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Title:

Introducing Gender into Political Concepts of the Information Society

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During the nineties concepts of an emerging information society entered the political scene all over the world. In the European Union as in its states many reports showed the impact of information technology on nearly all areas of everyday life. It became obvious that only a broad participation of people would create more understanding of the chances and the risks of an information society. In 1996 the federal German government installed a so-called Forum Info 2000 combining a spectrum of societal groups to discuss several main issues of an information society. Experts came together in eight working groups on topics like 'work', 'education', or 'health'.

Despite an easy available amount of knowledge on women's situation in all these areas, the agendas and the first discussions of the Forum Info 2000 working groups remained without reference to gendered perspectives on life or work. For this reason the women's group in the German Society for Informatics established in cooperation with women and men from other women's organisations, from the unions, from industry, politics, science, and churches a ninth working group called 'Women in the Information Society' or 'AG 9' in the Forum Info 2000. This AG 9 started in the middle of 1997 with the aim to introduce aspects of gender equity to the information society initiative in Germany. During one year the specific chances and risks for women in an emerging information society have been outlined and a broad spectrum of recommended reforms towards increasing gender equity has been provided. Recommendations concentrate on the areas work, education, democratization and information technology design:

It is difficult to give a short summary of the results achieved by a group of 30 female and male experts. First (1.) we explain the substantial reason for creating the AG 9. Literally that means introducing to the starting point of our work. Therefore we will give a short insight into the usual male-dominated debate about information society. This definition will largely follow the form of a thesis. Considering this background, (2.) the objectives of AG 9 become perfectly comprehensible. In the following we will present the results of AG 9, which will not only help to give a better explanation of the world in relation to gender relations but will offer an possibility to change it, too. This presentation of results is divided into the following four parts: (3.) Just Distribution of Work, (4.) New Opportunities in Profession and Education, (5.) Potentials for Democratization, (6.) Future Technology Creation. Our report ends (7.) with a little outlook on possible new ways of work and life in future.

1. Definition of Our Position

Political parties and representatives of the economy in Germany, Europe, Japan and the USA today agree that the fast development of information and communication technologies will accelerate a dramatic change in economy and society. As early as 1994 the recommendations of

the so-called Bangemann report, i.e. a group of personalities in the European Council, talked about a revolution opening new, enormous capacities for human intelligence and being the source for numerous changes concerning the ways we work and live together.

Every man and every woman shall be a winner in this information society. An automatism is being constructed between new information and communication technologies and thousands of new jobs. An enormous market of economic growth will be created via the information society and consequently reduce mass unemployment. In the report a higher standard of living is promised as a result of new technologies which goes along with a growth in the fields of service and entertainment.

Once more these arguments link technical to social progress. New information and communication technologies shall lead to economic and social prosperity. But a change in gender relations is not explicitly mentioned in this context. The predicted and strived for numerous changes in work and living conditions do not seem to be related to the ways the sexes work and live together.

Therefore it is no miracle, that the promotion programs of all German political parties mentioned absolutely no question explicitly aiming at the change of gender relations. There was only one exception: the pilot applications which were to be executed to secure the structural transition consider "variable tele-working, which is user-friendly for families and women".

This emphasizes once more, that there is no intention to relate the structural transition to gender relations. On the contrary: everything shall remain unchanged. Assigning tele-net-working to women, often in combination with part-time jobs, implies their further responsibility for families, raising children and reproduction tasks. Every woman is once more left alone to solve the problem of combining family care with professional work.

But even most critics of an economic growth euphoria, which can be found in different political parties, trade unions as well as in science ignore the question of gender in their debate on information society. They assume that a number of political measures concerning society have to be executed to design information society in a socially compatible way. Therefore they intend to avoid inequality in many fields among other things by realizing a basic supply with information, by effective protection of data, consumers and youth as well as efficient concentration control.

