or in alternating shifts.



Prof. Christian Lackner
Director of the Healthcare Division
at Drees & Sommer SE

Prof. Christian K. Lackner is a clinician working in a real estate company. Christian switched from his role as Director at the Institute for Emergency Medicine and Healthcare Management at the University of Munich Medical Centre, which he held for many years, to become the Senior Consultant at the Healthcare Division of the Stuttgart-based real estate consultancy, Drees & Sommer. He has consulted large clinics for many years on alarm and contingency plans for coping with mass-casualty incidents (MCI) and mass-infection incidents. He also helps these institutions roll out and standardize these plans at a regional and national level.



THE NEXT GENERATION: HEALTHY, RENEWABLE, CIRCULAR

Sustainable buildings aren't just energy efficient. They're made from natural and recyclable materials, which means that they consume fewer resources and lead to employees feeling better about their workplace. On top of that, there's a chance of achieving lower construction costs through leasing models or deposit-refund schemes. With the office facing increasing competition from the home office, we shouldn't underestimate the significance of sustainability.

*By Peter Möhle, Partner at Drees & Sommer SE and
Managing Director of EPEA – Part of Drees & Sommer*



Drees & Sommer's new office building in Stuttgart is as good for the environment as it is for employees' health. Beside its sustainability credentials, it also provides a safe and healthy work environment for approximately 200 workers.



In 2021, Drees & Sommer moves into a new workspace with a new, heavily-insulated façade, solar panels on the roof and the south wall, geothermal energy supplied through pipes in the earth and a north façade covered with greenery. The building conforms to an energy-plus standard, meaning that it generates more energy than it actually uses and which is one of the requirements of the Cradle to Cradle principle. It also features state-of-the-art digital equipment.

"If you want to tell people what to do and what makes business sense, it's best to put your money where your mouth is."

Drees & Sommer is investing 22 million euros into the four-storey tower, which extends over a gross floor area of around 7,000 m². It will feature a huge conference area, chill-out areas for employees like a terrace, a cafeteria and a canteen for up to 1,000 workers, and desks for 200 employees. Designed by SCD Architekten Ingenieure in Stuttgart, the building is a far cry from being functional and institutional. It aims to get employees looking forward to coming into work (and provide an attractive alternative to working from home over the long term). In addition, it serves as a real-life model for companies thinking about construction projects. After all, if Drees & Sommer is to give clients advice on how to build digitally, flexibly and efficiently, what could be better than putting our money where our mouth is?

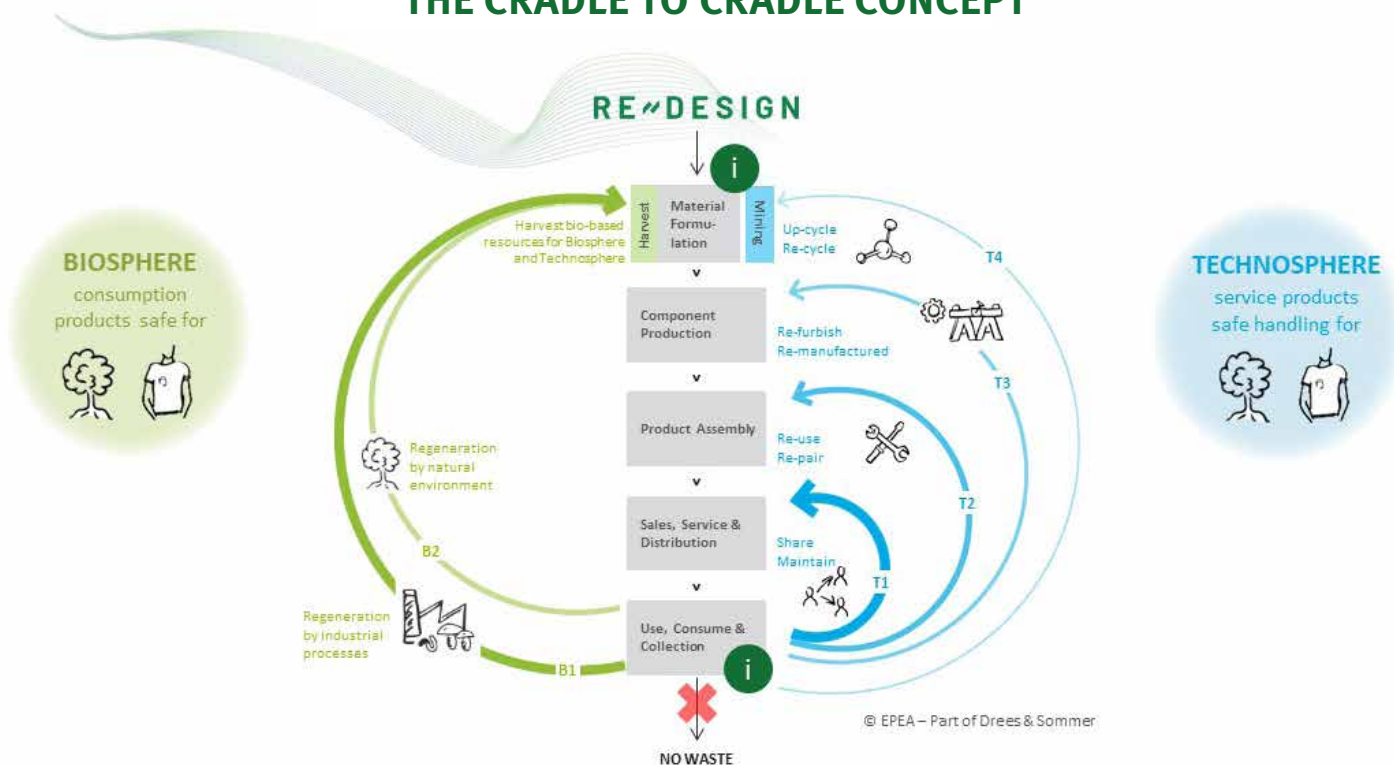
Meanwhile, sustainability has become a strategic priority for many companies and it's natural that they want to approach this holistically, both inwardly and outwardly. Obviously, the office buildings are a highly visible manifestation of this. This makes offices a vanguard of brand identity as well as being an important tool for attracting talent. And from a talent acquisition point of view, the coronavirus crisis hasn't changed a thing.



