

OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS IN TIMES OF GLOBALISATION – HOW GENDER AFFECTS WORKING PATTERNS IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

Linda Nierling/Bettina-Johanna Krings

Institute for Technology Assessment and
Systems Analysis (ITAS)
Research Centre Karlsruhe

Abstract Globalisation processes deeply affect living and working realities of men and women in industrialised societies. Whereas the public and academic discourse of global restructuring is widely gender neutral, the introduction of the gender dimension plays a central role in order to understand the manifold effects of globalisation on a local level. On the basis of a huge qualitative study on global change processes and their impact on occupations in different sectors this article argues that male and female realities in globalised working processes have changed distinctively. With regard to the gendered division of labour in the frame of globalisation, empirical findings will be presented which aim to provide an insight in changing working and living conditions of women and men on the local level facing global developments. In which way these processes enable or disable women's access to societal resources will be discussed with regard to changing or maintaining gender regimes in these occupations.

Keywords globalisation, global restructuring, gender studies, work, occupational restructuring

Resumo

Oportunidades e riscos em tempos de globalização – a influência do género no exercício de diferentes profissões

Os processos de globalização afectam profundamente as condições de vida e de trabalho de homens e mulheres nas sociedades industrializadas. Embora o discurso público e académico em torno da reestruturação global tenda a ser silencioso relativamente à influência do género, a introdução desta dimensão assume uma preponderância central quando se trata de procurar compreender os múltiplos efeitos da globalização a nível local. Baseando-se num estudo qualitativo extensivo sobre os processos de mudança global e as suas implicações nas profissões de vários sectores de actividade, este artigo sustenta que as realidades masculinas e femininas nos processos de trabalho globalizados se têm alterado de modo distinto. No que se refere à divisão sexual do trabalho no quadro da globalização, os resultados empíricos apresentados procuram destacar as alterações nas condições de vida e de trabalho de mulheres e homens a nível global e em face de desenvolvimentos globais. Na tentativa de perspectivar a manutenção ou a mudança das estruturas ligadas ao género nas profissões estudadas, discute-se em que medida aqueles processos possibilitam ou impossibilitam o acesso das mulheres a recursos da sociedade.

Palavras-chave globalização; reestruturação global; estudos de género; trabalho; reestruturação profissional.

Résumé

Opportunités et risques dus à la mondialisation – L'influence du genre dans l'exercice des professions

Les processus de la mondialisation influencent fortement les conditions de vie et de travail des hommes et des femmes dans les sociétés industrialisées. Quoique le discours public et académique n'aborde presque pas les aspects de genre, l'introduction de la dimension de genre joue un rôle central pour la compréhension des effets multiples de la mondialisation au niveau local. Sur la base d'une vaste étude qualitative sur les processus de changement mondiaux et leur impact sur les différentes professions dans les différents secteurs, cet article argumente que les réalités de travail des hommes et des femmes ont fortement changées dans un contexte mondialisé.

En ce qui concerne la division de travail entre les sexes dans le cadre de la mondialisation, des résultats empiriques seront présentés avec le but de démontrer les conditions de travail et de vie en transition des hommes et des femmes face aux changements mondiaux. Tout en essayant de voir s'il faut maintenir ou changer des structures liées au genre dans les activités étudiées, ont débat dans quelle mesure ces processus améliorent ou dégradent l'accès des femmes aux ressources de la société.

Mots-clés: Globalisation; restructuration globale; études de genre; travail; restructuration professionnelle

«Two vectors shape the world – technology and globalisation. The first helps determine human preferences, the second economic realities (...). Given what is everywhere the purpose of commerce, the global company will shape the vectors of technology and globalisation into its great strategic fecundity»

(Theodore Levitt 1983, in Hack, 2007: 28).

Introduction¹

Since the beginning of the 1990s, technological and political processes have had a strong impact on the reorganisation of global value chains. On a global scale, these restructuring processes have strongly reinforced new forms of the international division of labour, and this in turn has affected working conditions at the local level (Huws, 2006).

Although a few decades ago, the commutability of white-collar work seemed «untouchable», technical expertise now offers options for offshoring and outsourcing these activities. Thus, it is now not only repetitive tasks or lower qualified activities in the production sector that have been relocated elsewhere in the world, but also «knowledge-based» activities like software development,

¹ The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive critical and fruitful comments on the paper.

administration, and service-oriented tasks. In academic debates, transnational corporations are considered particularly important driving factors in these developments. There is general agreement that their dominance is growing not only in national and international markets, but also as a new business model in terms of production and distribution modes, at least in highly industrialised societies (Hirsch-Kreinsen, 1998; Kotthoff, 2001; Hack, 2007).

Taking these processes into account, it seems that the combined impact of economic pressure, technological innovations and the restructuring of organisations has very much influenced the working conditions of nearly all occupational groups in most European countries. On the basis of the empirical findings from a large European research project², this contribution focuses on qualitative changes at the workplace level caused by global restructuring. A number of case studies conducted in different sectors in fourteen European countries have shown, however, that the effects of the increased «globalised» work are in fact multifaceted³.

One central, theoretical assumption in the project's approach is that work is increasingly being organised according to market demands, with customer needs causing peaks in work load and leading to an intensification of work. This seems true for nearly all sectors under review, while the consequences for career development, physical and psychological well-being and future employment prospects differ enormously not only between sectors, but also between men and women.

Indeed, to obtain a comprehensive picture of the interaction between global processes and its impact at the local workplace level, it seems crucial to introduce the gender perspective. As the globalisation discourse in developed countries has already shown, the public view of globalisation processes is an incomplete one, particularly with regard «to women's rights as fundamental human rights» (Chow, 2003: 445). For this reason, we emphasise research that focuses on male *and* female realities, on changing hierarchical arrangements in gender relations as well as on gendered institutions, i.e. values, identities, role behaviour and gender

² In 2005, the European Commission funded a ground-breaking research project, called Work Organisation Restructuring in the Knowledge Society (WORKS), to investigate restructuring processes in global value chains and their impact on organisations as well as on individuals. Combining theoretical work and a detailed analysis of a wide range of statistics with in-depth case studies, the team analysed the forces that bring about these changes, including restructuring of global value chains and the policy environment, and produced a series of publications highlighting different aspects of these changes: in work organisation, employer use of technology, skills and knowledge requirements, career trajectories, occupational segregation, and the quality of working life (for further details, see: <http://www.worksproject.be>).

