

Responsible
building
and
design

HORNBACH
Sustainability
Magazine
2022

**THERE'S
A WAY!**

HORNBACH.
Holding

DEAR READERS,

Let's emphasize the positive. The past two years of the pandemic certainly posed a challenge to economies and societies around the world. Despite that, many people saw that good things can come out of the situation, both in their private lives and at work. All at once, we could focus on the essentials. There's a way! We concentrated on what makes us who we are. Things that increase our satisfaction and make us happy. But also things that made our company great. Here, we simply "let go" of much that had stood in the way and held us back: 93 rounds of agreement where everyone is asked their opinion, picked up, and taken along. There's a way! The spotlight was on every woman, every man, each with his or her skills. Act fast. Take responsibility. Know we trust you.

At the same time, life with the virus showed us how important it is to be sustainable in our dealings both with each other and with the world around us. The pandemic really put the focus on social and ecological sustainability. Is there a way? What product ranges do our customers* need to make their homes more sustainable? Which products need to go? What resources can we save in which areas of the company? Is that the way?

* In this Sustainability Magazine, terms such as "employees" and "customers" refer equally to people of all genders. See Page 18 to find out more about how we approach this topic.



At HORNBACH, it means many smart minds passionately pressing ahead with their areas of sustainability. Minds that bring their specialisms close to our customers. That is our way to let go of things we no longer need and focus on where we need to advance. There is a way!

In this spirit, enjoy reading our 2022 Magazine!
Yours,

Anna Krall
Head of CSR and Editor in Chief

CONTENTS

SOCIAL COMMITMENT

HORNBACK'S HEART



HORNBACK's Foundation "People in Need": On its 20th anniversary, we look back, talk to witnesses, and examine the motives of the Foundation.

06



DIVERSITY

DIFFERENT NEEDS, SAME RIGHTS

Measures to boost corporate diversity. We visit IKEA Germany and interview HORNBACK's Supervisory Board member Simona Scarpaleggia.

12

GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE

A MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Gender meets language: German offers numerous solutions, but which one is "right"?

18

PEOPLE AS KEY SUCCESS FACTOR



HORNBACK'S PEOPLE MAP

A glance at HORNBACK's employee statistics and what they mean for the company.

20

DARE TO BE FLEXIBLE

BRAVE NEW WORLD OF WORK



No sign of the "great resignation" here: Several initiatives at HORNBACK are trying out new, more flexible ways of working.

22



MAKING SUFFICIENCY YOUR MOTTO

MORE OR LESS: WHAT'S MORE?

One home trend is increasingly in the spotlight: life in the smallest of spaces, such as a tiny house. We take a peek.

28

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

HUMANS AND NATURE: FROM VANQUISHERS TO GUARDIANS?

What role do ethics, business, and politics have to play if we are to succeed in halting climate change?

32



TIMBER AS A RESOURCE

BACK TO THE FUTURE

What resource is fit for the future? One that keeps growing back!

34



THE LONG ROAD TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

A FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION

How can a circular economy help us to make our lifestyle more compatible with the environment?

38

SHAPING THE FUTURE SUSTAINABLY

NOT JUST A TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

We need more sustainable development in all areas of our lives. Technology has a key role to play.

44

CARBON ACCOUNTING

IT'S COMPLICATED



Companies facing growing pressure to disclose their climate data and shrink their carbon footprints. This is a great challenge, especially for retailers.

48

FULL TRUCK LOAD

LOADS TO DO

What does the FTL principle actually involve and which core requirements make sense here?

54



HORNBACK GOES TO SCHOOL

HEADS, HANDS, HEARTS – AND HORNBACK!

Who said the classroom is the only place to learn? Young people take up the tools and devise sustainable ideas for the future.

56



S O C I A L
C O M M I T M E N T

HORNBACH'S HEART

It is no secret that HORNBACH has its roots in the south of the German federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate. The very qualities that outsiders might look down on as rustic and simple-minded are actually the core of HORNBACH's corporate culture: a down-to-earth approach, open-mindedness, sticking together, and having your heart in the right place. These are characteristics typically attributed to people in the Palatinate. And they form the bedrock of our HORNBACH Foundation "People in Need". Katja Greil

Back in August 2002, HORNBACH was looking forward to celebrating its 125th anniversary. The festive mood came to an abrupt halt though when a low-pressure system known as "Ilse" brought the deluge of the century, with massive floods in Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic. Suddenly, the company's two stores close to rivers, in Dresden in Germany and in Ansfelden near Linz in Austria, were submerged with up to 1.50 meters of water and had to close for several weeks.

DOWN-TO-EARTH

Thousands of people were affected by the floods. Some lost all their belongings and some far worse than that. 33 HORNBACH employees from Saxony, Lower Austria, and the Czech Republic were also afflicted. HORNBACH wanted to help. Colleagues wanted to help. But how? Advice from experts quickly clarified that, by establishing a foundation, the company would be able to offer direct uncomplicated assistance to those hardest hit. No sooner said than done! Thanks to donations from the Hornbach families, the company HORNBACH, and numerous busi-

ness partners, the initial capital was soon on hand. Without delay, the HORNBACH Foundation "People in Need" was then set up in September 2002. HORNBACH's Heart started beating.

I N T E R V I E W
W I T H E L K E M I E T H

HALLO ELKE, IF WE CAST OUR THOUGHTS BACK 20 YEARS. WE COULD ALREADY SEE THE EFFECTS OF HEAVY RAINFALL IN AUSTRIA AND IN BAVARIA. HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THOSE DAYS HERE IN DRESDEN?

The River Elbe here in Dresden had also risen to worrying levels, so we were already quite concerned. The Elbe had rarely been so high, we all knew that. And when the news came that Prague had opened the dikes to save the city, it was clear that things would not end well. Suddenly, the whole mass of water arrived at our end.



Above: Elke Mieth, Case Number 27 and HORN-BACH employee from the very start. She has worked at the Dresden store from 1991 to the present day.

Opposite: The floods (top) and their consequences (bottom) at our HORN-BACH store in Dresden in September 2002.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE FLOODS ARRIVED?

The police drove through the streets and called on people to immediately evacuate their homes. We have two children, so we quickly packed the most urgent things. Back then, we lived on the 3rd floor of an apartment block and decided to flee to our allotment garden. You couldn't really get anywhere else because the river had already flooded all the bridges. We weren't even safe in the allotment, but we didn't know that yet. To enable the children to continue a half-way "normal" life, we took the television, fridge, and the necessities with us. Soon after, the water shot up through the drains in the allotments and everything was flooded within seconds. It was just far too much rain. In no time at all, all our belongings

were swimming in up to 1 meter of water. We couldn't rescue any of them.

AND HOW DID YOU SPEND THE TIME AFTER THAT, WITH NO APARTMENT AND NOWHERE TO GO?

Thankfully, people showed amazing solidarity. We moved in separately with various neighbors and acquaintances. We'd lived in a rented apartment and so we had many things stored in the basement. We lost all of those.

THAT IS TERRIBLE. WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

We heard relatively soon that HORN-BACH would be offering assistance to employees affected by the floods. That gave us a glimmer

of hope and a certain sense of security amidst all the uncertainty. We quickly received uncomplicated financial support so that we could buy the things we needed most. That was a huge relief for us at the time. We were so grateful for this great help that we of course also wanted to help out at our store in Dresden. During the day we stood in the water and dirt to help clean up the store. At home, the cleaning work continued. It was a tough time.

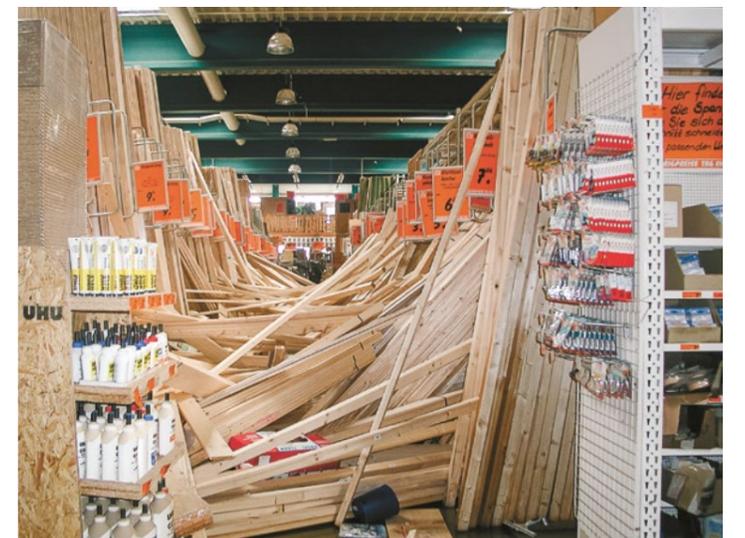
AND HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY, ELKE, WHEN YOU SEE IMAGES OF THE FLOODS IN THE AHR VALLEY IN 2021?

I'm still basically in shock. I too secretly look to see how high the Elbe is, even if a whole new level of precautions has been taken since then. Even so, after the floods we moved to live further away from the river. I know all too well what the people in the Ahr Valley are going through and what a disaster like this means for their lives. But, here too, it is fantastic to see that HORN-BACH is again offering uncomplicated and speedy assistance to those affected.

OPEN-MINDED

The work performed by the HORN-BACH Foundation is based on two pillars. It is a point of contact for company employees and also for people outside the company who are looking for help. To date, the Foundation has provided assistance to more than 4,000 people or their families. In most cases, the Foundation offers cash, with average grants of around € 2,000. That is money that can quickly help people in emergencies and offer some hope.

Last year was certainly no exception: Due to torrential rain, rivers escaped their banks in several federal states in Germany, as well as in the Netherlands and Austria. The images



of terrible destruction are still all too familiar. HORN-BACH launched a companywide donation campaign to support people living in the areas affected by the floods. This campaign collected around € 85,000, a sum the company immediately doubled. Prior to this, the HORN-BACH Group and Hornbach families had increased the Foundation's funds by € 500,000. The flood relief was passed on to employees affected, as well as to very large numbers of people outside the company. All in all, the Foundation was able to ease the hardship of more than 300 applicants.

STICKING TOGETHER

The funds required for the Foundation to maintain its work are secured on the one hand by regular allowances from the company. On the other hand, company employees document their solidarity in the “Colleagues Help Colleagues” campaign. Donation boxes can be found in easily accessible locations in the break rooms at HORNBAACH DIY stores and garden centers, HORNBAACH Baustoff Union outlets, logistics sites, and headquarters. These are regularly filled with small, and sometimes larger donations voluntarily made by staff. All based on the motto “Think of the Monthly Euro!” This regularly generates several thousand euros. These staff donations are also doubled by the company each year. And then there are donations from third parties, which the Foundation is always grateful to receive. After all, the number of people seeking help is on the increase.

HEART IN THE RIGHT PLACE

The Foundation’s support guidelines drily list the circumstances that count as emergencies. These are things none of us would like to face: death, serious accidents, and severe disease. In the latter cases, applicants often request funds for additional medicine, extra aids, or special treatments. Alongside these, the Foundation receives numerous applications for assistance in the wake of disasters such as floods and fire. Lists like these always involve actual human fates that have to be assessed and, it goes without saying, painstakingly checked. “It’s the large numbers of applications we receive from single mothers raising severely disabled children that occupy me most”, confesses Karl Garrecht, the Chair of the Foundation Board. It is certainly no easy task for the four Board members of the HORNBAACH Foundation, all volunteers. They are all former HORNBAACH employees who are making the most of their retirement while getting actively involved at the Foundation.

For Lutz Zielinski, this work opens his eyes to the sad fact that very many people need immediate assistance and often fail to obtain this due to bureaucratic hurdles. The hardship suffered by many of the applicants is not easily forgotten. So it is all the more uplifting when the Foundation can help people with links to HORNBAACH. Johannes Otto can recall standing next to a colleague who wept to show her gratitude and a colleague who was able to avoid his home being taken away.

And when deaths occur within the families of colleagues, those left behind are not left alone. Upon the death of his mother, one colleague received assistance in the form of a flight back to his distant home country. Another had the repatriation costs covered following a fatal accident abroad. “Making sure the work of our Foundation actually helps people – that’s what it’s all about for me. That’s why I’m involved. And I know that my three colleagues on the Board all have similar motives”, explains Dr. Ursula Dauth when she looks back on 20 years of activity at and for the HORNBAACH Foundation.

INTERVIEW WITH KARL GARRECHT



KARL, WHEN YOU THINK BACK TO AUGUST 2002 – HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THAT SITUATION?

It was a dreadful time and terrible to see how many HORNBAACH colleagues lost literally everything. So the desire to help came pretty much immediately. But how? If you do it via salaries, not all the help reaches those in need. We wanted to make sure that basically every euro that was donated actually arrived where it was needed most urgently, and as quickly as possible. So we raced against German officialdom and set up the Foundation at the earliest chance. I’d like to stress the overwhelming solidarity shown by our colleagues. Without a second thought, all celebrations – including those for the company’s anniversary – that would have been financially supported by HORNBAACH were immediately cancelled. And the initiative for that came from our stores! We then added the cash earmarked for the celebrations to the



Left: Karl Garrecht as Chair (center), Ursula Dauth (left) Johannes Otto (far right, standing), and Lutz Zielinski (right): All channel their common sense and enormous empathy to offer support.

Opposite: Karl Garrecht, 82 years-old – founding member, crossword hack, dog lover and not to be gotten down – with 64 years of service the longest active HORNBAACH man.

donations. We were all very glad to be able to establish the Foundation so quickly and at least offer some financial support to our colleagues.

WHAT IS THAT STRIKING LOGO ALL ABOUT THAT ALWAYS APPEARS IN CONNECTION WITH THE FOUNDATION?

It’s meant to symbolize the assistance, the outstretched hand we offer to people. HORNBAACH extends its hand to colleagues and their families who need help.

IT IS THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY. ARE YOU HOLDING A CELEBRATION?

No, the Foundation is not there to celebrate itself. It stands for assistance, rather than as an aim in itself. Having said that, we didn’t want to just ignore the anniversary. So we gave some thought to how we could draw attention to it. We are based in one of Germany’s largest wine-growing regions, so it made sense to mark the anniversary with Riesling and offer this in an anniversary bottle with a spe-

cial label for our colleagues to buy. The underlying thought was that we would receive money. Not just that, the donors also get to appreciate the wine. They give something and get something in return. That’s the ideal case. But the Foundation also wanted to make the public aware of its activities again. When all is said and done, the only help we can offer is that which is donated to us. ◀

Since being established on September 2, 2002, it has given hope to several thousand people who are in need. It began with floods and recently the floods returned. In the intervening 20 years, the HORNBAACH Foundation “People in Need” – HORNBAACH’s Heart – has worked hard to help.



**HORNBAACH Stiftung
„Menschen in Not“**



DIVERSITY

DIFFERENT NEEDS, SAME RIGHTS

What does diversity actually involve? How can you actually live it at a large retail group? And what does that mean for people who work or shop here? We pay a visit to IKEA in Germany.

Florian Preuß

For as long as I've worked at IKEA, I've never once found myself thinking that, as a woman, I might be at any kind of disadvantage at work." Karin Reuchlen does not just say this; she articulates the sentence with her eyes firmly fixed on me and with great conviction. She really means it. And she also knows that things can be very different. Before joining the well-known furniture group with Swedish roots as a new store manager 15 years ago, she held the same position for another large retailer, where she was one of two women among 58 men. "There, gender was always a topic and, as a woman, I was always somehow special." It is a different picture at IKEA Germany: The overall gender distribution – 58 percent women and 42 percent men – is similarly reflected on management level.

STANDING UP TO UNCONSCIOUS PREJUDICE

So it's all hunky dory when it comes to gender equality? "Yes, but you have to keep your eye firmly on the ball", says Nicole Peper, People & Culture Manager in Germany, and gives me an example right away. At the annual "Tal-

ent Review", where experienced managers assess which individuals have the potential to manage a store in future, the results some time ago were just too one-sided. Many of those selected were male, middle-aged, and of German origin. "After that, we simply reversed the process and invited all employees to let us know if they saw themselves as having the potential to manage a store." The result was an absolutely equal distribution of women and men, as well as 50 percent non-German origin and all aged below 30. The managers then addressed this discrepancy between self-assessment and third-party opinion. "That was challenging, but it also produced interesting insights. To further raise awareness, we will soon be offering all managers training on unconscious prejudice", adds Nicole Peper.

Amatul has so far not encountered any prejudice at IKEA. The young woman from Pakistan, who fled to Germany all on her own six years ago, wears a headscarf for religious reasons, also when she is at work. At the end of 2021, she completed a two-month internship at the store in Frankfurt Nieder-Eschbach together with other women refugees as part of the company's "Broadening perspec-

tives” initiative. Unlike at her previous workplaces in Germany, her headscarf was not an issue, either among colleagues or among customers. That comes as no surprise to Janina Schäfer, Manager of the People & Culture Unit in Frankfurt Nieder-Eschbach. Together with her team, she supervised the women, has herself worked in various functions at IKEA for 17 years, and for the past three years at the store in Nieder-Eschbach. The 400-strong team includes people from nearly 40 countries, she explains. “And that pretty much matches the diversity of our customers as well. And for customers it is often a real advantage to obtain advice in their native language if they wish.” To make that easier, the employees’ name badges show which languages they speak.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE COMMON GOOD

Having said that, customer benefits were not the motivation for IKEA’s commitment to refugees and many other initiatives, explains Detlev Blenk, Manager for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. “As a company, we see ourselves as having a humanistic ethos and are very interested in contributing to the common good”, he adds. He attributes that to a mindset he has often encountered among people in Småland, the Swedish province where the company founder Ingvar Kamprad hails from: “Don’t think you are better than anyone else. We are all equal and have shared rights”, he says to summarize this mentality. The same applies to people’s sexual orientation. Back in the 1980s, the company deliberately integrated gay men into its campaigns. On the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHO/TB), it now raises flags to promote human rights at all its locations worldwide. “That boosts our appeal and inspires others to follow suit”, says Nicole Peper. “We also discuss our approach and values at interviews already to make sure both sides are on the same wavelength.”

