

TRANSCRIPTION PODCAST SIEMENSSTADT CALLING #4

- PRODUCTION AND WORKING WORLDS -

Metin Bukan

We have to think differently. We have to think younger. Exactly the approach Stefan suggested: ask young people and take them along on the journey.

Sarah Tietze

Welcome to Siemensstadt Calling, the Siemensstadt Podcast. A podcast for everyone interested in cities of the future, smart technologies in urban environments and sustainable urban development. 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 and together with the general manager of Siemensstadt, Stefan Kögl and other guests, we will present you the background of the Future Place Siemensstadt. Enjoy! Berlin's district of the future is being built in Siemensstadt. The historically shaped industrial area in the west of Berlin is opening up. The new Siemensstadt will combine working, production and research with living and public life. In today's episode we take a look behind the scenes and inside today's Siemensstadt production site. What are the job descriptions behind the 7,000 Siemens employees working at the site today? What does production currently look like and what is important for production sites in the future? And the decisive question: How do we succeed in involving the employees in this process of change? We'll get the answers to these questions today from someone who probably knows the many employees in Siemensstadt better than his neighbours, someone who has been working here for almost 40 years and who, as a works council member, represents the interests of his colleagues.

Sarah Tietze

Dear Metin Bukan, it's great that you're here with us in the studio today to discuss Siemensstadt with Stefan Kögl and myself. Hello Stefan, hello Metin, how nice that we are here together today.

Metin Bukan

Hello Sarah. Hello Stefan.

Stefan Kögl

Hello Sarah, hello Metin.

Metin Bukan

Nice to be here.

Sarah Tietze

Yes, the pleasure is definitely all ours. Metin, you've been with Siemens for a long time. You started your apprenticeship at the switchgear plant when you were 16. Today, 40 years later, you're still here. I think a lot has changed. What did it look like in the past? And what is the situation like today? What has changed over the last 40 years?

Metin Bukan

Yes, so let me start. When I was 16 at the time, I had planned to just do my training here and finish my education. When I finished my training, I felt like part of a family and ended up saying, "You know what, I'm going to stay here one more year and make a little extra money. But that one year, as I said before, became 40 years. And of course Siemens has now become a part of me and I am a part of Siemens. And what has changed in the last few years? Yes, when I look back, then of course many, many people have worked here. Through today's automation and digitalisation, many things have changed. I'll just give you an example. In the past, colleagues ran back and forth with materials, pushing materials back and forth. And today, Agilox is driving. What I mean is that the work content is still there. But of course, for the colleagues, it's not as physically demanding as it was in years past. And so the whole process is changing. So, not only in logistics issues, also in assembly, in prefabrication. Through digitalisation, automation, it's simplifying everything somewhat. People have to change. But above all, what's going very well is that the focus is on occupational safety and health promotion. And that is also good for people.

Sarah Tietze

Metin, 7,000 employees work in Siemensstadt, many of them in production. How many work in production? How many work in the switching plant? How is that divided up?

Metin Bukan

In Siemensstadt, I would estimate about 3,500 employees in production and in the switchgear, it is about 2,200.

Sarah Tietze

Stefan, we've just heard from Metin about how production in the switchgear plant has changed over the last 40 years. My question to you, looking to the future, what is important for production sites in the future? What is changing?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, I would take up the idea that occupational safety and protection of employees is an essential aspect in the production halls. But also in the surrounding area. So what is the environment in which these halls are located? How do you get there? The mobility issues, the infrastructures. A second topic, which Metin has already mentioned, is digitalisation. So these factory halls also have to be supplied with energy, broadband, etcetera. These are things that are taken for granted today. How do I map them? If I want to network production processes, I need corresponding infrastructures that didn't exist in the past. And another aspect is, of course, to come back to the environment, that employees no longer go to some dark hall somewhere on the outskirts of town and move around, as they used to. Instead they expect, or we also want to offer, an attractive environment. So when he comes out of the hall, it begins there, where do the employees go? There is not only an attractive canteen, but maybe also a few alternatives. Perhaps one would like to do some sport afterwards. You may wish to buy something here and there. And what we in Siemensstadt are pursuing, of course, is the possibility of living in the immediate vicinity. Certainly, some employees in Siemensstadt are already doing that, but there is still demand and it should be covered.