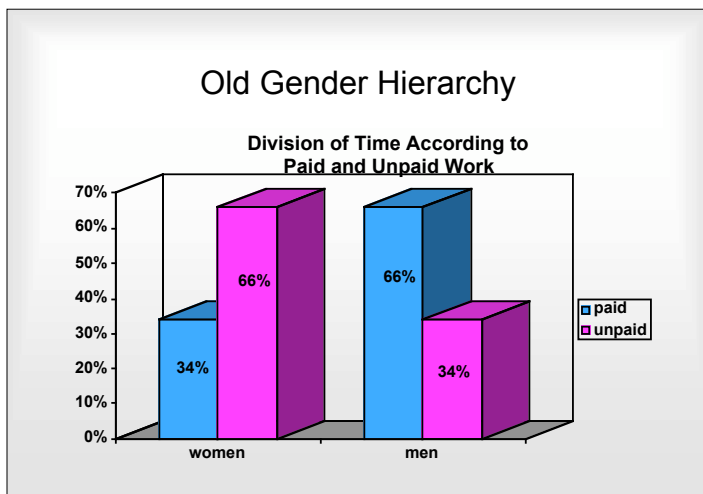
Even those designers of a more human future society talk in a very general sense about better compatibility of work-world and private world in information society and forget to mention, if it is feasible for the different female and male lifestyles. To sum up it can be said, that the discussion about information society has been blind to gender so far.

Even if the so-called big politics does hardly mention gender relations, the gender-hierarchical distribution of work still exists. Today, work is still not distributed equally among the sexes: while men dominate the paid wage labor, women are more responsible for the unpaid, private household and family care. This responsibility for home-life prevents their equal participation in the job market. As a consequence men dominate on all levels of wage labor in higher and better paid for positions, whereas women's workplaces do rather belong to the lower third of the hierarchy. Plainly spoken this means that women earn up to a third less than their male colleagues. Nearly all unpaid work in family and social networks rests on their shoulders.

Our experience in everyday life confronts us all with this women-discriminating phenomenon, but due to women research an abundance of corresponding material exists. We have chosen a little statistic from the German United Nations report on human development to demonstrate this.

Men do indeed work nearly as much as women in industrialized countries, as far as paid and unpaid economic activities, which can be quantified are concerned. This is already a little success, because it has not been the case for long and is still not the case in less industrialized countries.

But if we make a division between paid and unpaid activities, our gender-hierarchical reality becomes quite clear in just one statistic. A third of all activities done by women in industrial countries are paid and two thirds of their activities like shopping, food preparation and childcare are unpaid. The situation for men is reversed: two thirds of their activities are paid, the remaining third is not.



Source: Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen (Ed.): Bericht über die menschliche Entwicklung 1995, Bonn 1995, p. 98 (translated)

2. Objectives of AG 9

Under the influence of the mentioned status quo the AG 9, like many others, assumes first that the development of the information society will bring about numerous changes in the ways we work and live together. But we seriously consider the fact that this structural transition happens at a time, when female work and female life are still very much different from male work and male life and take this second aspect as a starting point of our deliberations.

Therefore, the AG 9 agrees, that information society will have effects on gender relations. Here, different ways of development are possible:

- Women could become the losers of the current worldwide developments without an active women-oriented policy. This could harm German society, too, because a one-sided orientation towards male modes of work and life blocks necessary and sensible innovations in economy and society.
- On the other hand you can achieve a shift in social borders by an aware women-oriented policy especially in times of social change and awakening. This shift can break down gender-hierarchical division of work and push us towards the realization of the principle of equal opportunities, being one of the major principle in the German Grundgesetz. At the same time this development can contribute to an information society which adapts more to human needs and demands. In face of their multitudinous life experience in family

care, job and social networks especially many women ask for a sensible cooperation between human beings and technology.