³ One of these many facets is the increase in informal work, seen today in huge migration streams from Eastern European countries to continental or Southern Europe. Domestic and care services as well as prostitution – activities done by women – are considered the flipside of the global economy (with regard to *gender and migration* see Rerrich, 2006; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Henshall-Momsen, 1999).

power relations. Against this background, the authors support the hypothesis that globally induced developments strengthen gender-related working conditions in the long run, and that in some occupations these developments even increase the disadvantages faced particularly by women in the labour markets.

The following contribution is divided into a theoretical part and an empirical one: the first section reflects on the historical process of globalisation during which important features developed that still seem to affect the current globalisation debate. Some theoretical assumptions are then drawn from these reflections on the relationship of gender and work during recent global restructuring processes. The second section presents the empirical findings of three occupational clusters in different European countries in order to show the impact of globalisation. The final section offers some concluding remarks.

Global restructuring and work: Gender matters

Globalisation as planetary management

Globalisation has existed as an idea for more than 500 years. From a historical perspective, the dynamics of globalisation were also formulated as «the twofold process of the particularisation of the universal and the universalisation of the particular» (Robertson cited in: Jameson, 1999: XI)⁴. Thus, cultural variation, the features particular to nations and regions, is embedded into a whole which in turn influences the understanding of individual practices and routines. The way in which the interdependencies between regions and nations are measured and how they are connected depends greatly on the perspective used and includes processes that may have existed for centuries. To date, the perspective «tends to be a function of transaction among unitary nation states» (Sassen, 2007a: 4; Sassen 2007b) and this also very much defines the power relations between these states.

From the perspective of the global system, historical processes of globalisation are most often considered to be an ongoing process of integrating regions and nations into the world market system (Altvater and Mahnkopf, 1997; Münch, 2005; Hack, 2005, 2007)⁵. The concept of globalisation thus reflects the potential extent of a world market and, at the same time, an immense enlargement of

⁴ Understanding these processes is strongly connected with understanding the philosophical concept of modernity which dates back to the Renaissance in Europe. At the end of this era, and especially during the Enlightenment, the view of the global system changed fundamentally. It encompassed a new relationship with nature, a new self-understanding of subjectivity, a new intersubjective and political relation towards community and a new economic attitude (Dussel, 1999: 13).

⁵ This process has been described in a huge body of literature which primarily deals with the economic development of globalisation and its impact on societal development (from a critical point of view see Polanyi, 1978; Braudel, 1986; Altvater and Mahnkopf, 1997; Hack, 2005).

today's global communication, both of which seem far more tangible now than they did in earlier stages of this process.

With these concepts in mind, the process of nation building in Europe, its military occupation on other continents, its establishment of a bureaucratic and political organisation, its total ecological transformation, and its economic expropriation were intended to be long-lasting⁶. According to Enrique Dussel, these views became integrated in a concept of «managing» the planetary centre that implied the idea of a world system to be managed according to a specific «peripheral social formation» (Dussel, 1999: 12; Polanyi, 1978). The idea of managing the global system led to the metaphor of centre-periphery strongly shaping the global perspective which defined power relations between the Northern and the Southern Hemispheres. In this sense, perceptions of the global have long been constituted «through practices and power projects of past eras, such as the colonial empires of the sixteenth and subsequent centuries ...» (Sassen, 2007a: 5).

This historical angle on the global question allows us to recognise fundamental tension between the interdependencies of what might be unchanged national and cultural identities or the power relations of what might be unchanged regions of centre and periphery.

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, perception of globalisation was expanded by several major trends, as capitalistic processes and ideologies spread throughout the world (Pyle and Ward, 2003: 463ff.; Pyle, 1998; 1999). First, international financial institutions and the majority of nations promoted market determination of economic outcomes. Second, many developing countries shifted to more «export-oriented» production for external trade. Third, in many sectors multinational corporations moved into countries level by level, and established networks of subcontractors. Fourth, since the late 1970s, globalisation has also involved structural adjustment policies, mandated by international organisations like the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.

Although these trends have been reflected by a critical international discourse, the difference between «developed» and «underdeveloped» as a reference for the relationship between the countries of the Northern and the Southern hemispheres has been widely established⁷. Therefore «underdeveloped coun-

⁶ Thus, from a historical point of view the semantic development of globalisation is strongly connected with the concept of modernity in Europe (see overview Tyrell, 2005; Hack, 2005; Jameson and Miyoshi, 1999). If modernity begins with the «Renaissance premodern process, and from there a transition is made to the properly made in Spain, Amerindia forms part of «modernity» since the moment of the conquest and colonisation (...). If modernity enters into crisis at the end of the twentieth century, after five centuries of development, it is (...) also a matter of a "planetary" description of the phenomenon of modernity» (Dussel, 1999: 18).

⁷ In spite of the economic growth in Japan and currently in China, the northern transatlantic economic system (specifically the links among the European Union, the United States, and Canada) represents the major concentration of processes of economic globalisation today. «At the turn of the millennium this region accounted for 66 percent of worldwide stock market capitalisation, 60 percent of inward foreign investment stock and 76 percent of outward foreign

tries» and their «backwardness», did not exist per se, but only in relation to «developed countries». It was not poverty per se that produced «underdevelopment», but the fact that the «developing countries» became part of an international system in which the normative idea of one world became relevant in several senses: on the one hand, the introduction of capitalistic processes seemed to be the model for «development»; on the other hand, «underdevelopment» started to be a normative problem. The establishment of development policies between countries, however, greatly strengthened the interrelation between countries (Tyrell, 2005).

Considering the different meanings of globalisation, the discourse on «development» and «underdevelopment» focused strongly on two aspects:

First, a position developed that conceptualised globalisation as «an exclusively *European/ American* phenomenon that *expanded* from the seventeenth century on throughout all the «backwards» cultures (the Eurocentric position in the centre and modernising on the periphery)» (Dussel, 1999: 18). After 1960, the centre shifted more towards the US (Jameson and Miyoshi, 1999; Wobbe, 2005).