Sarah Tietze

Metin, hearing that, how does it sound to you? Will this change the lives of the employees?

Metin Bukan

Well, that sounds quite exciting at first. And we have already started to make a small contribution to this as switchgear workers. In fact, we have just installed health promotion equipment in our open spaces during breaks, such as table tennis tables, so that our colleagues have the feeling that they are doing something together by playing table tennis and exercising. That's just part of it. And I think we can do even better in the future if we have the open campus, if we could integrate that.

Sarah Tietze

Open campus is actually a great catchword. Siemensstadt is going to open up. That means that today, Siemens employees are among themselves. That will change in the future. We're opening up the industrial site. It will become an open district, and external companies will have the opportunity to move in. Perhaps the first question to Stefan is: Who are you talking to? Which companies do we want to be interested in the Siemensstadt location?

Stefan Kögl

You could say that there are three groups. One is, of course, the companies that are working on researching and developing solutions and products that are also attractive and interesting for our Siemens units. From the perspective of pursuing common goals, of course, and both companies would then find their products and solutions in order to open up new markets. Digitalisation, for example, is giving rise to a whole host of topics in the field of smart grids. But also in the area of mobility. If I take the railroads, for example, they have certain interests in what happens to their passengers. We have mobility concepts and software solutions which need to be developed further. So we should bring these issues together. But also, as I said earlier, how do we network buildings? The large energy suppliers and ourselves network buildings. People are actually working on the same issues, but from different angles. So these companies that are researching such solutions are first of all attractive for our Siemens units. The second group - and this overlaps to some extent, of course - are companies with which we come into contact anyway as a result of project development. So there are the utilities alone, which supply the site with electricity, heat, water, etc. but also many other topics for mobility which are tied to the city, for example. We enter into dialogue with them. How do we do that here at the site? And that's where interesting synergies inevitably arise, because we're also striving for new, sustainable solutions, innovative solutions. Since we are, of course, carrying out a very long-term project here. And then there is a third group, I would call it that, which arises from the fact that we are in dialogue with projects in the surrounding area: Gartenfeld, Tegel... These projects are two, four, five years further along in their development than we are. They are talking about specific solutions that they now want to implement. Our Siemens units are involved not only in offering them solutions, but also in developing them for the future. And other companies are already involved in the projects at various points, where interesting collaborations are emerging.

Sarah Tietze

Thank you, Stefan. Metin, what does this mean for employees who have been working at the site for a long time, who have always been amongst themselves? If external companies come in is that a gain? Or are they also fearful?

Metin Bukan

I think you have to... it's a double-edged sword. Of course, employees are fearful because they say, 'Oh, the new people coming in could replace us in our jobs. Replace our jobs with theirs.' And now I'll mention the other side. I started out by saying that I am part of Siemens.

Siemens belongs to me, to my family, and I see it like this: imagine I'm having my break, sitting in a café, and a start-up entrepreneur comes and sits down with me. What could be better, more beautiful, to represent another person's family and to be proud of it? And that's what the other side is. And to say okay, then we get in touch and say, 'You know, I'm proud to be able to work at Siemens. And I have this and this job'. That's the other side of the discussion. So both. There will be people who will be proud that other companies are there and they can say with head held high: I work at Siemens and have this and this task. And the other person will say: The main thing is that I don't lose my job.

Sarah Tietze

Let's stay with this picture again. The start-up entrepreneur meets the Siemens employee, the long-time Siemens employee. Does it make a difference whether you're marketing a greenfield or an existing site with many existing Siemens employees?

