
Interview with **Mr. Siegfried Balleis** at FAU Erlangen campus, Bavaria, Germany

27 June 2022. Duration 1.5 hours

Vikas Prabhu:

Thank you, Mr. Balleis, for sparing your valuable time to interact with me. Without much ado, I will dive right into our discussion. I looked at your article in the book 'One and One equals Eleven', and I read that when you started your term as Mayor of Erlangen there was a recession in this area. And there were job losses. So, you came with this vision to create jobs and bring the economy back. You say you did some SWOT analysis of this region, and then you found that in the medical sector, this region had developed a lot of capabilities and expertise. Can you go back in memory, talk about the SWOT analysis, the background of how this region was so good in medical technology?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

First of all, I should mention we had the German unification in 1990. When the former part of Germany, which was occupied by the Soviet troops after World War second, was unified with the old *Bundesländer*, or what we call the old *Bundesrepublik* Germany. In the first years after unification in 1990, we had a wonderful economic development. Why? because the people in the other part of Germany, they had no chance to invest their money. But with the unification, all shops were full. There was a very strong demand for the people, and we had a wonderful business cycle in Germany. But this was only a very short time, till 1993. 1990 to 1992 with a wonderful increase in economic development, but then it plunged down because we had many disbalances in the economy. And there was not enough of innovation. Even in Erlangen we lost in this time, approximately, between 4000 to 5000 working places. So, we had a real crisis in this city. And the unemployment rate was more than 10%. In the developing country, it's not so much but in industrialized country, unemployment rate of 10% is very much. So, we had a real crisis.

At this time, I was not mayor. I was the head of the economic department of the city administration. I started with this job in 1988. From this time on, I was head of the economic department of the city administration. And the Lord Mayor, my predecessor, Dr. Hahlweg told me, Mr. Balleis, we have to do something against this crisis. So, we had different workshops, where we analyzed what can we do. And, we had a very good analysis in the field of medical research, production and services. And we figured out that we had been compared with all the so-called great cities in Germany. A great city in Germany is already defined with more than 100,000 people. You cannot compare it with Indian cities or even with Chinese cities, because a million city in China is a tiny city. But in Germany, we call the cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants as a great city. And compared to all the other 83 so-called great cities, we had at already at this time the highest percentage in working places active in the field of medical research, production and services.

So, we identified a wonderful strength, of course, for the city. And I proposed and

said, "Well, you have to get rid of weaknesses, but you should strengthen the strength." And so, we said, we will focus on this field. At the same time, I heard a wonderful lecture of, I think it was a Russian scientist, Nefiodow. He wrote a wonderful book in 1993 which was called 'The Sixth Kondratieff'. He designed a new economic theory in the 30s, of Russia, where he analyzed, you know, you have business cycle, for example, lasting for four years, usually. You have an increase, you have a drop, and then it's going down again, you have a depression, and then it's going up again, and so on. So, the business cycles are usually in, in former times, every four years. But this man analyzed what is the business cycle on the long run. And he found out there were business cycles, for example, starting with the invention of steam engine, and later on the railway business, and later on the car business, and later on the chemistry business, and actually the information business. And he found out these business cycles lasted approximately 40 years. This was his philosophy.

And this Nefiodow, I think he's still alive, I had, of course, a very good contact with him in former times. He said that the sixth long cycle it is driven by health technology. And I said, wow! if we have such a unique position, strong position of course, such strong position in medical research, production and services; and if it is true, what Nefiodow says that this is a long-lasting business cycle of the future, then we can only win if we focus all our political and economic strength on this field. And so, I said in my inaugural speech, as a newly elected mayor in 1996 – it was a 2nd of May 1996 – I said, my aim it is, and I take the others with me, of course, our common vision should be that this city of Erlangen will become the federal capital of medical research, production, and services.