Second, from the perspective of the periphery, the process of «modernisation» and «development» indicated «rational» management of the world system. This position seeks to decry the practises of domination and exclusion in this world system. From this point of view, administration of the planetary system is based on managerial reasoning which implies ecological destruction as well as the creation of poverty and social exclusion of regions and individuals (Jameson and Miyoshi, 1999; Polanyi, 1978; Altvater and Mahnkopf, 1997; Hack, 2005). Today, economic operations such as the creation of a global market for capital, a global trade regime, and the internationalisation of the division of labour, must thus also be understood as modern concepts which propagate these reasons (Giddens, 1995; Tyrell, 2005).

Without a doubt, the meaning of globalisation has changed completely since 1989. From that point on, the term «age of globalisation» was widely used in public as well as in academic debates. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, globalisation was quite often spoken of as if it were a force of nature. According to Hartmann Tyrell, even in academic debates, the concept of globalisation used today has borrowed widely from critical interventions that deal with other fields of tension, as described above. The everyday use of the term implies the idea of (cultural) progression towards a new era. According to these discourses, the importance of nation states with their territorial restrictions is being replaced by new forms of governance like «connectedness» or «global interconnectivity» which greatly strengthen the idea of a single world (Tyrell, 2005: 5). In the face of the strong economic dynamics of today's globalisation processes, it seems that the global system is in some part being constituted within the national identities. As Saskia

investment stock, 60 percent of worldwide sales in mergers and acquisitions, and 80 percent of purchases in mergers and acquisitions» (Sassen, 2007b: 60).

Sassen underlines, today's global dynamics cut across institutional hierarchies and across the institutional encasements of territory. This does not mean, however, that old hierarchies disappear but rather that new levels emerge along the old hierarchies and that the former can often trump the latter (Sassen, 2007a: 6).

Hence, global processes must in some part be met through their specific constitution in each country. Particularly at the level of working structure, globalisation processes seem to be strongly anchored in national settings. When contemporary consequences of these processes are evaluated, it seems important to consider the ideological heritage that the concept of globalisation still transmits. Especially in terms of a «rational» management of the global system as well as in terms of the idea of centre and periphery, critical approaches may contribute to new and more balanced visions of globalisation. These characteristics have also been identified and critically discussed by feminist theorists who strongly emphasised the patriarchal structure within these processes.

Globalisation processes and gendered working structure

Since the 1970s, Feminist Theory has vehemently confronted debates on globalisation and its rhetoric meaning of «development» as well as «underdevelopment of countries». Here, practices of domination and exclusion of countries between these globalisation processes – as described above – have been adapted and further developed towards gender relationships, especially in countries of the Southern hemisphere.

The relationship between centre and periphery in terms of the distribution of power between the Northern and Southern hemispheres was, in particular, seen as part of an ongoing process of female oppression by patriarchal structures. Making these adverse effects on women's daily lives visible provided new perspectives on the changing qualities global processes were creating at a local level. Many forms of subsistence, cultural forms of community, and childcare as well as the recognition of women in their communitarian environments were placed under a great deal of pressure by global processes. Experience from these feminist debates has shown that it was extremely important to incorporate gender issues in terms of setting up public policy agendas and strategies for effective social change locally, nationally, and on a global scale⁸.

But not only the working and living conditions of women in the south are affected by globalisation processes. In western industrialised societies, these processes have also influenced female participation in the labour market. Whereas «at the outset of the twentieth century, paid employment was a strong male activity, and a clear division of labour existed in most middle-class families»

⁸ This experience shows significantly that resistance to globalisation on a local level is not something new. It is historically derived and locally founded as i.e. the Mau Mau movement in Kenya or the Chipko-movement in India show (Chow, 2003; Mies and Shiva, 1995).

(Hofäcker, 2006: 32), it seems that this division of labour has now been challenged. In academic literature, increasing female participation is generally considered as progress towards fewer discriminating gender differences in the labour market.

However, feminist theorists have criticised this positive view for several reasons (according to Hofäcker, 2006: 32ff; see also Daly, 2000): First, despite changes in female participation in the labour market, the division of household and care work has changed only marginally. Second, empirical studies have shown that there are important differences in the extent and the quality of female participation in the labour market. Therefore, feminists have largely regarded the emergence of «atypical» forms of work (such as flexible working arrangements or part-time work) as a continuation of enduring gender-based labour inequalities. Third, cross-national statistical comparisons suggest that political regimes and especially family policies provide a varying degree of support for women's participation (see also Sainsbury, 1999). Thus, there is a large body of literature on processes of globalisation, but most mainstream theories treat these processes as gender-neutral with regard to female participation. According to Ether Ngang-ling Chow, ancient and current debates on neoliberal and universalistic globalisation accord little attention to gender, and women are likely to be under-represented in their work and living experiences in specific societal contexts (Chow, 2003; Werlhof *et al.*, 2003)⁹.

Since globalisation seems inevitable and its effects are now felt in the working and living conditions of men and women in the western industrialised countries, globalisation and its dynamics are producing contradictory effects. At the individual level, «globalisation creates employment opportunities and increases female labour force participation, wage benefits, economic independence, self-worth and more life options, although these advantages are still limited and unequal» (Chow, 2003: 453; Wetterer, 2002). However, at the same time, it also creates new forms of «feminisation of labour» in segregated and low-paid work, wage dependency, labour exploitation, economic marginalisation, and poverty and is further worsening the already low status of women and their everyday living conditions (Wichterich, 1998). Here too, economic and political developments on a global scale contribute significantly to local situations, showing how globalism and localism are interconnected (Sassen, 2007a; 2007b).

The following empirical findings provide some insight into actual changes in working and living conditions experienced by women and men at the local

⁹ Especially in the fields «women and development» or «gender and development» a broad international discourse exists which started as far back as the 1970s. Examining the gendered impact of economic globalisation, feminist researchers reformulated theories and research methodologies (Werlhof *et al.*, 2003; Merchant, 1987; Haraway, 1995). Other challenges were the impact of economic globalisation on women who vary by race, ethnicity and class (Walby, 1986; 1990). Important work on gender also has done by international organisations like the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNIFEM (Pyle and Ward, 2003: 462ff.).

level in terms of gender-related working patterns in the framework of globalisation. To return to the hypothesis that globally induced developments strengthen gender-related working conditions in the long run, these results show that in some occupations such developments are increasing the disadvantages faced particularly by women in the labour markets. According to this hypothesis, the following questions are posed: How do labour activities become «more global» and what consequences do these changes have on gendered working conditions in local situations? How can global processes be described at a workplace level? What are the new forms of gendered division of labour? How do institutions make a difference in strengthening or weakening these processes in different countries?

