

**RESEARCH GROUP PAPER AND DRAFT PROPOSALS-3 FOR
CONSULTATION WORKSHOP ON GENDER AND TECHNOLOGY,
BRUSSELS, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Information Society
Directorate-General Miniaturisation, Embedded Systems, Societal
Applications**

February 12, 2005

Dr. Irene Kamberidou
Dr. Nikolaos Patsantaras
THE UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS,
Tel.: 210-9702112 (Sociology Lab)
6973312067 and 6977618994
Email: npatsant@phed.uoa.gr
ikamper@phed.uoa.gr, or
renakamp@hotmail.com

VIRTUAL GLOBALIZATION

Key words: gender subject/citizen, service society, commercialization, “professionalization”, virtual world order, virtual servitude, digital despotism, virtual elite, future exclusions-technophobia, cultural commonality, commonality of cultures, virtual illiteracy, virtual techno-illiteracy, interdisciplinary communication/research, Education, socio-economic-biocentric rationale, technoethics..

Everything as we know it today is definitively and ultimately in the process of transformation due to two significant changes in the global scene—the globalization of the economy, aggressive/dynamic competition, and the ‘invasion’ of technology in every area of human-social life, in every sector of public and private activity.

Today we are witnessing the creation of “a society of services/ a service society”, as a result of accelerated technological developments, in combination with the globalization of the economy-- a service society, ‘a bodiless society’ which is gradually replacing industrial society. The expansion of a new bureaucracy is being promoted, the formulation of units that provide services, and the creation of thousands of specialized employment positions in the distribution and use of new technologies, whose hard nucleus is made up of specific specialized knowledge and know-how, denied to the less-privileged gender subject/citizen. The products of the technological

revolution are in reality services—a fact that has foundational consequences on society!

We are at a transitional stage, in a transitional period that not only disorganizes and disorientates but also marginalizes the less privileged gender subject, namely **an extremely large sector of the population, the majority of the EU population, the non-mainstream social groups**. That which was familiar, understood and considered a given is being eradicated, and no longer understood. Due to the high speed disorganization of existing structures the gender subject/citizen is having dramatic difficulty in adapting and comprehending what is going on, and our social system is confronting difficulties in defining the problems and thus providing solutions on how we can get through this transitional period.

The technological revolution is not only about how the gender subject/citizen thinks, produces, moves, communicates, shops or is entertained.. One of the most basic and crucial results of technology is the changes in the way the gender subject/citizen learns, in addition to how the gender subject/citizen sees, experiences or deals with his/her existence and how he/she experiences and sees other peoples' existence. Science and technology intertwine, intermingle and interact with society, since they function/operate in society, thereby increasing the complexity of their nature and their relations.

Obviously, technology has made our life better in many ways. Clearly there are many significant innovations in commodities, a new wave of products, health care innovations and benefits, etc.. However, although technology has made our life better and easier, sometimes the price is too great. For instance the continuous and systematic destruction of our natural environment, social-ethical opposition issues, resistance to commercialization-‘professionalization’, the total exclusion or the limited access of the less privileged gender subject, etc.

Accelerated, high speed technological developments-- in combination with the globalization of the economy and strong and aggressive competition—have resulted in a greater social exclusion of the non-mainstream gender subjects, namely creating more unemployment. Notably, the low educational level of the labour force that has joined the ranks of the unemployed has caused the continuation of their unemployment, in other words inability to find new jobs. Such a reduction has also been observed in the numbers of the middle class labour force, whereas the appearance of a new elite, a virtual elite seems to be drawing the boundaries of exclusion for many social groups.

The more technology develops, the more social exclusions are increased in the EU. A new form of power- **a virtual world order, a virtual globalization** (a new elite) is being established.¹ This new virtual technological class, which possesses the know-

¹ See: Patsantaras, N., Kamberdiou I. (2004). “The Virtual Harem: Technophobia or Exclusion? An Educational Perspective”. Abstract and article submitted and presented at the CONSULTATION WORKSHOP ON GENDER AND TECHNOLOGY, BRUSSELS, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Information Society Directorate-General Miniaturisation, Embedded Systems, Societal Applications, 28 June 2004.

how and required education to promote a new technological society while surpassing or ignoring personal ethics and basic human principles, disregards aesthetical creativity, social solidarity, democratic dialogue and economic justice. As a result human values are being sacrificed to technological progress and priority given to information—surpassing and disregarding that of mind and body. Has this new aggressive ruling class, the virtual elite, divided nations and the planet into three functional/operational categories? For instance: 1) the virtual classes, namely the virtual ruling masters, 2) the clone function class, and the 3) slave function class, clearly observe in the Third World.. The promotion and support of research in the social sciences could provide us with a clearer picture, especially concerning a **topography of the excluded social groups in the European Union**.