Some of the audience, of course, said, wow, he's crazy. (laughs). Why should we become a federal capital for medical and so on? But then I added very specific actions, of course, in this field of health, and after one or two years, nobody laughed anymore about this, because they saw, well, this is a wonderful potential for new jobs and so on. But of course, this was not only my success, I had wonderful partners which helped me in this process. First of all, there was at this time the Prime Minister of the free state of Bavaria, Dr. Edmund Stoiber. I knew him very good, and I told him, we want to focus on this field. He was our strategic partner – in every government declaration he said Erlangen is in Bavaria the head of health. We had a very, very good cooperation with the Bavarian government. And there are, of course, many, many investments which followed with the help of the government.

The second strategic partner was the CEO of the Siemens company, Dr. Heinrich von Pierer. He is now 81, but he is still a fantastic man, physically and mentally. And I always say he is fit like a sports shoe. (laughs). And he was also at the *Schloßgartenfest* and we were sitting together. I like him very much, he's so inspired and so keen, and so on. And this was a very good cooperation also with him. He decided on 3rd of October 1997 – this is one and a half years after I came into power as a lord mayor – he said, "we will build the new medical factory of the Siemens company in Erlangen." And this was at this time the largest investment Siemens made after the unification. This means for the years 1990-96 there was never such a

huge investment in a new factory like here he announced in Erlangen.

Because, you know, after unification, of course, all the investments went to the east part of Germany because it was underdeveloped. And we had to bring jobs to this east part of Germany, because, you know, we had to abolish all the old inefficient jobs under Soviet or socialist structure. There were too many people in the factories, and so on. They downsized everything. So, we had to bring new jobs to them. And many, many firms invested between 1990 and 2000 in the new *Bundesländer* so there were jobs for them. Because, otherwise, all the people would come from the east part of Germany to the west part of Germany, and we would have a desert in this region. So, it was a very strategic approach that people invested in this time. Sorry, but this was a very long answer for your question.

Vikas Prabhu:

To go a little further back, when you found that medical research, production, and services was the strength of this region, how did that strength develop? I shall visit the Med Museum and make notes, but I would like to know your perspective on it. Was it only Siemens that really developed this region?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

No, it was not only Siemens. Now, we have to stand up and I show you something. (Gets up, walks to a window overlooking a legacy building on the other side of the street, with a plaque on it which reads Erwin Moritz Reiniger). So, if you look to this house, you see a plate with the name Erwin Moritz Reiniger. This was a founder of Siemens Healthineers. He was 130 years ago. This was a spin-off of this university (FAU). He was at *mechanischen* working at the university. This company today is more worth than the BMW company. And they earn billions of euros every year. It's a wonderful company and it is a spin-off of FAU. I think this is the most successful spin off ever from FAU. He was not a scientist, only an employee, a mechanic. And when he heard that in Würzburg Röntgen invented the X-rays, he went to Würzburg two days after he heard of it, he drove to Würzburg which is about 100 kilometers away, looked about the invention, and then he developed his firm for medical technology, with X-rays. This was first one to develop here (in this region). So, the university is strongly connected, of course, still today with the Siemens Healthineers company,

Vikas Prabhu:

We have Siemens Healthineers in Bangalore also.

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

Okay, and they are of course in China also. What is also very interesting for you, one and a half years ago, in corona times, they bought a Silicon Valley company, Varian, for 16 billion euro. So, you see how strong this company is? (Vikas agrees)

So, back to your question. It was, of course, not only Siemens, but Siemens was the largest player in this field. We had at this time also some other firms. For example, we had the firm Biotronik. They made pacemakers for the heart. And this was also a

spin-off of our FAU. It was a wonderful entrepreneur called Professor (Max) Schaldach. He had a research project, which was financed by the Volkswagen company in the 70s. Unfortunately, he died in a plane accident. He was a pilot. Nobody knows exactly what happened. Not very far from here at the airport in Nürnberg. He built, I think, a 500 million Deutsche Mark, at this time, which is half of Euro, 500 million company with many subsidiaries in Switzerland, Brazil, and so on. So, we had several firms here in this in this region.