In order to respond to these questions properly from a methodological point of view, it seems important to differentiate between occupational groups and sectors and show the different consequences for men and women in these occupations (Blossfeld and Hofmeister, 2006). Due to the scope of the implications these processes have for different occupational groups, it seems that there are trends of «privileging of economic organisation over areas of life and the non-responsibility for the production and survival of human beings» (Acker, 1998: 10).

In portraying the situation of women and men in European countries during global restructuring processes, the results of the study thus provide an important insight into the effects of globalisation as an ongoing process of a «rational management» on an economic scale. Particularly the integration of gender differences can reflect a society's view of the appropriate roles for men and women and how this is reinforced by economic, political, social and cultural institutions (Pyle and Ward, 2003: 466; Gunnarson and Balkmar, 2005). The empirical results contribute to the overall debate on globalisation, especially in terms of such categories as power relations and subordinations.

Local working structure: the research field

The empirical findings are presented on the basis of the qualitative research of the European project WORKS (see above). Changes in working lives were analysed from an individual perspective in in-depth case studies of different occupational groups¹⁰. In order to record the many facets of global restructuring, individual work biographies were analysed in companies of various sizes and

¹⁰ The occupational groups under research were: designers in the clothing industry; researchers in ICT; skilled and semi-skilled production workers in the food and clothing sector; production workers in software development; front-office employees in customer services; IT professionals in IT service providers. Here, the three occupational groups of the IT sector are summarised to one occupation: IT professionals.

over a wide range of sectors. The aim was to include industries which underwent global restructuring processes at different times. The four sectors chosen were clothing, food, IT, and the public sector: The clothing sector faced major restructuring processes as early as the 1970s (Dunford, 2004), while the food industry started its Europe-wide restructuring in the 1990s after the single market was established in the European Union (European Foundation, 2004). In the IT sector, internationalisation strategies started during the industry's boom years in the late 1990s, and resulted in global offshoring processes of IT services (Boes and Schwemmler, 2005). Currently, in all countries included in the sample, the public sector is undergoing massive restructuring processes towards privatisation which is causing deregulation of previously well-regulated working conditions.

Employees with a wide variety of working profiles from different occupational groups in these sectors were interviewed. As the WORKS project focuses on work changes in the knowledge-based society, a key criterion was to choose occupational groups affected by work changes and changes in knowledge requirements in order to analyse the effects of global restructuring on different occupations with regard to their knowledge intensity. The sample thus ranged from highly skilled, knowledge-intensive occupations (designers in the clothing sector and IT professionals) to semi-skilled tasks (front-office employees in the public sector) and low-skilled employees (production workers in the clothing and food sector). The case studies were distributed over the 14 countries in order to obtain a representative sample of different levels of knowledge intensity of the occupations within countries in different parts of Europe (Northern, Central, Eastern and Southern Europe) (see annex).

One prerequisite for the case studies was that all companies researched had undergone restructuring processes at a global level during the past five years. In total, 27 occupational case studies in 14 European countries with 222 individual interviews were carried out. Each case study consisted of 8-12 semi-structured biographical interviews with employees of the occupations being researched¹¹. The interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, were conducted during working hours with the consent of the company management. The interviews were centred around the following research topics: work biography, changes in occupational identities, skills and qualification, quality of work and work-life balance. The category «gender» was an integrative part of the research design and was analysed intensively in each of the research topics. Interpretation focused on changes in the individual work biography caused by global restructuring processes.

In order to structure the international research, common interview guidelines were designed which were adapted and translated by the research partners. This approach aimed to cover a range of certain topics in all interviews, but at the same time to keep a narrative dimension in the interviews.

¹¹ The sample included the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, The Netherlands and the UK.

The interview findings were summarised by the partners in case study reports which were structured around the five central research topics mentioned above. The overall findings of each of the occupational groups were compared cross-nationally and discussed within the WORKS consortium (cf. in detail Valenduc *et al.*, 2007).

Female microspaces: global restructuring and impacts on different occupations

Gender differences are usually neglected in the academic debate on globalisation processes. However, the gender approach seems particularly apt for showing how global processes aim to change the realities of work and life for men and women at the local level and analysing the different quality of these changes. In industrialised societies there are many facets of global processes with regard to challenging options on the one hand and increasing social inequalities, particularly for women, on the other. Our aim is thus to show how processes of globalisation influence gender relations in different occupations in European countries.

The occupational groups analysed in the context of the WORKS project cover three occupational clusters, ranging from high skilled knowledge-intensive work (designers and IT professionals) to semi-skilled occupations (front office employees in the public sector) and low-skilled manufacturing occupations (production workers in the food and clothing sector). This diversity allows the sample to cover a wide spectrum of male and female working realities today¹².

New skill demands – new opportunities for women? Knowledge-based occupations

The knowledge-based occupations are represented by two groups: professionals in the IT sector and designers in the clothing sector.

Since the 1990s, there has been much discussion of IT professionals in academic literature as representative of new working models in knowledge-intensive sectors (Schmiede, 1996; Baukowitz *et al.*, 2006; Pfeiffer, 2004). Since information technology renders its services easily transferable on a global scale, the IT sector has faced large-scale internationalisation processes in recent years. The aim of the sector's international orientation was to expand international production capacities and develop foreign markets. International production structures are now very common in the sector and have influenced working conditions in several ways (Boes, 2005: 26ff., Boes and Schwemmler, 2005). Not only have off-

¹² In the following, the article focuses on changes in knowledge-intensive occupations as well low-skilled manufacturing occupations, because the analysis showed that the changes due to global restructuring were most crucial in these occupational clusters.

shoring processes become a significant economic development, but changing working conditions at the workplace level have too.

By contrast, designers in the clothing sector have rarely been the object of research to date. This occupation, however, is of particular interest in this context since due to the high level of tension arising from its creative demands and the increasing economic demands of the clothing sector, a sector which is particularly susceptible to global acceleration processes (cf. Nierling and Bechmann, 2007). Although the clothing sector has a long history that can be traced back to the beginning of industrialisation, it is also one of the most dynamic sectors in global restructuring processes. The overall economic trend of global market orientation leads to an enormous acceleration of production processes being especially visible in this sector.