Employees' health and well-being is an important part of this equation. Sustainability poses a lot of challenges, many of which require a high level of inventiveness, plus plenty of upstream research into the types of materials to be used and consideration of which planning specialists to bring on board. It's also important to bear in mind that sustainability is about more than being as energy efficient as possible – it also involves material selection and health and well-being. Drees & Sommer's new building in Stuttgart addresses both aspects, employing green, plant-covered façades and natural materials such as clay walls and carpets made out of recycled materials. This should also have a positive impact on the air quality in the office and workers' productivity. The products and materials used are all recyclable and will retain value after the end of their life cycle. They can also be easily disassembled with existing user guides.



THE CRADLE TO CRADLE CONCEPT



This is all based on the Cradle to Cradle design principle, according to which the consumption of resources and waste should ideally be reduced to nil and materials used are considered to be “nutrients”. Buildings and the materials employed in buildings are selected on the basis either that they are completely bio-degradable or they can be repurposed – in the construction industry, they are mostly recycled in so-called technical cycles. To satisfy these requirements, the right system and product design need to be in place, and the materials’ chemical composition needs to be such that they don’t release any harmful elements into recycled goods and the environment later on. In short: the circular economy relies on healthy building materials which is where measures like material certifications and an overall building material passport come in.

Whilst interdisciplinary research teams are currently working hard on material cycles, manufacturers and producers are applying concepts like Cradle to Cradle to develop waste-free, recyclable and compostable building materials. More and more construction firms are getting on board and architecture and planning firms are being challenged to incorporate recycling and positive sustainability into their projects. In a parallel to the 1970s when the oil crisis suddenly put energy onto the agenda, the industry as a whole – including construction firms – is focused on the development and utilization of recyclable materials. And just like energy consultants came to the fore back then, a new class of professionals called circular engineers or material planners is now being drafted into planning teams to work on these challenges with architects and constructors. If the construction and property industries want to make a real contribution to climate protection and saving resources, all roads seem to lead to the circular economy.

The number of building products that conform to the C2C principle is constantly increasing. You can find C2C-certified products for floor coverings, partitions (including glass partitions), and types of insulation and façade.





Sustainable products like Cradle to Cradle-certified carpet floor tiles by Desso, which create healthier room environments, will become more widespread in the workplace of the future.

The Cradle to Cradle design principle also has a direct impact on the people using the buildings. We have already seen (in real examples like the town hall in Venlo) that companies that set up offices in sustainable buildings have lower incidences of illness and a lower turnover of employees. In a nutshell: if you feel comfortable at your workplace then you do not fall sick that often and have fewer reasons to look for a new job.

“If you feel comfortable at your workplace then you do not fall sick that often and have fewer reasons to look for a new job.”

Sustainability can also be factored in once buildings are commissioned. The kind of smart technology that will be used in Drees & Sommer’s flagship new offices in Stuttgart will control systems to save energy and reduce operational and ancillary costs. A mobile app will enable access credentials to be assigned, conference rooms and parking places to be booked, and heating, ventilation and light to be configured automatically for every user.

However, from the perspective of global business, it’s important to have comparable, cross-border standards of quality, which is why we need a catalogue of international criteria. With international standards in place, properties would need to be built not just with sustainability in mind, but also with the aim of being certified. This is important from an investment point of view because the market value of a certifiably sustainable building is higher than properties without accreditation.

Venlo town hall in the Netherlands (top right), the new RAG building in Essen (below left) and The Cradle, a hybrid wooden building in Düsseldorf (below right), are the poster children for Cradle to Cradle design in the construction industry



There are already three industry-recognized standards for green buildings: the American LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), the British BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) and the German DGNB (Sustainable Building Council) seal. Nowadays, practically all new buildings have at least one of these standards, all of which aim to provide information about efficiency, eco-friendliness and resource consumption, and whose certification offers an independent perspective on quality.

Companies know what they can expect from certified properties, not just in terms of energy consumption and water efficiency but also air quality in office spaces and transport connections. Thinking about circular recycling, the 2018 DGNB standard offers a system of sustainability certification where some elements of the circular economic model have already been integrated.