As a matter of course, IKEA now also employs many people who were less visible in the past, such as people living with disabilities and refugees. The company tries to make it easier for people in the latter group to get started in the world of work by offering language courses, internships, and support with trips to the authorities. This way, it aims to contribute to integration. Through to 2023, up to 300 people who have fled their home countries can take part in the corresponding program. And that is cer-



Above: HR Manager Nicole Peper aims to take greater account of the needs of different generations in IKEA’s recruiting activities as well.

Previous page: Amatul from Pakistan completed an internship in the Refugee Initiative and is now starting her training at IKEA.

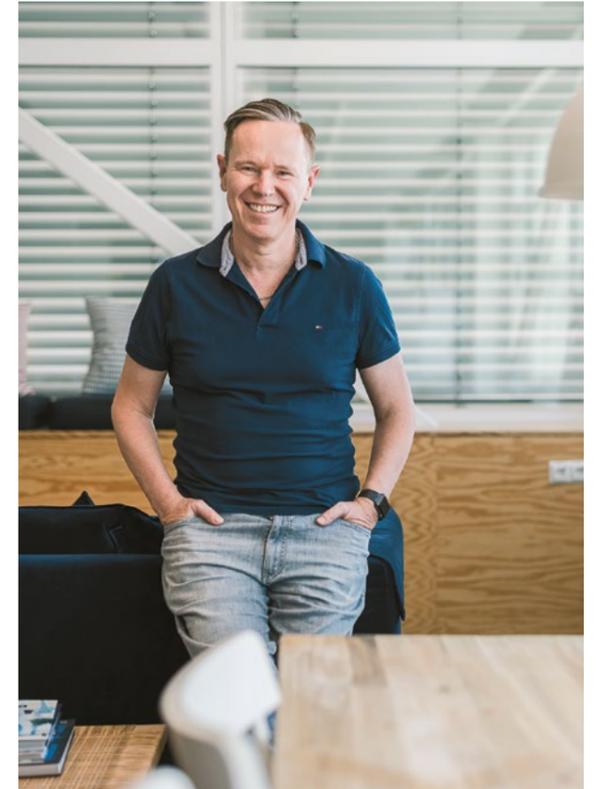
tainly also advantageous in the growing competition for talent. “We would of course be delighted if they all decided to work with us after the program.

But that is not the aim and also not realistic”, says Jenny Årlemalm, Project Manager for IKEA’s Refugee Initiative. Still, Amatul is enthusiastic and chose to stay on board. “From the very start, I was surprised how friendly and helpful everyone here is. I was treated so kindly and never had to be afraid to ask questions. Things were not always like that in my previous jobs.” Between the end of her internship and the start of her training, she worked part time in sales at the Nieder-Eschbach store. Since August, she is now officially one of around 170 new trainees at IKEA Germany, six of which in Frankfurt Nieder-Eschbach.

ALL GENERATIONS HELP TO BUILD IKEA’S SUCCESS

Karin Reuchlen can look back on an eventful working life. After many years as a store manager, since the end of 2021 she has headed the “Age Diversity” project at IKEA. The focus here is not so much on a specific age group; the company rather aims to justice to the needs of all generations. “Our goal is for people in all the different stages of life to feel comfortable and at home here. Every generation can contribute to the company’s success. Their backgrounds and needs may vary very widely. Making sure we take due account of all these is a great challenge”, explains Karin Reuchlen. When it comes to implementation, she makes a distinction between “long runs” and “quick wins”. The former mainly involve structural measures that require a certain lead time and agreements with works councils and other bodies. The measures to make working hours more flexible are one example here.

Thankfully, there are also “quick wins”, changes that are quickly introduced, easily organized, and may absolutely have a noticeable impact. “We saw, for example, that young people who apply for training positions here take a really long time to relax at interviews if the recruiters and managers are significantly older than them”, relates HR manager Nicole Peper. “To help break the ice faster, the interviews are now also attended by a young employee representative and a trainee representative.” At the other end of the scale, the company was also considering how it could better tailor its application process to the needs of older applicants. And it was obvious that its future job adverts would account for the age diversity factor. All in all, one thing is clear: There is a lot going on at IKEA. ➤



Top right: Detlev Blenk appreciates IKEA’s humanistic approach. One priority in his work as a manager for “Equality, Diversity & Inclusion” is to contribute to the common good.

Bottom right: Having spent more than a decade as a store manager, Karin Reuchlen is now tackling the topic of age diversity.



INTERVIEW
WITH SIMONA SCARPALEGGIA

“THESE STEPS BENEFIT WOMEN AND MEN IN EQUAL MEASURE”



MS. SCARPALEGGIA, YOU HAVE BEEN CAMPAIGNING FOR WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES NOW. WAS THERE ANY SPECIFIC INCIDENT THAT TRIGGERED THIS COMMITMENT?

Yes, it has become a kind of life mission for me. At the start of my career, I noticed that numerous women joined the company as colleagues, but hardly any of them took their careers further even though they were competent and successful. I thought that was unfair and also saw it as a great loss, both for companies and for society as whole. I looked into it more closely and found a whole number

of obstacles: cultural, economic, and organizational. The further I advanced in my own career, the more I thought about what I as a manager could do to help remove some of these obstacles.

COULD YOU GIVE US A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE?

In Italian companies, it was long the norm to start important meetings in the afternoon. Often, the managers only came home late in the evening. That is a great hurdle for many female colleagues, particularly those with families and children. When I myself reached a position where I

could change the rules, I stipulated that meetings would begin at 10 a.m. and be over by 4 p.m. at the latest. The meetings were very well prepared and also highly productive. Ultimately, that even convinced the skeptics.

UNDER YOUR LEADERSHIP, IKEA IN SWITZERLAND SIGNIFICANTLY RAISED THE SHARE OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN A SHORT TIMEFRAME AND ALREADY REACHED A 50:50 RATIO IN 2015. WERE THERE ALSO MANY SKEPTICS YOU HAD TO CONVINCE THERE?

When I arrived in Switzerland in 2010, women made up 62 percent of Ikea's workforce but only 15 percent of its middle management. We measured that exactly and then set ourselves targets. As it happened, many of the measures we took were soon quite well known. Our reputation as an employer improved significantly and that put us at a real advantage when it came to attracting the best talents. The Ikea brand also demonstrably profited from this. Just as important, however, was the fact that these steps benefited women and men in equal measure. Numerous men gladly drew on the option of working as a manager on a part-time basis. And remote working – which is now everywhere – was enthusiastically taken up by our female and male colleagues ten years ago. We also made sure that equal work received equal pay regardless of gender. All these measures significantly improved satisfaction levels within the company and also made a key contribution to our very good financial results.

SINCE YOU LEFT IKEA IN 2019, YOU HAVE ADVISED OTHER COMPANIES AS THEY HEAD FOR GREATER DIVERSITY AND GENDER EQUALITY IN YOUR ROLE AT THE CERTIFICATION BODY EDGE, WHERE YOU ARE NOW IN THE SUPERVISORY BOARD. WHAT APPROACH DOES EDGE TAKE HERE?

We first assess the situation on all levels of the company, look at representation levels in various areas of management, and evaluate developments in salaries. We then compile potential solutions. Ultimately, the company management decides which gaps have to be closed and which measures should be implemented to achieve this. The consistency with which the company tackles this issue and achieves its self-imposed targets is then evaluated at regular intervals by an independent certification body and the company's auditors.

MANY COMPANIES ARE CLEARLY MAKING GOOD PROGRESS IN THIS AREA AND OBTAINING RELEVANT CERTIFICATION. IN SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, THOUGH, WE CAN SEE GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO SET FIXED GENDER QUOTAS, AT LEAST FOR SUPERVISORY AND MANAGEMENT BOARDS. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

It goes without saying that the ideal approach is for companies to set their own targets, and that is also more sustainable. On the other hand, the statistics show quite clearly that the situation develops faster and better wherever quotas are introduced. And I would like to broaden the perspective. Reports on this topic mostly refer to a “women's quota”. In Italy, the media even call it a “pink quota”. But the quota is a kind of safety mechanism for both genders. It protects the underrepresented gender in each case, regardless of whether that happens to be women or men.

WHEN YOU YOURSELF BECAME A SUPERVISORY BOARD MEMBER AT HORNBAACH AND AT THE AUTO-GRILL RESTAURANT CHAIN TWO YEARS AGO, SOME MEDIA COMMENTARIES SAID THIS WOULD PROBABLY BRING “A BREATH OF FRESH AIR INTO THESE MALE-DOMINATED SECTORS”. IS THAT ASSUMPTION CORRECT?

Well, Covid first took some of the wind out of our sails. Many meetings could not be held in person. Last year, HORNBAACH then asked me to speak about diversity and inclusion at a meeting of its Board of Management and to report on my experience. After this presentation, I shared experience on the same topic with HR managers from all regions. And then the company is also working intensively on its ESG and sustainability targets. I am following all that with great interest and very happy to offer tips and suggestions wherever I can.

MANY THANKS FOR TALKING TO US! <<

About Simona Scarpaleggia: Originally from Rome, Simona Scarpaleggia began her career at IKEA in Italy and was then Managing Director of IKEA in Switzerland from 2010 to 2019. She has been a Supervisory Board member at HORNBAACH Holding since March 2020.

GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE

A MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

HORNBAACH stands for diversity in its projects and for the diversity of everyone who is passionate about implementing these projects. Gender is absolutely irrelevant. That is easily said....

Barbara Pfeil

For many people, both in the company and in its target group, this approach is not enough given the debate currently surrounding gender-sensitive language in German. Ever more people seem to be questioning their speech habits:

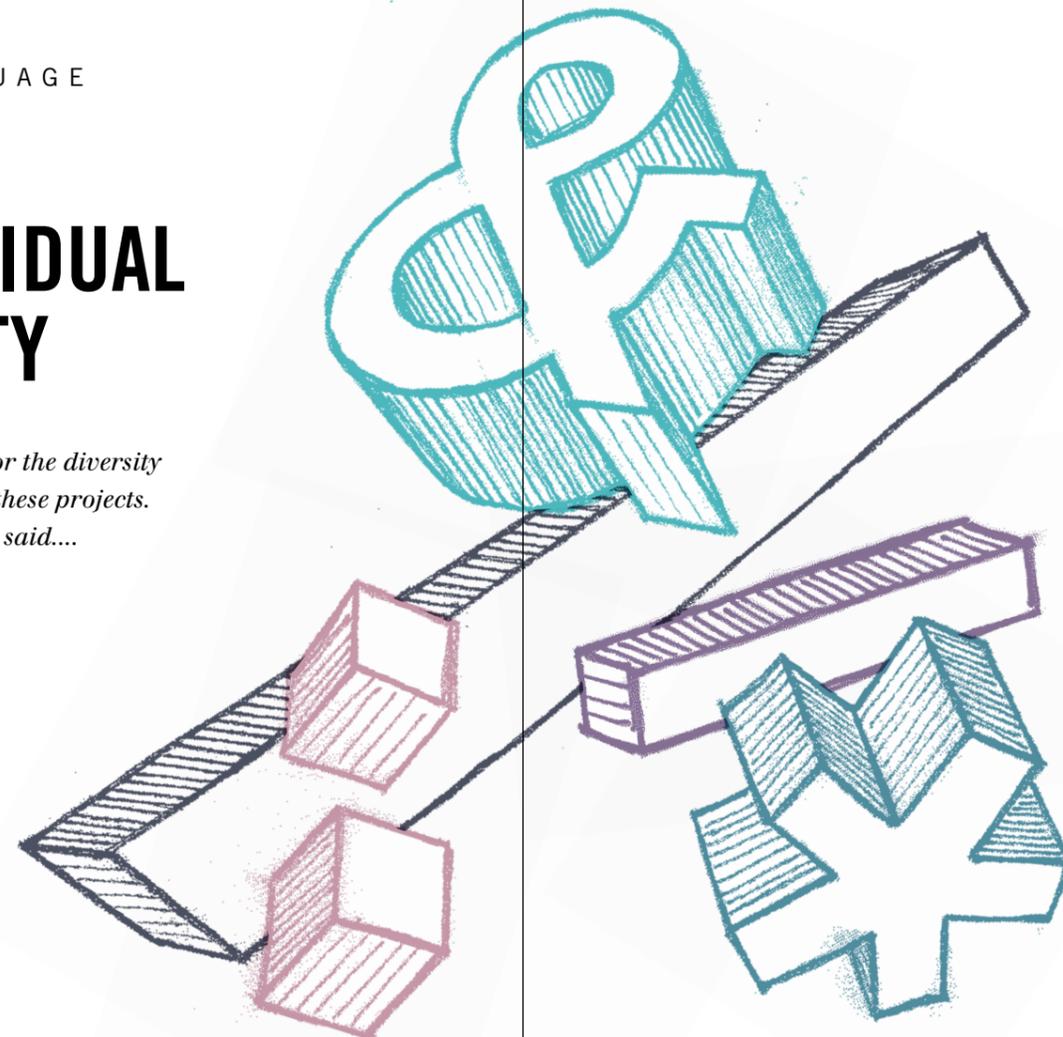
**“What am I actually saying there?
What image of reality
am I portraying?”**

What gender-neutral language claims to do is just that: portray reality. The reality is: There are women. There are men. And there are people who would not allocate themselves to either gender, or to both. The reality is: Some of them channel all their passion into implementing projects. And some of them purchase the materials they need for those at HORNBAACH. The reality is: HORNBAACH aims to reach all these people with its communications.

Take your pick. Is it he? Is it she? Is it he and she, (s)he, or they? German also offers many options to include and exclude. When it comes to choosing the right words to formulate things in a (more) gender-sensitive way, calls for clear guidelines within the company have been on the increase.

**“How do we do that
at HORNBAACH these days?
What does the company see
as the right form?”**

Unlike other companies, HORNBAACH has so far not introduced any strict formulation guidelines. It is largely left to the discretion of staff members to decide what they would like to express and how to formulate it. In other words (or wordesses): They are free to decide themselves what the best approach is to the individual situation, channel, and target group. HORNBAACH is therefore sticking to an approach it has taken in many other areas in recent years as well: moving away from fixed standards and towards greater individual responsibility for its staff.



That means staff face the challenge of finding the right way to convey the message in line with the company's approach:

**“HORNBAACH does not care
what your gender is.
We respect you and celebrate
your passion for your project.”**

Another hurdle is the brand-boosting tone HORNBAACH has cultivated in recent decades. HORNBAACH's image and the language it uses are built in particular on clarity, directness, and a total absence of fuss. That means anyone wishing to be consistently gender-neutral in their communications has to tackle a few problems:

**“How can a text with
'Doers and Doeresses' or
'Doing Persons' still sound clear,
direct, and unfussy?”**

That is precisely the difficulty, or maybe just the novelty, that irritates opponents of gender-neutral language. It sounds different, clumsy, or awkward, at least compared with previously learned forms of expression. But is that a reason to avoid the topic? At core, is it not about what has always been the core of successful communications? Finding the best words and expressions to make sure your counterpart has the best possible chance of understanding what you mean? And can therefore latch on to what you are saying? Is that not what we actually want? A strong connection to people who implement their projects with HORNBAACH? There is no alternative. If we want to reach others with what we are saying, we need to empathize with them. So we can repeatedly ask ourselves the following questions:

**“What is my message?
Who needs to understand it?
How do these people tick?
How can I best pack
my message for them?”**

We are all part of a society that has always been in flux. That can lead to tensions between us. That is the way things are and we have to accept that. It is equally true that we will never reach everyone. But we can do our best to reach those we are addressing in the specific context.