I can tell you another company, which has a ridiculous history. (laughs) After reunification, Chancellor (Helmut) Kohl was the chancellor during reunification and it was his historical result that he managed this reunification because, you know, Russians were not interested in a strong Germany, the English were not interested in a strong Germany, the French neither. Nobody was really interested in a strong Germany because, you know, our historical guilt was that we started World War second – Germany or Hitler at this time. So, the other countries which ruled Germany after World War second, they said we don't want to have another strong Germany anymore. (laughs) This was, of course, a very, very delicious work for Chancellor Kohl, that the French agreed, the Americans were supporting it. The Americans were very open for it. The Russians could not oppose because they plunged down. The Soviet Union was away from map – the was only Russia and the other countries. And Maggie Thatcher was completely against the reunification. She said the Germans we have to hold them tiny and small. But in the in the end Chancellor Kohl succeeded. He got the okay from Paris, from London, from Washington, and more or less also from Moscow. He reunified this country.

And then there were transferred hundreds of billions of money to this new *Bundesländer*. For example, he gave 1 billion to Lothar Späth, who was in former times, the prime minister of Baden-Württemberg. He got 1 billion only for one single city in Jena, which is about 220 kilometers from here. Späth was a very good politician, but also a very good entrepreneur. He wanted to buy firms from old Western Germany to bring them to Eastern Germany. We had a firm here, nearby, which was the active in the field of laser technology for eye treatment. And this man said, "I don't want to go to Jena, I want to stay here." And a good friend of mine said, "Siggy, you should help me. He wants to stay here." And we met for pizza in the city hall in 1996. And he said, "well, if I get some funds from the free state of Bavaria, I will build a new firm here in Erlangen." And within, I think, 15 years, he developed from zero – one single man – to a company, which had a turnover of 90 million. Within 15 years! This firm has the name WaveLight. Now, of course, they have other owners, but you can see, within a discussion with a pizza on the place in front of the city hall, I organized some funds from the free state of Bavaria. I think it was, at this time, one and a half million Deutsche Mark. And then he developed this firm, which is still active here in Erlangen. So, this was not only existing firms in the field of medical technology, but we also generated and brought together new firms. This is one very interesting example – the company Wavelight.

Vikas Prabhu:

Very interesting example of how entrepreneurs and the state hand-in-hand

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

Exactly, hand in hand. Because if he would have to finance it with the banks, I'm quite sure he would not get the money, because he was only one man. Even with super good ideas and so on. Subsidizing and helping by the state is very, very important in the seed stage. And later on, of course, the companies have to work under market conditions, no?

Vikas Prabhu:

So, then, coming to the year 2003, you managed to establish the Medical Valley Center here. Can you talk about how the whole process came about?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

I had a very good cooperation with the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. You know, in Germany we have a special construction, it's something between free market and state market. It's a very special construction in Germany. It's a legal entity which makes tasks what usually the state would do for organizing the industry and commerce. A legal construction of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. We have it all over Germany. For example, this one (the one referred above) is one of the larger one which is responsible for the whole area of Nürnberg, Fürth, Erlangen, and central Franconia - middle or central Franconia. They had a very good cooperation with them, of course, because they had (and have) a department for innovation.

In this department, there was a very, very keen guy with whom I cooperate still today. And now in a very, very interesting field, in the field of quantum computers which will be the future of Supercomputers in the next years. This guy, you can write the name, is Dr. Theirauf. He was responsible for building up a start-up competition at the Chamber of Commerce. And he also developed a model for such a Business Incubation Center. So, he was the spiritual father of this idea. And I was the one who implemented it with the industry, with the state of Bavaria, and so on. Between 2000, when he worked out this blueprint for this Business Incubation Center, I brought together the local savings bank – called as *Sparkasse* in Germany – which is owned by the city, and I was ahead of the supervisory Board of the *Sparkasse*. So, I had some power, of course, to say you should do this. (laughs). And that brought together, of course, the free state of Bavaria, because I had a very good contact with the Prime Minister, Dr. Edmund Stoiber.

And so, we said, well, we should build such a Business Incubation Center. On 12th or 13th of May 2003, we had the opening of this Business Incubation Center. It was so successful that in less than two years, it was fully booked. And we said, okay, let's enlarge it, one to one. So, we doubled it. And it is the size as it is today. (Some part removed at Mr. Balleis' request – which related to his perception that his vision has not been followed with the same eagerness by his successors). This was of course wonderful for us. When we opened this innovation center, and we doubled it two years after because it was so successful. And there are now I think about 30 or 35

startup companies in this business innovation center.