“At a time when towns are calling climate emergencies and movements like ‘Fridays for Future’ are fighting for more environmental protection, scarce a day goes by when climate change and the future of our planet isn’t on the agenda.”

Almost all of the new buildings in Germany’s commercial centres have adopted ‘green building’ as an important – even indispensable – benchmark for quality, and the next generation of healthy, recyclable and digital buildings is already in the pipeline. The high-value retention of green buildings, EU laws on taxonomy and social pressure have pushed green issues and sustainability up the agenda. After all, at a time when towns are calling climate emergencies and movements like ‘Fridays for Future’ are fighting for more environmental protection, scarce a day goes by when climate change and the future of our planet isn’t on the agenda; and the pressure to act is growing. Without any other credible means of guaranteeing a future for our grandchildren, energy efficiency, renewables, a positive carbon dioxide footprint and Cradle to Cradle design will be paramount. There’s plenty at stake, but office users will also benefit from sustainability. We will all have modern, sustainable and health-promoting buildings and workspaces to look forward to. And that’s exactly what Drees & Sommer’s employees will be getting when they move into the next-generation building in Stuttgart.



BREEAM®



Peter Möhle (Dr.Eng)
Partner at Drees & Sommer SE
and Managing Director of EPEA –
Part of Drees & Sommer

Since 1996, Peter Möhle has helped countless national and international building projects become green buildings. Professionally, he focuses on the areas of energy design, energy management and the development of sustainable districts. As the Managing Director of EPEA GmbH – Part of Drees & Sommer, he also champions and pioneers the Cradle to Cradle principle within the construction sector. Peter is a member of the DGNB executive committee and is the chair for the area of system development and sustainable urban districts. He finished his studies in mechanical engineering (with a specialisation in energy technology) at the University of Stuttgart and Tucson, US, and earned a doctorate from the University of Stuttgart in 2009.



FRESH IDEAS – AND NEW BUSINESS MODELS

Because they create digital tools and other innovative solutions
that connect the analog and digital workplace, start-ups will play a key role in
shaping the office of the future. The property industry would be well advised to
partner with start-ups and strategically invest in their ideas.

By Martin Pietzonka

Head of Innovation Services at Start-up Hub Berlin and Senior Consultant at Drees & Sommer



Many companies have lost out as a result of the coronavirus crisis, but others have benefited. For example, the American video conferencing provider Zoom, which was founded in Silicon Valley in 2011, has spread over the world and become an integral part of working life, whatever industry we happen to be working in.

All entrepreneurs who start a company dream of having a good idea that experiences a boom, often using technology to develop new applications with the ability to scale rapidly. Meanwhile, start-ups are sprouting up in almost every business and lifestyle sector. Many vanish without a trace, yet some manage to establish themselves. But all start-ups face the same challenge: how to prove that investment in their technologies will pay dividends and that they are resilient enough to survive in the marketplace.

Young entrepreneurs and company founders have been interested in the construction and property industry for some time. Known within the real estate and construction industry as PropTechs and ConTechs, their common goal is to challenge property companies with digital technologies. Meanwhile, the latter is equally interested in start-ups, hoping to discover innovations that give them an edge, develop new products, services and business models and get a supply of fresh ideas and motivation. The start-ups they are currently targeting are mostly in the areas of big data, the Internet of Things and artificial intelligence.

Right now, in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, the resilience of young companies is being sorely tested. It's becoming clear that the most robust PropTechs are the ones that can generate short-term returns on investment. Nevertheless, big property companies should still be thinking longer-term and following a clear innovation strategy. And this could well mean making strategic investments in firms that won't generate profits –

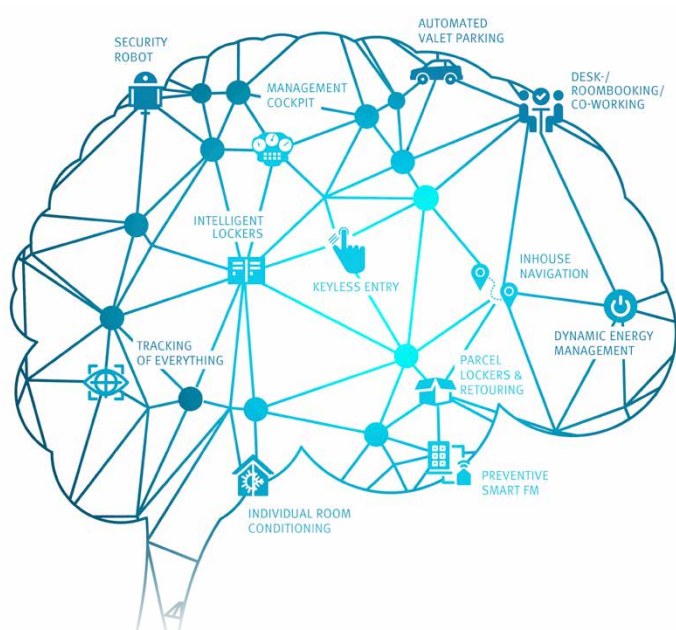
at least in the short term – but which are underpinned by a good idea, and which are creating new technology-based products, services and business models. A wise, strategic investment could increase a firm's ability to adapt to the much-heralded new normal and make efficiency gains – both of which can make it a winner in the digitization stakes over the medium and long term.

