

TRANSCRIPTION PODCAST SIEMENSSTADT CALLING #1

- WELCOME TO SIEMENSSTADT -

Sarah Tietze

Welcome to the Siemensstadt Podcast. A podcast for everyone who is interested in urban technologies, urban development and smart building, and for all those who are looking forward to the development of Siemensstadt as a place of the future. I am your host Sarah Tietze-Kamya and together with Stefan Kögl, the general manager of Siemensstadt, we will present to you all the background information about Siemensstadt. Stay tuned! Our first episode regards the question: What is being built in Siemensstadt? What will it feel like to live, work, study or even go to school in the new Berlin district?

Sarah Tietze

This I will be talking about with Stefan Kögl, the project manager. Hello Stefan, nice to have you with us.

Stefan Kögl

Hello, Sarah.

Sarah Tietze

Stefan, your CV tells us that you are an architect and that you have managed all construction projects at Siemens over the past 10 years. But apart from the hard facts about you, we are interested in much more. What is important to you as an architect, as an urban developer, as a neighbourhood planner? Do the projects you're responsible for bear your signature?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, I think so. After 10 years at Siemens, a signature will be recognisable. What's important, of course, is what you build and for whom you build. We in Siemensstadt will be building an entire district. That means it ultimately affects everyone. And in this respect, the question is not only what needs people have today, but also in the future, because we are building a city over several years or very many years. For residential development, this means creating livable areas, apartments, houses that have enough space for their residents to develop, but which are still not wasteful. Creating places of retreat that are suitable for a family, for example, or even for a single person. Particularly in the current era, I think the requirements have changed significantly. Or at least we have become much more aware of how important a retreat is.

But also: How will the workplace and the office develop in the future? And let's not forget that public spaces and squares are certainly a key focus for the city. Because we have just experienced how nice it is when you can go to a park or even have a small pond or some other beautiful environment in which you can move around if you can't fly abroad.

Sarah Tietze

Siemensstadt is a completely new district in Berlin, a small city within the city. What topics are the focus of the design of Siemensstadt?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, good question. First of all, the initial situation is that we have a closed industrial area. So there's a fence around it. And we want to turn this area into a liveable, open district, a smart campus for the future. Of course, sustainability is important. Perhaps not in the sense in which it is used in everyday life today, but in the actual sense, namely: How does the city function best and will it still function that way in the future? Ultimately, we are building something that should probably function for the next 100 years. A key parameter here is, of course, mobility. How do I get into the city? But also how does it work within the city? And here we are already experiencing very strong changes and we are anticipating how it will change. That means that when we plan today, we have to know what it will look like in 20 or 30 years. Another important topic is, of course, technology. It offers us considerable opportunities. This will happen gradually over the years. In this respect, there will not be a development now where we say: This is how the technology will be in 20 years. But we know that a great deal will happen over the course of the project, and we must also look to the future and recognise the possibilities of the future today. The bottom line is to come out with a neighbourhood that is liveable. Also important, we must not forget that it should, of course, have a positive impact on the surrounding area and the environment.

Sarah Tietze

We'll take a closer look at the future of Siemensstadt in a moment. Now I'm interested in what Siemensstadt looks like today. Why don't you take us on a tour of today's Siemensstadt?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, of course. You have to remember the history. More than 120 years ago, work was started on this site, which was far outside of Berlin. The Siemens Group acquired the site and then began to develop it. Today it is a piece of Berlin.

But of course, very distinctive buildings from that time, including listed buildings, have been preserved, fortunately, and characterise the image. The switchgear hall high-rise building is particularly noteworthy. This is the landmark that is visible from afar, an 11-story high-rise, but certainly also the Parabel Hall, which is not as visible because it is in the middle of the area. And as an entrance, so to speak, our time-honoured administration building. These will continue to dominate the image in the future. It is also important to know that this location is now the largest Siemens production site in the world, with around 7,000 employees. It will remain that way. But of course, just as it was 100 years ago, it was and is a place for the future, obviously, because it still exists. The task now is to transform this site for the next 100 years, to create a district here where people work, live, research and live.