So this appeal is addressed to you if you communicate with others – regardless of the subject matter – and wish to forge a link with them: Be clear about your message. Empathize with those you wish to reach. And create opportunities for them to latch on. Your language and your texts do not have to be uniform. Quite the opposite: They should always be individual. ◀

HORNBAACH'S PEOPLE MAP

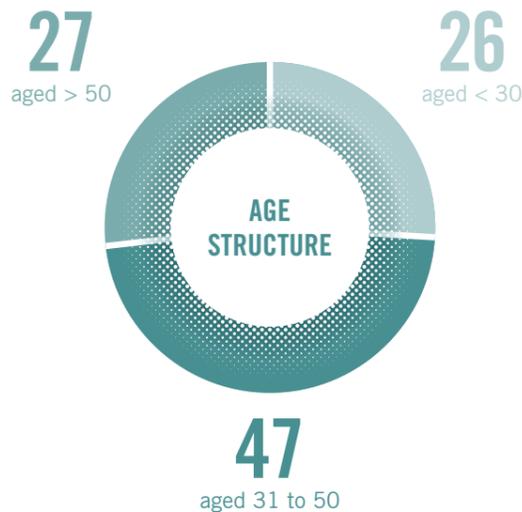
167 36 9 7 Status: February 28, 2022 Text: Franziska Ring

HORNBAACH would be nothing without them – our people! Day in, day out, they each contribute to securing the company's success. HR topics have always enjoyed great prominence at HORNBAACH. Thanks to catchwords such as equal opportunities, diversity, work-life balance, etc. they are also playing an ever more important role in terms of public awareness. HORNBAACH is

convinced that trust is the way to build long-term work relationships with highly motivated and loyal staff. Measures to maintain and improve employee satisfaction and loyalty are managed by the relevant HR departments in the individual countries in which we operate. The following overview summarizes the structural data for HORNBAACH's employees in the 2021/22 financial year:

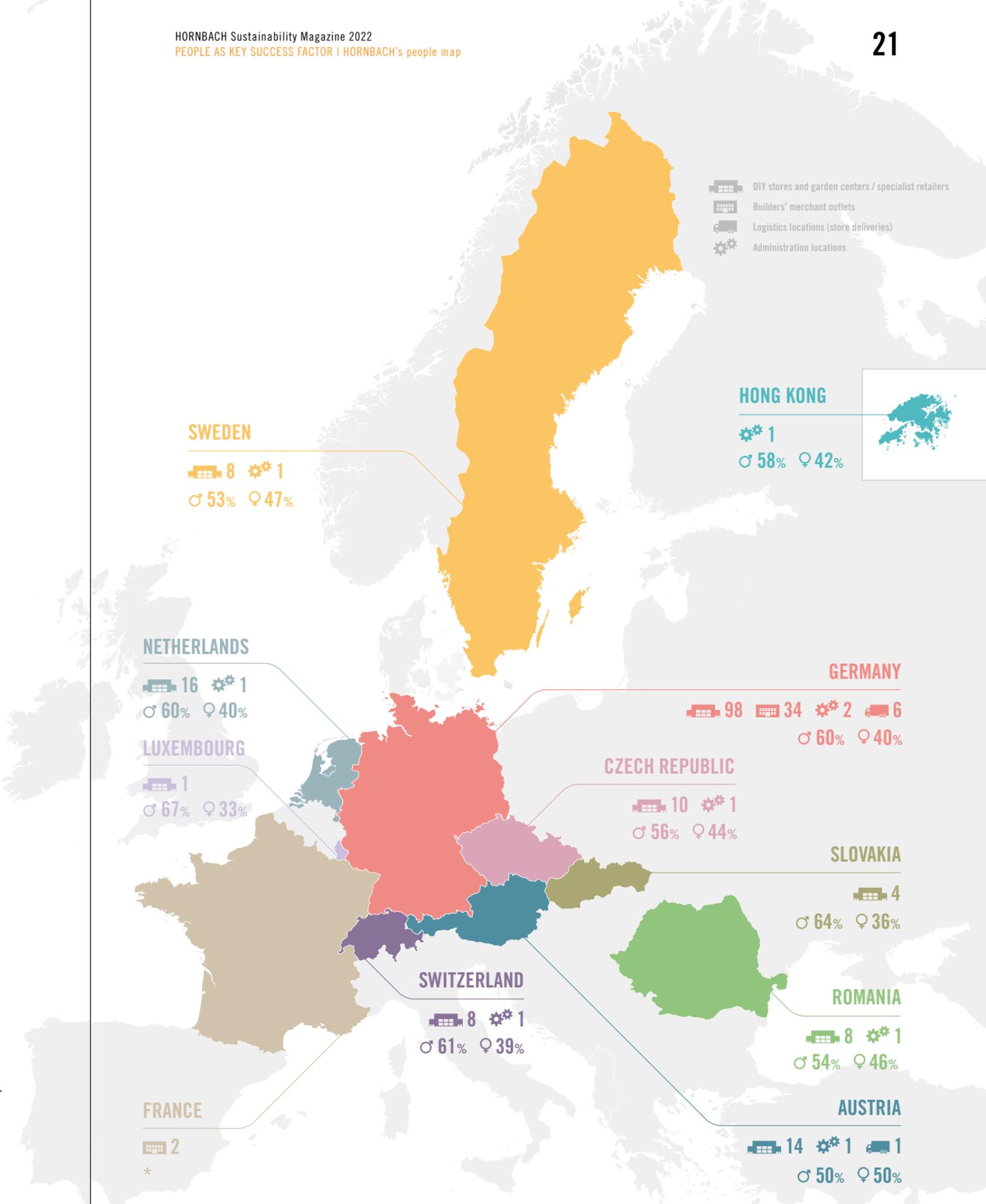
HORNBAACH EMPLOYEES
in the 2021/22 financial year **24,268**

of which ...
Figures in %



HORNBAACH is convinced of the power of diversity. It is a key pillar of business success. That is why we promote the social, ethnic, and cultural diversity of our people and channel this to the company's benefit. Nearly 25,000 people from more than 100 countries work at HORNBAACH. People with different backgrounds and characteristics

enrich our teams and our company. That is one reason why our gender quota is relatively well balanced in all our regions. This leads to greater customer proximity, creativity, and innovation. And it makes a valuable contribution to securing our company's future. «



* No structural data is available for employees at HORNBAACH Baustoff Union in France.

DARE TO BE
FLEXIBLE

BRAVE NEW WORLD OF WORK

*What does my job actually mean to me? How important is it to me to have a career?
How much would I like to work, in what kind of setting, and when?
People are currently hunting for meaning in their lives and increasingly questioning
their own working lives. In the US, employers who stuck rigidly to crusty rules
were hit hard by the wave of resignations known worldwide as “The Great Resignation”.
HORNBAACH, by contrast, has in recent years seen the emergence of numerous
initiatives which aim to try out and enable new and more flexible ways of working.
We take a closer look: Florian Preuß*

Everyone is required to spend a minimum of 40 hours in the office per week. If you don't show up, we will assume you have resigned”, wrote Elon Musk in a mail to employees of the Tesla Group in June 2022. After two years of pandemic, with a great deal of work performed from home, other companies have also started strictly ordering their staff back to the office. When she reads this, Katharina Schenk can only shake her head. She has accompanied firms and their teams through change and development processes for many years now. She joined HORNBAACH in early 2021, right in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic and the strict lockdown. Her onboarding was almost entirely virtual. Back then, an estimated total of 90 percent of the 1,800 colleagues at HORNBAACH's Headquarters in Bornheim worked from home or on a mobile basis. One-and-a-half years later, many are still drawing on this option.

A MULTI-SPACE FOR NEW FORMS OF COOPERATION

“In today's world, I deliberately choose the place where I can best perform my work and obtain the best possible results”, says Katharina Schenk. That sentence could serve as the motto for the “Flexify” project that she and several colleagues from Technology have promoted for more than a year now. At core, the project addresses the question of what people and teams need to work healthily and productively in a flexible, hybrid world of work – something, incidentally, which an overwhelming majority of the techie colleagues voted in favor of in an initial survey in 2021. And what does that mean for the space provided by the employer? “Conventional offices have largely served their purpose”, explains Katharina Schenk. “What we need today is a kind of multi-space that does justice to a new meeting culture and changed needs when it comes to cooperation.”

A visit to Building 4 at Headquarters offers an impression of what this kind of multi-space could actually look like. The whole of the first floor was converted at the end of 2021 – under employees' own steam and almost entirely with materials from the adjacent DIY store. “We don't work at a bank or an insurance company”, explains Kathrin Matic from the project team when she looks at the steel-framed shelves, plywood boards on the meeting tables, lounge of garden furniture, and numerous transport castors among the varied fittings and furnishings. “The DIY feel

suits us just right. It's also inexpensive and, more than anything, really flexible when we convert the space to meet the different needs of teams.” The only downside is that the power points for the notebooks and large screens cannot be installed without further ado. Anyone wishing to invite guests or colleagues working at home to join an on-site meeting either has to use the spaces available or spontaneously grab an extension cable.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE

One of the “power users” at the new Flexify space is Ronny Wörl. He began work in HORNBAACH's Customer Technology department in 2015 and, since this year, has headed a team of six colleagues and seven external employees. In recent weeks, he has made regular use of the new premises, particularly for internal meetings: “Holding meetings in person means you can see more, take note of minor reactions, the proverbial question mark on team members' foreheads, for example. And it goes without saying that you can use the time before and after the meetings to catch up with people, whether at the coffee machine or in the lounge. The challenge is to integrate and convince those tuning in from elsewhere just as effectively.” At least the technical requirements are in place: All the project and workshop rooms are designed for hybrid settings.

Ronny Wörl himself returned to working in the office regularly at the beginning of the year, but also draws on the shared workplaces on the other side of the corridor. “At home, the office is often occupied by my girlfriend. Here, on the other hand, there are no longer any firmly allocated workplaces, but I have always managed to find a free desk so far.” What about personal things? They are taken home again at the end of the working day but can also be stored in one of the rustic fruit crates to which any colleague can attach a name tag. Interest in the Flexify project has risen consistently in recent weeks, with the numerous options available in the new space being put to ever greater use. One exception: The focus room, a separate wing for silent work with no phone calls or video conferences, is mostly vacant. “Based on feedback from colleagues, we know most of them prefer to work at home if they need to focus all their concentration on a project. For them, the office is rather a place for interaction, somewhere they go to work on something together or discuss something”, explains Katharina Schenk. In the coming months, the pro-



**IN TODAY'S WORLD,
I DELIBERATELY CHOOSE
THE PLACE WHERE I CAN
BEST PERFORM MY WORK
AND OBTAIN THE BEST
POSSIBLE RESULTS.**

Katharina Schenk

"It's a great solution", enthuses Florian Stuppy, whose team is responsible, among other areas, for staff deployment at the CSC. One key task performed by the team is to assess how many calls and mails will be received from customers in the next four weeks and calculate how many colleagues need to be on the job at the various times. If submitted in good time, preferred vacation dates can be accounted for. However, other events that may create a difficulty often arise at short notice, such as the unexpected funeral of a friend or an important appointment at the authorities. "Once staff deployment planning is complete, all colleagues can post an entry on the exchange platform and find an exchange partner. That all runs smoothly and does not require consultation with line managers", explains Florian Stuppy.

"The exchange platform is really easy to use", confirms Sergej Kaiser, who is part of a nine-member CSC team offering in-depth telephone and online advice to customers on all aspects of tools, machines, hardware, and electrical installation. Anyone in this team of experts can stand in for anyone else and swap shifts accordingly: "I have two young children who I look after in the morning until school starts at 8 a.m. During school holidays, early shifts from 7 a.m. are no problem for me. During term time, though, I regularly swap shifts with one of my eight colleagues. I've never had any problem finding someone who would like to move to the early shift." But what happens if the swap does not materialize or is entered in the system at too short notice? "If that happens, we team members can speak directly to the manager. In important cases, like a sudden doctor's appointment for the child, the manager is always able to find a solution."

ject team aims to look more closely into opportunities and techniques for focused work. Offerings on the agenda include digital fitness, healthy work, and hybrid cooperation.

**DIGITAL MARKET
FOR SPEEDY SHIFT SWAPS**

Another topic is grabbing the headlines at many HORN-BACH stores: the exchange platform in the HR deployment planning software provided by ATOSS. For several months, this has offered greater flexibility and opportunities to staff at numerous locations and enabled them to optimally combine their work and private interests. This service has its origins in HORN-BACH's Customer Service Center (CSC). Here, around 290 employees work in a three-shift system from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. For several years now, they have drawn on the option of quickly and easily swapping shifts or even full days among each other by using a digital time logging system.



**WORKING HOURS TAILORED
TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS**

What can be done when staff wish to make changes on a medium-term or even long-term basis, rather than just swapping shifts at short notice? What can they do, for example, if a rigid five-day week and standard working hours of 37.5 to 40 hours a week no longer fit in with their individual circumstances, whether just temporarily or even permanently? "If we wish to attract committed employees to the company in the first place and retain them on an ongoing basis, we have to create the right conditions. We also have to be prepared to question regulations that may have been in place for decades but are no longer in line with the times. People's individual circumstances just vary so widely",

comments Jochen Braun, a member of the Management of HORN-BACH Baumarkt AG in Germany and responsible, among other areas, for HR. "Taking due account of the needs of our customers and teams, our aim is to enable all colleagues to align their work commitments as well as possible to their individual situations."

To this end, employees now have the option of agreeing "Bespoke Working Hours" with their managers. In recent months, around 330 colleagues from a total of 15 stores and one logistics center in Germany have participated in the pilot project with the same name. Working with five different components and in liaison with their managers, they could reduce or increase their working hours for a period chosen at their discretion. Reinhard Wätjen

Above: Built entirely with materials from the HORN-BACH store, the Flexify space offers a variety of options for working and networking.

Opposite: Katharina Schenk is certain: "Conventional offices have largely served their purpose."

Previous page: Name tags show who the personal items in the fruit crates belong to.



Left: Florian Stuppy's team is responsible, among other areas, for planning staff deployment in HORNBAACH's Customer Service.

Opposite: For Ronny Wörl, the lounge space is the perfect place to watch longer presentations in video conferences in a relaxed atmosphere.

from the HORNBAACH store in Bremer Neustadt chose the first option. He has worked at the company for 27 years, is also actively involved in the Works Council, and has now used his most recent pay rise to work one hour less a week. He has also converted part of his Christmas allowance into extra vacation days. "For me, that is one way to prepare for my approaching retirement", remarks the 58-year-old specialist adviser from the sanitary department and chuckles. "Not just that, in 2023 I want to obtain a trainer's license for fitness-based martial arts. I'll need a bit more time for that."

MORE TIME FOR FAMILY OR MORE CASH FOR VACATIONS AND CARS

For Stephan Rummel, retirement is still a distant prospect. He too has nevertheless decided to reduce his working hours – in his case to 36 hours, spread over four days. "That saves me two car journeys a week, which is a real advantage given the latest gas prices", explains the sales assistant from the construction materials department at

the HORNBAACH store in Halle an der Saale. "What's more, I have more time for my family and for renovation work on our house. There's a lot needs doing there."

Carola Öhmke has no need to renovate her house. Instead, the senior checkout assistant at the Magdeburg store has treated herself this year to a great vacation and a new car. "The 'Bespoke Working Hours' model came at just the right time for me. I have increased my weekly working hours to 40 for a six-month period and that gives me more money. I really appreciate the flexibility this model offers both for the company and for me." Her boss, Marko Senz, nods and agrees. "I have the impression this has boosted employees' sense of identification with the company. Not just that: I've also noticed that this topic is a really strong argument in interviews with applicants", the store manager reports. Despite all the euphoria, one message is still very important to him: "We can't satisfy every wish, we have to keep things up and running. The shift plans have to meet our target of being there for our customers exactly when they need us. We can make up for some gaps by sharing

employees across departments and thus grant many wishes. However, there are times when it just isn't possible to change the working hours."

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT FULL-TIME JOB

All in all, the pilot project was so convincing for the participants and the company's management that, just a few months after being launched, it is now to be rolled out across the whole of Germany. By the fall of 2022, around 12,000 employees at the 96 stores, the logistics sites, and administration departments will have the option of selecting "Bespoke Working Hours". That explicitly applies

AT MEETINGS HELD IN PERSON YOU CAN SEE MORE AND NOTE MINOR REACTIONS, LIKE THE QUESTION MARK ON PEOPLE'S FOREHEADS.

Ronny Wörl



to management staff as well. "We see this as offering a great opportunity to attract people to the company or for a further career who previously saw themselves excluded because they didn't want to or couldn't work full time. That applies not only to mothers and fathers, but also to people who simply wish to have more leisure time and nevertheless take on responsibility in their jobs", comments Karsten Kühn, the member of the Board of Management at HORNBAACH Baumarkt AG whose responsibilities include the company's HR.

"With a well-functioning team, that all works well", emphasizes Josipa Mrnjavac. Today, the head of department at HORNBAACH's store in Bad Fischau is working full time again. In Austria, that means the customary 38.5 hours a week, and that is how she started out back in 2003. In the intervening years, though, she cut down her working hours: "After my pregnancy I was initially at home again, then I worked 20 hours a week as a sales assistant in my old product area. It was just important to me to be there for my child." A few years ago, she increased her hours to 30 a week and was offered the position of head of department once again – on a part-time basis. "I really appreciate the trust the company placed in me. My child is now a fine teenager and no longer needs so much attention. That meant I could to return to full-time work."

It is examples like these, and the measures behind the scenes that make them possible, that helped HORNBAACH recently to receive official Austrian state certification as a "family-friendly employer". "There could hardly be a better accolade for us; after all, we are a family-managed company", remarks Christa Höchstätter, HORNBAACH's HR Director in Austria. Following in-depth workshops held with employees and managers, the company has identified measures that will gradually be implemented in the years ahead. These include flexible working hour models, including the option of switching shifts at short notice in ATOSS, part-time and tandem models, also for management positions, options for time out, attractive additional benefits, and a modern communications culture. "Back in 2018, we introduced the sixth week of vacation and already received considerable recognition both from within the company and externally as well. That enabled us to position ourselves as a pioneer and as an attractive employer", adds Christa Höchstätter. "We aim to keep pursuing this course and consciously make people the focus of our activities at HORNBAACH."



MAKING SUFFICIENCY YOUR MOTTO

MORE OR LESS: WHAT'S MORE?

Luxury! That once meant escaping all forms of want and deprivation and being able to afford whatever we wished: a fast car, trips round the world, fancy clothes, masses of food, a large house. Times have changed and a whole host of reasons make it unadvisable to go "higher, faster, further". Fast cars emit gases harmful to the climate, as do flights to the Caribbean. Foodstuffs are increasingly judged in terms of their sustainability, both for the climate and for animal welfare. And when it comes to houses, a new approach is emerging. The catchword here is sufficiency – deliberately limiting yourself. Christian Wolfram

The term "sufficiency" comes from Latin ("sufficiencia") and means finding a moderate balance and also changing existing patterns of consumption. When referring to a sustainable lifestyle, sufficiency is closely linked to using as little energy and as few resources as possible and minimizing your own ecological footprint. In terms of living space, there are many reasons to set limits. In Germany, the average inhabitant has living space of nearly 50 square meters, while the average apartment offers space of more than 90 square meters. Apart from the fact that living space is in ever shorter supply, particularly in urban regions, costs are also continuing to rise, even in the country. The effects are felt by families in particular, who can often simply no longer afford to live in the city. The result? Gentrification and social tensions are changing the overall climate among people living in the city.

BEING SATISFIED WITH WHAT YOU ACTUALLY NEED

This all being so, it comes as little surprise to read ever more often about a trend towards life in the smallest of spaces, like in a "tiny house". The advantages are obvious: Less space means lower maintenance costs and, as a general rule, less energy and resource use. But are economic reasons the only factor that makes life in less space attractive? No way! Sufficiency is more than a trend, it embodies an ecological and sustainable way of life. Deliberately foregoing consumption, throwing off ballast, the whole process of slowing down – these side-effects can all make a real difference to our wellbeing. To put it differently: Sufficiency is not just getting by with the essentials, it also means being satisfied with what you actually need.