At no time is innovation more needed than in an economic crash – and that's precisely where start-ups can make a difference. However, it's crucial to have a functioning ecosystem where key players can collaborate as peers. Strategic partnerships are indispensable because very seldom does an idea that has been developed in isolation achieves market penetration. A far better approach is to combine the vision of start-ups with the knowledge and expertise of established companies and institutions.

Drees & Sommer explicitly wants to encourage these kinds of partnerships and develop flexible collaboration models. The company has created innovation centres and hubs at various locations and set up an innovation ecosystem called “Creators”. All these initiatives involve collaborating with start-ups to develop promising business models with real-world applications. There is a programme of events such as meet-ups, hackathons and accelerators and incubators where companies can network with young entrepreneurs. For new company founders, it's an opportunity to gain



knowledge and coaching, get access to new customers and markets, and get financial backing. For established companies, it's a chance to find new and unconventional ideas that disrupt traditional thinking and gain inspiration from start-up culture. They are also looking for partners to help them become digital pioneers in the property sector. Start-ups operate in many industries – e.g. the virtual office, collaboration tools, project or document management tools, intelligent platform models and software-as-a-service models. And their innovations can help established players to modernize and steal a march on their competitors. The knowledge that start-ups possess make them a key player in the ecosystem – particularly the office property sector, where the digital tools that they create help people collaborate virtually or combine analog and digital work processes.



In addition, it is already clear that intelligent buildings can unlock economic opportunities for users, letting agents and investors, promote sustainability and help save the environment. They even enable entire areas and urban districts to be intelligently connected with “Customized Smart Buildings”: intelligent buildings crammed with modern technology (including many innovations that start-ups have helped develop) that can be tailored to customers’ needs. The running of buildings can be optimized by connecting technical systems, sensors, and planning, operational and usage data in an intelligent way and ensuring that the highest IT security standards are observed. What’s more, things like the energy and water supply, public transport and even the provision of leisure activities can be harmonized across entire urban districts, as projects such as the Franklin Mannheim Smart City or the Heidestrasse district in Berlin demonstrate.

Artificial intelligence provides insights about properties and leads to the development of new business models, products and services, so intelligent buildings like these are of interest to facility, property and asset management companies too. The reason for developing a property platform is that smart digital buildings can lead to higher long-term profits. For example, building managers can use an app to rent out office and parking spaces in the evening when they’re not being used by workers. Meanwhile, tenants can use the management dashboard and usage statistics to optimize their space utilization. High-tech buildings are the future. But without outside innovation, they will remain the future. Which is why the property sector needs to work together with start-ups. The coronavirus crisis has put so many start-ups under existential threat and there’s a real risk of a missed opportunity here. After all, we’ve seen that the right idea that comes at the right time has the potential to revolutionize entire sectors. The video conferencing service Zoom has shown the way.



Martin Pietzonka
Senior Consultant at Drees & Sommer

Martin Pietzonka joined Drees & Sommer in 2019. He heads up the innovation services division at Start-up Hub Berlin, and is also responsible for innovation management, scouting and collaboration with start-ups. His role includes offering practical support with digitization. Having completed an MBA, Martin has spent his career advising over 100 start-ups in all sectors on developing their business models, business plans, strategies and venture capital finance. He was also previously managing director of a cross-industry innovation network based on “Connected Life”.



WHY HAVING AN ECOSYSTEM IS BETTER THAN GOING IT ALONE

CREATORS
powered by Drees & Sommer

Promoting start-up culture through matchmaking and networking: the CREATORS platform is there to support founders and help create partnerships. Michael Aechtler, Head of Innovation Services at Drees & Sommer and Nathanie Ursinus-Vasiliadis Senior Consultant of Innovation at Drees & Sommer, tell us more about what its objectives are.

The interview was carried out by Harald Czycholl-Hoch, freelance business journalist

Drees & Sommer established the CREATORS platform to help realize business ideas, develop partnerships, accelerate innovation and instil companies with a start-up mentality that can serve them in the long term. Depending on what stage they are at, it will offer start-ups, companies and talented people a bespoke approach to develop future-ready and goal-orientated ideas. To facilitate this, the platform provides unlimited room for creativity, backed by more than 50 years of sector-specific experience. In this interview, Michael Aechtler, Head of innovation services at Drees & Sommer, explains how the platform will help accelerate digitization in the real estate industry.

