

### **Prospects for the US shopping malls.**

The shopping mall is emblematic of the American suburban way of life. Today, as many retailers are in the red, the fate of this essential tool in the consumer society seems to be either to die or to evolve, according to The New York Times, Forbes and The Economist, in 3 articles published in 2020, 2018 and 2020. The dossier is illustrated with two photographs of abandoned malls taken from The Guardian. One can wonder if shopping malls can survive. What is causing the demise of these American giants? How could they be spared, in today's challenging context?

Both Forbes and The Economist present the shopping mall as national heritage – often featured in films and series - shaped by the American suburb and the car culture. This major cog in the consumer-oriented economy also provides entertainment and relaxation and fosters social links and patriotism, according to the “Ode to the shopping mall” from The Economist. But the beast seems to be dying: The New York Times calls the trend a “retail apocalypse”.

Forbes points out that in the garment sector alone the number of closures has kept soaring. These closures are illustrated in the photographs of abandoned malls featured in The Guardian. What is killing the shopping mall, if it is indeed dying? The Economist claims that American citizens find malls less enticing today. One of the reasons, according to The New York Times, could be that consumers are increasingly more inclined to purchase services and to spend more on experiences rather than material goods. The other obstacles put forward, presented respectively by The Economist and The Guardian, are high tariffs and income inequality. Although E-commerce does not concern all products offered in the retail industry, it has also been detrimental to shopping malls.

However, the share of “Big Box” stores, mentioned in The Guardian, has risen faster than the share of online trade in the retail industry. As for the current health crisis, even if Forbes emphasizes that it took its toll on brick-and-mortar retailers, the retail crisis preceded the pandemic. Could going big be one of the keys to survival? According to Forbes' article, whose title indicates that malls are not dying but evolving, consumers expect more from a mall than just a purchasing act. Large scale, flexibility, rejuvenation and renovation seem to be key. The Economist contends that if Americans are not confined to their homes in the future, the winners could be extravagant mega malls offering entertainment and amenities aimed at improving customer experience.

Although shopping malls are being forced to adapt and evolve, in the near future they will probably remain major landmarks in suburban America