In both occupations, labour processes changed fundamentally due to globally induced processes, the ensuing developments in each of them differed with regard to gender relations, as shown in the following:

The internationalisation processes in the IT sector have opened up new access options to this field of work, especially for women. As reported in many studies, the percentage of women is very low in sectors with strong technological expertise (cf. Winker, 2002). With the internationalisation of IT companies, international markets and global collaboration and communication have become important factors in the profile of IT professionals which was formerly strongly technically based. Empirical evidence shows that the skill portfolio has been broadened towards soft skills, such as project management skills, customer-oriented communication skills, language skills and social interactive skills.

As revealed in one of the case studies of the IT sector:

both the increasing importance of general skills in sales and marketing and the location of IT research in the contextualised areas of computer science such as geoinformatics, human computer interaction etc. opens the field up for people holding degrees in geography, psychology, linguistics etc. who are more likely to be women (Holtgrewe, 2007: 17).

Up to now, these new demands have established new career paths and occupational opportunities. Besides the «traditional» technical career path, a new «managerial» career path has evolved, demanding the skills mentioned above, which seems to be more favourable for women. Consequently, the proportion of women working in this field has risen significantly in recent years¹³. In terms of job perspective, IT offers very challenging career patterns for both, men and women, i.e. in terms of further qualification, international experience, high salary levels, and attractive working surroundings (Krings and Nierling, 2007; Valenduc, 2007).

While the demands for new skills open up opportunities in the field of IT for female employees too, at the workplace level, working conditions are constantly

¹³ Nevertheless, the percentage of women in the field of IT is still very low.

changing. Although current economic conditions in the sector are still very much in favour of highly satisfying working conditions in terms of quality of work, job autonomy, job security as well as career prospects, in recent years globally induced acceleration processes have had a great effect on the local work situation.

At first glance, empirical evidence suggests that the IT sector does not present inequalities between the sexes in terms of entry, formal qualification and career possibilities. However, due to global restructuring, the orientation towards markets has significantly increased and led to acceleration processes within the daily work routines of the occupation. Tighter schedules and deadlines, extensive travel activities as well as unusual working hours because of the need for global synchronisation of working times are common nowadays. Thus, working tasks are becoming more demanding and have to be fulfilled in a shorter time frames. Furthermore, working time is very much aligned to the demands of international cooperation. This requires i.e. the need to communicate late at night or at the weekend with partners abroad. Overtime as well as unusual working hours seem to be regarded as «normal» in this occupation. At second glance, it becomes obvious that women working in this occupation have to align their way of working and living very much along the given demands which in general follow male working patterns, in which work clearly has priority in life.

Globalisation processes in the clothing sector have had a different impact on the work realities of female designers. But in this occupation too, the work has become increasingly intensified due to global dynamics. The high market pressure in the sector has led to significant acceleration processes in the clothing industry, i.e. the number of collections per year doubled in recent years. These acceleration processes affect designers directly at the workplace level as they have to deal with tighter deadlines, a higher work load, compensate flexibly for high peaks in the work load caused by collections, and fulfil a multitude of tasks while being under constant market control in order to meet the high economic demands of the sector.

A very high proportion of the designers are women who identify themselves strongly with the occupation and the creative aspects of the work, although due to the globally induced changes in work organisation, the skill portfolio of design has undergone significant changes. Aspects such as technical knowledge, and coordination with other departments like sales or production have become more important and take up an increasing portion of working time as well as work content. Although the working profile has changed fundamentally, integrating technical, managerial as well as administrative tasks, the designers are still very much dedicated to their occupation. The creative aspects of the work such as developing one's own ideas and new concepts, and shaping and inventing new models very much express the subjectivity of the designer. Therefore, the occupation generally has high relevance for the employees, providing self-fulfilment, identity and an artistic expression of talent. This high commitment to work still seems to buffer the new demands that arise from global

restructuring processes. The new demands are widely integrated into perception of the occupation (Nierling *et al.*, 2007). However, this new development is sometimes «perceived as threats to creativity: less time to create and innovate, more constraints from market feedback.» (Valenduc and Muchnik, 2007: 47). This new development strongly emphasises the managerial aspects of the occupation – whether this development makes the occupation more attractive for male employees or changes attitudes towards the occupation among women has to be elaborated long term.

Female designers who opted for their profession have made a clear decision to follow a traditional male biographical pattern, because the temporal demands of the occupation are very high. Therefore, work clearly stands at the centre of their life, which is strictly organised around working demands. Also in the IT sector, globally induced work realities have contributed to women adopting a strongly male biographical pattern. As a consequence, the biographical stage reached by female employees seems crucial in defining the gender relationship of knowledge-based occupations.

For young women, these fields offer a broad variety of challenging working possibilities and career developments. However, at the stage of family planning, gender differences become very obvious. Due to persisting gender roles in society, women are still the main caretakers. As mentioned above, the working time requirements in both sectors are very demanding. Part-time work models are rarely used, as they seem inappropriate for the prevalent male working culture of the IT sector as well as the tight work organisation in design. Very often part-time working models are deemed to have negative impacts on career development¹⁴. Therefore, building a family still leads to occupational disadvantages for women.

In a male structured work environment like IT or design, women very often have to decide either for or against a family or a career. Generally, working conditions in the IT sector allow a combination of work and family life, although women are often forced to create models to combine work and life in an individual way (Krings and Nierling, 2007). However, in design, it seems to be impossible for women to combine the demands of work and family life:

All designers I met were between 25 and 35 years old and very few had children, I would say that within the 10 to 15 with whom I had tighter relations, only one had a baby (...). Indeed, it's not easy to get a job as a designer. Everybody wants to keep his job and unfortunately it's not convenient to have a baby at this moment. In any case, I wouldn't even think about it now because of that (French designer in Valenduc and Muchnik, 2007: 42).

¹⁴ For many decades, part-time work has had a strong gender bias, because this model is used to a great extent by female employees. Nevertheless, part-time work is still the most common instrument for atypical working time arrangements and is still regarded as the main organisational instrument for employees to balance work and life, both in political and academic debates (European Foundation, 2007).

By contrast, the situation for male designers is not similarly polarised; in a traditional way it is mainly their wives who organise family life (Valenduc and Muchnik, 2007).