This approach to life goes along with a whole series of trends and movements that sociologists have identified for the present day. "Slow life", which puts mindfulness and slowness at the heart of our actions, rather than hectically racing against the clock, is said to improve people's quality of life. The principle of "downshifting" comes from the world of work and aims to enable people to lead more self-determined and fulfilled lives by reducing their working hours. And the trend towards "simplicity" is usually explained by referring to the fact that we are increasingly overwhelmed in a complex world and long for things to be easy and uncomplicated. Slower, less, simpler. That sounds quite different from "higher, faster, further". It sounds as if, for many people, true luxury means deliberately coping

with less, even if they can afford more. "Minimalism" is the term used to describe an approach to life in which people question their own patterns of consumption and free themselves of unnecessary ballast. And this brings us back to tiny houses: Anyone who moves into one definitely needs to get rid of many things for which there is quite simply no longer space.

TINY HOUSES: ALL YOU NEED TO LIVE

There is no exact definition of what a tiny house is, or of how tiny it must be to qualify. Some manage with less than ten square meters of space, while others have around 50 square meters, making them roughly the same size as a two-room apartment. And then there are mobile versions on wheels and those that are firmly sited. What all have in common is this: A tiny house offers everything you need to live – a kitchen, sanitary facilities, space to eat, and space to sleep. Tiny houses have their origins in the USA. During the financial crisis some 15 years ago, many homeowners ran into difficulties servicing their mortgages and were obliged to move into emergency accommodation. Tiny houses therefore owe their genesis to the financial hardship of their owners. But they quickly turned into a worldwide movement, the effects of which are increasingly visible in Germany too. These days, the decision to live in a tiny house is often based on a desire to lead a sustainable, minimalistic life. Moving into emergency accommodation has become a conscious decision for many, one to downscale and focus on the essentials.

PETER LUSTIG GOES TO THE AUTHORITIES

He is maybe the prototype of a tiny house inhabitant: Peter Lustig. In Germany, nearly everyone still remembers him from the children's series "Löwenzahn" (Dandelion). Back in the 1980s, Peter Lustig had no problems finding a location for his blue construction trailer. He could simply park it on a meadow in an allotment and gradually expand his four walls and make them homely. In the real world, things are not quite so simple: Anyone wishing to build and move into a tiny house in Germany today has to comply with a whole number of regulations. These include obtaining a building permit and organizing mandatory electricity and water supply connections. Precise regulations apply in other countries as well. Even in the

USA, the home of tiny houses, there are building regulations and land-use plans, just like in all European countries.

SMALL HOUSE, GREAT CHALLENGE

Once the building law requirements have been met and the right location found, planning and construction can begin. The internet offers numerous videos showing how the most dazzling houses can be assembled with apparent ease and in no time at all. Even experienced DIY enthusiasts should not be taken



in by this illusion: However small the house is, that certainly does not make building it any less complicated than with a normal house. Numerous providers are on hand to support homebuilders with their project. Their assistance ranges from advice through to delivering a tiny house that is ready to move in to.

Like so often, the devil is in the detail. Trips to the authorities, building permits, water connections, and so forth. The best idea is

to find a competent partner who is familiar with all the regulations and can help with the planning, as well as a local architect who knows who to talk to at the authorities and can help with the formalities. Despite all this, there is no doubt as to the attractiveness of the tiny house concept. Construction prices are rising relentlessly, living space is scarce, less new building space is being developed, and ever more people are dividing their lives into ever shorter lifecycles. Due to flexibility at work, they no longer automatically wish to spend their whole life in the same place. However widely the reasons differ from case to case, nearly all countries are witnessing a trend towards tiny houses.

SMALL HOUSE WITH GREAT POTENTIAL – BUT NOT EVERYONE’S THING

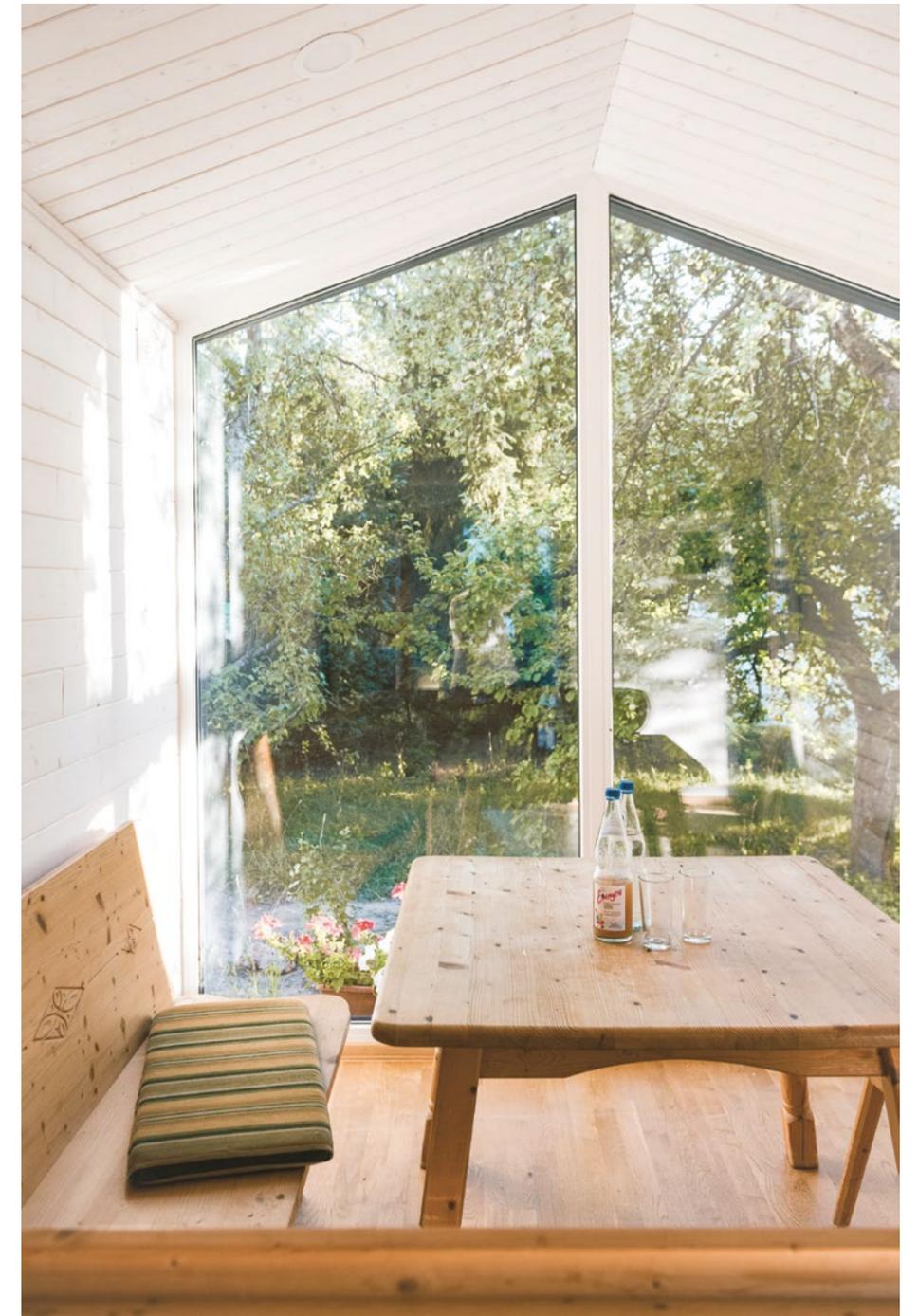
Comparatively low purchase and maintenance costs, environmental benefits, flexibility, and mobility: The benefits of a tiny house are immediately clear. But anyone thinking about a tiny house should also consider the challenges involved. The planning is complex, as are the approval procedures. And there are very few tiny houses that are free of barriers, making it difficult to imagine staying through to ripe old age. And it goes without saying that 40 square meters do not offer enough space for a large family.

But anyone aware that a tiny house might not be a lifelong solution, but the right way to live for a particular period, can certainly appreciate living in a small space. And anyone who sets out on this adventure will not only change their previous lifestyle but also automatically shrink their ecological footprint. Either way, it is worth trying out life in a tiny house on vacation on a campsite before actually deciding to buy your own. This way, everyone can find out where true luxury is to be found: in more or in less. ◀

Previous page: Being satisfied with what you need. Life in a tiny house can lead to great satisfaction.

Opposite: It goes without saying that tiny houses also benefit from their own garden.

Right: Less is more – and yet even tiny houses can be cozy.



HUMANS AND NATURE: FROM VANQUISHERS TO GUARDIANS?

The effects of climate change are noticeable all round the world.

And it should be clear to most people by now that changes are urgently needed if the earth is to be worth living on for future generations. What role do ethical questions play in this?

What can businesses do? And what actions do we need from lawmakers?

Jannes Kühn



Power relations between humans and the natural world were long clear: Nature was stronger and seemingly invincible. So it was an absolute sensation when Roald Amundsen was the first person to reach the icy South Pole in 1911. In 1953, Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary set a further milestone in human history by climbing Mount Everest. Jacques Piccard and Don Walsh advanced into previously unknown dimensions in 1960 when they journeyed down to the Mariana Trench more than 10,000 meters below the ocean surface. As celebrated heroes, these individuals all managed to overcome previously insurmountable barriers.

Step by step, the original relationship between people and nature has changed. Humans have taken advantage of the natural world and its resources. However, the consequences of our way of life are now painfully clear: Rainforest is being destroyed, ever more animal species are dying out, our oceans are awash with plastic. All indications are set on alarm. Our job now is to make sure the earth remains a planet worth living on – to stop conquering and start protecting it.

A MATTER OF RESPONSIBILITY

In summer 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a widely discussed and highly disturbing report. Scientists from more than 60 countries offered proof that the process of climate change which began upon the onset of industrialization is the result of human activity. Not only that: Some of the effects, such as rising sea levels and melting glaciers, are irreversible. The experts agree that if we do not drastically change our way of life it will not be possible to reach the target set of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees compared with the pre-industrial era.

Human-made climate change confronts us with the decision as to how we should deal with its implications and as to what responsibility we bear. From a philosophical perspective, this is where environmental ethics comes in. It addresses the question: To which organisms or objects do we as human beings attribute their own intrinsic value? The motive is important: Do we appreciate animals and the natural world for egoistic reasons or because we bear

moral responsibility? The range of answers varies widely – from the assumption that things are only of value if they are useful to people through to the position that humans bear responsibility for the whole of the natural world. What very quickly becomes clear is that there are no universally valid responses on this level.

REALITY CHECK

What happens if we put opinions and ethics to one side and look at environmental protection from the perspective of our own real life? We live in a capitalist consumer society. The market solves all problems, right? Compared with US-American economic thinking, this statement has to be slightly modified. We have seen that some people simply go under in this system and have changed our market economy to make it “social”. As people, we therefore feel responsible for other people. By contrast, the impact of our actions on the environment has long been at best priced into economic and political developments. These days, most companies are also pursuing sustainability strategies that include protecting the environment in the interests of future generations. Here too, we have to look into the motives. According to a study by the Bertelsmann Foundation in 2021, the key drivers of companies’ sustainability efforts chiefly involved external factors, such as investors or political requirements. Accordingly, it would seem expedient to create further external impulses in some areas.

Politics as the driving force of a sustainable economy? So how can the economy become more sustainable? Alongside substantial sustainability efforts made by companies, lawmakers also have an important role to play. It therefore comes as no surprise to see that virtually all political parties have sustainability in their manifestos. Two basic approaches stand out: subsidizing desirable behavior and regulating undesirable behavior. But how do companies react to these requirements? Subsidies can basically have an impact, but the changes promoted have to be at least as economically viable in the long term as the status quo. Even if one technology receives government grants, for example, it may still be more attractive more a company to rely on existing tried-and-tested technologies.

Restrictions and prohibitions may also be effective, but they often also give rise to dissatisfaction among those regulated, as they are perceived as curtailing their liber-

ties. Prohibitions scheduled to take effect in future may also have the opposite of their intended effect, at least in the short term. To guide company decisions towards greater sustainability, the objectives set by society and governments have to be turned into attractive company targets. Environmentally-friendly alternatives often involve higher costs and therefore represent a competitive disadvantage in the short term. Where the sustainable processes underlying sustainable products actually become a competitive advantage, however, they are automatically also immediately desirable from a business perspective. If lawmakers, society, and businesses work together towards this objective on a basis of solidarity and common values, then even large-scale transformation processes can be successfully managed.

EVERYONE IS IN THE PICTURE. SO WHY HAS THE PROBLEM NOT BEEN SOLVED?

The common objective is a resource-effective and sustainable world. This starting point forms the basis for all further developments. Now that we have shone light on our relationship with the environment from a historical, philosophical, political, and economic perspective, the question automatically arises: If there is virtually universal agreement that the effects of climate change are not desirable, why is it so difficult to halt this process?

The answer partly lies in human nature. There are two main motivations for people to accept change: pain or gain, i.e. foreseeable disadvantages if no changes are made or an associated advantage. Mapped onto our discussion, that means the effects of climate change have to be noticeable to us on an individual level or the benefits associated with a sustainable lifestyle have to be so attractive that we are prepared to leave old patterns of behavior behind. Whatever ultimately motivates us: Each of us – whether companies or individuals – has to and can make their own contribution. If this appeal falls on fertile ground and is reflected in our actions, we can preserve an earth in which future generations will also be able to visit polar regions, climb mountains, plumb the depths of the oceans, or quite simply live in peace. ◀

TIMBER AS A RESOURCE

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Wood is a unique resource, one that is alive even when the tree has been felled and the timber processed. Its color and structure are changed by the weather. If constantly touched, its surface alters and turns smooth. It can be sanded and repainted, again and again, and still manages to support centuries-old roof structures. It makes sense that we have started to think again about wood as a construction material. What resource is fit for the future? One that keeps growing back!

Lena Hauck



Ideally, the use of timber is sustainable. After all, it is a resource that grows back without energy input. Not just that: Trees absorb CO₂ and use the power of the sun to grow. Even the felling and processing of timber requires little energy, equivalent to just one to five percent of the energy stored in the timber. Compare that with the competition: Around eight percent of worldwide CO₂ emissions are attributable merely to the production of cement.

GET OVER THE PREJUDICES

Wood still faces great prejudices. Timber houses are not as stable as concrete and steel constructions. Timber houses burn faster. These are all myths. According to experts at proHolzBW GmbH, an initiative promoting the use of timber in Baden-Württemberg, basically any building that is built with concrete and steel can also be built with timber. However, confidence and expertise are still lacking. In Germany, for example, timber houses make up just 18 percent of all houses according to the professional organization Holzbau Deutschland. Having said that, the trend is rising.

After all, wood is not just a commodity that, given the right forestry management, will also be available in future. It also contributes crucial features to buildings. It has outstanding insulation properties, is light, can be processed in a whole manner of ways, and is nevertheless durable and stable. It regulates humidity in interiors and absorbs contaminants from the air.

And the construction industry is now taking note of these qualities. High-rise projects such as the HoHo in Vienna or the Mjøstårnet in Brumunddal in Norway may still be eye-catching exceptions. Soon they could be the norm.

SCARCE RESOURCES

Why are we on the lookout for alternatives to conventional building materials like concrete, sand and steel in the first place? Because

they are becoming scarce! The construction boom in recent decades used huge volumes of sand. And since large numbers of buildings continue to be built, this commodity is becoming ever scarcer, because we are using more than is naturally available. Concrete and glass, two other indispensable resources for the construction industry, are partly made of sand. Only sea sand can be used to produce concrete. Desert sand is smoothed and rounded by the wind and does not stick to cement as well as more angular sea sand. This lack of sand means things will soon become critical



HORNBACH FOUND OUT ITSELF HOW FAST THE TIMBER SUPPLY CAN DRY UP IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO SELL TIMBER FROM PROTECTED FORESTS.

for the three big players in the construction industry. Then there is steel, which is becoming ever more expensive to produce due to rising energy costs.

If you consider these problems, the effects of which are already making themselves felt, then one thing becomes clear. In future, construction is going to be trickier and above all



Above: Once felled, the timber is turned into a usable resource at the sawmill. That makes sawmills the link between the forest and us consumers.

Previous page: Modern forestry accounts not only for economic aspects, such as using timber as a product of the forest. It also aims to retain the multifunctionality of the forest, i.e. its protective function for the climate, people, and animals.

more expensive. So how can we offset the growing scarcity or even loss of some materials? Wood can fill if not all, then at least some of these gaps.

LOADED QUESTIONS

How can we make intensive use of the forest without neglecting the principles of sustainable forestry? And how much forest and timber do we actually have? 31% of the world's surface is covered in forest. That equates to four billion hectares. However, not all of this forest can be actively managed. Protected tropical forests, for example, are off-limits. Before being protected, these forests and the habitats they contain were already severely harmed by human intervention, and still are in some cases. The good news is this: A large part of the world's forests is nevertheless suitable for active management. And yet,

approaches in the timber industry vary widely. In the past, people thought monocultures and deforestation were effective ways to quickly obtain large volumes of wood. That is virtually the opposite of sustainable forestry, the origins of which can be dated back to the definition provided by Hans Carl von Carlowitz in 1713. Put simply, he said you can only remove the amount of timber from a forest that actually grows back over the same period.

Modern forestry goes one step further. It accounts not only for the economic aspect of the forest, i.e. using timber as a product of the forest, but also aims to retain the multifunctional role played by the forest, i.e. the ways in which it protects the climate, people, and wildlife. Many good approaches to sustainable forestry can be found around the world, but sadly not everywhere.

A REVIEW

Back in 2015, the WWF (World Wide Fund For Nature) filed a complaint against the Austrian sawmill operator Schweighofer, accusing it of processing timber from primeval Romanian forests that were protected. The suspicion was confirmed in December 2016 and Schweighofer lost its FSC certification. Schweighofer's timber also made it onto the shelves of HORNBAACH's stores in Romania. The company gradually found new procurement sources. But that took time. In fact it took too long, a fact sharply criticized by environmental protection organizations both within and outside the region. This triggered a campaign of mails and protests against the company.

FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES

The violation committed by the business partner in Romania had consequences for all suppliers who provide HORNBAACH with timber grown in Romania. For more than two decades, HORNBAACH's procurement guidelines had only permitted the purchase of FSC-certified timber from regions outside the EU. These were extended to include the EU member Romania. Since then, timber from Romania has to bear valid FSC certification. The information box explains what this certification is.