Sarah Tietze

You just talked about the switchgear high-rise, the Parabel hall, the administration building. In other words, some really striking buildings that dominate the landscape today. What will remain and what is coming architecturally?

Stefan Kögl

So, of course, the monuments that characterise the image today and create a high level of identification, will remain. However, they will of course be supplemented by new buildings, and to such an extent that the two, old and new, will have to be combined to form a new, high-quality building style that it is understood as a whole and not as different architecture styles next to each other. Of course, the use of the monuments will have to be adapted to modern or current requirements, so that they can also be used in the future.

Sarah Tietze

Siemensstadt is a new district in Berlin that combines the old and the new, yet it is still modern. I'm sure you've often walked through this district in your mind. Can you take us with you on a walk through the new Siemensstadt?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, there is the first question: Where do I even go in? And the new entrance will be at the S-Bahn station on Rohrdamm, which will be reactivated. There, an entrée will be created, if you will, between the old and new administrative buildings on the left, new buildings on the right and on the left. And there will be the start of the new boulevard that will penetrate deep into the area from east to west. To take you for a walk, would take too long. I'll take an e-scooter, the area is just too big otherwise.

And if we now drive along the boulevard, which is lined with trees, a lot of trees, on which few cars still drive. But rather at walking speed, no faster, there will surely be a lot of pedestrians on the road. As the switchgear high rise appears on the left, then there are new buildings on my right and left. Cafes, stores, but also social facilities will be found here. On the right hand you will see the school area. The European School is to be built here. An elementary school, a secondary school and also a kindergarten.

Stefan Kögl

And if you then continue along the boulevard, it will take you to the new central square, which will certainly be lined with striking houses, including taller ones, and will be the new center of the district, where people will meet.

Sarah Tietze

That's very nice. Let's sit down and have a cup of coffee together. An image of the new Siemensstadt is becoming clearer in my mind. A completely new district is really being built in Berlin. I'm interested in the question of when the whole thing will happen. How long will it take to complete the district?

Stefan Kögl

The area is very large, about 100 soccer fields. That means we will implement it in stages, module by module. We will start at the entrance with the revitalisation of the Siemensstadt S-Bahn station along the boulevard from east to west. Our ambitious plan is to start building in 2022 and have the campus up and running by 2030. And people should be able to experience the open campus even if, of course, the last building has not been finished yet.

Sarah Tietze

When we talk about Siemensstadt, we are talking about an area that is 70 hectares in size. That's about 100 soccer fields. Today, the area is mainly used for industrial purposes. But 2800 residential units, public life, the campus are to be added. 70 hectares won't get any bigger. It's not going to get any bigger. Will there be room for all that?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, there's no need to worry about that. Currently, only 35 percent of the site is built on. It is used extensively, but as I said, it is not covered by buildings. In order to find a good answer to this question, we held an urban planning competition, which was decided at the beginning of the year, in order to achieve a balanced distribution of uses. The winner, by the way, was Ortner und Ortner Baukunst from Berlin.

That should also be mentioned. And the special thing about their design is that there will be a sequence of large and small squares. That means there will be a lot of good locations. That's what you call it quality in external spaces and not just a nice main location somewhere, and then many side streets that are not so attractive.

Sarah Tietze

Siemensstadt today is a classic industrial site. What will it feel like to live there in the future? Will it be possible to combine production and living? Will it feel like living in an industrial area?