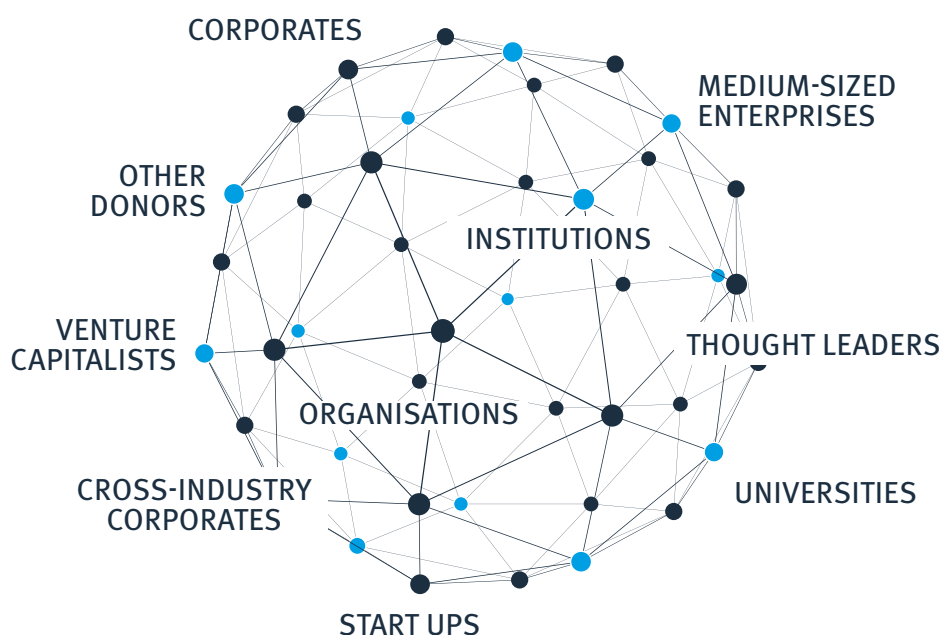
What was the motivation for setting up CREATORS?

Michael Aechtler: *The conviction that genuine, scalable innovations can only exist through the exchange of information. And so the purpose behind CREATORS and its component parts is to create a thriving ecosystem in the construction and real estate sector that is populated with start-ups, big corporates, experienced medium-sized firms, venture capital firms and other investors, universities and other experts and creative thinkers from other industries.*

When did you start it?

M.A.: *CREATORS went live last autumn. We launched our Creators Match tool, which matches corporates and start-ups in a targeted way, at the last Expo Real in October 2019. Prior to that, we used a similar tool called "Start it up!", which was only used for matchmaking internally. However, staying true to the ethos of our ecosystem, Creators Match was opened up to companies seeking partners.*

We connect strategically-focused and use case-minded corporates and start-ups. Our ambition and focus are to show corporates that there are many innovative players that have innovative solutions to offer across the whole value chain. We regard ourselves as enablers who help bring collaborations into being. There has already been a good uptake, with around 110 registered users. We then use a link to a start-up database to enable companies to find suitable start-ups.



Could you give an example of how this works in practice?

M.A.: *Let's imagine that a company in the IoT/Smart Building space is looking for a technology partner. The matching algorithm on CREATORS can find suitable PropTechs to help with the concrete, real-world application they have in mind. Finding a match is the perfect place to start. However, it's only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to our innovation services. If things go ahead, we can then step in with more tools, our ecosystem and our expertise to help establish and manage collaborations.*

Does matching use set categories or can it be customized on a case-by-case basis?

M.A.: *During the registration process, users are asked about relevant technologies and the phases of the property life cycle. These "matching points" provide the basis for automated match suggestions that are tailored to the user's profile. As well as choosing from a range of existing categories, users can also refine their search using individual tags.*

Can several PropTechs show up as possible matches?

M.A.: *It is definitely possible. The tool is set up like a dating platform where you can scroll through a list of all matching start-ups and find out more about them. If you find a company you're interested in, a match can be made on the spot.*

Will there be partnerships between companies and start-ups?

M.A.: *That's always the plan and there are lots of different forms that the partnership can take, ranging from stake-holding, franchising, cooperation on specific projects and lots of other options. We have extensive knowledge and expertise gained through our own projects that we are very glad to share with our partners and clients.*

In your experience, are corporate users at an early stage of digitization or have they made some progress?

Nathanie Ursinus-Vasiliadis: *We're seeing companies addressing the issue of digitization and being increasingly open to the idea of working with start-ups. However, there's still plenty of room for improvement in this area. There's a lot of uncertainty about finding suitable start-ups, setting up a collaboration, creating new business models and more. We have a lot of experience in this area and can therefore support them with our knowledge and expertise and our ecosystem. Having an ecosystem beats going solo – that's been our philosophy ever since the launch of CREATORS.*



Michael Aechtler
Head of Innovation Services at
Drees & Sommer

Michael Aechtler has been heading up Innovation Services at Drees & Sommer SE since February 2019. He is also the founder of the Next Entrepreneurs Organisation gUG, where generation Z develops innovative solutions for the future with start-ups. Previously, Michael was head of committee of Startups & Young Business at the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (IHK) for the Stuttgart region. He gained experience in consulting at MOSAIQ MEDIA GmbH and LINGNER Consulting New Media GmbH.

What benefit will Drees & Sommer get out of having an innovation platform like this?

N.U.-V.: *We are always looking for exciting start-ups and partners and are keen to grow our contacts in the innovation ecosystem. We champion the idea of an open, thriving ecosystem and cross-sector collaboration. For example, a start-up specializing in AI that had previously created solutions in other sectors could quickly develop and scale solutions for the construction industry. At Drees & Sommer, we want to drive innovation and be able to offer our clients the best possible solutions.*



Nathanie Ursinus-Vasiliadis
Senior Consultant of Innovation
at Drees & Sommer

Nathanie Ursinus-Vasiliadis trained in media studies and is Head of Innovation Scouting at Drees & Sommer. Her main responsibility is to identify the most promising start-ups and industry trends and integrate them into innovation and digitization projects for Drees & Sommer's clients. She helped create Creators Match, the industry-wide matching tool that connects established companies and innovative start-ups.