Stefan Kögl

I can answer the question with yes and at the same time I would want to use the word marketing a little differently. So it's true, if I see it now as urban development and I would be on a greenfield site, then we are in a fantastic situation, because we do have a very great company here on the site. 7,000 employees, as Metin already mentioned, all of whom I think on average are at least similarly proud of this company. This means that it is an attractive environment for anyone who joins, because there is already a functioning system, an ecosystem. And maybe again on the subject of employee fears and being proud to be a Siemens employee. Siemens is just over 170 years old because they have always faced the changes. And a company, a unit, a production simply also depends on economic success. That's the way it is. There are a lot of changes at the moment and what is happening here now, which should be seen as positive, is that people are taking it upon themselves to say: Okay, you are investing in this location, you want to function in the future, you also want to be profitable in the future. You want to face these changes and also meet them. And yes, in this respect it is a fantastic prerequisite for the entire location.

Sarah Tietze

Metin, how do you see it?

Metin Bukan

Well, as Stefan has already said, I can only agree with what was said. As Berliners and Siemens employees we are proud to have the campus here in Berlin and not somewhere else in the world. And that is exactly what we need.

We don't want to lag behind, we like to stay ahead and of course with startups that help us move forward, with new technologies, new ideas. Whether that's startups or other companies or universities that are helping us to be one more step further than our competition. And that's why I think it's really a damn good idea of Siemens to implement this in Berlin as well. And you have to approach it with this in mind. It's a huge task to allay the fears of employees who may still have some. But that can only be done with education. And that's also what this portal is for.

Sarah Tietze

Thank you two for the nice dialogue. Changes, in any case, will be quite important in the switchgear plant and the switching halls are partly listed, a very important area. Here, too, there will be major changes. Stefan, what are the current plans for the switchgear plant?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, so this is definitely one of the most challenging and exciting tasks. We have the urban planning design by Ortner und Ortner. The concept provides for changes of use, for example to integrate a conference area there. A market hall, but also office workplaces, cultural facilities, public facilities, in other words, very diverse. And now it's a matter of sorting it out in such a way that it works as a whole in the end. That is still a very, very long-term perspective. Production will continue there for the next three or four years. Then, when the relocations have taken place, these issues can be addressed. The only important thing is that some of these halls are listed buildings. That in itself is an essential matter. And they are located in the center of the city's development. So these halls will continue to play one of the most important and decisive roles in ensuring that the whole thing works in the future.

Sarah Tietze

You just said two to three more years of production here. Then you mentioned the move as an important milestone. Where will the current work in the switchgear plant be moved?

Stefan Kögl

So, in the overall urban context, there will be two production hubs. One in the north, where Siemens Energy will be located. And in the south, the dynamo and tube plant, as it is called at the moment, where the switchgear, the medium voltage - at least according to the current plan - will also move in.

Sarah Tietze

What does such a move mean for you the switchgear plant and also such industry hubs?

Metin Bukan

Yes, we had never had a move like this before. This is something completely new. It's a whole new challenge for us. What is very important is that we now, as Stefan mentioned, and this will happen in the next two or three years, is that we do our homework so well until then that when we move. We shouldn't lose or forget anything on the way and say, 'Oh, but we should have thought of that'. The homework has to be done now, locally, by the BUs or by the operations.

Metin Bukan

They are very important and they are, in my opinion, the very first focus before the move. But the homework must be done in advance.

Sarah Tietze

What specifically is the homework you're talking about?

Metin Bukan

Well, that means, for example, what vertical range of manufacture would we need tomorrow? Which technologies would we need tomorrow? What equipment are we moving over with? Do we have to make any new acquisitions? And all these topics must of course be coordinated in advance so that when we move, we don't just think or say: Oh, we would have needed that technology, but unfortunately we didn't plan for it. And when you've moved in it's difficult to set up another room when the rooms are already taken. That's how I would present it.