We will emphasize these alternative developments in the following four main topics of our work:

3. Just Distribution of Work

4. New Opportunities in Profession and Education

5. Potentials for Democratization

6. Future Technology Creation

Here, we will proceed as follows: first we will describe the existing problems for women in the current developments in each field, then we will give a short description of our objectives for each field and will finally introduce selected recommendations for measures, incentives of AG 9. These incentives are directed at the Federal Government, the governments of Germany's federal states, representatives of employers and employees and to the economy.

3. Just Distribution of Work

Problems

The rapid development of information and communication technologies results in great increase in production and performance and consequently significant potentials for rationalization. This technological development and its worldwide networking possibilities and multi-media software has effects surpassing the market for information and communication technologies and influences the whole work-world. Global digitalization of nearly all fields in work and life has effects on the number and quantity of jobs, work organization, work conditions and job profiles for a wide range of jobs.

New work forms are created in all fields of the economy. New network technologies make the decentralization of organization structures easier and let it therefore gain a new quality. The internationalization of the economy is increasing, complete company units are being outsourced, the first virtual companies are being created. The crumbling of usual work structures will result either in flexibility or in individualization of work.

Now, there are two central developments concerning women:

- the number of jobs is continuously decreasing
- the unjust distribution of work is growing

The most significant effect of this development in Germany is mass unemployment with at present 8 million people looking for a job (i.e. 5 million registered and 3 million as "silent reserve"). But for many many employees lifelong full-time employment in an office or factory with clearly regulated working hours will soon belong to the past. Work outside the normal working relationship and dependent work is becoming more and more influential. Nearly a third of all dependently employed is today engaged in so-called "not normal working relationships".

More and more women belong to this group. They work in poorly paying occupations, in so-called stand-by positions, in merely apparent self-employment, they do outwork and short-time work. Most jobs are part-time jobs and thus they will not be able to secure a living.

Social security systems in Germany are still oriented at continual full-time work relationships in combination with marriage. Due to this development principally women are at a disadvantage, especially without an independent social security.

Objectives

But the deep structural transition inside the developing information society, which is only suggested here, offers chances for a change in gender relations. The current development towards information society affects the whole concept of normal work relationships which continues to be an impediment for women and now begins to crumble.

We bear in mind the results of social scientific women research. According to them a social problem evolves out of normal work relationships leaving no time for family needs. At least men or women with children can hardly combine work with reproduction tasks. It is a condition for an employee in a normal work relationship to have someone in the background organizing everyday life and caring for children and elder relatives. The clear division and sex-specific assignment of paid work and unpaid reproduction tasks are based on the incompatibility of the mentioned fields of life. Women's responsibility for household and family tasks prevents their equal participation in the job market. Thus, dependent relations and a difference in power between the sexes are created.

Assuming the erosion of this normal work relationship, this change should be used to strengthen and expand women's positions in the job market, achieve at the same time a juster distribution of reproduction tasks and give more room to fields of life outside work.

Incentives of AG 9

Reduce working time for everyone

Women's goal in the current transition must be a just redistribution of the decreasing work volume and a just distribution of the reproduction tasks. Here, the decisive measure is a general reduction of working time for all employees. Therefore representatives of employers and employees are asked to develop ways for a redistribution of the short good "work", making an independent basic income possible and consequently reducing unemployment.

The new opportunities of information society must create a link between paid work and family care for both sexes. Apart from a general reduction of working time it is necessary to transform until now unpaid social work (e.g. honorary activities, childcare and caring for the elderly etc.) into paid work.

Separate social security system from work

To take first steps into the direction of a juster distribution of work, female and male politicians today have the obligation to separate the social security system, especially the old age pension fund system, from work in combination with marriage as soon as possible. A new social security system shall provide a basic financial social security for both female and male citizens and secure new developments in all fields of life and work.

Expand individual sovereignty over time

A radical reduction of working time does of course not mean a rigid working time of 30 or 25 hours per week. The opportunities for a temporal flexibility of work can and must be used as a chance for the development of more individual sovereignty over time for the employees. Especially women would profit from that. It is one goal to achieve an independent individualization of working hours largely independent from the immanent rules of the job market via annual work accounts and sabbaticals.