Vikas Prabhu:

In the book, you refer to an initiative called the Forum Medtech Pharma. Was this connected to the Medical Valley ecosystem in any way? Can you talk about it?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

It was very interesting because I thought about how can we bring together the different stakeholders in the field of health. I think we founded it already in 1996, a competence initiative in medicine and pharma. And it was a nearly genius idea. Because it was a zero Euro institution. (laughs) And I can tell you why. I said to the firms, if you will be our host, and give us drinks food and something like this in this space, you get the privilege that you can get one half hour of our time budget to introduce first your company and introduce your products. And we had with never the problem that anybody invited us because every wanted, of course, half an hour with an audience of approximately between 70-80-100 participants.

We invited scientists, entrepreneurs, and people from the public sector, to come together all in the field related to medical technology. And as I just mentioned, the company who hosted us got the chance to introduce yourself, to introduce the products, and afterwards, I had a very, very strict concept: I said, bring us some ideas, you get five minutes to present it, to make a pitch, and you get another five minutes for discussion. And then the next will come. And then after 90 minutes, I said, now the session is closed. You have heard interesting ideas, you know interesting cooperation partners, and now you get food, you get drinks, and so on. And now you can communicate each other. Then it was open space and open end. Sometimes it lasted three hours, sometimes only two and a half, but the strict was half an hour they host, then after five minutes a new short pitch, five minutes discussion. And after 90 minutes, it was closed. I continued it till I left my office in 2014.

We did it I think three or four times a year. We never had the problem to have enough audience because they were eager to hear what is the new idea in the field of medical technology? What are new ideas in physical health? What are new ideas in some hospitals, and so on. So, it was a continuous process. And some told to me, "Well! Siggy, this is college policy what you're doing, because everybody can hear read? I said no. They have to say about what they want to read, that they get five minutes for discussion, and then comes the next." And we never had a problem to have enough lectures. We had a waiting list for their firms. We never had the problem to get a host, and this was all organized for zero Euro. This was I think the most successful initiative I started.

At this time, we had very few money in Erlangen because the Siemens company, I should explain, was one big company. Some earn very much money, but they were always some parts which lose money. And then they put all together, their profits and

the losses and from this small list, I got the tax what we call *Gewerbsteuer*. But now as we have a new organization, and Healthineers which was the cash cow of the Siemens company is own public company, my successor he gets so much money, it doesn't know even to invest it. (laughs). Because Healthineers is as I told you, is such a wonderful, wonderful, successful company. Two years ago, they bought Variant, a Silicon Valley company, for 16 billion Euro. Incredible.

Vikas Prabhu:

Yes. So, so then coming back to the establishment of medical Valley, so you had a lot of big players in this region already. FAU was very established, Siemens was very established. So what was your vision in terms of creating a new association, where all these big players would come and how would they collaborate there? And did you think that they were okay with having this association where they could come and invest and collaborate? Did you have kind of an acceptance from them?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

First of all, I told you in the competence initiative, I had all the partners already together, No? They applied to be a member of this club. And I had not to take a rope to bring them to me, because they applied for it to go with me. But finding real organization it took very long time. We discussed it very, very intensive. We thought should we found a GmbH, you know, a limited company? Should we develop a public company, an AG, i.e., an *Aktiengesellschaft*? In the end, we said we should found, what in Germany is very, very popular, a *Verein*, if we translate to English it is an association. You can find an association, for example, to grow up dogs, you can find a *Verein* to help the university to raise money. A *Verein* is a wonderful purpose for organizing different ideas. in the end, we said, Okay, we want to develop such a *Verein*, and I said, okay, and I prepared to be to lead this *Verein*. you know, I was Lord Mayor, I was head of the supervisory board of the local Savings Bank, I was head of supervisory of the local utility for electricity, gas, power, public transport, and so on. I had many, many jobs, but then I said it's so important for me that I'm also prepared and ready to be the founder of this new *Verein*. And we found it, let me think, on 18th of January 2007.