Sarah Tietze

And how does this planning work? How do you do the homework and whose homework is it?

Metin Bukan

Well, that's the homework for reparation and, of course, the works council. They will be involved. So we're now starting slowly with these topics, looking together at the vertical range of manufacture that will be required tomorrow and what products we want to bring to market.

And this is coordinated together accordingly, so that we can plan the topics that we recognise, where we say there is a need for action or financial requirements, so that we identify the funds needed for new plants or new production sections.

Sarah Tietze

Production is currently still distributed at Siemensstadt and will be centralised into two production hubs. What changes will this bring to production processes?

Metin Bukan

I don't think there will be much change compared to today, because the northern part will be Siemens Energy. We have already separated ourselves. Of course, we still have a few interfaces here and there, where we still have contact. But I think that in the next two or three years, the interfaces will be adapted accordingly. And on the southern area, where the dynamo plant, tube plant and switchgear plant are moving, that will become the production area and there will certainly be no disruptive factors. So, it is very well considered that you have two large areas where production takes place. This has to be separated from the public due to occupational safety issues. But I think that has been solved very well in the urban planning competition.

Sarah Tietze

Stefan, do you want to add to that?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, well, of course the infrastructure is also important here in terms of traffic. We have a very large area at the moment, a lot of logistics issues that have to be coordinated. That will remain the case in the future. We are now concentrating this production in the south on one area or several productions on one area. To stay with Metin's image, this is also a double edged sword. On the one hand, we are concentrating a great deal on logistics and have to see how it all works, but at the same time the distances will be significantly shorter and we can reduce the volume of logistics traffic for the entire site, compared to the current situation. So we will have - and this is worth getting right - more apartments, more space overall. There will be a little bit more traffic. But especially with regard to the production hubs, we are reducing the load.

Metin Bukan

I can imagine it happening like that.

Sarah Tietze

Let's get back to the switchgear. Stefan, you said that conference space should move into the switchgear plant. A market hall is possible. Who is considering this?

Stefan Kögl

Oh yes, good question. We now have the idea of holding a student competition. So, there are different formats and we deliberately want to have new ideas here. Of course, the students will also be asked to come up with ideas that can work. And of course there are also economic aspects. After all, the halls have 50,000 square meters. That is a very large area and will also be supplemented by new buildings. But we assume that we will get interesting ideas here that will breathe life into the whole thing in the future. Young people will also have to move there in the future, they will know what life will be like in the future.

Sarah Tietze

Metin, can you imagine how it feels to go shopping in the switchgear plant someday?

Metin Bukan

Yes, that's a great question. So for me personally, the very first time I go in there, where I have spent close to 40 years, would be unfamiliar because that was the place where, yes, I sweated and I made a living. When I go shopping, I don't make money, I spend money. But certainly it will be interesting and certainly it's quite something new. And as Stefan said earlier, young people. We have to put ourselves in the shoes of young people as well. I am a little older and I also have young people at home, my children. And these are worlds that collide. And in the end, we always find a way to reach a consensus. And I think, to come back to the question: How would it feel to go shopping there? I think the first time unfamiliar, it will take some getting used to, but it will work.

Sarah Tietze

Metin, for you as someone old-school, that's a lot of changes all at once - you just mentioned that. For your colleagues too, of course. What are the issues? Or what issues are important for the colleagues you represent as a works council member, regarding the Siemensstadt project and the future outlook?

Metin Bukan

The fear is, of course, job security. So, is my job still secure, future-proof? Then there is the issue of whether I will be taken on the ride in the direction of reorganisation and digitisation. Will I be qualified for new subjects, new tasks?

Or will I be dropped? How future-proof will that be? Because if people don't position themselves in a future-proof way, they also have fears and it accompanies them throughout their lives. And it's precisely these fears that we have to alleviate by constantly explaining to them where the journey is leading and taking them by the hand.