HORNBAACH was confronted with the question as to why it had not immediately removed all Schweighofer products from its shelves. The answer is simple, but disconcerting:

WHAT IS THE FSC?

FSC stands for Forest Stewardship Council®. The FSC monitors compliance with sustainable forestry standards worldwide. These should account both for social aspects and for ecological and economic factors.

As the FSC explains: "The FSC system ensures that forests are used in accordance with the social, economic, and ecological needs of current and future generations. Companies wishing to obtain FSC certification undergo extensive reviews each year. The seal represents an obligation and a convention for manufacturers, retailers, and consumers worldwide that sustainable forestry standards are complied with from the raw material through to the end product."

There was no other timber to purchase in Romania. Klaus Götz, who was HORNBAACH's Group Procurement Director and responsible for the product range, recalls: "Where any timber was available on the market at all, it was of poor quality." The reasons for this go far back into the past: Through to the 1990s, Romania mainly had small-scale sawmills that produced low volumes of construction timber.

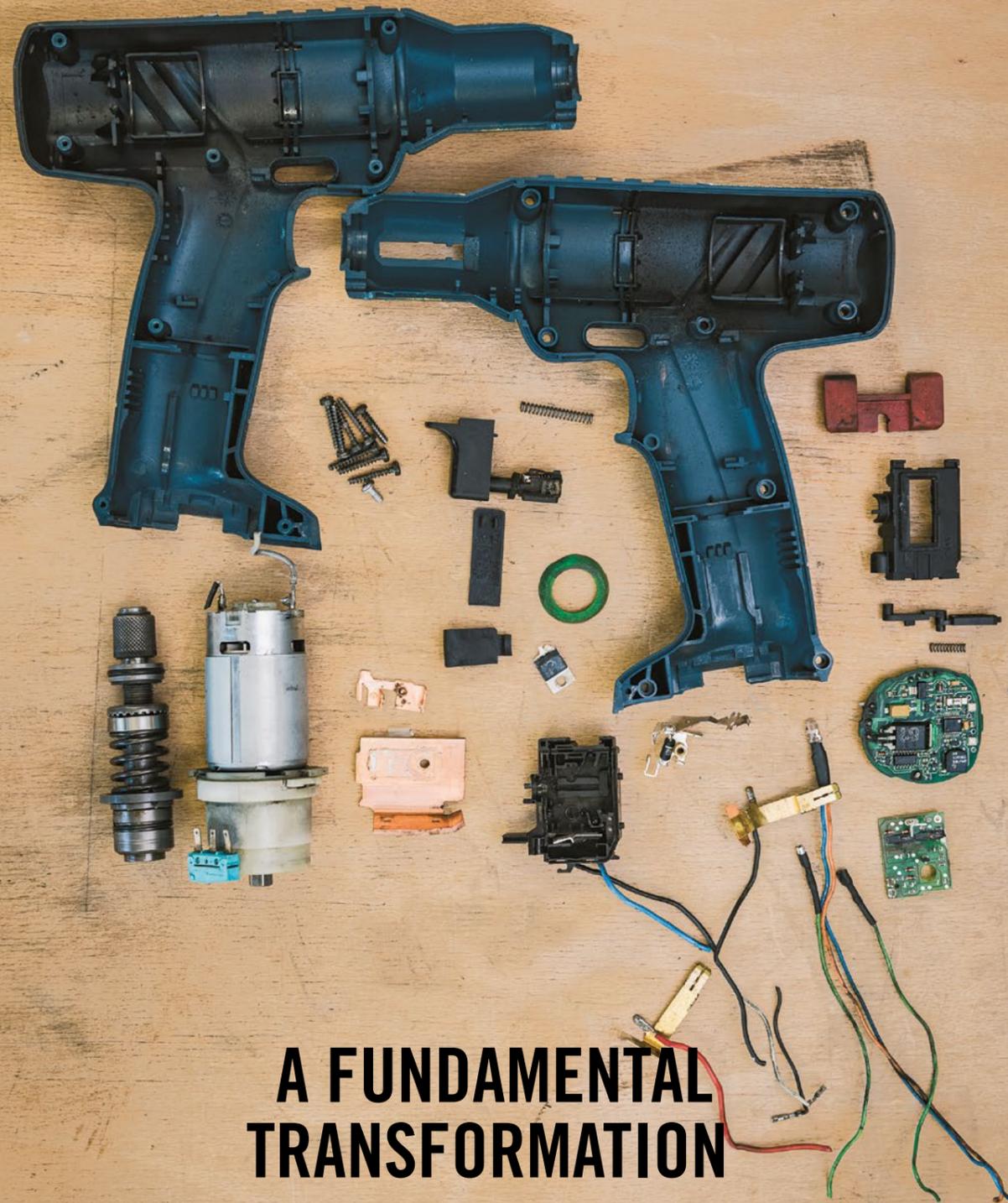
But the potential was there: Romania is a densely forested country and 30% of its surface – more than 6 million hectares – is covered by forest, most of it unused for economic purposes. The Austrian company Schweighofer seized on this opportunity and bought the smaller sawmills. So far, it has built three modern, large-scale sawmills. There is still no way round Schweighofer if you wish to purchase large quantities of timber in Romania.

CURRENT STATUS

For HORNBAACH, there is clearly no question of cooperating with Schweighofer without valid FSC certification. This situation is still the case today. And there are further factors which influence efforts to establish a sustainable and successful forestry industry in Romania. Mechanisms have been put in place that are intended to prevent overexploitation in Romania's primeval forests. Trucks are closely inspected when they enter or leave the forests. The same applies to deliveries to sawmills. These measures should make it impossible to fell and process timber from protected forests. To help protect Romania's forests, environmental protection organizations offer hands-on support for these checks.

Wood has served us human beings well in the past and has the potential to do so in future too. With courage, innovation, and confidence in a highly versatile construction material, we are well prepared to go successfully back to the future. HORNBAACH is playing its part. ◀◀

THE LONG ROAD
TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY



A FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION

What can we do to make our economy and our lifestyle more environmentally compatible? That question is increasingly relevant at HORNBAACH as well.

One much-discussed topic in this context is the circular economy.

Andreas Back, Head of Quality Management, Environment & Disposal at HORNBAACH and Prof. Dr. Tobias Viere from Pforzheim University explain what it is all about – from a practical and a scientific point of view.

Christian Bretschneider and Jannes Kühn

Building an effective and resource-efficient circular economy is the way forward for all sectors. At HORNBAACH too, all of the company's product ranges are regularly put to the test. Foils, cardboard packaging, plastics, or rubble: HORNBAACH is always on the lookout for ways to obtain valuable secondary resources from old products. "Recyclability crucially depends on the quality of the resources available. The purer they are, the more suitable they are for reuse and the higher the quality of the new products that can be created", explains Andreas Back, Head of the Quality Management, Environment & Disposal departments and a member of the internal CSR Strategy Group at HORNBAACH. This body plays a key role in the considerations given to gradually making the product range more sustainable and resource efficient. It performs ongoing reviews to assess how critical individual product groups are. It then prepares draft decisions which ultimately determine whether specific articles are retained in the product range. That, for example, is how the decision was taken that the company should in future no longer sell fireworks at New Year.

One current recycling project is the production of rain barrels from discarded rigid plastic. The plastic is collected locally, then ground and cast into new barrels. Logistics have a significant impact on the carbon footprint. They determine whether a product makes sense from a sustainability and climate protection perspective. "From a certain distance upwards, the CO₂ emissions caused by transporting the article exceed those that can be saved by recycling. That makes little sense", stresses Andreas Back. The team is already working on further topics. There are plans, for example, to change plastic trays to a reusable format with returnable deposits. The team referred here to a study compiled by the Fraunhofer Institute, which assessed the ecological impact and climate protection potential of a system of this kind, taking due account of freight mileage and the required material input. The compressed bundles of plastic materials are now being used to create new articles for sale and service packaging. The most prominent example involves the hardware bags made from this plastic that are used in hardware aisles at HORNBAACH DIY stores and garden centers.

Much still remains to do for Andreas Back and his team. HORNBAACH is convinced that this is just the start when it comes to addressing the huge topic of the circular economy. One man who is absolutely familiar with this topic from

a scientific perspective is Prof. Dr. Tobias Viere. He has worked at Pforzheim University for nine years now, where he is Professor of Energy and Material Flow Analysis at the Institute for Industrial Ecology. Key focuses of his teaching and research include sustainability management and reporting, environmental accounting, and the circular economy.

INTERVIEW WITH PROF. DR. TOBIAS VIERE

PROFESSOR VIERE, HOW IMPORTANT WILL THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY BE IN FUTURE?

Over the past five to six years, this topic has become even more important thanks both to political measures (such as those on EU level) and to the commitment shown by companies. Particularly in Germany, the circular economy is mostly mentioned in the same breath as recycling. Viewed on its own, however, recycling does not quite hit the mark if we wish to outline the idea of a circular economy. As I see it, the circular economy is a variety of industrial ecology and a way to put the three fundamental sustainability strategies – efficiency, sufficiency, and consistency – into practice. It is important to understand that we need all three strategies in equal measure if we are to achieve the goal of sustainable development.

YOU BROUGHT UP THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND RECYCLING. COULD YOU DESCRIBE THAT IN MORE DETAIL?

If we really had a comprehensive circular economy, the traditional recycling business would be a lot smaller. After all, if a lot more was already done within the respective cycles then there would be far less material needing to be recycled. Disposal and recycling companies in Germany have long interpreted the circular economy as meaning that a few resources are recovered at the end of a product's lifecycle. This approach is not wrong in itself, but it only reveals one aspect. A comprehensive circular economy kicks in at an earlier point in the cycle, in fact at several



Above: Academic assistants from Professor Viere's team at Pforzheim University check the suitability of various products for the circular economy. These include the electric tools from all manufacturers that are used by DIY enthusiasts and professionals.

points, such as product intensification. That means products are used more frequently, reducing the number of products needed in total. One crucial factor is to try to close material cycles as far as possible, and long before they reach the disposal stage. This way, we would extract fewer resources and raw materials from the natural world.

ONE VERY WELL-KNOWN APPROACH IN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IS THE "CRADLE-TO-CRADLE" CONCEPT (I.E. NOT "CRADLE-TO-GRAVE"). HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THIS APPROACH AND ITS PRACTICAL FEASIBILITY?

The vision underpinning cradle to cradle, just like that underlying the circular economy, really depends on the assumption that enough

energy is available that does not cause any harm to the environment. That is because any form of circular economy requires a corresponding input of energy. The technologies and structures needed for this have to be put in place. The whole approach will therefore require a certain period of transition. In the longer term, though, even that will only work if we take equal account of efficiency. The more wasteful we are with the energy, the less likely it is that we will be able to develop suitable capacities for its generation.

DOES THAT MEAN THAT A FULLY CIRCULAR ECONOMY IS BASICALLY IMPOSSIBLE?

Well it is certainly not possible in the short term, of course. Even from a long-term perspective, one-hundred-percent recirculation

will not be possible due to physical and material facts. You always lose a certain amount of material, for example due to wear and tear. From a purely physical perspective, an absolutely circular economy is therefore all but impossible. But please do not get me wrong: It is definitely possible to work with far more materials on a circular basis than we do at present. Even a ninety-percent circular economy would be huge progress compared with the status quo. Across the whole of the EU, we are currently at a mere twelve to thirteen percent. It is just that hundred percent is unrealistic.

YOU MENTIONED THE ASPECT OF INTENSIFYING PRODUCTS. IS THAT INTERESTING TO MARKET PLAYERS FROM AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE? TO PUT IT BLUNTLY: WILL THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND CAPITALISM EVER BE A GOOD MATCH?

Circular business models are already partly in place now, but are in many cases not (yet) economically viable. Some companies have already performed concept studies on this. But you make a valid point. From my perspective, it is one of the greatest challenges facing the circular economy. What do functioning business models need to look like and how will they impact on the value chain? Fewer parts and components are produced in a comprehensive circular economy than is currently the case in our throwaway society. Product intensification will nevertheless give rise to new opportunities, such as repairs or other steps to lengthen durability. That means you make products that are of higher quality at the outset than now. The total value added for the first-time use of a product would increase, but lower numbers of these products would be made in quantitative terms.

WHAT ROLE CAN POLITICIANS PLAY HERE?

To make progress, we need further incentives from lawmakers. The status quo is that, from a business perspective, it still makes more

sense to manufacture new products in the overwhelming majority of cases. Numerous approaches are already being discussed, such as take-back or repair obligations on the part of manufacturers. Regulations such as CO₂ pricing and rising energy costs also have a role to play. If these regulations were to change, then many manufacturers would also rethink their product design.

WHAT IMPACT MIGHT THAT HAVE? COULD YOU GIVE US AN EXAMPLE?

Today, huge numbers of products are glued. In most cases, that makes it difficult or impossible to repair them. If governments were to issue corresponding regulations, then com-

Below: The relationship between the weight and materials used in individual modules is directly linked to the recyclability of the individual product. It also indicates the ecological footprint of the product.

Bottom: Mechanical features rarely lead to premature defects. They tend to be robust and can regularly be repaired. By contrast, damaged electronics, such as circuit boards, often mean the end of the tool and can only be remedied in individual cases and with great effort.



panies would start using more screws again. That way, it would be far easier to dismantle a defective product into its individual components and put these, or at least some of them, to reuse. Overall, what we need from my perspective is a development towards a circular market economy. EU legislation has to be formulated in such a way that the regulations still allow for reasonable competition. So the question is not so much about whether a circular economy is compatible with capitalism, but rather how the political framework for capitalism is structured.

YOU MENTIONED EU LEGISLATION. DO YOU SEE COMPANIES AND CONSUMERS AS STILL TAKING AN OVERLY NATIONAL APPROACH IN THEIR THINKING?

Yes and no. It is certainly true that more could be happening on the international cooperation front. However, it is no less important for individual countries to see themselves as being responsible and assuming a pioneering role. Germany did that in other areas in the past, such as environmental protection. Now it is the EU Commission that is creating fresh momentum, such as the EU Green Deal. A combination of both approaches would be ideal: If one country sets certain regulations and presses ahead, then that influences other countries and regions and motivates them to follow suit.

CAN WE GO BACK TO RESOURCES AND MATERIAL FLOWS? PARTICULARLY IF THEY ARE COMPLEX, PRODUCTS ARE VERY RARELY MANUFACTURED AT JUST ONE SITE. THE INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS COME FROM DIFFERENT CORNERS OF THE WORLD AND ARE THEN ASSEMBLED. WHAT IMPLICATIONS DO RESOURCE AND SUPPLY CHAINS LIKE THIS HAVE FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN PRACTICE? WE KNOW THAT TRANSPORTATION, FOR EXAMPLE, IS A DECISIVE FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF A PRODUCT.

A circular economy means that value chains and systems certainly have the potential to change significantly. What we are talking about here is a fundamental transformation. Not everything will simply fit into the existing systems and logics. Ultimately, transportation is again dependent on the availability of energy. Reversed logistics is also a challenge and also relevant for companies taking back products. In the best case, the product can be dismantled,

such as into electronics components, plastics, etc. These resources are not all on a par in terms of their value and durability. Depending what ultimately remains, there will either be suitable logistics chains to make the materials available again for new products, or they will be professionally shredded and reprocessed.

WHAT OTHER FACTORS PLAY A ROLE IN A COMPREHENSIVE CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

A circular economy is not an end in itself, but is rather meant to contribute to overriding global sustainability goals, such as upholding biodiversity. But if you ask me for specific aspects, then what particularly strikes me are biological cycles. Where possible, products within these cycles should be fully compostable or biodegradable. That would rid us of the “technological waste” we currently have to contend with. Another measure is remanufacturing. You have that, for example, when a manufacturer of large construction machinery buys back and overhauls the machinery. Here, recycling is not even necessary. The components are simply used a second time. These are all determining factors when it comes to building a comprehensive circular economy.

FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW, DO YOU SEE A COMPREHENSIVE CIRCULAR ECONOMY AS BEING MORE REALISTIC FOR SOME SPECIFIC PRODUCTS OR PRODUCT GROUPS THAN FOR OTHERS?

Yes, for less complex products involving fewer material components. There is certainly also greater potential for biological cycles, such as in the food sector. If we have a good composting system and the foodstuffs do not have to be highly processed, then we can certainly still do a great deal. As things currently stand, we could achieve far more circularity in all economic sectors. If we take the car as a complex product: One key topic for the future here is autonomous driving. Once these vehicles reach the market further down the line, then it would ideally no longer be necessary for each individual to own their own car. Instead, far lower numbers of vehicles would be driving more or less around the clock. And if the components assembled are of such high quality that they can be fully or at least partly reused at the end of their lifecycles, then we can take things even further. The process of dematerialization accompanying the circular economy also marks a clear shift towards a world of services, and thus away from the



purely physical product. As a consumer, I can enjoy the same benefit from an individual product by using it as a service.

WHAT PLAYERS ARE PARTICULARLY CALLED ON TO ACT HERE?

The way I see it, we all have a responsibility to act. By selecting and designing their products and services accordingly, all participants in the value chain can make a difference. Ideally, we need to ask ourselves: How great is the discrepancy between what we do now and what is theoretically possible? This way, we can identify measures that can be imple-

mented with little effort and those areas where we might need to revisit our strategy. If everyone were to tackle this and identify steps, then we could certainly move a good deal closer to actually building a circular economy. «

Above: The faster and more easily a product can be dismantled into its individual modules, the more suitable it is for a circular economy. Glue, clip attachments, and unstandardized screw use significantly increase the time needed to dismantle the product.

SHAPING THE FUTURE
SUSTAINABLY

NOT JUST A TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

What targeted steps can we take now to successfully align digitalization and sustainable development? This key issue of the 21st century has recently occupied companies as well.

The way we currently live and do business does not offer satisfactory answers.

If one thing is clear, it is this: We need more sustainable development in all areas of our lives if everyone is to have a fair chance of enjoying a good future in social, economic, and ecological terms. And technology has a key role to play.

