

# Shopping Centres - Origins, Logics, Developments

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## ORIGINS, LOGICS, DEVELOPMENTS WORLD-WIDE

In former days, when trade was limited to a small number of suppliers of goods and those few who could afford these goods, this trade was mainly effected by travelling salesmen, although already in ancient cultures trade and service quarters, streets or places or even whole districts emerged in the larger towns which could be seen as an origin of today's shopping centres. With an increasing division of labour in the economies people needed to be supplied with ever more goods, which lead to a further focus on fixed trade locations, nevertheless still in and closely around towns, which, due to a limited mobility of the population in ancient days (Rome), did not grow much larger than four kilometres in diameter. The comparably recent technological innovations eliminated that constraint and made it possible for towns to grow much larger which again fostered the emergence of fixed trade locations. The typical shop then was located on ground level in buildings in certain streets or places, but at the same time also projects intended exclusively for trading were built. Some of the large and well-known examples are the 'Grand Bazaar' in Constantinople, today's Istanbul, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele in Milan, some arcades in London, the Brussels galleries or the Gum in Moscow.

Pioneers of modern shopping centres emerged in North America in the 20ies and 30ies of this century and were followed by a real wave of shopping centre construction in the 50ies. Today there are more than 40,000 shopping centres existing in North America attracting over 50 % of the whole retail turnover, despite the successful performance of 'big boxes', 'power stores' or 'price clubs'. One reason for the ascent of North American shopping centres into their dominating position today might have been the fact that the main population explosion did not start before the definite layout of towns was laid down.

The retail situation in Australia and South Africa is comparable with that of North America. In Central and South America and the Far East dynamic

growth can be witnessed. While the Tiger states showed extremely dynamic developments in the recent past, today the large cities of China advance at an almost unbelievable pace.

Scandinavia and Holland were the pioneers in European shopping centre development, followed by Germany, with the introduction of two regional shopping centres in 1964. Intensive shopping centre construction in France set in at the end of the 60ies (Parly 2 west of Paris). After the establishment of simple 'strip centres' in the 'new towns' a dynamic trend towards shopping centres set in in Great Britain. There, as in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, an emphasis on in-town locations could be witnessed.

At present Austria ranges about average in the European shopping centre scene, but a rise in the European average has to be expected due to the dynamic shopping centre industry in the Mediterranean countries, the reform countries and the new German Länder.

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