Sarah Tietze

Stefan, these are multiple and very complex topics. Can you answer them all?

Stefan Kögl

That is not my task at all. So, you have to differentiate between which questions, fears arise from within the company, i.e. is it within production, within this unit? What Metin has just described are issues that are not directly solved by the Siemens City project. But there is, of course, an indirect influence, because we naturally take on board the requirements that come from the plants. But they have to be defined in the companies so that we can then provide the best possible workplace conditions. And of course we anticipate things. Of course we know the requirements. So, if I now just mention a broadband network. That might be something simple, even if it's not there yet. Everyone can imagine that. And, of course, there is not always a clear differentiation for the employee. When he reads again what is to happen in Siemensstadt and so on, he naturally associates it with his current fears. If they are there. I mean, what we do, and that's something Metin has already addressed, is to see the need to talk to the employees. But it's also important that everyone has the same level of information. So, for example, we now have rounds of talks with the plant managements, the works councils like Metin and representatives from the Siemens City Project, who are leading the development in a three-way round, where we put ourselves on an equal footing. So, at regular intervals, because one person's opinion may already be a little different or the other may not yet have this information. We won't be able to answer all the questions in these rounds, permanently. But at least we know what questions are there and who has to answer them. That is crucial. And that can of course be passed on to the employees and ensure significantly more transparency.

Sarah Tietze

Metin, how important to you is such a far-reaching dialogue with the Siemensstadt project, but also with the plant managers?

Metin Bukan

Yes, Stefan just mentioned the topic, eye-level. And I think I'll take that on board. Eye-level is very important, regardless of the level at which you talk and with whom you talk.

And if that is the case, that means whether it's the Siemensstadt 2.0 project managers, the operations managers, the plant managers and, of course, the works council members, and if we can find harmony and place the needs or fears of the employees there, and if they are also taken seriously in order to then bring information back down to the workforce, then I think this dialogue that we are starting or have already started is very important. And we must not slacken our efforts in this regard, but keep at it again and again, so that we always exchange information on a regular basis.

Stefan Kögl

Yes, what I would like to add is, of course: employees also have the opportunity to participate online at any time. That can't be said often enough. This is possible for all citizens on the Siemensstadt website, but of course also for all employees to continue to express themselves here.

Sarah Tietze

Metin, a question for you. The Siemensstadt Innovation Campus is scheduled for completion in 2030. How do you imagine life in 2030? What is important to you there?

Metin Bukan

So, the very first thing is environmental awareness, which is, priority number one, at the top of my list, because I already hand over the world to the young people, if I'm no longer here tomorrow, with a reasonable future. And directly to Siemensstadt 2.0 years 2030: that work and family, everything is in harmony, that everything is also affordable and that you can live there. Yes, happy and satisfied in the campus and shaping your working life. That when an employee looks out of the window, he might be looking at the daycare playground, where he says, "Oh look, my child is also doing quite well and I can continue my job here with peace of mind". And that is vision of the future is something really great. I think we can also implement that.

Sarah Tietze

Stefan, what does life look like for you in 2030? What should a district of the future look like?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, well, I would like to correct it just a little. We always say that the Siemensstadt Campus will be alive in 2030. The final completion will take a little longer. Nevertheless, coming to your question, I can also just underline what Metin said. These are, of course, the goals that we have set ourselves here. I've said it many times elsewhere.

