

## POP UP IN THE CITY

### Interview with Mr. Jürgen Block, CEO of the Association of City Marketing and Town Centre Management Germany



**k+** The Science Year 2015 focuses on the „City of the Future“. Living in the city is (again) attractive. How are the city marketing executives prepared for the future?

**jb** The modern city marketing ensures by the participation of its partners a sustainable quality of life in the cities and has established itself as a future-oriented tool for preserving the competitiveness and granting its importance also in the future. Nevertheless, city marketing is often understood to be a pure advertising and event instrument, and some cities do not yet use the potential of a holistic marketing. Currently - and in the future much more - the secret currency of the cities is quality of life. Successful city marketing processes contribute to this development by urban development or a brand strategy statement. Here overall objectives are agreed and have to be consistently pursued by all the available instruments. That's the theory - in practice, the strategic quality and the actual power of the city marketing processes vary widely, depending on many local factors and resources.

**k+** What are the key factors for a vital and functioning city?

**jb** That is high-quality diversity, multi-functionality – so the colourful mix of shopping, tourist and cultural attractions, an excellent infrastructure, interesting public space that is inviting and attractive, and events conveying identity. And above all friendly citizens, merchants and restaurateurs.

**k+** A daily market, a vibrant retail and small crafts business used to ensure a dynamic city. Where there is no historic old town, it is sometimes difficult to establish a vibrant city center. **How can the City still be attractive for people of all ages and prepared for increasing environmental demands?**

**jb** Cities must ensure also in future their multifunctional nature. But there will be shifts in the individual segments - the most exciting is certainly the question of future retail in our cities. I do not know how it will look like, but I trust the model of the European city and the innovative power of the trade. We must be careful that none of the current developments of either towards an interchangeable „Clone City“ or towards an unattractive „Ghost Town“ will prevail.



**k+** A well-stocked retail is essential for a city to be attractive for residents and tourists. However, especially in small and medium-sized cities problem areas are caused by high vacancy rates. Pop-up stores offer the opportunity to create new attractiveness, but also lead to new topics in the city, especially where artist projects are introduced or political statements set. For a culinary international understanding and lively public discussion for example in America the „Conflict Kitchen“ project contributes to by changing specialties in a pop-up restaurant from countries with which the United States is currently in conflict. Another example is the „Bamyan Ski Club“ recently installed in St. Moritz as so-called pop-up bar for a good purpose, namely to promote Afghan skiers. **Can you imagine these concepts for German city centres? What happens meanwhile in view of the revitalization of vacancies?**

**jb** Pop-up stores, creative temporary use, setting up of new businesses, trainee stores or citizens' initiatives are good approaches for the short and medium term bridging of unwanted vacancies. Basically cities should also make sure that their retail spaces are properly distributed and dimensioned. Coordinated regional retail development concepts would be a real help here as well as creative architectural solutions. This includes of course also open-minded property owners, because if one accepts that former „wash floors“ are today well rentable penthouses, ground floor surfaces must not necessarily be retail uses in the future.

**k+** **How do you evaluate the factory outlet concept in the historic city centre of Bad Münstereifel, would it be transferable to other cities?**

**jb** By its combination of existing quality of experience and shopping and by the integration of a City Outlet, Bad Münstereifel surely pulled off a coup. To what extent the concept is permanent and what changes it will bring to the city as a whole, has certainly to be observed. However, it brings many positive aspects together, thus contributing to lasting success. Not in all small towns these positive criteria are existing, thus the concept can only partially take over a role model. To search for creative solutions and find niches, however, the task of each city.

**k+** Well proportioned shopping centers with excellent design can help to shape the identity of the city - which requirements should they meet in the eyes of city marketing executives?

**jb** For shopping centers the same applies as for inner cities as a whole - they must be „special and varied“, best by form and content. Unfortunately this is not applicable for all shopping centers, and arbitrariness here leads to interchangeability especially with the virtual shopping world. There is a need to strengthen their strengths, otherwise they could in the future end up as a problem for many cities parallel to the destiny of properties of former warehouses. Shopping centers and city centers have for a long time been looking askance at each other, but got used to each other in the meantime. But this habituation must not lead to boredom but to a creative and cooperative relation. There are many good approaches, however, the city marketing executives are seeking even more support in view of the positioning of the city centers through the shopping centers.

**k+** The brand essence, the common identity of the city, finds its expression in the city center. Through its buildings, citizens and activities. A visitor to the city should get in contact with all its highlights, at best experience the image of the city with all his senses already arriving at the station. The design of the space and the visual language (web, logo, routing) interact coherently with each other. **What about the visual language in German cities? Can you name us some lighthouse projects?**

**jb** Many cities are taking care of a qualitative appearance which certainly includes a modern and clear visual language. This comprises an authentic brand identity, such as just presented in Bochum, or a unified design of public space, which can be achieved by a voluntary agreement or concerted design guidelines. Here the city of Nagold can be mentioned as a successful example. In principle, a clear information and signage system is important for the quality of experience in the city, another good example can be found in Kleve. Also creative solutions like the fragrant city tour in the city of „scents and flavors“ in southern Lower Saxony, Holzminden, arouse curiosity and approaches citizens and tourists in an emotional way.



**k+** The BCSD organizes the German City Marketing Conference 2015 in Bremen.  
What can the participants expect this year?

**jb** We will refer to the Science Year 2015 ‚City of the Future‘ announced by the Federal Ministry of Education and hold our conference under the title ‚Future. City. Marketing - Scenarios for the Future of City Marketing‘. During the event, we look to questions such as: What are the implications of trend themes such as digitization, mobility and sustainability for the city marketing? How do you deal with it? How do you have to be prepared to handle these issues adequately? But we are, of course, also interested in the social changes and the trend of urbanity. We are pleased to present again high-level speakers, for example, the keynote being held by Prof. Dr. Peter Sloterdijk.

**k+** Mr. Block, thank you very much for the interview.

Interview made by Susanne Weller.

## ABOUT bcsd

The **Association of City Marketing and Town Centre Management Germany** (Bundesvereinigung City- und Stadtmarketing Deutschland e.V., bcsd) was founded in 1996 in Berlin, Germany. The association represents the interests of city marketing and town centre management organizations from over 260 cities in Germany. The association supports all those who engage in any kind of city marketing or town centre management in the cities and who, together with the local community, stand up for vital and functioning town centres.

The association gives impulses, collects current and relevant issues in cooperation with experts and transforms them for the city marketing organizations' work in the cities. The association organizes discussions about the future of the city and cooperates with a wide network of partners and experts. Numerous businesses with different focuses such as consultancy, communication, town planning or marketing services are supporting members of the association. **[www.bcsd.de](http://www.bcsd.de)**