Vanessa Herget

INTERVIEW WITH DR. ANDREAS SCHOBERT,
ELMAR SOMMER, AND UDO LEBRECHT

MR. SCHOBERT, WHY IS SUSTAINABILITY AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN TECHNOLOGY AS WELL? AND HOW DOES HORNBACH DEFINE SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT?

Andreas Schobert: Technologies can support and speed up sustainable development in many areas, whether with data-driven efficiency enhancements, i.e. automation, or with digital innovation. At a retailer like HORNBACH, though, technology is not an end in itself. More than anything, it is there to make life easier for our users, i.e. our customers and staff. Here, we take a three-pronged approach that accounts for people, processes, and technology. Ensuring the right interaction between these three elements is essential. Processes that are not aligned to people and their needs will not achieve sustainable outcomes. Technology that does not simplify, automate, or accelerate the right processes leads to waste. Put very simply, at HORNBACH sustainable technology means focusing on the right things and on things that matter – building business success to the benefit of our staff and respecting the environment and the society we live in.

AND HOW DOES TECHNOLOGY SPECIFICALLY CONTRIBUTE TO THIS?

AS: We can find numerous examples. You only need to think of AI-assisted route planning that cuts journey times and saves energy or enhanced product videos that help avoid goods being returned. What counts far more than individual contributions, however, is the basic attitude to what I do when I make new technical solutions available.

In this interview, we spoke to: Dr. Andreas Schobert (center), CTO in the Board of Management at HORNBACH Baumarkt AG since 2015, Elmar Sommer (right), whose responsibilities include innovation and research and development in the Technology department, and Udo Lebrecht (left), who has promoted the technological and technical infrastructure for HORNBACH Baumarkt AG for more than 25 years now.

I need to ask: Are customers willing to pay for this solution? Are employees prepared to use it? Does the solution actually improve something or is it just more digital? Would I buy the solution if I knew the high price my descendants would pay because we did not bother to think about whether it could be done more easily or made more environmentally compatible?

Udo Lebrecht: It is basically about the sum total of all obvious things. That starts with small things like deleting test systems that are no longer used but needlessly take up storage space. It continues with the question as to how a system has to be designed and developed to minimize subsequent operating costs. Ultimately, you get to issues like what structural opportunities new technologies can offer in combination with improved processes for the overall ecosystem, e.g. in cooperation with suppliers and service partners.

CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE IS A TOPIC THAT IS ALWAYS STRESSED. WHAT SUPPORT CAN TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS OFFER WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS FROM A CUSTOMER'S PERSPECTIVE?

Elmar Sommer: Putting resources and energy to efficient use is an omnipresent topic, also among our customers. That makes me think right away of the "SMART HOME by HORNBACH" solution. Alongside the convenience factor, this helps to reduce energy consumption and cut costs, for example by working with automatic heat sensors and standby switches. SMART HOME can also help in the garden by managing watering. And smart products also have the advantage that they are extendable with software updates and therefore remain "ever young".

AS: Another example is the use of immersive technologies, i.e. virtual reality or video advice. Using VR, we can help our customers with their advance planning of a bathroom, for example, and enable them to walk round inside it. That not only boosts the imagination, it also helps customers to reach the right decision on products like tiles. And



customers do not even have to drive to the store for that. They can simply use our app. And there is another useful side-effect: The advantages for customers are direct, but we too stand to benefit indirectly from developments like these in future. After all, they help us to save resources, such as a space at our stores that will then no longer have to be built or heated.

UL: Not only that: Our stores are increasingly evolving into logistical hubs for our customers. Alongside the store as a direct shopping option, we also offer a separate collection point where customers can conveniently collect or return goods and save time and costs in the process. We often combine our own collection points with those of large logistics companies to help people avoid multiple journeys.

DIGITAL INNOVATIONS ARE INCREASINGLY SHAPING OUR DAILY WORK AS WELL. WHERE WOULD YOU SAY THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES HAS GENERATED A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT FOR HORNBAACH'S EMPLOYEES?

AS: HORNBAACH has relied on mobile work in many areas, and not just since the pandemic, to offer colleagues the greatest possible flexibility. From the start, that required a work environment that was very well equipped in terms of its technology. Since then, we have been working on new agile work concepts that focus on the hybrid workplace. To give you just one example: We have enriched the hybrid world of work to include options for healthy virtual breaks. These deal above all with psychological wellbeing and offer brief sessions in which easy methods can be learned and practiced.

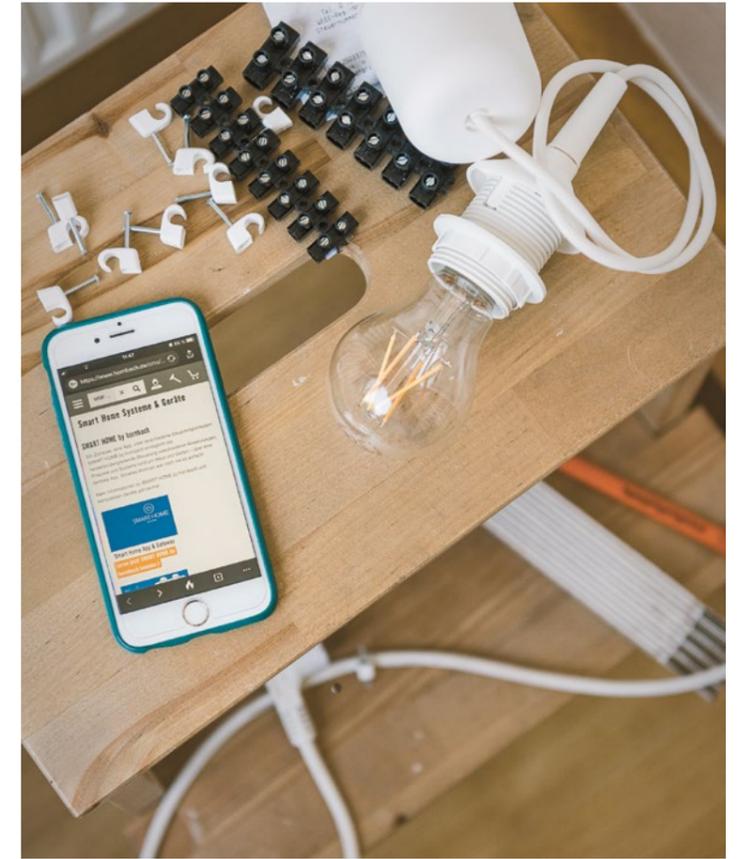
ES: A really practical example from our operating environment would be the bio-exoskeleton, a kind of rucksack that offers specific support to people's backs and joints when they have to make difficult non-ergonomic movements on an ongoing basis. We have tested the use of these at our logistics centers. In an environment where moving heavy goods is part and parcel of the job, hydraulic lifting systems can help our colleagues to avoid move-

ments that might harm them. Another example is the use of drones, which support stock-taking processes at our stores and logistics centers by performing simple pallet counting processes from a bird's-eye view, removing the need for employees to shift the pallets.

IF WE GO OVER TO THE DARK SIDE, TO PUT IT THAT WAY, SHOULD WE NOT ADMIT THAT TECHNOLOGY IN VIRTUALLY ALL ITS FORMS IS A HUGE RESOURCE GUZZLER?

UL: In green IT, each individual technologist is called on to make his or her own contribution to continually improving the energy efficiency of our technological products, extend the durability of solutions, and live digital sufficiency. Having said that, one major lever for the whole company is in infrastructure topics of course. Despite increased computing power, we have actually reduced the amount of electricity used in recent years by deploying new server systems and Flash memories, and by expanding virtualization. When it comes to terminals, we are paying increasing attention to extending their use times by repairing them instead of just replacing them and by assigning new uses to appliances rather than disposing of them directly. And for new systems we look very closely during the tendering stage already at factors like the longest possible usability, electricity consumption, and maintainability in order to minimize the carbon footprint. One ever more important factor, particularly for cloud use, will be to look into topics such as green coding and data economy during the design and development of new solutions already. Optimized programs require less computing time and thus further cut electricity consumption, just like all the data that does not need permanent storage. Of course, both factors help to improve performance and provide staff and customers with an enhanced user experience.

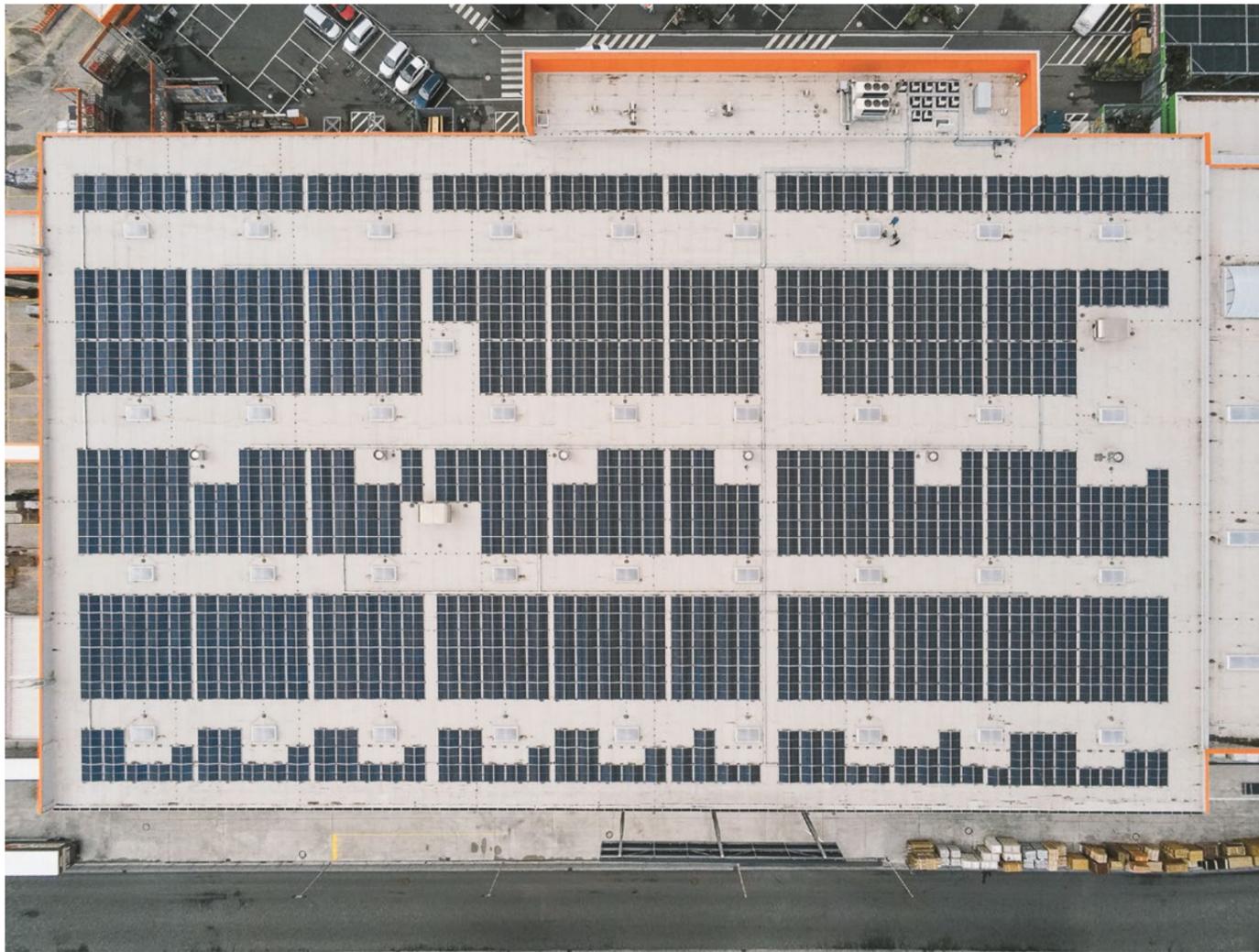
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE, CONSIDERING ALL THE CHALLENGES THAT SUSTAINABILITY WILL INVOLVE?



AS: Given our people-centered approach, it goes without saying that in everything we do we also think through the sustainability implications. We see technology as a source of solutions and an enabler, as a trailblazer for a sustainably good future. Viewed that way, sustainable action is not just a great opportunity to make life easier for our customers and colleagues but also for us to improve ourselves and our services –and remain a competent partner for our customers' projects. «

Above: From app to web shop – the smartphone is a symbol of technological innovation

Opposite: Automated assistance from above: Drones support the stocktaking process at the logistics centers.



CARBON ACCOUNTING

IT'S COMPLICATED

Companies face growing pressure from politicians and investors alike to disclose their climate data and systematically reduce their own footprints, as well as emissions incurred by their supply chains and products. This poses great challenges for retailers in particular due to the complexity of carbon accounting and their limited influence on the overwhelming share of their footprints.

Anne Spies

In the Paris Climate Agreement signed in 2015, nearly all of the world's countries committed to limiting global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees. The aim is to reduce emissions of all greenhouse gases, including CO₂, methane, and nitrous oxide, if possible to net zero by 2050. Since then, many of the participating states have set specific targets and compiled reduction strategies. Germany intends to be climate neutral by 2045, while the European Union (EU) as a whole is aiming for climate neutrality by 2050. However, "net zero" and "climate neutral" do not mean that absolutely no gases harmful to the climate will then be emitted.

Most EU member states are planning to exit from coal-based electricity generation, expand renewable energies, press ahead with making buildings more energy efficient, and convert large parts of the transport sector to e-mobility – to name just a few examples. However, these measures will still not quite reduce emissions to zero. The remaining CO₂ emissions will therefore have to be removed from the atmosphere, for example by planting trees.

In its latest report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that, based on existing technologies, emissions can be cut by at least 50 percent by 2030 (compared with the base year of 1990) provided that suitable legislative initiatives are introduced immediately. The EU is currently aiming to achieve a reduction target of 55 percent by 2030. Reaching this target will require a realignment in numerous areas of business and society. In the "Green Deal", around one trillion euros are to be invested over the next ten years in areas such as renewable energies, biodiversity, and the circular economy. At the same time, legislative initiatives such as the EU Taxonomy and the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR) have been introduced. These are intended to ensure that private sector funds are also channeled in the right directions, i.e. in sustainable and climate-friendly companies and technologies.

GROWING PRESSURE ON COMPANIES

Publicly listed companies in particular have since come under ever greater pressure from banks, asset managers, and other investors to disclose their climate data, as well as their targets and strategies to shrink their CO₂ footprints. This way, investors can in turn meet their own reporting

obligations and offer sustainable financial investments. A few years ago, it was still mainly manufacturers – energy-intensive companies with smoky chimneys – that took the flak. These days, all sectors are having their climate fitness scrutinized. Companies unable to demonstrate a net zero target consistent with the Paris Climate Agreement are increasingly no longer eligible for investment.

In the DIY sector, the first companies have already emitted clouds of publicity and announced their commitment to reach climate neutrality. The German Rewe Group, parent company of the Toom DIY chain, and the British Kingfisher Group have announced their intention to reach net zero emissions by 2040. The Finnish retail group Kesko, which also includes the DIY chains K-Rauta and K-Bygg, and the Australian DIY group Bunnings aim to achieve climate neutrality by 2030 already.

It is worth taking a closer look at these climate targets. After all, for all companies the net zero target only applies to their own business operations, such as heating and electricity at their own stores and company vehicles. This perspective does not include upstream and downstream emissions, such as those arising when the products sold are manufactured and used, or from external logistics services. These emissions, which the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHG) defines as "Scope 3", account for the lion's share of the total carbon footprint in the retail sector. At Kingfisher, for example, they make up around 99 percent of total emissions. Just to compare: At the steel manufacturer Arcelor Mittal less than 10 percent of total emissions are incurred outside the company itself.

RETAILERS HAVE A SCOPE 3 PROBLEM

There are basically two reasons for the hesitancy in addressing Scope 3 emissions. Firstly: Collecting and calculating the data is a complex process, particularly at retailers who offer a very broad range of products. At HORNBACH, for example, it would involve determining for around one million different products which materials account for which share of the weight in each product, what volumes of emissions were incurred when processing these materials, how often and how long a customer uses the product, and how the product is expected to be disposed of or recycled at the end of its lifetime. Secondly: In reducing their Scope 3 emissions, retailers are reliant on assistance

from their suppliers, service providers, and end customers. They can exert a certain degree of influence when structuring their product ranges and selecting suppliers. However, the definition of achievable reduction targets for all Scope 3 categories is hardly feasible on a reliable basis.

But that is exactly what is expected, for example by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). This association of NGOs has attempted for several years now to introduce some order into the jungle of different objectives. It provides companies with a framework to define science-based reduction targets that are consistent with the Paris Climate Agreement. By the end of 2021, more than 2,000 companies from around 70 countries and representing around one third of global market capitalization had affiliated themselves with the SBTi. Companies that set themselves SBTs are required not only to define long-term emissions reduction targets but also to show exactly how they intend to reach these by way of interim targets and planned measures. In the fall of 2021, the framework was further supplemented by the “Net Zero Standard”. In future, SBTi participants may only refer to themselves as climate neutral once they achieve net zero emissions across all three scopes – and here mainly by achieving actual reductions rather than implementing offsetting measures.

DECARBONIZATION IS ONLY POSSIBLE IN COOPERATION WITH MANUFACTURERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

It is increasingly clear that serious decarbonization always requires great efforts. Merely introducing audit-proof carbon accounting for internal and external emissions is a major project. This nevertheless forms the basis enabling material savings potential to be identified in the first place.

The good news is this: For retailers, investments in cutting emissions in their own business operations, i.e. Scopes 1 and 2, pay off relatively quickly, particularly given rising energy prices. According to a survey conducted by the German Retail Federation (HDE), the German retail sector as a whole has today already cut its own emissions by more than half compared with 1990 and thus almost met the EU's climate target. For non-food retailers, moves such as converting to LED lighting and optimizing building technology were decisive in this respect. Converting to solar energy and installing heat pumps have also become increasingly attractive in recent years. Here, retailers who own the

stores themselves and have freestanding buildings with large quantities of roof space are at an advantage. Another popular measure is procuring green electricity, a move that is reflected in a significant reduction in Scope 2 emissions on the level of the individual company but does not at first represent any genuine saving.