The crucial thing will be that we remain flexible. Because of the strong changes that are taking place at the moment, also in the technological area, we will not be able to plan today and therefore say, it will work in 2050. But the speed is simply higher, the speed of change. That is, we are now planning things that we can see on the next five years. And it may be that we have already thought far enough ahead. I'll just take the topic of individual traffic, cars, for example. Today, I theoretically need a lot of parking spaces for the entire area, but I am convinced that in ten years, the requirements will be different. There will simply be less individual traffic. We will offer attractive mobility concepts. So what does public transport mean today and then in the future. There will just be a lot of much more individual options, also with the ability to call cars or vehicles individually, which then bring one from A to B within the area. We also want to have significantly less, not to say very, very little traffic, but very, very slow traffic, individual traffic. In this respect, however, we must also take account of developments and be in a position to adapt to them again and again. That will be one of the decisive factors. And what we said earlier is that we must - and this is my conviction - we must speak to young people, because they deal with many things differently today. And it has a lot to do with digitalisation issues. And that has nothing to do with the fact that we old hands, I'll say, I'm also part of that group, can still handle a smartphone, but it's simply this self-image and the expectation of what possibilities arise.

Sarah Tietze

Metin, do you have an idea how we can speak to our young colleagues, how we can involve them with their wishes and expectations for a district of the future?

Metin Bukan

So I personally would ask my own children. I'll briefly go into Stefan's topic. Again, a very brief example. Keyword "ask young people and possibly learn from them". Our older generation, we say to ourselves: Well, I need a car in front of my front door with which I can then go shopping or to work. My children think quite differently. They say: No, I live in a city, in a big city. I don't need a car. I take public transportation. And if I ever need a car for a purpose, I can borrow my car through car sharing. I don't need a car for that. And then we also have the issue of parking. I've also talked to my children about this, and they say: Dad, just imagine if everyone did this, then we'd never have parking problems, because the cars will be on the road all the time, because if I leave it there, someone else will rent it? And so the vehicle is permanently on the road. And when I talked to them, I realised that we as old hands, sorry again Stefan, but we have to think differently. We have to think younger.

And exactly that approach, as Stefan said: ask young people and take them along on the journey. How do we do that? I can only speak from my own experience: I have learned to listen to young people. I think that's what we, all the old hands, have to take on board. Listen to the young people.

Sarah Tietze

That was a wonderful almost-final word, wasn't it? Many thanks to you two. Stefan, the closing words are all yours. After the nice discussion, we would like you to give us an outline of where Siemensstadt stands today. What are the milestones that we have reached and what are the next steps that are still ahead of us in terms of development?

Stefan Kögl

Yes, we have already addressed the issue of relocations today. That is the main topic. It's a lot of work. And that is one of the main focuses of our activities. At the same time, of course, there is the issue of creating building rights and what can be implemented here in terms of urban development in the future? The participation of the public authorities has begun. On October 5 and yesterday, for example, there was a citizens' dialogue on this. That the topic B-Plan procedure runs parallel. The first building construction competition for two new buildings on the very east of the site. The decision will be made on November 24. But these are also initial activities for Siemens. These are buildings that will be occupied exclusively by Siemens. Yes, and the goal for next year is to push ahead with these urban development and building law requirements. This will all take a little longer. Not because it's going slowly, but because these are simply processes that are necessary, that are already very much accelerated, also by the authorities. And we still have to plan, however, and so that we can start with visible new buildings by the end of 2022 and can probably do so. And I emphasise that again, for many that sounds like a long, very long time. In reality, it is an incredibly fast process, a process that is otherwise unparalleled.

Sarah Tietze

Thanks for the outline and thanks to you two for the really fruitful dialogue. I have learned very, very much. I learned that we have to think differently, that we also have to enter into dialogue with the younger generation in order to jointly shape the district, a new district in Berlin, the district of the future. And of course I also learned how important it is to take the employees by the hand, the 7,000 employees who already work in Siemensstadt today, and embark on the journey with them together.

Sarah Tietze

Thank you both and see you soon in Siemensstadt.

Metin Bukan

We thank you.

Stefan Kögl

Thank you, Sarah.

Sarah Tietze

If you want to learn more about Siemensstadt, the people who live and work here, or the projects that take place around Siemensstadt, then tune in again next time. Bye and see you soon.

S-Bahn announcement

Next Stop: Siemensstadt.