The current developments described above reflect the main tendencies in gender-related working conditions in the IT sector as well as in design. Nevertheless, cultural and national differences have a great impact on gender-related working patterns. This is particularly visible in combining family and career since crucial gender differences arise here in knowledge-intensive occupations. Where family life is culturally embedded in institutional settings, this allows strongly adapted, family-friendly working models, leading i.e. to a «baby boom» in the case of Norway (Krings and Nierling, 2007: 64). But these preconditions for a work-life balance are much weaker in other parts of Europe. Especially in the Eastern European countries, the opposite development can currently be observed. For example, after social transformation the field of IT is at a developmental stage which demands high commitment to work from employees, who are mostly male. The Hungarian case implies:

Flexibility and overtime provides Hungarian employees with a competitive advantage: work councils do not allow employees to work at weekends in Austria or in Germany. There are no such limitations in Hungary, and employees do not mind working at weekends; it increases their efficiency and helps them to obtain certain jobs. Flexibility also means that, in contrast to their German colleagues, for Hungarians it is not a problem to get up from their desk and rush straight to the airport to travel to some remote place. Young and mostly unmarried Hungarian employees even like this (Makó, Illésy and Csizmadia, 2007: 12).

Integrating family needs in such a working environment seems to be very difficult. Furthermore, recent findings show an increasing polarisation of male and female work in the new member States (European Foundation, 2007). Although the gender equality of former socialist regimes is still higher than in the old member states, «a widening gap in working hours may reduce women's longer-term ability to compete with men in the labour market» (European Foundation, 2007: 57). This development confirms that gender relations at work are very much shaped by the distribution of working time between the sexes, which is still highly influenced by persisting gender roles with regard to care responsibilities.

In Southern Europe, reconciling work and family life relies mainly on the family network, which is still strong in these countries. However, these supportive family networks are now increasingly disappearing. Because of the lack of institutional and organisational support, the reconciliation of work and life is becoming very complex and difficult for women who have to organise their own ways of dealing with both family planning and career development.

Standardisation and privatisation in a highly regulated occupation: female employees in customer services

Currently, the field of customer services in the public sector is facing fundamental changes due to global reorganisation. Fields of work which were formerly «publicly» regulated are now increasingly being restructured along the lines of the «private» logic of work organisation. Deregulation is found in various fields such as wage levels, work intensity, job security and increased working time flexibility on part of the organisations. One major trend that can be observed is a growing level of standardisation, which allows the work force to be deployed interchangeably in different fields of work (Dunkel and Schönauer, 2007). All these changes affect a field of work in which the percentage of women is very high.

Empirical evidence shows an area of tension in the sector currently as it shifts from a publicly organised field of work field to a private one. Although many changes have already occurred in the way work is organised in this occupation, i.e. increase in work load, longer working hours orientated towards customer needs (which means unusual working hours, weekend work, and overtime), working conditions are still very much subject to strict employment regulations in the public sector. The main changes in working conditions were circumvented by outsourcing changing demands, i.e. in working time, to private companies. This strategy meant that front-office employees have up to now been sheltered from more fundamental changes. Thus, establishing service outsourcing as an ongoing process seems to be the forerunner of further worsening in working conditions for the employees. However, in the long run, the option of outsourcing tasks to (cheaper) private companies implies a growing reduction in the public sector staff. Thus it is both working conditions and job security which will further deteriorate in the future.

Here too, the gender-related implications of global restructuring can be best observed by looking at how working time has developed. In this occupation, the division of labour at a household level is organised traditionally, and up to now, working conditions in the public sector have seemed to be very advantageous for women with children.

The reason for wanting to work in the public sector definitely ties in with them being mothers with children, looking for flexibility in their work but also a sense of security which they believed their employer could give them. (...) Interestingly, all the women interviewed were married, with a husband taking on the main «breadwinner» role. What they ask from their employment is that it should enable them to give priority to their traditional gender role and not create undue conflicts in their lives (Dahlmann, 2007: 11).

Female employees seem to identify themselves with the main carer role in a very traditional way and respond individually to changes in working time arrangements. These changes are very heterogeneous in all countries. Either

working time is becoming more flexible or it is organised in shift systems which leads to a rigid organisation of working time; which of these two options is used, depends specifically on the organisations involved. Interestingly both types of change processes in working time deeply affected their work and life and caused strong resistance in the affected women who had organised their family life according to the given working scheme. Because of the changes due to restructuring, they were forced to reorganise well-practised combination models of work routines and family life. Country differences were not decisive in this occupational group, because the changes in work organisation were very heterogeneous.

To sum up, although working relations are still highly regulated in comparison to the private sector, employees have to face a high level of reorganisation processes. It can be assumed that working conditions in public services will resemble those in the private sector in the future. Thus, the role of the public sector as a protected area of work is rapidly changing in nearly all countries. The protected and regulated work environment represented an especially attractive field for working mothers who could combine the demands of work with family duties and child care in a satisfying way. This is reflected by the fact that the attitude towards child care is very traditional in all countries. Changes in terms of job security due to standardisation processes as well as a change in working hours will certainly deeply affect this balance. However, the way in which changes in this field of the labour market will affect female employment chances and career prospects in the future must be the subject of further research. It is certain that changes here will have a further significant effect on the working and living realities of women involved (Muchnik and Valenduc, 2007).

Persisting gender stereotypes: women working in production

The occupational group of production workers has a long history. Strictly speaking, it has been in existence since industrial production began in the 18th century. Over the past centuries, the production process has of course changed fundamentally. It became increasingly automatised, which led to a high degree of standardisation in working tasks¹⁵. In the field of production, global dynamics led to a significant decline of European blue-collar work as the companies outsourced activities on a large scale (cf. Birindelli *et al.*, 2007). This outsourcing greatly affects the daily working realities of production workers.