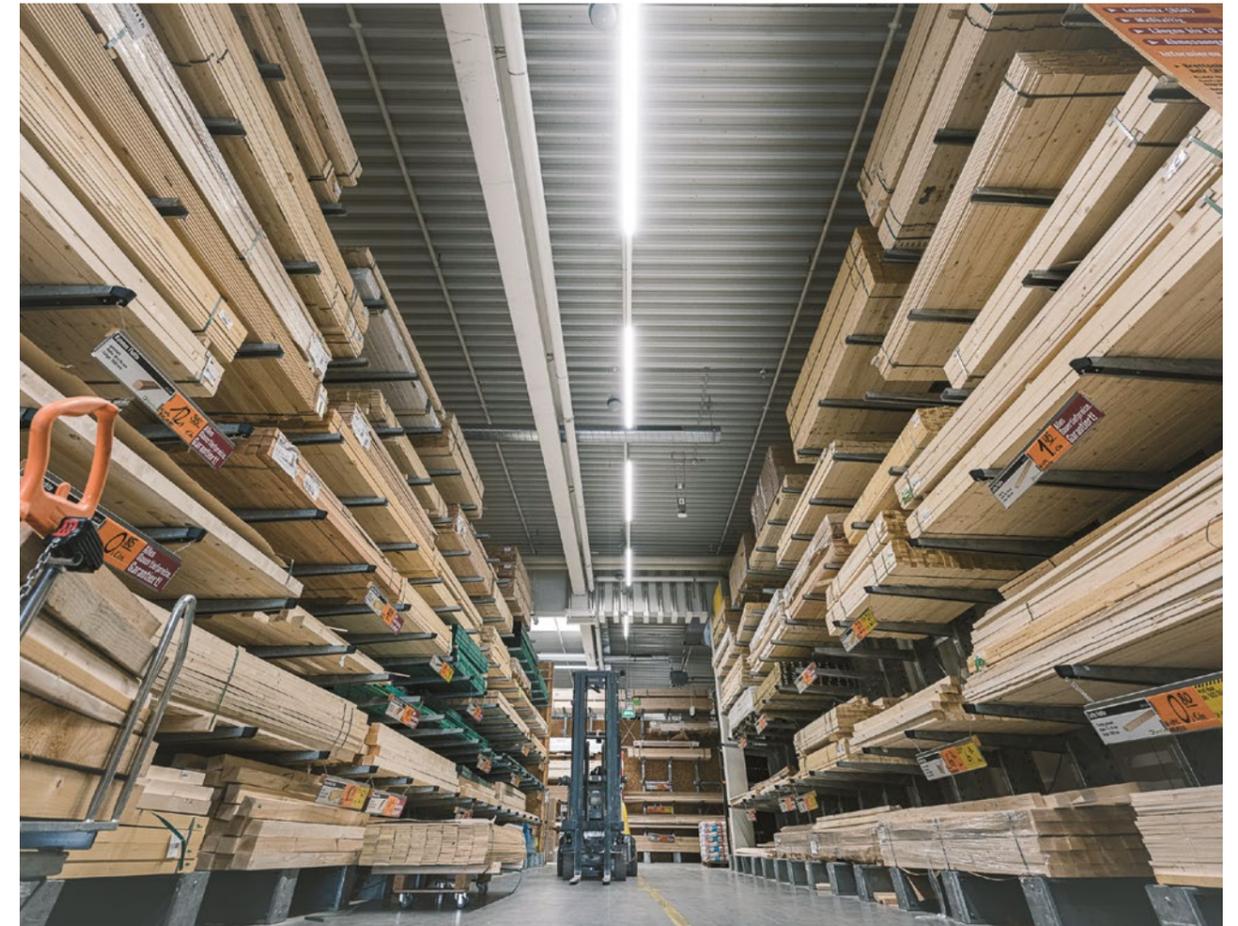
Scope 3 emissions are the proverbial elephant in the room. Reduction strategies here can only be implemented in cooperation with suppliers and service providers, who make the carbon footprints of their products and services transparent and themselves set reduction targets. The easiest solution is to include reduction targets in supplier agree-

CLIMATE-FRIENDLINESS AT HORNBACH

In the 2021/22 financial year, HORNBACH for the first time calculated the carbon footprint of its own business operations (Scopes 1 and 2) with help from the climate tech startup Planetly (see Interview). Its footprint mainly comprises emissions due to heat, electricity, and its own vehicle pool. In the years ahead, emissions arising outside the company, such as from manufacturing and using the products sold, logistics, customer traffic, and business travel, will continually be added to the calculation.

This carbon accounting makes it possible to measure the savings achieved, identify existing potential, and define reduction targets consistent with the Paris Climate Agreement. Numerous measures to reduce energy consumption and emissions were already taken in the past. These include introducing building control technology, converting to LED lighting, measures to optimize logistics (full-truck load), e-charging points on car parks, and installing solar plants and heat pumps at new stores. HORNBACH is currently looking into which existing stores would be suitable to install photovoltaics systems and how much of their proprietary electricity needs this would cover. Potential levers to reduce the CO₂ from heating energy or the vehicle pool are being considered.

The product range also includes ever more “sustainable” products. Greater climate friendliness is achieved, for example, by reducing packaging, recyclability, climate-neutral production, or comprehensive cradle-to-cradle approaches.



ments. Kesko, for example, intends to oblige at least two thirds of its suppliers to set Science Based Targets themselves to reduce their emissions.

Ikea is probably one of the most committed retailers when it comes to solving the Scope 3 problem. The Swedish furniture retailer has not only converted its own business operations to renewable energies, but is also assisting 1,600 direct suppliers to procure renewable energy and granting loans to finance solar plants. Not only that: The product range footprint is to be improved by using recycled materials, energy-efficient electrical products, natural glues, and low-emissions steel. Its logistics service providers are required to electrify their vehicles or use organic fuels.

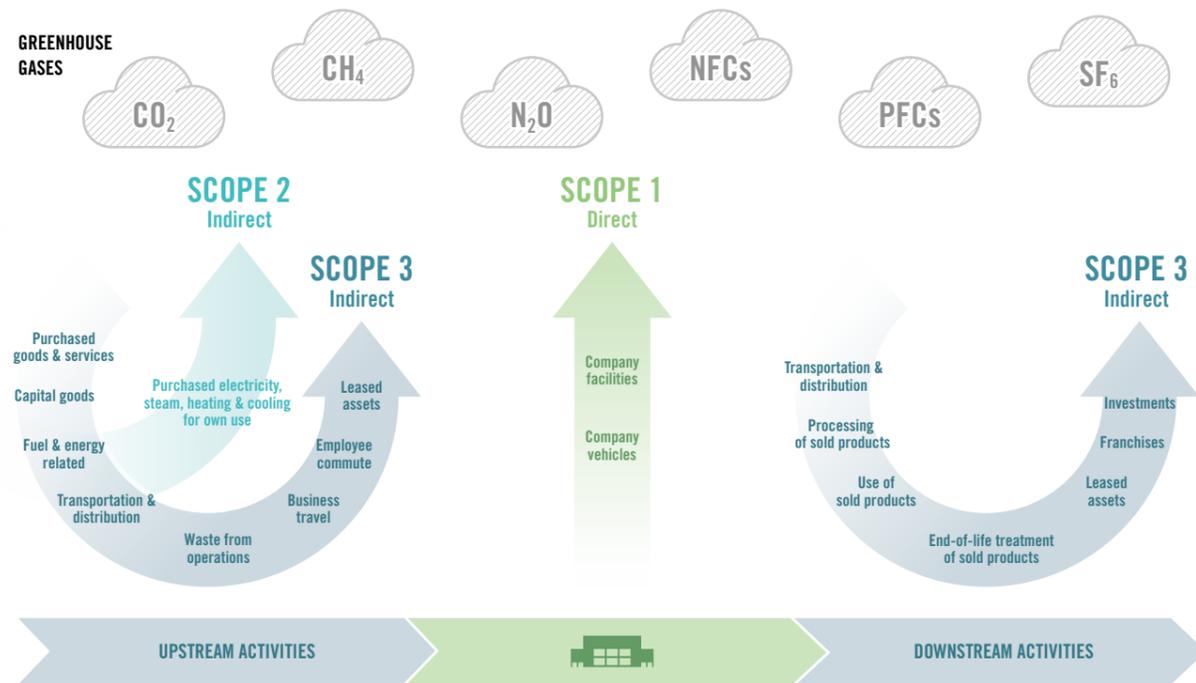
Together with other companies, Ikea is also working towards emissions-free container shipping.

CLIMATE NEUTRAL IS NOT ALWAYS CLIMATE NEUTRAL

However, the complexity of the task gives rise to controversial ideas. In recent years, for example, ever more retailers have included “climate-neutral products” in their ranges. The climate neutrality thereby advertised is achieved by procuring carbon offsetting certificates which finance tree-planting campaigns in South America, for example, or measures to expand renewable energies. The German Centre for Protection against Unfair Competition (Wettbewerbszentrale) has already taken

Above: In recent years, HORNBACH has converted the lighting at its stores and car parks to LED. This has saved several thousand tonnes of CO₂ and cut electricity costs by around four million euros a year.

Previous page: Thanks to a heat pump and 2,000 solar collectors on the roof, the HORNBACH store opened in Paderborn in February 2022 is the first location in Germany whose operations are largely energy neutral.



The Greenhouse Gas Protocol divides greenhouse gas emissions into Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3 emissions.

legal action against several retailers due to misleading adverts in connection with these products. Bones of contention included products such as climate-neutral plastic bags and heating oil. From the perspective of the authorities, competition is distorted when some companies merely purchase relatively inexpensive carbon offsetting certificates, while others incur great expense to actually reduce their own CO₂ emissions and call themselves “climate neutral”. Advocates of climate-neutral products respond that offsetting projects offer a good solution for those products that will never become climate neutral by way of reductions. Moreover, climate protection projects can be implemented where they have the greatest effect. A tree in the tropics, for example, stores CO₂ faster than a tree in the company car park.

Ultimately, though, discussions of this nature do not take us forward. In its Sixth Status Report, the IPCC calls for immediate and far-reaching reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in all regions of the world, sectors, and areas of life, as well as additional reforestation. The target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees would otherwise not be achievable.

INTERVIEW
WITH ANNA ALEX

“IF YOU DON’T MEASURE IT, YOU CAN’T MANAGE IT”



PLANETLY, A CLIMATE TECH STARTUP, HELPS COMPANIES TO CALCULATE AND SHRINK THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINTS. PLANETLY’S COFOUNDER ANNA ALEX HAS ALREADY ACCOMPANIED MANY COMPANIES ON THIS JOURNEY. WHAT ARE THE GREATEST HURDLES COMPANIES FACE WHEN CALCULATING THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT?

Many companies understand that calculating their emissions volumes is part of sustainable business activity, but they have no idea where to start. Not just that: Regulations are becoming ever stricter. We support our customers in overcoming these initial difficulties. We start by working together to gain an overview and understand which data is available, in what degree of granularity, and where it can be found. Often, the greatest challenge we encounter is obtaining data on Scope 3 emissions, i.e. in the upstream and downstream supply chains. These emissions are in the supplier’s area of responsibility and that makes it more difficult to access the relevant data. Having said that, we also see that carbon accounting is gaining ground as a topic in ever more sectors and that companies are increasingly willing to provide greater transparency. We have also noticed that, by the time we support customers in the second round of analysis, the process has become far quicker and easier. That is because processes are already in place, the data requirements are clear, and the basic understanding that was still missing at first is now firmly established.

WHAT BENEFITS DOES A SOFTWARE SOLUTION OFFER FOR CARBON MANAGEMENT?

Our software makes carbon management easier and offers full conformity with leading standards. Excel-based statistical analyses of the footprint are hugely time-consuming and only provide companies with limited insights into their carbon reduction potential. They make ongoing carbon management more or less impossible. That is why we have equipped our software with smart data collection, such as interfaces to other systems, real-time calculations, analytical functions in easily understood dashboards, and effective reduction tracking functions. Moreover, the methodology and emission factors conform to international standards and are permanently updated and enhanced in the background.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST LEVERS FOR AN (OMNICHANNEL) RETAILER LIKE HORNBAACH TO SAVE EMISSIONS?

In our own operations, the greatest lever is our buildings, where heat, lighting, and cooling are mostly the largest sources of emissions. Companies should on the one hand reduce their consumption, for example by working with more efficient lighting solutions, and on the other hand

prioritize procurement of renewable energies for their existing consumption. HORNBAACH has lived and optimized this approach for many years now. For most retailers, however, the greatest drivers in their carbon balance sheets are in their supply chains, i.e. in their products and associated logistics. These chiefly involve emissions arising upon the cultivation, production, and manufacture of raw materials for merchandise. Even though retailers are mostly not directly involved in production, they are able to promote the restructuring of product supply chains. Companies need to involve their suppliers, obtain undertakings from them, and introduce sustainability scorecards and clear environmental criteria in their procurement activities. To decarbonize logistics, we recommend that companies consider introducing lower-emission fuels, electrification – particularly for “last-mile” deliveries – and switching modes of transport.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO COMPANIES WISHING TO SET THEMSELVES A NET ZERO TARGET?

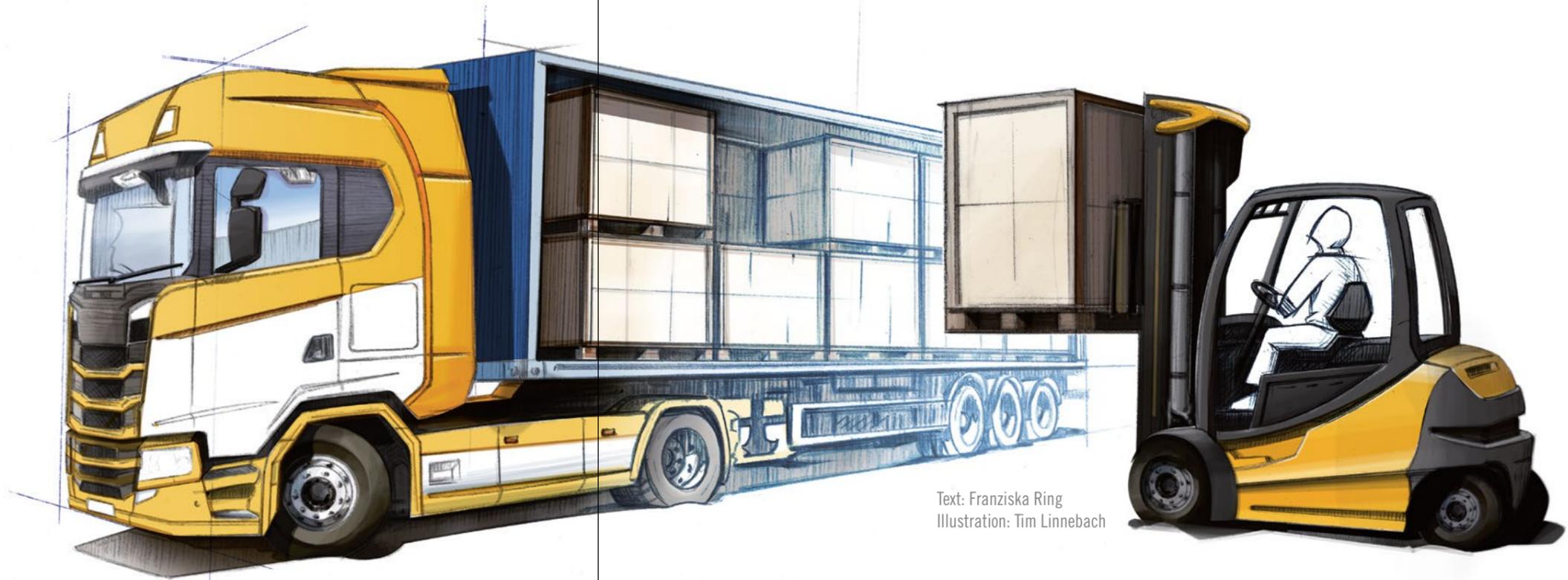
The first step is to calculate the carbon footprint in a way that covers all relevant emissions and is consistent with the GHG Protocol. If you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it. It makes sense to get started as soon as possible so that the calculations can be made more precise in the years ahead and a pool of internal expertise can be built up. In general, companies aim for targets, trajectories, and plans to reduce their direct and indirect emissions that are consistent with a 1.5 °C trajectory, using available instruments and standards, such as those offered by the Science Based Targets initiative. A net zero target can only be achieved with a comprehensive decarbonization strategy that makes reduction its core focus while also preparing neutralization measures. Offsetting can be drawn on as a transitional solution, but should not be the priority. To ensure successful implementation, this topic needs to be anchored at the top management level while also getting the whole of the company on board. Achieving a net zero target means a great deal of positive change.

That is only doable if everyone pulls together. We urgently advise our customers to be very transparent in communicating how far they have advanced, both internally and externally, and to publish relevant information. ◀

LOADS TO DO

How can we make transports of goods from our suppliers to our stores as resource effective as possible? That is one of the main tasks performed by our logistics. Here, we benefit from “full truck load” (FTL) which, as its name suggests, is based on the following principle: The truck is fully loaded. That cuts logistics costs and reduces the volume of freight space needed, administrative expenses, and the impact of price increases in the freight market. Working together with the store logistics development team, our logistics department has developed an algorithm that allocates the total calculated weight of goods to be transported to several trucks in such a way that their existing capacities are put to optimal use. Trials with this algorithm were launched with two long-standing suppliers in February 2020. Today, 56 suppliers in nine countries already work with the new merchandise planning logic. Since trials began, around 50,000 orders with total tonnage of around 1.2 million tonnes have been delivered. And the FTL processes are continually being optimized.