QUARTIER HEIDESTRASSE: SMART, CONNECTED AND FUTURE-READY

Community-focused, flexible, smart and connected:
Quartier Heidestrasse in Berlin is a forerunner of the
smart urban district of the future. As well as being
packed with technological innovations, it is designed
to accommodate evolving lifestyles and new ways of
working and getting around. It has made sustainability
a central aspect of its design.

*By Simon Dietzfelbinger, Partner and Head of Residential Properties at Drees & Sommer SE,
and Sissi Al-Sheikh, Project Team Leader at Drees & Sommer*



At the heart of the European city of Berlin, the urban district of the future is taking shape. Quartier Heidestrasse incorporates energy-efficient construction methods, future-focused transport concepts, innovative parking management and comprehensive connectivity to facilitate a new kind of healthier, more sustainable and more digital urban lifestyle.

The new development is made up of a total of seven buildings on a plot of 85,000 m² and will provide space for a mixture of office, retail, food and hotel businesses, as well as 944 rental apartments. For decades, the area where it is being built was part of the no-man's land in between east and west Berlin and populated mainly by freight depots and warehouses. Today, because of its central location close to Berlin's central station, excellent local and national transport links and the tasteful regeneration of the area, it has become one of the city centre's most promising locations. With a mixed-use profile that consists of residential and office buildings, retail spaces, a kindergarten, public roads and squares, parks, cafes, restaurants and a central convenience store at the heart of the project, Quartier Heidestrasse is currently the largest development in the German capital city. It is due to be fully finished by 2023.

The landowner is Quartier Heidestrasse GmbH, which is represented by Taurecon Real Estate Consulting GmbH as the construction site manager and project developer. Drees & Sommer has also been working on the project since 2014, with the goal of creating a vibrant and future-facing district that connects users beyond their apartments and office spaces and opens up a new digital dimension of life. Digitization experts at the company are coming up with a system that connects the entire district and covers a wide range of applications and user groups.

Quartier Heidestrasse is a sign of things to come

Entry into the office buildings is controlled digitally. App-based space utilization systems help organize office spaces. Meanwhile, heating, ventilation, blinds and other features are controlled automatically, both in the office and residential parts of the development. The Quartier app will not only enable neighbours to communicate but will also inform users about service offers. It can also do things like show energy consumption, enable communal facilities to be booked and dispense tickets for feedback and complaints. Post rooms will alert users via the app that a parcel has arrived and lifts will be called automatically when people leave their flat or enter the building.

Quartier Heidestrasse is a transport pioneer – offering the closest routes to local amenities and electric buses and enabling parking to be managed through the app. The app can also react to individual needs like parking duration, car size or advance bookings whilst directing people looking for a parking space to the closest available spot. Even car-sharing companies can be integrated into the app.



quartier HEIDESTRASSE

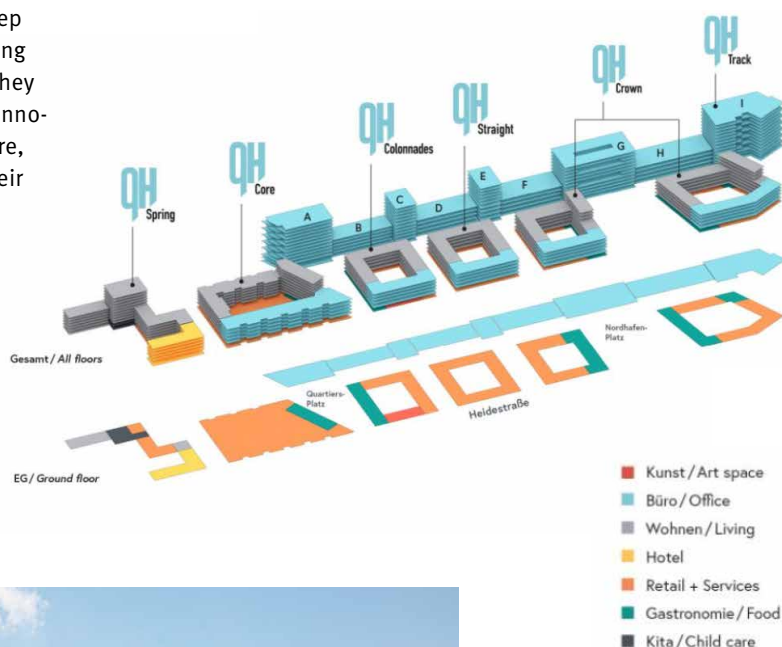


On the one hand, the Berlin development is a trailblazer for the architecture and technology of the future. On the other, it also serves as an inspiration to investors, project developers, proprietors and operators. If the property boom is over, the question has to be asked whether planned buildings, projects or existing properties are modern enough to be fully occupied in the next few years – and whether renters' increasing digital requirements can be met with the existing digital infrastructure. And lastly, opportunities need to be identified to offset lost income from developments. We already know that, in the medium to long term, this will only be achieved through eco-friendly and efficient buildings.