The two sectors of food and clothing are industrial sectors with a long tradition in national contexts in which production work is still an important task. Globalisation affected the sectors in different ways: The clothing sector has been very strongly shaped by global dynamics and has a long tradition of outsourcing

¹⁵ A large body of literature focuses on different aspects of production work, although recently the subjective perspective of production workers has often been neglected (cf. Lautsch and Scully, 2007; Senghaas-Knobloch and Nagler, 2000).

and offshoring production work, due to the labour intensity of tasks which allow only a very low level of automation (Dunford, 2004). Globally induced economic pressure due to acceleration processes in international markets are either being shifted to subcontractors down the value chain (Flecker and Holtgrewe, 2007: 22) or compensated for by high flexibility demands that have to be fulfilled by production workers. By contrast, the food sector allows a high level of automation, and here global market pressure is at present stage arising only slowly, but is steadily gaining importance, and is often compensated for by an increased level of standardisation as well as flexibility in the use of working time (Meil and Schönauer, 2007: 77). In both sectors, a loss of union power due to global economic conditions can be seen (Nierling and Krings, 2007). Because of this, production workers come more directly face to face with the forces of globalisation: In both industries, a rise in global market pressure has led to standardisation processes, insecure working conditions, and high demands on worker flexibility. As described in the following, women working in production have been particularly affected by the processes of globalisation.

Female labour has a long tradition in the production sector because a second income has often been economically essential to the working class. Nevertheless, strong segregation between the sexes still determines the gender-biased allocation of working tasks and deployment of skills. Surprisingly these gender-related working patterns have remained constant despite the profound changes in working processes and profiles caused by standardisation processes. As a case study from the food industry shows, before global restructuring processes occurred, the occupational identity of male production workers was based strongly on their manual skill in a special field of work, which in turn implied the exclusion of women in this field. Due to the automation forced by economic pressure, the importance of this expertise was eroded. This process of change could theoretically have opened up the field for women and positively influenced gender relations in this working context. However, as the empirical evidence shows, male-dominated structures remained strongly intact, even when circumstances changed and «suggest the problematic nature of remaking long-standing work identity even once past certainties are swept away» (Sayce, Ackers and Greene, 2007: 99) (cf. Gorm Hansen, 2007).

Gender stereotypes in production work have not changed in the process of standardisation; on the contrary, they even seem to have become reinforced: Women are often chosen for tasks which are often highly standardised and repetitive. However, in terms of career, tasks involving technical development are essential for progress; therefore gender-related allocation of working tasks still results in career disadvantages for women, because generally men are chosen in preference for technically based tasks. These gender-biased decisions lead to further segregation of female and male working profiles in the production sector (Nierling and Krings, 2007). Along with (technically based) upskilling of male production workers, simple and repetitive tasks continue to increasingly be the

domain of women, which means a process of devaluing «female» tasks and revaluing «male» ones. Devaluation and revaluation processes become extremely obvious if they affect directly measurable indicators like i.e. the wage level. This can be best illustrated by one case study from the clothing sector. Here, women do not have access to special payments because of a gendered division of tasks:

the work categories men belong to (machine specialist; stamp specialist; store workers) have subsidies of risk that women categories don't have (seamstress, embroiderers) (Vasconcelos da Silva, Woll and Paulos 2007, 10).

The phenomenon «feminisation of work» – which is already well-described in academic literature – still plays a central role in the assessment of societal recognition of working tasks as well as professions (Becker-Schmidt, 2007; Gottschall, 1995). The empirical evidence indicates that, especially in production work, the feminisation of tasks becomes manifest in work organisation.

Due to global restructuring processes, outsourcing and offshoring activities have become very common in production. This development causes workers a high level of insecurity about their job future. Because of their low-qualified job profile, production workers do not have many alternatives and feel very much dependent on the economical well-being of the company they working for. Job insecurity can be regarded as the most important effect of global economic pressure at the workplace level for both female and male production workers. According to the findings of Nickie Charles and Emma James, at a societal level, job insecurity is gendered, as it is considered very much as a male problem:

And although job insecurity is equally serious for women and men in individual terms, there is still a widespread view that the provider role is an important part of men's identity and the inability to provide is particularly damaging to men (Charles and James, 2003: 550).

However, the way in which the increased level of job insecurity actually influences work and life for both men and women must be the subject of further research.

In order to meet growing market demands, flexible production patterns and increased demands on efficiency have become commonplace in food and clothing production. Especially the increased demands on flexibility by the firms lead to longer and irregular working hours at the individual workplace level, which often includes night shifts or overtime¹⁶. In line with increased efficiency demands in the work process, the work intensity has increased significantly due to global market pressure.

¹⁶ However it has to be noted that the possibility to work night shifts and overtime can be also appreciated by the workers because of the low wage level in production work (cf. also to Lautsch and Scully, 2007).

Female production workers are especially affected by these intensified working demands. Especially because of increased temporal restrictions, the combination of work and life becomes more difficult and exhausting. Working hours are organised around rigid shifts that often include irregular working hours without offering temporal flexibility. The time schedules for work often do not match the opening hours of childcare facilities or public service institutions, so very often the workers have to organise an individual fit to bridge both work and family requirements:

Women who have to take their children to kindergarten have quite a lot of problems; when they have morning shifts and must clock in at six they cannot take their children because nobody looks after them at kindergarten or school... (Italian production worker in Pedaci, 2007: 10).

The missing link between the timetables of work and public life often has to be organised on an individual basis, where social networks provide the most important support.

Of course, the practices of balancing work and family life are largely influenced by the national background and institutional settings of different regimes. In Southern Europe female production workers can still rely on a strong family background, whereas production workers in Continental and Northern Europe depend much more on institutional support or company measures. However, it becomes apparent that in no countries do the organisational frameworks offer essential support for female production workers. Even in Scandinavia, the changes in working conditions have deeply affected the living and working circumstances of female workers (Nierling and Krings, 2007).

Global dynamics meet local working routines – final conclusions

The findings show that global restructuring processes have a significant impact on occupations in terms of altering local working (and living) conditions. One central result which has been considered for all occupations is that there is a clear trend towards greater economic pressure from the global market economy which leads to acceleration and intensification processes as well as fundamental changes in skill demands in most occupations.

At the individual workplace level, globally induced acceleration processes have various effects on occupational groups. With faster production cycles and tighter deadlines in *highly skilled occupations*, acceleration processes are experienced as more intensive work routines by the employees. One characteristic of highly skilled occupations is that the growing pressure is embedded into organisational changes that offer employees a high level of self control and personal responsibility at work. In these occupations, employees identify strongly with the content of

the work, introducing artistic, intellectual, managerial and technological aspects which generally lead to a high adaptation of intensified working conditions.