Work flexibility is not only achieved with regard to time but also with regard to space and organization. Here, new forms of tele-working appear to be of advantage for everyone. But obvious advantages often hide the less obvious disadvantages.

Therefore, our recommendations will not include traditional tele-working at home. Traditional tele-working at home promises "compatibility of work and family", thus assigning women to

their classical role and imposing more pressure on them. And that is a problem. Tele-working at home requires a high capability in organizing work and family life. Nothing much remains from the hope for flexibility in combining professional with family work, if an unsecure order inflow in combination with great time pressure dominates the shaping of work. Tele-working at home significantly reduces social contacts, which usually go along with this kind of work. Additionally, many routine activities (data input, writing) are being transformed into tele-working jobs at home. Many poorly paying but exhausting jobs are created right now in so-called call centers. An orientation towards alternating tele-working is positively taking shape in the debate on tele-working, where tele-working at home alternates with activities in the company. Regular presence in the company maintains the integration into operation work processes and communication structures. If qualified activities can thus be executed, interesting professional prospects are created.

Finance pilot projects for qualified alternating tele-working

Companies, Federal and regional ministries therefore have the obligation to promote and test further pilot projects for alternating tele-working. Their focus has to be on the development of independent, qualified and work for women and men securing their old-age pension.

The tendency of employers to dismiss continual work relationships increases the stronger the separation in regard of the location of work from the company becomes. This can be observed in the entire economy. Future employees can thus unvoluntarily become one of the "new self-employed". Here, tele-houses and tele-centers could become a prospect by offering a common working place for self-employed thus avoiding their social isolation at home.

Promote the opening of tele-houses

Politicians should therefore be obliged to promote tele-centers and tele-houses with their opportunities for social interchange, childcare facilities and technical support with effective measures (e.g. financial aid). Here, a women-oriented policy must take the chance to participate in newly developing forms of work.

Promote female company founders

Federal and regional programs for the promotion of company founders should of course be intended to focus on female company founders. Opportunities for consulting, further education and "coaching" must be created and later be expanded.

4. New Opportunities in Profession and Education

Problem

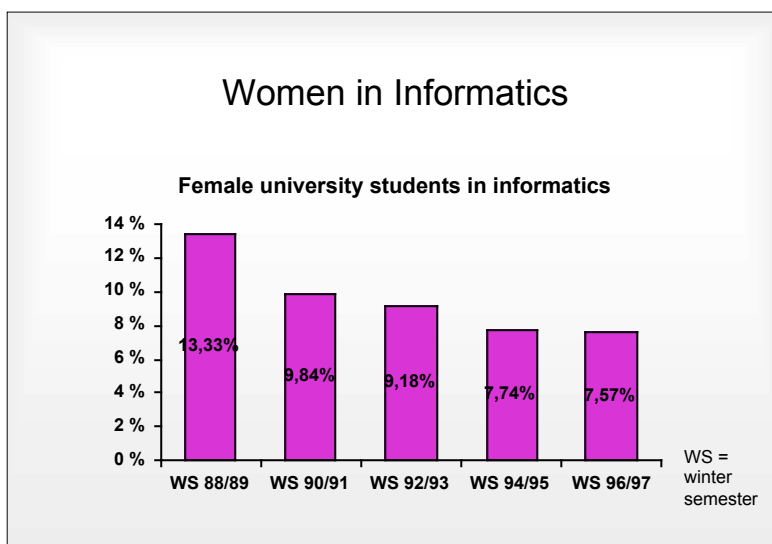
Many jobs that are typical for women and are located on the lowest hierarchical level (data input, easy office activities) disappear as a result of the introduction of information technologies. A rise in employment is mainly to be expected in companies operating in the fields of media and communication devices, telecommunication and data processing. These will be jobs for highly-qualified specialists.