Properly planned mixed-use developments:

Where different spheres of life overlap: whether you're a landlord or tenant, resident or commercial user, everyone wants to combine the different parts of their lives in the best way possible. Everyone wants to travel short distances, have the best mobility and transport services on their doorstep and as much flexibility as possible. Everyone enjoys being part of a community and being more sustainable – yet they aren't quite ready to do without technology and digital innovations. For a district or entire town to thrive in the future, it's important that people enjoy being there and that their needs can be met as sustainably as possible.

The way to meet these requirements in the long term is through mixed-use developments where housing, offices, retail, restaurants and leisure facilities are closely intertwined. However, it's not simply enough to put these different buildings adjacent to one another. Rather, it's about creating synergies and adding value by combining a wide range of applications and integrating aspects such as energy, climate, resources, mobility, infrastructure, digitization, finances and society. The driving principle in the future will be only using what you need: for example, a person renting an apartment won't need a study anymore if they can book into a neighbouring co-working space (if that's the appropriate work environment). Or an unused parking place could be taken up by others. Or moving to a digital concierge, which would increase comfort and flexibility.



Quartier Heidestrasse is an impressive example of what can be done. It combines a well-thought-out mixture of uses and smart building management with a kind of architecture that gives residents and users a general sense of well-being. A block of flats made of bricks sits next door to a mixed-use residential and commercial complex with a natural concrete façade and an inner courtyard filled with plants. QH Spring sets an early architectural benchmark with its 3-dimensional concrete façade filled with intricate metal detailing and eye-catching large windows. With the first tenants due to move in at the end of 2021, the building comprises a hotel, a kindergarten, commercial units and a 12-storey block of flats.

Taurecon Real Estate Consulting has worked together with Drees & Sommer and its collection of promising PropTechs and service providers to develop innovative ideas and technology-based approaches that will ensure that Quartier Heidestrasse has the digital and sustainable solutions for long-term success. Community-based and green, flexible and smartly connected – these are the qualities that make Quartier Heidestrasse a true pioneer.



Sissi Al-Sheikh
Project Team Leader at Drees & Sommer

Sissi Al-Sheikh is a Project Team Leader at Drees & Sommer's Berlin office and is responsible for lean construction management and project management for the 8,500-desk office project in the QH Trackdas area of the Quartier Heidestrasse district. As the main point of contact on the project management side of things, she oversees everything from site development and planning to site supervision and creating a comprehensive lean and digital solution for the area. After completing her studies in industrial engineering with a civil engineering module at the Technischen Universität Berlin and living in Arab Emirates, she joined Drees & Sommer in 2015 to work at its Berlin office.



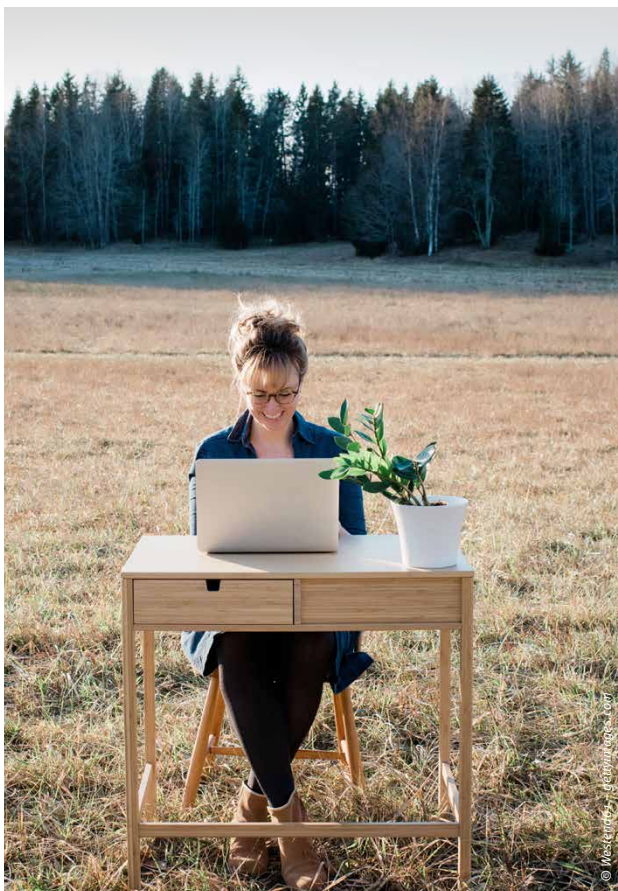
Simon Dietzfelbinger
Partner at Drees & Sommer SE

Simon Dietzfelbinger is Partner and Head of Residential Properties at Drees & Sommer. He studied industrial engineering at the University of Leipzig with a specialization in the construction industry and joined the company in 2009. His work focuses on residential construction and urban planning and the management and supervision of large-scale projects. In addition, he is involved in developing the areas of digitization and innovative business models in the residential construction sector. As an experienced project manager, Simon has extensive knowledge and expertise across all phases of a project – from the initial idea through to completion. Aside from Quartier Heidestrasse, some other projects he has worked on are the Fünf Morgen Dahlem Urban Village and Carossa Quartier, all of which are in Berlin.



