

Welcome Address by Stadträtin Elisabeth Haindl on the Occasion of the Reception of the Participants of the X. Congress of the EPBRS in the Kaisersaal of the Römer, September 2, 2005

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome on behalf of the major, Mrs. Petra Roth, and the city of Frankfurt am Main.

You are - as you may have noticed if you look around in this hall - in the heart of the beast, in the very center of the heart of the holy roman empire of german nation. We call it das "Alte Reich", the "Old Realm" in your words, and - it really lasted a thousand years.

It all started with Charlemagne, Karl the Great in the year 800 (spot-lighted). And it ended with Franz the Second (spot-lighted) in 1805. They, and all the gents on the walls in between them were the kings and emperors of the holy roman empire of german nation. It was a fairly democratic enterprise - well, not really democratic, let's call it plutocratic - but the emperors did not just inherit the crown from their fathers - they were elected by their peers, the Kurfürsten. A peer review process so to say, a peer review process that lasted a thousand years ... to you as scientists that should sound familiar.

The peer-review and election processes took place here in Frankfurt. The Kurfürsten, came here to elect and crown one of them as their king. They did so in the cathedrale and afterwards they met here, in the Kaisersaal, to celebrate.

This ancient "Reich", the old Empire, is the one we Germans mean, when we talk about the "really good ol' times". In fact the times were often not very good. From your perspective - as researches interested in time and rhythms - two of these gentlemen might be of particular interest.

This is Frederic the First, the famous Kaiser Rotbart, Redbeard, Barbarossa. He tried to turn back time. Because - even back then in his days, roughly 850 years ago - the times were a-changing, as Bob Dylan sung not so long ago. And the times were changing fast, even then. Way down in Italy, which then was a part of the Empire, cities like Milano and Florence had grown to be almost independent states, with flourishing trade. Modern economy had just been invented: there was money, there were banks, there were credits and loans and everything, while people were still swapping swine for sweets in the barter economy up here in the heartland. Barbarossa fought endless wars against these cities - needless to say that he finally lost them. He tried to bring back the good old days of glory, but time went past him and the end of his reign marks - as one is attempted to say - the beginning of modern economy.

This is Karl der Fünfte, Charles the fifth, the Carlos primero for the Spaniards among you. He tried to surmount time and it might have worked. He's the famous emperor of the "Realm, in which the sun never sets", das "Reich, in dem die Sonne nicht untergeht." America had been discovered only a generation ago and his realm extended around the globe - from the far east westwards over Europe to the Americas. Had he had the technical opportunities that we do have today, could he have moved as

fast as the earth rotates - he could have lived in an eternal midday sun without ever having to set foot on foreign ground. And with the help of the pharmacologists among you, he would not even have had to feel overly jet-lagged. Well - no. There were no jets in 1530.

But have you seen his motto, the latin words underneath his feet? PLUS! ULTRA! - meaning: "MORE! FURTHER!". Amassing possessions and inflating the Realm to a global, timeless enterprise in eternal sunshine the entire construction exploded in his hands. He fought numberless wars in many, many places against political and religious separatists - and in the end the Realm fell to pieces, there were endless feuds between the followers of the Pope and Luther, the Realm dissolved into spanish, austrian and german reigns and the REALLY dark ages of Germany were about to begin: the times of the religious wars and the War of a thirty years (1618-1648).

In the end, Karl did not get MORE and he did not get FURTHER - denying his own motto he decided to demand less and to get nearer to himself: he retired and died in a cloister.

Is there anything to be learned here, any take-home-message to take away with you from this hall, which is the heart of an empire, which has long stopped beating? Maybe.

I told you about two Emperors moving restlessly through war-torn spaces, one trying to turn back time, the other trying to overpower it. Both failed.

Some of you have come from far places. You have covered space to get here and some of you - in spite of all the melatonin - may still be somewhat jet lagged. The three dimensions of space seem to be at our command, while time, the fourth dimension, the one that you work on as scientists, is not. We are the masters of space, but, just like the emperors around us, slaves to time.

But are we really? To say it with the Holy Augustine - who is NOT present in this gallery - are not all times present in every very moment? If you look around this hall. and if you contemplate the fates of all these emperors and kings - is not all their past present in your very mind at this very moment? Eternity, the Holy Augustine would say, is present at every single moment.

So enjoy these timeless moments here in the Kaisersaal, in the presence of the past and in the anticipation of the future - I mean in anticipation of the congress that you are attending. This congress - as I hope and expect - will certainly provide you with less metaphysical and more useful take-home-messages about the nature of our perception of time than the ones I was able to offer.

The municipality of Frankfurt is very pleased to have you all with us. Please enjoy your congress, the City of Frankfurt and this evening.

Reply to Stadträtin Haindl by Horst-Werner Korf, EPBRS-President

Sehr verehrte Frau Stadträtin,
liebe Frau Haindl,
sehr geehrter Herr Stadtverordneter Kasper,
dear colleagues and guests,

in the name of all the participants of our congress, I'd like to thank you, Councillor Haindl, very much for this warm welcome in the historical heart of the city of Frankfurt.

You talked about eternity, about the past and the present – thus, the future is the only aspect of time I can still address in my – I promise - short reply.

Even though all participants of the congress work on various aspects of time and rhythms, we do not know what the future holds. But if I extrapolate from the rhythms in Frankfurt's past – I am fairly optimistic. Frankfurt has got a good rhythm, good vibrations, so to say, particularly for scientists.

On our way here with the streetcar, dear guests, and on the strolls that you may have already taken or that you might still take, you have seen a city that seems – at least architectonically – to be dominated by money. All the highrisers belong to banks, sky-scraping profits seem to be the only thing that counts here. This impression is misleading. Our university – and we are still very proud of that – is the only one in Germany that was not founded by an official decree of any of those nobles and kings who surround us here – it was founded in 1914 by the citizens of Frankfurt am Main. They paid for it and they still do – even in my very own research and in the organization of our congress I am supported by donations and funds stemming from citizens and companies here in Frankfurt. Frau Stadträtin Haindl, you are the representative of all these benefactors and I would therefore like to address my thanks to you.

But you are not only the representative of these citizens, you are also a member of their government and thus participate in shaping their political will. And it has been their and your government's will to strengthen the bonds between the University and the City, to support and even expand our University – even in times of tight money. Again, extrapolating from what has been done for us in the past, I am looking forward to a future not so dim.

You are a politician, you would probably say: “Do, ut des!” – “I give you something in order to get something back”. Yes. We as chronobiologists promise you to keep this city up to date, well-synchronized, not lagging behind the modern times. After all, time's our business.

Frankfurt am Main. Vivat, crescat, floreat!