It was a very, I remember, it was the one of the stormy day we ever had in Germany. This evening, we had a storm where the weather forecast said please stay at home; trees will fall down and this was really so. But the people they came for the foundation of this association this evening. It was a storm called 'Kyrill'. When this storm went through Germany, we founded this *Verein* - Medical Valley Association. And from this day on, we had a wonderful institution and a stable organization for organizing all the tasks in the Medical Valley.

And then happened something very bad for Professor Reinhardt. We had the head of Siemens Healthineers was Professor Reinhardt. And in this time, the Siemens company had some problems with bribery in 2007. A very strong scandal with this

company, and newspapers rolled out how bad Siemens is, and so on. And Professor Reinhardt at this time, he took over responsibility, even if he had no responsibility, no personal responsibility, but he took over responsibility for things his collaborators had done. And he went out of the city, I should tell you as you are from India, till 1996 he was the head of Siemens, India. If you look in the history of Siemens, India, you can find him, and he did a wonderful job in India. I think he was five years active in India. I have a wonderful interview on YouTube, unfortunately, it's only in German but it's interesting for you. You'll find about a one hour intensive interview when I interviewed Professor Reinhardt. So, Professor Reinhart took over responsibility for things he did not personally, but his collaborators did. And he finished his job at Siemens Healthineers. He was so wonderful. And I always said, he's a unique person that he is not only a scientist but also a professor and entrepreneur. I think, in whole over Europe, there would not be another man or woman with this competence he has, what he had. And I think I have been one year the head of this association and when Professor Reinhardt went out of his position of Siemens company, I said this would be the ideal position if he would do my job in this association, of course, not as a mayor (laughs).

But he said no, "Dr. Balleis, I will not do it." I was political stalker, because I telephoned him. When I met him, I told him. After half a year, I was successful. But he built me one step stone, final step stone, and he said – well, at this time we worked with *Sie*, not *du* – so, he said, "Dr. Balleis, you convinced me, but I will only do this job if my successor agrees this." I said okay, then I took my handy and telephone to Professor Requardt who was his successor at this time. I said, "Prof. Requardt, do you agree if Prof. Reinhardt will take over the CEO position of Medical Valley Association?" Prof. Requardt was in United States, and I think one hour later, I got his call, "of course." So, Prof. Reinhardt now had the chance to take over this responsibility. And this was, I think, the breakthrough for this association because I have then a wonderful scientist for the field of medical technology and a wonderful entrepreneur in one person.

Then we had already the dean at this time, Professor Jürgen Schüttler who was the dean of the medical faculty. He applied for something what was a wonderful approach of the German Federal Government in Berlin. He applied for the *Spitzencluster-Wettbewerb*, the top cluster competition. But unfortunately, he was not successful. Professor Reinhardt was the head of this Medical Valley Association. I brought them two together. The dean of the medical faculty and Professor Reinhardt. The critic was that our application was only focused on Erlangen, but at this time I had very good relations – I still have today, of course – to the European metropolitan region of Nürnberg, which is a very large organization. And I asked my colleagues, the Lord Mayors, and county managers and so on, "do you agree if we apply as a metropolitan region of Nürnberg for this *Spitzencluster-Wettbewerb*?" and they agreed. So, they had a wonderful application with the subsidizing of the whole region of the European metropolitan region. So, they had been successful. They got 40 million Euro of fresh money from Berlin, and they had the task to raise another 40 million from the private sector. And Professor Reinhardt had a wonderful network, he

did not raise only 40 million he raised 50 million. This was the start of wonderful and big success for the whole Medical Valley. You should really talk to Prof. Reinhardt if you can. He loves the time he spent in India.

Vikas Prabhu:

I tried meeting him at the *Schloßgartenfest* but he seemed very tired as he had just returned from his trip of Mallorca.