RETHINKING THE WORK-PLACE

By Steffen Szeidl, Member of the Executive Board, Drees & Sommer SE



The coronavirus crisis has changed the world of work in an instant, emptying offices of life at a stroke. In the meantime, however, those empty offices have gradually started to fill up: only this time with safety measures like barriers, signs marking the way, access rules and partitions. And despite what some people may hope, there may be no going back to the way things were. For example, our office next-door neighbours may stay at home, only available for a chat over video conferencing, because they belong to an at-risk group, need to take care of their children or simply don't want to commute. Some changes may be here to stay (even in the medium and long term). Behaviour that would have been considered pretty abnormal before the pandemic has now become part of the much-heralded new normal.

From one to multiple work locations

The very idea of the workplace needs to be fundamentally rethought because it won't just be one workplace in the future. Alongside working from home and going to the office, soon you'll be able to work from anywhere. And whether that involves working from co-working spaces, cafes or hotels, work can, and will, be done remotely.

For this kind of working model to be successful, the right conditions have to be in place to facilitate co-working. This requires investment, and that in turn requires action from the senior management team. It's not just a question of installing the necessary technical solutions but of actually trusting employees to exercise their individual responsibility and make the right decisions on behalf of the company.

It's the job of a company's leadership team to make decisions that create the best possible future for their company and employees. Health is also a priority here. Even if we do manage to overcome the pandemic in the near – or perhaps not so near – future, people will still be far more health-conscious than they ever were and a healthy workplace environment will rise up the agenda. Partly, this will involve taking a systematic approach to hygiene at work and partly it will mean using healthier materials during building and fitting out. Both factors will be important in future-proofing the office.



The office has to be cooler than working from home

There's no doubt that the office will continue to exist. But it will go from being a purely work-orientated environment with fixed attendance hours and become a hub for meetings and networking events with customers and clients (where human contact is so important). Its new role requires the office to have a living room-esque ambience that fosters feelings of togetherness, is comfortable and relaxing for long periods and is generally an exciting place to be. It also needs to be equipped with the very best technology for collaboration. Or, if you had to tell the man in the pub: as well as being a hub for meetings, the office of the future needs to attract people and therefore be cooler than working from home.

Different asset classes will begin to overlap

This shift will have a knock-on effect on existing asset classes. The traditional office will become more of a meeting and conference location whilst the residential sector will need to think about the home office – which might include importing certain office features and anticipating future trends. We can already start to see a blurring of the lines between the various classes of asset. There will also be fewer large spaces on the rental market and tenancy contracts will be shorter – both in the short-term and the medium to long-term. There will surely be an initial slowdown depending on where we are in the economic cycle.

New normal. New rules

Legal issues are likely to grow in importance moving forwards. The current crisis has caused some urgent decisions to be made and, for the moment at least, there is likely to be some legal leeway. However, the more that this situation normalizes, the more important it is to start thinking about things from a legal standpoint. If we take working from home, employers have a range of different contractual responsibilities towards their employees which could easily get complicated if they are given wide-ranging freedoms. There are, of course, obvious things like the need for an ergonomic chair or having the necessary hardware and software to be perform one's work just as effectively from home. However, there's more to it than that. Employers are also responsible for a whole raft of things like compliance with workplace guidelines, the working time directive, confidentiality and data privacy, insurance issues and workplace safety.

We need to think about the big picture

It's undeniable that most of our current laws still come from the industrial era. And whilst these regulations may still have some relevance for employees that work in manufacturing, they are completely outdated when it comes to the modern workplace. In fact, several companies had already been pushing for changes before the coronavirus hit. And for the most part these demands were ignored by politicians, although there have been murmurs of amendments such as a "Right to work from home" or calls for the workplace guidelines to be overhauled. But what we really need to do is to rethink the workplace at a fundamental level and come up with a brand new approach. This means that the whole process has to be carefully thought through to reflect the working realities of today and tomorrow rather than making incremental changes and improvements to the status quo. We can only hope that politicians will react with the same speed with which they brought out the coronavirus support package.

Work from Office – Work from Home – Work from Everywhere

Working from home was on its way to becoming a major trend even before the coronavirus broke out – whilst having a single workplace is on the way out. The office may remain as the place where most work is done, but it will be complemented by other workplaces at home, in cafes or at coworking spaces. The boundaries between 'work' and 'leisure' will become even more blurred. To use a computer metaphor, the company will become a kind of universally-accessible cloud. Meanwhile, employees will work together whilst remaining independent and distributed. If we stay on top of all the latest developments and take appropriate action, we will discover a better new normal waiting for us on the other side once the dust begins to settle.



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As the leading European Consulting, Planning and Project Management enterprise, Drees & Sommer has worked with private and public clients from construction bodies to investors on all types of real estate and infrastructure projects – both analog and digital – for 50 years. With its pioneering and future-shaping consulting, the company offers solutions for successful buildings, high-return portfolios, powerful infrastructure and livable cities. 3,820 employees in interdisciplinary teams based at 46 locations worldwide support clients across a wide spectrum of sectors. All the services provided by the partner-run company take into consideration both economic and ecological concerns. Drees & Sommer calls this holistic approach ‘the blue way’.

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