

## Igniting the entrepreneurial flame



What sets humans apart from robots? How will we feed ourselves, travel and work in the future? As the summer's biggest heatwave held Germany in its grip, Steffi Czerny, founder of the *DLD* innovation conference, welcomed students, politicians, economic leaders and digital pioneers to the University of Bayreuth. And they arrived in their droves for the third *DLD Campus*, swapping 36°C for a 360° view of our society's latest developments and fresh, inspiring thoughts on the digital future.

Steffi Czerny opened the conference by telling the students what this future holds, predicting that: "Quantum computing is to the modern day what the internet was in 1995 – don't underestimate this technology."

### **Technology meets empathy**

Greetings from a possible future came in a video message from "Sophia", one of the world's most human robots, who was even granted Saudi Arabian citizenship in 2017. Her inventor, David Hanson, took to the *DLD* stage to discuss the factors that will ultimately always set humans apart from robots: "Empathy – robots can only imitate human behaviour. But empathy means putting yourself in another person's shoes and feeling their pain."

## **Politics meets everyday university life**

Judith Gerlach, Bavarian State Minister for Digital Affairs, also attended *DLD Campus*. She emphasised that women are playing a greater role in the digital world and identified Steffi Czerny as a role model for creating *DLD*, a source of digital inspiration.

Criticism came from Katharina Schulze, Green Party chair for Bavaria, who called for both the expansion of digital infrastructure and significant improvements in mobility in rural Bavaria: "If I want to travel from Herrsching to Bayreuth, I have to buy thousands of tickets. One of the machines will usually be broken and then I won't even be able to buy my ticket through the app because I don't have a mobile connection."

## **Winning together – losing together**

Founded by Andreas Kunze, Konux aims to make trains more punctual through the use of artificial intelligence. Kunze took part in a panel discussion with Jörg Liebe (Lufthansa), Gudrun Hermann (Tik Tok) and Dirk Treibe (Medi) that asked how Germany will make itself fit for the future. Kunze emphasised that the only way to make digital transformation happen is to involve employees and let them play their part. His motto? "We win together – we lose together".

## **Clear words**

Wolfgang Kerler, co-founder of 1e9, spoke out clearly against Germany's prevailing pessimism when it comes to technology and the future. "According to the Bloomberg Global Innovations Index, Germany is second after South Korea. The world considers us more innovative than we do ourselves." He had four career tips for the students in the audience: "Demystify technologies! Don't let things drive you mad! Develop visions together! And just do it!"

## **Food meets future**

"Just doing it" is sometimes easier said than done – particularly when it comes to kicking unhealthy habits like eating too much meat. Everyone is talking about the future of food, and *DLD Campus* also addressed this topic. Nick Lin-Hi from the University of Vechta put it plainly: "We know that our lifestyle isn't sustainable. The new generation is a lot more open to new foods. But the mass market isn't."

## **Silicon Valley meets Bayreuth**

*DLD* also welcomed philosopher Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht of Stanford University. Born in Franconia, he has been working in Silicon Valley for decades, building bridges between the humanities and sciences. When asked what makes Silicon Valley different to Bayreuth, he replied: "At first glance, it doesn't look a lot different. But Silicon Valley isn't a geographical location, it's a state of mind. The rest of the USA believes that 'anything is possible', that

anything you can imagine can be achieved. But in Silicon Valley, people say that 'nothing is impossible'. This includes everything beyond our imaginations – a big difference.”

### **Courage and a change of perspective**

“What kind of future do you want to wake up to?” Maks Giordano of Krait asked the students, continuing: “Visualise your goal and then think backwards – think about the measures you need to take to make it happen.”

As the day drew to a close, participants continued to mull over everything they had heard as they headed off to network in Bayreuth’s evening sun. The temperature may have cooled a little, but the 360° view of the present and future had certainly fired up many of the students and their entrepreneurial spirit.

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