Stefan Kögl

So, the question can be answered clearly with yes and no. How will it feel? Of course, it won't be like having a production area right next to a residence, without any protective measures. We do have noise pollution here, we assume that it will be solved differently in the new area. This means that it is possible that commercial buildings will be inserted or built in the gaps. But it is also possible that we will build residential buildings in the immediate vicinity of the production facilities, with appropriate noise reduction measures. That's what's so exciting, because of course production there today is no longer the heavy-duty production that it perhaps was 100 years ago. These are ultra-modern production halls. Nevertheless, these requirements have to be met, and ultimately this is also the original question in this project. The goal, the idea is to bring these uses together in a confined area and to find answers for them. That is the challenge and that makes it exciting.

Sarah Tietze

You told us at the beginning that 7,000 Siemens employees work in Siemensstadt today. That means it is used exclusively by Siemens. The future Siemensstadt will be open to outsiders, to companies, to start-ups. For whom is it exactly?

Stefan Kögl

Siemensstadt is to become an open ecosystem for everyone. And a bit of a reflection of Berlin's open, lively, diverse and free culture. Today's working world is no longer characterised by separating oneself, but by cooperating, communicating, exchanging ideas, and working together. And that applies to both small and large companies. In other words, the goal is to create precisely that atmosphere here, so that companies settle here that want to cooperate in a wide variety of fields. And it doesn't matter whether it's a small company, a startup, or a large DAX corporation like Siemens.

The important thing is to offer these opportunities, i.e. also for research institutions, universities and others, depending on their needs.

Sarah Tietze

In the 70 hectares that Siemens is developing with Siemensstadt, the coexistence of life, work, industry, science, and research will happen very, very closely. What does Siemens hope to gain from this proximity?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, Siemens is first and foremost an industrial corporation. And we always talk about smart cities or the Internet of Things, but less often about smart industry. Yet the Industrial Internet of Things is an enormously important area in which Siemens is also very, very well positioned. In short, it's about optimising industrial processes and workflows and developing new business models. The industrial production of individual one-off items or small series is one example of this. But new intelligent forms of production of the future, such as 3D printing, also contribute to this. A direct juxtaposition of industry, research and science naturally opens up completely new possibilities here. Namely direct trial and error, the direct dovetailing of new developments with manufacturing chains.

Sarah Tietze

When we talk about Siemensstadt, we're talking about a smart campus. What kind of smart technologies can we expect in the new Siemensstadt?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, since I've also been working at Siemens for a very long time, I naturally have a high affinity for technologies. And to that extent, we also work a great deal with them. Perhaps it's first important to consider how you approach a topic like this in the first place. And today, we are planning the whole thing digitally first, in other words, we are already using technologies and then using this digital planning to go into reality and create digital twins for our buildings in the future. And that is today's basis for being able to use technologies. That means technologies such as networked buildings, which for energy use also means, for example, that decentralised energy generation can be controlled centrally. But above all, in mobility, it means knowing the building or the houses or the city all in a model. Everyone is always talking about autonomous driving, but in terms of planning cities more than 100 years old, and cars are destined to find their way into the future. So creating that basis is the first step towards being able to use some of these technologies most effectively at a later stage.

Sarah Tietze

You said at the beginning that we build cities for people. What is the benefit of a smart city for people?

Stefan Kögl

So the smart city would first have to be defined. And smart city doesn't just mean technologies, it also starts with urban planning, i.e. intelligent planning. But above all, it helps people to be able to meet the requirements in the first place. So we simply have an influx into the cities. We have a lot of challenges worldwide, whether it's just energy, energy needs, but also water management, resources, healthcare. Smart cities and networked cities offer the possibility to meet these requirements. Or let's take logistics. If you think about how many parcels have been ordered in recent weeks and months and brought to our homes by dedicated drivers, I think everyone realises that this can't go on forever. There will have to be new solutions, and we will find them here.

Sarah Tietze

That's it for this episode. Thank you for listening. If you want to learn more about Siemensstadt, the people who live and work there, or the projects that are happening around Siemensstadt, tune in again for the next episode of the Siemensstadt Podcast. Bye and see you soon!

S-Bahn announcement

Next Stop: Siemensstadt.