Women are still greatly underrepresented in fields of education and jobs concerning information technology, one of the most promising future occupational fields. The society's understanding of technology is responsible for that. Sex stereotypes like "women are sensitive and caring", "men are technically competent and dominant" influence the expected role behaviour of girls and boys and consequently coin their role models. And the widespread myth regarding technical knowledge as a kind of male secret knowledge still exists.

Today, women naturally use the various applications in information and communication technology in their vocational training and jobs. And although it might seem exaggerated, you can say, that as soon as a larger group of women does something technical it is no longer regarded as that.

Even jobs and academic disciplines in information technology focus on technology orientation and a dry and unimaginative approach towards technical problems. Therefore, women experts in information technology have been criticizing for years the lack of social orientation as well as the lack of orientation at human benefits or the missing holistic approaches to the development and shaping of information technology.

Creative potentials, the life experience and the values of women remain untouched. They have little influence on the contents and forms of vocational training and further education in information technology.



Source: Fakultätentag Informatik

This discrimination against women might have considerable negative effects on the German economic system. Most experts agree that jobs in information and communication technology do not only require their employees' technical competence, but at the same time require social and communicative competence, teamwork, application orientation and the ability to embrace different disciplines.

The abilities mentioned above are regarded as female stereotypes and consequently of no major importance. The fact that jobs and abilities defined as typical female earn less than comparable male occupations is still almost a law of nature in our society.

Objectives

Despite all problems we intend to make use of the changes in jobs and career profiles to break down the horizontal and vertical division of work among the sexes in occupational activities. In many economic fields the occupational focus lies at a point, where planning, technology and service overlap. Apart from the basic vocational training new qualifications like holistic approach, process-oriented work, ability to communicate and social competence are required. If we succeed in recognizing those key qualifications, being regarded as female stereotypes and are

important for information technology, as occupational qualifications and assess them accordingly we will eventually realize that they can be more intensely contributed by women. As a consequence new career chances for women might be created in many technology-oriented professional fields.

Simultaneously technical competence must be understood in the sense that it includes application orientation as well as technology profits. Then, more women will be attracted to the academic discipline of information sciences, which has been a very technical one until now.

Incentives of AG 9

A different technical education must already start at school. Our recommendations are directed to the ministries of education and teachers. They read as follows:

Expand basic education in information technology

It is important to practise information technology in different subjects. Apart from possible applications pupils should be especially introduced to the limits and social risks. The application of technology should be seen as a method. Information technology must be integrated into different subjects with special regard to interests and experiences of girls. Female teachers should be included here.

Realize girl-oriented topics in school

Teaching concepts should be developed and applied which motivate girls to use technology and acquire technical qualifications. Because we have just begun here, all fields promoting models and research (e.g. the Bund-Länder-Kommission) should focus on the development of topics corresponding to the demands of girls and women. It is necessary to give deliberate support to the respective public debate and academic exchange by meetings and workshops. Existing initiatives (e.g. "Schools into the Internet") are urged to realize concrete measures for equal participation of female pupils and teachers on all possible levels.

Realize the results of research on coeducation

Different forms of separate lessons for girls and boys are to be introduced to schools, universities and further education facilities - especially in the technology and natural sciences field. Federal government and federal states have to establish more pilot projects to gain new ideas about tutorial systems and academic disciplines for women, summer universities for women pupils and students as well as women's universities. Experiences gained in women's projects have to be implemented for coeducational learning processes, too.

Change academic disciplines in information technology

Additions to and reforms of academic curriculums including cooperative, ecological and communicative elements in technical education, must be promoted by Federal and regional ministries of education and research in cooperation with women's organizations, representatives of employers, trade unions and associations of technical professions. This change considers the demands of professional life as well as special wishes and abilities of women.

Women at universities are urged to take advantage of the chances offered by new professional challenges and to participate actively in reforming vocational training and academic disciplines in information technology.