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

Of course, he is now I think 77 or so. But he knows so much. Reach him my email and he will answer you. He helped some years ago lectures in Stanford, everywhere he worked. But now, he has also some health problems by himself, of course, but he's still a wonderful partner. And if you send your questions by mail, I'm quite sure he will answer you. If you tell Professor Reiner what I told you about him, he cannot resist any longer. (laughs)

Vikas Prabhu:

What kind of support did you get from the big players in the area – especially, Siemens and FAU – in setting up the Medical Valley Association?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

First of all, the main players we asked to become member of the Board of this association. For e.g., Siemens Healthineers is in, Prof. Hornegger is in, or the head of our hospitals... you know we have 23 different hospitals here in Erlangen? Prof. Iro is a member of it. The mayor of Erlangen was, of course, a member of the board. Some other stakeholders, I think we've had a board of about 10 members. The main stakeholders got a seat in this steering committee or supervisory board. They had a personal interest of course, to have to do a good job.

Vikas Prabhu:

What does the board do?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

The role of the board is, of course, only defining the large lines of the development. The main job, of course, was done by Professor Reinhardt, who was the CEO. He also had a very good team. For e.g., there was Mr. Trinkwalter. He was one of the most active members of this team. And Mr. Heigl, who founded this Medical Valley. I know him since 23 years. I just had a discussion at 12 o'clock with Mr. Heigl. And, of course, some other members of the team now. And there is now a new management – Anna Werner and Marco Wendel.

Vikas Prabhu:

Medical Valley is formed as an association, so they do not make any profit? Can you speak about the model in which the association operates?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

It is a nonprofit organization. But we said, of course, we should have also a commercial arm. So, we also develop Medical Valley GmbH, society with limited liability. They are holding some shares in some companies in the field of medical technology. And they asked me after 2014 will you manage this company? And I said no. (laughs) I had so much responsibility for 18 years as a mayor. And you know if sent something goes wrong, the mayor is guilty. And I said no, I'm now very glad to have no more liability. And I said honestly thank you very much that your offer me to manage this association, but I said, no, I want to be now a free man. (laughs). I consult you; I give my advice, but if you are a manager of a GmbH, or if you are a CEO of a public company, you're responsible for everything. And I said, no, I do not want in the end of my career, or the end of my professional life be accused at the court that something went wrong in my company, which I should have known but I did not know. So, I said, no more liability. And this was the advice of my wife because she found it three firms, and she said, "Siggy, no more liability for in such a firm." And this was I think, a very good advice. (laughs)

Vikas Prabhu:

Seeing how Medical Valley Center is today and the kind of work it is doing today, so you feel like your vision was fulfilled? Has it reached the goals that you had set out with at the time of founding?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

I think it has more than fulfilled what I ever could hope and expect, really. But I tell you, the booster was Professor Reinhardt. You should really make an interview with him. He brought so much brain, so much experience, and his whole network in this. I would never had the chance to concentrate on this because being a mayor you are responsible for 2000 employees, you are responsible for the steering committee of the local savings Bank, you're responsible for the utility, electricity, gas, public power, and many other jobs. I had to wear 20 hats at a time. It's all written on my homepage: balleis.de. You can see all I've done in this time. And I'm still doing and my publications too. Unfortunately, it is in German and, may be, Janik can help to translate it for you.

Janik Wadlinger:

Where do you see the medical value going into the future from this current position?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

Well, in 2007, I got the okay by the whole European Metropolitan Region of Nürnberg that this should not only concentrate on Erlangen. Then we developed a strategy to stretch into the whole region. You know, we have a subsidiary now in Forchheim, also in Bamberg. We have good cooperation in the other cities, of course, Nürnberg and Fürth. And my vision is, of course, that Medical Valley could stretch over the whole European Metropolitan Region of Nürnberg. And I have now a new responsibility, I'm the head of the steering committee of the European Metropolitan Region of Nürnberg for the field of economy. My predecessor was the former CEO of the Nürnberg insurance company. And he was also the president of the chamber of

industry and commerce. And I was elected, I think, eight weeks ago in this new position. So, I have now responsibility for the economy of the whole metropolitan region of Nürnberg. Not a responsibility in an advising role, not responsible for personnel or something like this, but as an advisory board - *Koratorium*. It's not a steering committee but it's an advisory committee.