To achieve optimal capacity utilization rates, though, it is important not just to develop in-house strategies and processes but actually to put them into practice in cooperation with business partners! Based on the motto “Deliver goods not added costs”, representatives of industry, logistics, and retail – including HORNBAACH – have agreed the following seven core requirements governing the safe and resource-effective dispatching of deliveries:



Text: Franziska Ring
Illustration: Tim Linnebach



SAFE FOR TRANSPORT

Sales packaging and goods are protected against damage, theft, and environmental factors. The pallets and goods are firmly linked to each other and form a stable unit.



STACKABLE

The layer pattern of the load unit is even. Based on an even load, its load capacity is at least 400 kg.



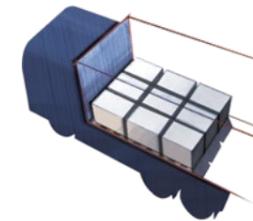
EXCHANGEABLE

The pallet is suitable for storage in high-bay warehouses and for transport by forklift trucks.



SCANNABLE

Two identical labels are attached to each load unit, one on either end. The size, quality, and format of the labels, and the way they are attached, ensure they can be read by a scanner.



LONGITUDINALLY LOADABLE

Load units are loaded longitudinally in direction of travel. Each load unit can be unloaded by a forklift truck from the rear and without having to be shifted.



STORE-SPECIFIC

The load unit only contains goods for precisely one store.



INTERLOCKING

Each load unit is flush-packed. Its basic dimensions are consistent with those of EUR pallets. The packing scheme is gapless.

The only way we can help our logistics centers contribute sustainably to protecting the environment is if everyone plays their part. To achieve this, we ask ourselves where we have the potential for improvement. And that is where we get started. It will not happen overnight. Little by little, though, we can achieve more. ◀

HORNBAACH GOES TO SCHOOL

HEADS, HANDS, HEARTS – AND HORNBAACH!

To change things, you have to start small. That well-known saying contains a nugget of truth. After all, ideas give rise to projects, projects to initiatives, and initiatives maybe to movements. With its “HORNBAACH goes to school” project, HORNBAACH is seeing if that can work. And it is already making a difference for young people right now. Andrea Polls

If you were a tool, which one would you be today? That is not the kind of question you ask yourself every day. If you did, what would the answer be? For 20 pupils at Geschwister Scholl Grammar School in Zossen outside Berlin, the question feels just right. The 14 to 16-year-olds sit in a circle and get thinking. The first hands soon go up. One answer is: “I’m a spirit level, as it’s always me who keeps my team in balance”. What makes young people want to compare themselves with tools? On the morning in question, the answer is close at hand. The ninth grade is in the middle of a two-day workshop with HORNBAACH and the learning partner Forever Day One. The young people spend these days finding out about tools and machines. And how to use them, build a Berlin chair under their own steam, pool their creative flair, turn their ideas into specific project plans, and make models of their visions. In this environment, identifying as a spirit level or a hammer is not so off-the-wall...

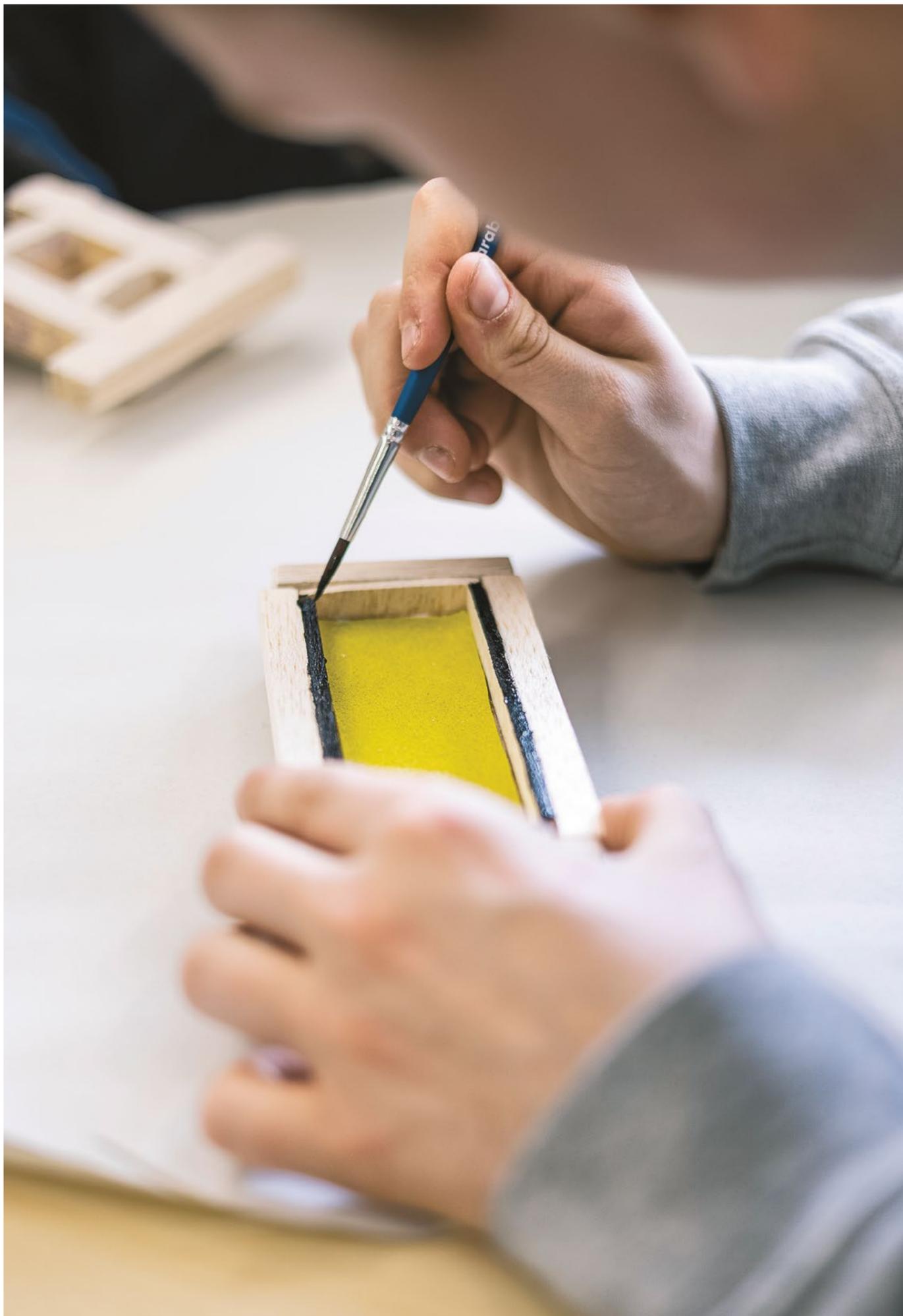
HOW IT ALL BEGAN

What has that got to do with a DIY store? More than you might first think. HORNBAACH has gone to school, and that basically since early 2020. At one of their first meetings, Karsten Kühn, HORNBAACH’s Chief Marketing and People Officer, and Moritz Ettl, Founder and Managing

Director of Forever Day One, were quickly seized by the inspiration for the joint project. In terms of contents, they looked at how we could take a different approach to training and learning, and maybe even revolutionize them. Ideas and visions were shared, and much common ground was identified. This proved to be the founding moment for an exciting project. “Forever Day One believes that no one is too young to initiate change and encourages young people to get involved”, explains Karsten Kühn with regard to the ideas underpinning the cooperation. “That’s where HORNBAACH comes in, because you can express change really well with manual skills and activities. And we had the impression that manual skills in particular are underrepresented in most learning approaches.” The two companies are also convinced that shared building projects are especially suitable for reviving young people’s curiosity in a playful manner. “Too often, existing learning structures just turn curious children into mini-adults”, adds Karsten Kühn.

THE WAY IS THE GOAL

Have an experience and learn from it: That is the basis for the project and experience-based approach taken by Forever Day One and HORNBAACH. “It is a holistic concept where it’s not so much the goal that counts, but



WHAT DOES FOREVER DAY ONE STAND FOR?

The revolution starts small

To enable young people to actively shape the future, what's needed are innovative and sustainable learning concepts – and pronto! And who better suited to help develop these concepts than future-oriented companies and courageous young people themselves?

Forever Day One aims to rethink the way we learn and work. To find new paths, the company set out on an exploration and asked people across the whole world about how they already live and think the future of work. When it comes to learning, places like Brightworks School in California, the experimental business school Kaospilot in Aarhus, and Hellerup Skole in the Danish capital Copenhagen have shown that learning is one thing above all: a shared experience. That is what makes a project-based, experience-driven approach so central to the “HORNBAACH goes to school” concept implemented together with Forever Day One.

Find out more at:
www.foreverday.one

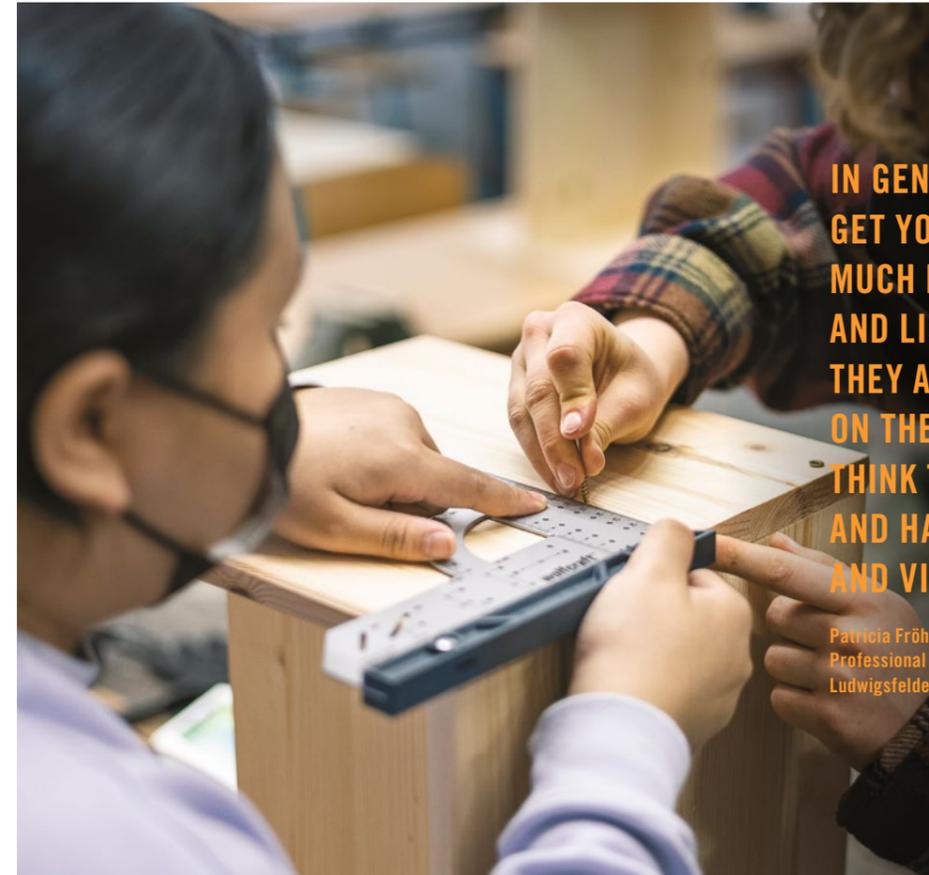


rather the way there”, explains Lina Westermann, Lead Learning Designer at Forever Day One. Shaping things, finding your own voice, and seeing that you yourself can make a difference – these are key learning contents for the five-day camps that form the centerpiece of the project. The young people should be given space to develop new awareness, exploit previously undiscovered skills, and receive strategies for the future. In other words: The young people are enabled and empowered to design sensible solutions under their own steam – with support from trained coaches and HORNBAACH staff.

The pilot project kicked off in the fall of 2020. Four schools, five days each, six coaches, four HORNBAACH colleagues. And the result? An absolute success! Alongside obvious aspects such as learning how to use machines and tools correctly or put materials to sensible use, the camps also trigger numerous latent learning processes. Young people learn to trust their own abilities and work-

ing with their hands gives them the feeling that they can make a difference. Not just that: the projects enable personal potential to be detected and exploited, while also promoting structured thought and planning and triggering emotions such as pride and courage. “What makes the program so special is the way it combines hands-on expertise and the development of more far-reaching potential. It's not about building something or holding some workshop. It's about uniting both elements to help participants learn something about their own skills and strengths”, explains Theresa Ryll, a coach at Forever Day One.

The pilot camps held in 2020 showed how well this form of learning went down with young people and really sets things in motion. The feedback was impressive. However, the pandemic meant that the further camps planned for 2021 had to be postponed. So did the project enter hibernation? Quite the reverse, it really got going! “The first camps showed how we met with open ears and it was soon



IN GENERAL, WE SHOULD GET YOUNG PEOPLE MUCH MORE INVOLVED AND LISTEN TO THEM. THEY ARE HUGEY FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE, REALLY THINK THINGS THROUGH, AND HAVE GREAT IDEAS AND VISIONS.

Patricia Fröhling,
Professional Customer Adviser
Ludwigsfelde Store

clear that we would continue. We would love to achieve even more with our initiative”, adds Sylvia Späthe, the manager responsible for the project at HORNBAACH.

RELAUNCH IN SPRING 2022

In this case, achieving more means making the project and its idea accessible to even more young people. Together with Forever Day One, the company devised potential gateways and new elements for the project. In the end, the project managers decided to supplement the Day One Camps with three new elements: the Day One Workbook, die Day One Building Kit, and the Day One Road Trips. “You can see these three elements as funneling the interest. The Workbook is on display at the stores and enables us to reach a very large number of young people. The Building Kit is already slightly more special. It can be ordered by teachers for their schools, enabling students to implement the first small-scale projects in

the classroom. The Road Trips are held as two-day workshops at schools, for example as project days. The five-day Day One Camps round off the learning opportunities as the most intensive unit in terms of their content”, explains Sylvia Späthe.

The first road trips after the pandemic break were launched in March, while the workbooks have been available at stores since June. The project relaunch is in full swing and the positive feedback made managers leap from their chairs. Speaking of chairs, the so-called Berlin chairs, which can also be used as a shelf or a small table, play a starring role in the road trips. That is because the students build them right on day one with a little help from HORNBAACH colleagues. That is one of the absolute highlights for the young people. “We built the chairs completely on our own, with no adult assistance, and in such a short time. That was amazing”, says Aaron, aged 14 and a participant in the Day One Road Trip in Zossen.

“The way the young people taking part in the project develop during the two days is clearly visible. At first, they are still a bit nervous and maybe slightly reserved. By the second day, they are far more open and secure. They

TOO OFTEN, EXISTING LEARNING STRUCTURES JUST TURN CURIOUS CHILDREN INTO MINI-ADULTS.

Karsten Kühn,
Chief Marketing and People Officer

helped each other and made sure they adhered to the safety measures. It was fantastic”, enthuses Dennis Baumann, a professional customer adviser at the store in Ludwigsfelde. His colleague Patricia Fröhling adds: “We should generally get young people far more involved and listen to them. They are hugely focused on the future, think about lots of things, and have great ideas and visions.”

GET SYNERGIZING, START A MOVEMENT

The next Day One Camps are scheduled for October. But the store in Vogelsdorf, whose staff took part in the first road trip in March, shows how the project is already get-

ting things moving and creating synergies. Oliver Plasczyk, Assistant Manager in Vogelsdorf, still remembers the two eventful days very clearly and would jump at the opportunity to take part in the project again. At his own store, he is already showing what is possible: The projects that can be built with the help of the Workbook, such as a soccer goalpost made of pipes, a mini-pond, or a balance board, are on show at the store. “Our customers also see the Workbook and the necessary materials as an original gift idea. We’ve heard that in numerous conversations.” Participating in the Day One Road Trip inspired the store to try out some new ideas itself. Participants in the “Kids@work” event held in the summer also had the chance to build a Berlin chair.

These synergies are absolutely intended and are by no means limited to HORNBAACH’s DIY stores and garden centers. A further conceivable and desirable development would be to attract new project partners from trades companies, educational facilities, or other businesses. To turn the great idea pursued by HORNBAACH and Forever Day One into a movement for the future. And benefit young people who want to change things. ◀◀

Find out more at
www.hornbach-macht-schule.de

THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF “HORNBAACH GOES TO SCHOOL”

The Workbooks

60 pages of thought-provoking ideas, inspiration, and practical instructions. The Workbooks are already on offer free of charge at all HORNBAACH stores. A digital version is also available for downloading.

The Building Kit

Together with the tool, this contains all you need for the projects. Each box has four construction sets with materials and tools. Classes or teachers who are interested can order the Construction Kit online and then perform projects at schools. These can be implemented without coaches or HORNBAACH employees.

The Road Trips

These are two-day workshops in schools. Ideas to improve the contents or appearance of schools as a place to learn are devised and then implemented in model form. Not only that: a Berlin chair is also built to find out how to use machines and tools. The Road Trips are each conducted by four trained coaches and at least two HORNBAACH employees.

The Camps

At these one-week events, students put projects into practice. They flesh out the idea, do the planning, procure the materials and actually implement the project. The Camps are accompanied by trained coaches and HORNBAACH employees.



IMPRINT**Published by**

HORNBACH Holding AG & Co. KGaA
 Hornbachstraße 11
 D-76879 Bornheim
 Telephone (+49) 0 63 48 / 60 - 00
 Fax (+49) 0 63 48 / 60 - 42 99
 www.hornbach-holding.com

Corporate Social Responsibility

Anna Krall
 Telephone (+49) 0 63 48 / 60 - 4556
 csr@hornbach.com
 www.hornbach-group.com

Design Concept and Photography

Sebastian Struch
 Adrian Schröder
 Schröder & Schröder GmbH & Co. KG
 www.sebastianstruch.de
 www.adrian-schroeder.de

Translation

Daniel Clark & Associates
 Business Communication Services
 Kopenhagener Strasse 49
 10437 Berlin
 clark@dca-communications.com

Production

Kunst- und Werbedruck, Bad Oeynhausen

HORNBACH.
 Holding

HORNBACH
 Es gibt immer was zu tun.

HORNBACH ■ BAUSTOFF
UNION