Introduce information technology to vocational training

Vocational training for jobs dominated by women must especially be supplemented with (information) technological issues. Function and possible use of applications of information technology should become a topic as well as their efficient adaption to work processes, which will not only consider human needs but quality, too. Vocational schools and companies must win

women teachers for this task. Education in groups of women should be considered an alternative, too.

Improve further education in professions for women

Companies and further education institutions have to offer further education in information technology for women giving them the opportunity to combine their professional with new knowledge in information technology. Today, women must have the opportunity to become specialized in additional skills such as multi-media. Women can thus become participants in new application developments and work processes.

Improve future careers' guidance

Careers' guidance for women must direct their attention towards the changes and promotion prospects in different professions to prevent their decision for a profession without satisfying career prospects.

Girls and women should be encouraged to take unusual decisions. Federal and regional ministries and the federal employment office should as a rule promote programs encouraging women and girls to embark on a technical career. Programs like the "Take-Your-Daughter-to-Work-Days" in the USA could serve as an example. Regional cooperations between companies and women's networks must be additionally established. Young women and the social environment influencing them (e.g. parents and both female and male teachers) can thus be introduced to new occupational fields and professional and private careers of women technicians.

Establish mentoring networks

The establishment of mentoring networks between school, university and professional life has to be enforced in technical fields. A substantial support in various educational situations can thus be achieved and become a significant countereffect to the abandonment of vocational or academic education.

Realize educational accounts for lifelong learning

To give women the opportunities for lifelong learning as demanded in information society politics are urged to develop concepts like educational accounts. Educational accounts shall ensure the right of education, which can be financed and is independent from life expectancy.

5. Potentials for Democratization

Problem

The free (of charge) access to information and to education is of great importance for the historical progress towards equal opportunities for women. The new digital services are exclusively offering more and more information and education, even vacancies. But these services cause initial costs and running costs for private households, operational and public facilities. Women's future access to information in the internet is consequently in danger, because hardly any terminals for both female and male citizens exist and access via private households is very expensive in Germany. Due to the double pressure that job and family impose on them, women have no time to surf in the net.

While examples from other countries show that extensive support programs enabling inexpensive technology, education and reasonable connection fees have achieved broad effects, free and public access to the Internet (e.g. in libraries) is still very rare in Germany.

This is so much more dramatic, because women are not only separated from the access to information in general, but because the forms of information exchange are being transformed, too. Communication in the past has been influenced by the presence of people. Today, a growing

number of exchange processes is transmitted via technology. Although direct communication, meaning interpersonal exchange of information, continues to be of great importance, women must not be assigned exclusively to face-to-face-communication which is due to a lack of resources.

Communication and cooperation between people, freedom of expression and information are conditions allowing political participation and are important contributions to a living democratic society. New media and worldwide data networks will cause a change in traditional communication structures and political processes of decision. The technical possibilities are also causing new forms of publicity which is emphasized by their representation in the internet.

Until today the question remains, if this change can strengthen objectives in participation and equal opportunities and thus contribute to the democratization of our society. Fact is, that women are not represented more distinctly and evidently than in the classical media.

The problem of women's underrepresentation on all levels of political and economic-technical decision remains. As a consequence women have hardly direct influence on the development of strategies for shaping information society.

Objectives

Probably we soon agree that the active participation of women in the shaping of the future society is urgently needed and must be fought for. In relation to new media we must succeed in realizing decision rights and election possibilities for women.

It is important for women to experience how new media can be used in accordance with their own interests. With the help of the new media women might have the chance to create a publicity for their own interests, which lies outside the range of traditional, existing male structures of power. Already today women networks use international communication ways like the internet to pass on information and accompany political activities.

Every individual woman must have access to the net. Private life changes in accordance with net communication. The topics in the net do no longer draw a sharp line between private and public topics. Women might have the chance to reveal their oppression, which does not only happen in private but is also an individual and isolating process, to a chosen public.

Summarizing we expect, that the new network publicity will contribute to the democratization of our society, supposing that a great number of women participates in the opening networks to women communication and cooperation.