Vikas Prabhu:

I am conscious that we are getting close to the closure of our interview time so I will focus on a couple of important questions I wanted to ask. At the time of founding Medical Valley Association, you being the Lord Mayor of Erlangen, it was a very good plan to leverage the capabilities of this region. But finally, when you had to expand your scope to the entire metropolitan region of Nürnberg, did you feel like the identity of Erlangen was getting diffused? Were you okay with it?

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

No! First of all, I was one of the big supporters of the foundation of the European Metropolitan Region of Nürnberg. And I had long discussions in my city council, because they said, it cannot only be the name Nürnberg, we are Erlangen and there's a city Fürth. And I said, "Well, if we have later on 11 cities and 22 counties, we cannot have every name of every city and every county in this, we have to concentrate on one mark, and the mark of this region is Nürnberg, it's a largest city." I had to have some struggles with my city council – where is Erlangen, where is Nürnberg – I said, No, we have to concentrate on the largest city, which is known in the world, not always in the best sense, you know, World War second, and the role that Nürnberg had. But if we take away these 13 years, the black phase of history in Germany, then Nürnberg is a wonderful city in the Middle Ages. In the 16th century, it was the economic center of Germany. We had inventions Peter Henlein with this clock, we had wonderful inventions and a wonderful economy. And even in the 19th century, the industrial heart of Bavaria was Nürnberg, with the first railway in 1835, on the continent, the first railway in Europe. The first of course was in Great Britain, but on the continent, the first was Nürnberg. And we had a wonderful strong economy and so on.

I said we must not only concentrate on these 13 years in history, but we have to concentrate on the wonderful contribution the city has for the whole country. So, I was a supporter to name this region after Nürnberg – European Metropolitan Region of Nürnberg. Because I was the head of this region between 2011 and 2014, I was the CEO of the European Metropolitan Region of Nürnberg. The founder was the former mayor of Nürnberg, Ulrich Maly. I just finished the half marathon yesterday with him. He only ran 10 kilometers, I ran 21. (laughs) I have a very good personal relation even he is from another party, from the Social Democrats and I'm from the Christian Social Union. But we had a wonderful cooperation, and I was his successor. We founded this region. And from 2011 to 2014, I was the CEO of this region. And in this time, I made very strong reform of our association. Before, it was only a political association. And when I was responsible, I said, we want to have a double top: a political head and an economic head or a business head. And then this time, we had a dual guidance of this city, which works wonderful till today. The chief

of Bamberg city council, he is the political head. And Professor Gutmas (?), is head of the business half. You can also find this on the European metropolitan region homepage.

So, I was a supporter, I said even if I'm the Mayor of Erlangen I do not end thinking at the borders of my city, I have the playing field as a whole metropolitan region, which if you add everything, our gross domestic product of this metropolitan region is larger than that of the state of Hungary, for example, if you compare it. It's a significant number

Vikas Prabhu:

It's amazing to see how the way you were able to overcome barriers of different political parties and collaborate across regions. And that, I think, is the basic philosophy of an ecosystem is to look at collaboration beyond the competition.

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

Genau. I will now cite one of the predecessors, and this would be worth to be written down. It was a predecessor of Prof. Hornegger. And he's actually so strong that he fulfills the footprints of this man who was the president of this university in the 70s and 80s. This was Professor Fiebiger, a wonderful man. And he said, we should practice pre-competition cooperation. Even if you're a competitor, there are some ideas and some fields where you can cooperate. But in the product, of course, then your competitors. But in the great visions, you can also cooperate. A wonderful idea!

Janik Wadlinger:

That foundation was laid by all the partners and then afterwards they were able to compete

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

Exactly. And this was really a wonderful, great president of this university. And he was one of the motors of our technical faculty, which is a wonderful, successful and so on. He went every year to the prime minister of Bavaria and said, I need this chair, I need this chair, I need this chair, I need money, every year. (laughs)

Vikas Prabhu:

That is all for now, Mr. Balleis.

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

Wonderful. And if you have some more questions, no problem. You send me a mail and I will response as soon as possible.

Vikas Prabhu:

Thanks a lot for sparing your time, Mr. Balleis. Wish you a nice day.

Mr. Siegfried Balleis:

Wonderful. You too!