

SCIENCE & FAMILY: MEN ARE IN DEMAND! LOEWE-FLOWFORLIFE PANEL DISCUSSION MODERATED BY JOCHEN BREYER

“That was the best panel discussion I have ever experienced at the TU Darmstadt,” was the enthusiastic feedback of one visitor after the event “Science & Family: Men are in demand!”. **LOEWE-FLOWFORLIFE** together with **LOEWE-emergenCITY** and **ProLOEWE** had invited to this event on March 24. Three scientists presented their model of a modern family on the podium: Dr. Franz Baumdicker, a mathematician at the University of Tübingen, married to a mathematics professor at the TU Darmstadt. He lives the „*dual career couple* model“ with his wife and three children, the advantages and disadvantages of which he presented to the panel, but at the same time also explained how to implement it in practice: “Make it clear as early as possible what you want in terms of career and family and how you want to realize it – and above all clarify it as a couple,” Baumdicker told the panel.

Dr. Sebastian Braun and his wife, also with three children, live a different model. Both work 80 percent, the wife is a doctor, Braun himself a biologist. The couple lives in Sweden and benefits there from the flexible option of reduced working hours and very good and reliable childcare. Neither partner can imagine working 100 percent “in this case family, career and our health would probably suffer,” says Braun.

The most unusual model of a modern family, even today, was presented by Dr. Florian Kaffarnik (biologist): He gave up his own career in favor of his wife, a professor, and their three children, and

takes care of children and household. “When we’re invited somewhere and other men ask me about my profession and I answer ‘househusband,’ I’m immediately written off,” Kaffarnik says. “Many women, on the other hand, are enthusiastic and envy my wife.”

Discussed issues were put in a broader context by Dr. Kim Bräuer, sociologist, TU Braunschweig. She leads the fathers’ project “You don’t need to be Superheroes,” for which she has conducted numerous interviews and conversations with men. She could confirm many of the issues and problems presented. But there is a clear sense that something is happening in our society, according to Bräuer: “Many men want to do things better and differently than their own fathers and get more involved in family life, raising children and the household.”

In addition to personal tips from the discussion participants on how to reconcile a scientific career and family, specific suggestions were also made as to how our state research funding and universities could better support scientists with children. All in all, it was a very special and different kind of equality event – an enlightening discussion with fathers as role models and in a very relaxed atmosphere – which not only led to a lively exchange between the large number of listeners and the panelists, but also provided a number of humorous moments. With Jochen Breyer as the discussion leader, it was once again clear how crucial a skillful and empathetic moderation is for a successful event – thank you for that!

Moderator Jochen Breyer, Dr Franz Baumdicker, Dr Kim Bräuer, Dr Florian Kaffarnik and Dr Sebastian Braun (from left to right). Photo: Michaela Becker-Röck