But if we intend to realize this, we must implement the following necessary measures:

Incentives of AG 9:

Install terminals for both female and male on location

To ensure all women's future participation in information society, it is necessary to give open access to the new media. The use of digital media must be affordable, accessible and technically comprehensible for all women.

Ensuring free access to important information

It is urgent to realize the direct and free access to information relevant for decisions. Here, it is important to include women's organizations, associations and groups into political decisions on the future in information technology.

Create public media consulting offices in women's organizations

Federal, regional and local governments are urged to implement a broad and extensive support program for women. Publically funded consulting offices in women's groups and initiatives have

to be established as soon as possible. The program must ensure the development of training concepts and the establishment of mentors and the supply with efficient technology.

Create women-oriented opportunities in the net

Public institutions and organizations offering and transmitting information in the internet must regard their target group women in form and contents. Women-related contents must be introduced into the net, presenting concrete personal and professional benefits for women. The experience of women's organizations and professional associations, which have already established an infrastructure of women-specific opportunities are to be included. A nationwide and decentral women's servers must be established and their maintenance be secured.

Research sex-specific network culture and communication

Scientific research on sex-specific differences in the network culture and communication should be performed and their effect be analyzed. Research on how women's initiatives and topics can be accessed via the usual search functions is necessary, too.

Guarantee right of self-determination in information

It is important to guarantee the desirable protection of personal data and intimacy, because the net creates a new publicity, where women can deliberately go beyond their privacy. Here, governmental institutions are obliged to create the necessary regulations to maintain self-determination in information. Self-determination in information is equivalent to our decision who is allowed to know something about us at a certain point of time. Its realization is the basis for more democracy in information networks.

6. Future Technology Creation

Problem

Various studies show that creation of a technology which is principally oriented at technical feasibility without considering human benefits is not attractive to women. Often, women technicians criticize the lack of social orientation as well as the lack of orientation at human benefits or the missing holistic approaches to the development of applications in information technology. As long as these aspects are neglected in favor of approaches principally oriented at technical feasibility, only a few women will find opportunities for identification and development inside information technology. At the same time, women's creative potentials which are achieved in female socialization remain untouched.

The one-sided development and use of technologies in certain fields of application can be observed in the transport field. Here, substantial public funding is used to realize an "intelligent" traffic management by means of a traffic guidance system. Such telematic systems do not help to avoid useless travelling by car or lorry and they are no contribution to the useful exploitation of cars. Instead, they lead to an even distribution of traffic. Traffic guidance systems affect public short-distance and long-distance transport in a negative way. When cooperating with public transport it used as a kind of emergency exit in case of traffic jams or lack of parking space. Thus, cars have priority. Such systems are expensive and no money is left for the expansion of public short-distance transport. Traffic guidance systems suggest a flowing traffic and lots of vacant parking space by new hopes for mobility, but will only lead to additional traffic.

Objectives

It is necessary to understand and test the significance of prior consideration of women's life experience in face of existing male dominance in developing the information society. Prime

factors are the orientation at ecological and social benefits, quality-orientation, a holistic approach, respect for social relationships and competence in communication or even participating and interdisciplinary approaches.

The majority of the large sums from German and European funds invested into traffic guidance systems will be re-directed to support public transport, assuming women's participation in technology creation. Due to their various tasks in job and family and the corresponding various ways women depend especially on public transport. And by the way, public transport offers enormous chances for the application of telematics. For example, information desks in trains and stations can be established, where information about timetables and connections for delayed trains can be easily accessed. Furthermore, it makes sense to develop user-friendly software, giving assistance in organizing car-sharing and collective taxi transport. Intelligent use of traffic-lights could result in priority for public transport and bicycles.

Incentives of AG 9

Fund women's research in information science

The Federal and regional ministries for education and research should intensify support programs for the continuous development of women's research in natural sciences and technology.

