

A man in a dark blazer and light trousers walks towards the camera in a large, modern logistics warehouse. The floor is polished concrete with yellow safety lines. In the background, there are complex automated conveyor systems with multiple levels and robotic arms. The lighting is bright and industrial.

DISTRIBUTION CENTRES: FOR MANY PEOPLE, THE NAME CONJURES UP IMAGES OF LARGE FLAT BOXES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. BUT **TIM BECKMANN**, CEO OF **INTOSPACE**, SEES SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT: A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR A BETTER WORLD. “WE ARE STRIVING FOR A HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IN WHICH LOGISTICS REAL ESTATE REALLY ADDS VALUE TO SOCIETY.”

Intospace is a new company with established roots. Its launch, on 20 September 2020, marked the moment when this real estate subsidiary of Somerset Capital Partners, an investment fund, became a standalone organisation. The move allows Somerset to develop in new directions while intospace can focus on its core task: working on future-proof logistics.

The latter begins with paying attention to – and having a vision on – the key trends in the world of logistics real estate. Tim Beckmann sees plenty of opportunities: “The sector has had a negative image for a long time,” he says. “People associate logistics with pollution, nitrogen emissions, traffic and ugly boxes in the countryside. The discussion around how to move forward [on these issues in the Netherlands] is in full swing, and it would be good if the sector made itself heard more. Logistics is the lifeblood of the economy. So long as we continue to make products in a different place at a different time to where we want to consume it, we will need logistics to bridge the difference. It is here to stay! So it is important to think about how we want to do this. Logistics is about more than just constructing a large building as quickly as possible; it is also about accepting your social responsibility and working on fast, smart and clean logistics. We enjoy challenging ourselves with this and creating a movement. As a market leader, we can play an important role in shaping a healthy and sustainable future in which logistics real estate really adds value to society.

MULTIFUNCTIONAL LAND USE

“Many groups say that achieving energy neutrality by 2030 is not feasible; we prefer to ask, ‘What will it take to get it done?’ With our distribution centres and logistics expertise, we are ideally placed to take initiatives and steps towards a sustainable future. This includes looking for opportunities to make more effective use of the scarce land in our densely populated country. Here, multifunctional land use can provide an answer: stacking goods and clustering different functions in layers. This starts at the bottom, with storage, and continues up to parking, solar panels and finally the roof garden. The addition of a recreational function to the roof, such as tennis courts or allotments, turns the distribution

“LOGISTICS IS THE LIFEblood OF THE ECONOMY”

centre into a building that has a positive impact on the environment. Having a green roof also helps to blend a building into the landscape better. We have a plan on the drawing board to create more than 250 allotments on a roof, including all the necessary facilities. By thinking more creatively about combining functions, we can use space in the Netherlands even more efficiently.

INNOVATIVE ENERGY SYSTEMS

“The transition to a sustainable society brings some serious problems with it. The current electricity grid is unable to meet the rapidly increasing demand for power and the large-scale use of new, green energy sources. For example, a large proportion of the planned development in the Netherlands cannot go ahead because the grid lacks the capacity to supply more new homes.

“We contribute to solving this problem in various ways, including by developing emissions-free real estate. For example, we have already installed more than 1 million square metres of solar panels on the roofs of our distribution centres, and we use smart battery technology to store the excess energy. As we only need 20 percent of the electricity we generate, all these buildings provide far more energy than they consume.

“In Hoofddorp [adjacent to Schiphol Airport Amsterdam], we are currently building the first off-grid distribution



TIM BECKMANN

What’s your experience? My background is in logistics. I trained in logistics and have worked in the industry for nearly 25 years.

What motivates you? I like to set the bar high and look for where you can make a difference. This is true both in my personal life and at work. Everyone is unique and companies, too, must demonstrate over and over that they do more than simply supply a commodity product or solution.

What project are you working on? We work on a lot of ambitious projects at the same time, but the ones that stand out are the off-grid DC that we are building in Hoofddorp,

and a number of projects in which we are going to show the market what you can achieve with functional design.

What do you want to achieve? Through intospace, we want to show the importance of logistics to our society and to ensure that logistics once again becomes part of the design of our landscape. And, of course, we want to have an impact on the market through our commitment that our buildings must be good for our customers and for the environment in which they are located.

What is your vision for the future? Logistics is driven by the fickleness of the consumer and the

consumer determines how logistics develops. The real estate sector will have to become more agile and adaptable to keep up with and facilitate these developments.

What did you want to be later? A director. I knew from an early age that I like being behind the controls.

What wise lesson have you taken to heart? That you should always stay true to your internal motivation.

Who has taught you the most? An old colleague who showed me what you can achieve by being entrepreneurial and, sometimes, a bit of a rebel, even in large corporate organisations.

Are you always sure of what you are doing? I always stand behind my decisions and choices. I typically share the challenges I face with a lot of people. This enables me to make better decisions in the end.

What should we wake you up for? A party.

What are you afraid of? Parrots and populism – the ease with which society embraces certain ideas and beliefs that are not supported by factual arguments.

What or who makes you angry? Anonymous internet users. The world would be a lot nicer if the big tech companies would delete all anonymous accounts and only allow

you to create an account using your DigiD [online ID to access Dutch government services]. I’m also allergic to complainers. Everyone is responsible for their own happiness and we have much more influence on what happens around us than we often realise.