By contrast, in *low-skilled occupations*, global economic pressure leads to job insecurity and higher (temporal) flexibility demands from the workers. The quality of work and job satisfaction is continuously weakened. Since the global management of companies is spatially undefined, the power of unions has also deteriorated as have formerly strong worker's collectives. This development is very likely to worsen the working conditions of production workers even further in the future.

Semi-skilled occupations have been faced with a broad range of organisational changes with reorganisation processes in the public sector. Daily working life was already deeply affected by these changes; ongoing restructuring processes from «public» to «private» will certainly aggravate working conditions in the public sector even further.

With regard to gender relations, global restructuring processes have a wide variety of effects which seem strongly correlated with occupational level.

In terms of *skills and qualification*, it becomes clear that in low- and semi-skilled occupations, traditional gender roles in terms of task division and skill development are retained. Changes in the skill portfolio do not lead to changing career patterns or quality of work for female workers; on the contrary, male-dominated career paths prevail. By contrast, changes in skill demands in knowledge-intensive occupations enable female biographies in that traditional male occupations and biographical paths are opened up and offer women the opportunity to explore new working fields. These fields demand high individual commitment towards work, and women identify themselves increasingly with the content as well as the creative aspects of work. This enables them to gain access to the labour markets and the control to explore their own ways of working and living.

It seems that qualification and skills play an essential role for women in achieving substantial and mental independence from traditional gender roles in work. Whereas in highly skilled occupations, the high qualification level empowers (female) employees to actively shape their individual work biography, in semi- and low-skilled occupations employees depend much more on the organisational framework determined by their current job. This provides them with few opportunities to actively change their job situation.

Still, it is in terms of *work-family relations* that gender inequalities are most striking. In all occupations it becomes evident that intensified working conditions have a particular impact on women because of their care obligation. But here too, differences can be observed related to the occupational level. In low- and semi-skilled occupations, employees depend very much on given temporal frameworks of the organisations around which they organise family life. If these temporal frameworks change, women are forced to adapt family life to the new schedules, which often involves high subjective costs.

In highly skilled occupations, temporal flexibility offers women the option of developing individual strategies for combining work and family. These employees seem to have more freedom in realising their own model of life and to have the power to liberate themselves from the (female) obligation of care work. In an extreme case, this can even result in the decision to follow professional and career paths exclusively. Nevertheless, in all occupational groups the male attitude towards work and the lack of involvement in care work remains, even if women are on their way to breaking out of the traditional role model. Especially if work intensification increases due to global pressure, gender differences in work are related to care obligations. The «double burden» of female employees becomes obvious i.e. in terms of career opportunities or work-life balance. Furthermore, it has to be stressed that female empowerment within the occupation is orientated to male working patterns; the current working structure does not offer options for work and life that would allow women to enter into alternative working and living concepts.

The results also show that the *institutional setting* as well as cultural embeddedness play a crucial role in shaping gender-related work relations. Institutional support is capable of buffering and influencing the impacts of global change processes on the local workplace. It gains particularly in importance in lower-skilled occupations where there is little space for individual action, since the influence of worker's representatives is being widely diminished. In countries with low institutional support like Eastern Europe, workers and employees are exposed much more to global forces which can lead to increased sex segregation on the workplace. In contrast, the institutional background in Northern Europe enables women very much to realise their own living and working models. It seems that in times of globalisation, the role of institutional backing becomes even more important in the development of European working conditions.

With regard to the hypothesis that globally induced developments strengthen gender-related working conditions in the long run, it seems that global restructuring should be considered first as an enormous driving force. This driving force definitely influences working patterns in local and national territories, even in highly industrialised societies. Second, with regard to unequal access, control and distribution of resources and opportunities between men and women, the results greatly emphasise two different pictures: On the one hand in highly skilled occupations, women have gained access to the labour market and gendered effects are being registered. On the other hand, in lower skilled occupations, existing gender regimes remain and even exacerbate gender segregation as well as the gendered division of labour.

Overall, the results greatly underline the critical dimension of globalisation «how it creates differential opportunities, challenges, risks and dilemmas for women and men and how, in turn, it modifies the process of social change» (Chow, 2003: 446).

Furthermore the issues of globalisation such as acceleration processes and the increase in market demands within occupational ones very much support the idea of globalisation as a concept of ongoing «global management». From the gender perspective, it should be examined to what extent the term «globalisation» is still embedded into a (male) dominated ideology and (European/ American) culture which is still transporting the centre-periphery metaphor on different levels. From that critical perspective, economic expansion should be analysed less from the centre and much more from the periphery.

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Annex

Table 1: Distribution of occupational case studies across countries (number of case studies)

	Austria	Belgium	Bulgaria	Denmark	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Norway	Portugal	Sweden	The Netherlands	UK	In total
High skilled occupations:															
Designers in clothing					1	1					1				3
IT-professionals	1	1	1		1	2		1		1		1	1	1	11
Semi-skilled occupations:															
Front office employees in customer services in the public sector	1	1				1		1	1			1		1	7
Low-skilled occupations:															
Production workers in food or clothing		1		1			1		1	1	1				6

Linda Nierling studied Environmental Sciences and Business Administration at the University of Lueneburg, Germany and the ETH Zurich, Switzerland. She graduated in Environmental Sciences in autumn 2005. Since October 2005 she works as a research fellow at the Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS) at the Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe, Germany. Her research focus lies on change processes in work, gender studies and sustainable development. Currently she is working on her doctoral thesis on recognition structures of work. The PhD-project is located at the University of Frankfurt, Germany in the department of sociology.

Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)
Research Centre Karlsruhe
Hermann-von-Helmholtz-Platz 1
76344 Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen
Germany
E-mail: nierling@itas.fzk.de

Bettina-Johanna Krings, M.A. Senior Scientist at the Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS) at the Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe. She has completed her studies in Political Sciences, Sociology and Anthropology. She had working experiences in Latin America. Since 1994, she was involved in research activities at ITAS on different issues like science and technology policy, gender studies, research policy for a sustainable development. Since 1999, she has a strong focus on the relationship between information technologies and consequences on working conditions. She has completed several projects on that issue with strong bias on different topics.

Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)
Research Centre Karlsruhe
Hermann-von-Helmholtz-Platz 1
76344 Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen
Germany
E-mail: krings@itas.fzk.de

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