Encourage plans for developments corresponding to women's needs and demands

Interdisciplinary plans for research and development in technology policies aiming at the creation of technical applications answering to women's needs and demands especially in everyday life and the service field are to be encouraged.

Integrate ecological and social benefits into evaluations concerning the effects of technology

Studies concerning the effects of technology and social scientific effect research must be very aware of female opinions in their questions and methods. Public funding in research and development must be linked to the integration of ecological and social benefits.

De-intensify the progress in technology - intensify the debate in society

According to the interests of democratic decisions on information technology both female and male politicians are urged to oppose the intensification of progress in technology. It is their duty to give sufficient and detailed information about contents and effects of decisions and to moderate a real debate in society.

7. Outlook - Towards New Worlds of Work and Life

As emphasized the development towards information society includes some opportunities to change existing responsibilities and positions. Responsible and social action of economy, administration and politics can oppose the existing effective mechanism using information and communication technologies and results in more rationalization, more unemployment, more isolation, more social injustice and consequently more discrimination against women. To summarize again our main political objectives, it is the opinion of AG 9 that we can indeed proceed towards new worlds in work and life.

New Worlds in Work and Life

- Reduced working time for everyone
- Individual sovereignty of time and space
- New jobs in the social field
- Broken down gender-stereotypes
- Expanded technical competence
- Education accounts for lifelong learning
- Financeable access to new media
- Women-related topics in the Internet
- Women participating in the shaping of technology
- Ecological and social benefits in technology design
- Satisfying human needs

First, the rare good "work" must be distributed in a more just way. Effective and massive reductions in working time for all employees must be linked to individual sovereignty over time and space which goes as far as possible in creating an information society giving room not only to work for women and men, but to activities in family as well as in social and political environment, too.

Next, sex stereotypes should be broken down within the scope of changing career demands and all so-called women activities should experience a rise in value. The so-called key qualifications result in new career chances for women in many occupational fields. And when technical competence is finally understood in the sense that it includes technical benefits and is more related to application, more women will be attracted to the academic discipline of information science, which has been dominated so far by strictly technical contents.

It is of utmost importance to make education accessible for everyone at any point of her or his life. Therefore, education accounts must be realized, offering easy access and being flexible in use.

If we can possibly succeed in transforming honorary and nursing work in the private life into work securing them a living, we are on our way towards equal distribution of work among the sexes. Many individual biographies could be realized with new sovereignty in time and space in face of work, which is reduced in time and secure for everyone.

We have mentioned incentives for women's influence on political levels, too. With free access to information terminals in public rooms, free use of networks and opportunities for further education women themselves will become active via the internet and increase their influence on political decisions. If new women-related online services in information and communication will be established by public institutions and women's organizations, the internet can contribute to a broad networking in women's politics and thus support democratization.

This widespread debate is especially decisive for future processes of technology creation, if women participate in the development, creation and application of information technology. If then linked to questions on effective use of systems in information technology and if hardware

and software are not studied in isolation but in their social environment, they can pave the way towards an information society, satisfying human needs and not only conquering new markets. A widespread social debate and a feministic creative approach is necessary to realize these suggestions. Our suggested model cannot be implemented within 24 hours. The social redefinition of the value of work is a cultural process and will need a lot of time. Time and a changed role model are required in the breaking down of male and female stereotypes. But we assume that our suggestions will be incentives for and will invite to a necessary widespread debate on the future of information society. The chances resulting from the shown changes and developments must be used by a newly activated women's movement to proceed towards equal opportunities for women.

Recent Developments

After the change of the Federal government in autumn 1998 the initiative "Forum Info 2000" was transferred to a related initiative "Forum Informationsgesellschaft". The working groups have been restructured (<http://www.forum-infogesellschaft.de>). The working group "Women in the Information Society" is continuing its work concentrating especially on developments in the European Union. Since recently our work is even supported by an office (see information at <http://lovelace.fh-bielefeld.de/forum>). We are very interested in new international contacts.

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