Who or what makes you happy? Working with the younger generation. In particular, their drive, innovativeness and creativity give me a lot of energy.

What makes you laugh a lot? I can laugh at a lot of things. Laughter is also a very good way to put things into perspective.

What keeps you awake? Today’s world worries me sometimes. On the

one hand, we humans are social animals, but at the same time there is so much division and we don’t accept unconventional behaviour.

What are you proud of? That in both my logistics career and in my short real-estate career, I have experienced the journey to becoming a top-three player in the country. That’s really cool.

Who is your hero? I have many heroes: people who make a difference by swimming against the tide and changing the world by continuing to believe in their dreams and ambitions.

What is your favourite sport? I’m enjoying the current battle in Formula 1 and I

am also looking forward to being in Abu Dhabi for the final race.

Are you a loner or a group person? Both. I can work independently and forget the environment around me very easily but, professionally, I enjoy it when the team really becomes a team. If you really enjoy being with each other and you respect each other, you can achieve magnificent things.

Introvert or extrovert? Fairly extrovert.,;-)

Optimist or pessimist? Super optimist. There is a solution for everything and there are opportunities everywhere.

Which trait do you value most in your partner? Without Inge, I would never have been able to do what I have done so far. I can sometimes be blind to certain things and she helps me enormously to keep a broad perspective. She also has an incredible memory and ability to empathise, and so she basically ensures that everything is always organised.

Which season is the best? Only autumn makes me less cheerful – I enjoy summer and (on skis) winter.

Which holiday destination? I still have so many countries to discover, but I think Canada (British Colombia) is a top country.

What have you learned to appreciate during corona? The empty motorways.



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centre in the Netherlands. This 50,000 square metre warehouse needs a lot of electricity, a requirement we meet without taking power from the grid. Unused energy is stored in several container-sized batteries and, along with the other companies on the park, we form a virtual network in which we exchange energy with each other. Nodes like this can play a major role in solving the local energy problem and contribute to a liveable planet.

URBAN LOGISTICS

“Every era has its own logistical challenges. For us, these lie in coming up with smart solutions to keep congested cities liveable and accessible. We want to reduce urban traffic by combining flows of goods, something you can do by transshipping goods on the outskirts of the city and clustering them there before they travel the last mile with small, local transport, such as an electric van or a cargo bike.

“At the same time, we are committed to sharing our knowledge. Using logistics real estate, we want to create an ecosystem for collaboration and innovation that will accelerate the development of the logistics of the future. For example, we are building a City Distribution Centre in Badhoevedorp [close to Amsterdam]. This is a logistics campus in which all kinds of parties think together about how urban distribution can be made better and smarter. [Power company] EON considers the City Distribution Centre to be such a cool initiative that it will provide the charging infrastructure. It will be the largest electric charging station in Europe, with space to charge 800 vehicles.

“We are also working on other ‘liveable city’ ideas. Already, many apartments in London and New York are being built without a kitchen, because the price and convenience of eating out no longer justifies cooking at home. Cooking for

yourself is also associated with a huge amount of waste, because a lot is thrown away. Central preparation reduces CO2 emissions. We are moving towards a situation where meals are prepared on the outskirts of the city and then distributed. We are currently in discussions about the possibilities with a large caterer in Amsterdam.

PEOPLE-PROOF

“The Dutch population is ageing fast, which has major consequences for the labour market. The labour force is shrinking and companies are struggling to find employees, something that applies to logistics, too. Plus, until recently, logistics buildings were not the most inspiring working environments: large industrial boxes with a lot of concrete and little daylight.

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“In recent years, enormous steps have been taken to change this. That had to happen because logistics is people-work. A logistics building shouldn’t only be suitable for storing and transshipping products, it must also provide a pleasant place to work. We help our logistics tenants win the ‘war for talent’ by developing a healthy and challenging work environment that attracts and retains talent. This requires a design in which people are central, that pays attention to light, greenery, a good company restaurant and, preferably, space for relaxation and recreation. This focus on people results in attractive buildings and inspiring locations where people want to work.

INNOVATION

“We build for future generations. The buildings we are constructing today must last for at least 40 years. This means that we have to think now about what the world will look like in the future, and that we have to ensure that our designs remain meaningful and useful then, too.

“This requires not only that we adapt to changing consumer demand, but also that we seize the opportunities that technology offers us. For example, we are currently running a pilot with a company that has developed innovative fibre optic technology that allows us to provide lightning-fast, stable internet throughout our buildings. Because we can now work with IoT [internet of things], we can organise processes more smartly, which in turn can, for example, lead to lower costs, fewer delays and less food spoilage. And, thanks to this technology, we reduce the amount of data cable required by up to 90 percent. This can quickly add up to 10 kilometres of cable in an average building.

“But the real innovation lies in the fundamental question of whether we should continue to develop individual buildings, or whether we should focus on innovative communities. Our choice is for the latter. This is why, at the City Distribution Centre, we enable professionals from all kinds of industries to work together, through open innovation, to bring city logistics to the next level. If this seed develops, it will be good for the companies, the location, the sector and the world.”