Are we witnessing the beginning of a new underprivileged social group? Is this a prediction or foresight of **future exclusions**, and primarily the exclusion of women? Are we confronting a **new form of modern 'slavery'**, servitude or alienation, namely the appearance of a new 'underprivileged' social group that will be the **servants of the new virtual elite**, since they will not be able to participate in the socio-production processes. This excluded social subject will develop an imaginary or fantasy relationship with technology and not a productive one. In this form of alienation, **exclusion and technophobia go together**.

There is a real threat that a '**digital despotism**' may in the end succeed in drawing the boundaries of exclusion for many social groups, and women in particular. Undoubtedly, technological culture excludes the perspectives of women and other non-mainstream groups. What do we mean by 'digital despotism'? The technological elite or social groups with the know-how, formulate or will formulate development speeds that other social groups will have to follow, and those who are excluded or cannot keep up, will suffer exclusion, and "**servitude**"² under a new elite. In order to prevent the establishment or the institution of this new virtual elite we must create the educational prerequisites for the gender subject/citizen—so that the democratic principle concerning equal opportunities do not remain a political opportunistic rhetoric.

Another issue that needs to be studied and researched is the effect of technological developments on our natural environment. If we want to preserve life and an environmental balance on our planet, if we want to eliminate or reduce the increasing rate of unemployment, without commercializing or 'profesionalizing' other factors/elements of social life, without creating "a service society or a society of

²Kamberdiou, I. (2004). "Slavery of the Mind in the Pyramidical Hierarchy. Abstract and article submitted and presented at the first CONSULTATION WORKSHOP ON GENDER AND TECHNOLOGY, BRUSSELS, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Information Society Directorate-General Miniaturisation, Embedded Systems, Societal Applications, 28 June 2004.

servitude"-- since the products of the technological revolution are in reality services, a fact that has foundational consequences on society-- then we must look for a solution, not in the traditional economic profit rationale, but in the framework of a **socio-economic-biocentric rationale, and formulate a technological code of ethics: technoethos/technoethics**. We must exercise self-restriction, self-restraint and self-control as far as consumption and production are concerned, avoiding or limiting the unnecessary, needless, extravagant squandering of sources. Additionally, in the framework of the EU, we must gradually reduce the employment hours of the EU gender subject/citizen, thus creating more employment positions, thereby diminishing unemployment.

I. How can we confront the real problems of a virtual society, a technological society?

First we must name them and describe them. We must then investigate and examine real problems, issues and questions, such as: 1) solitude, loneliness and alienation of the new gender subject/citizen, in front of his H/Y which is his/her liason/connection to the world--international internet, 2) the overabundance of information and the incapacity of choice as well as that of processing and interpreting it. The gender subject has difficulty in distinguishing between credible, reliable sources of information and incredible and unreliable sources. In order to achieve this competency a new form of critical jurisdiction is needed, a new yet unknown way to select/choose/make choices/distinguish between sources, namely **a new wisdom, a new form of EDUCATION**, naturally given that the educational level of the EU citizens will have risen drastically, and 3) An examination of the processes of exclusion, or the new form of servitude, a "Virtual Servitude" which includes: the exclusion of specific social groups or non-mainstream groups from technological developments, electronic conspiracy networks, electronic terrorism, the violation of the electronic personality, domination of the imaginary (fantasy), explosion of pornography, the 'slave-trafficking' of women and children, castrated human subjects etc. All these characteristics are the result of the process of exclusion-- the exclusion of many social groups from technological developments and the use of modern technologies-- based on gender, race, socio-economic class etc., 4) Does the production, transfer and distribution of information take place less in the centers of government and political parties and more in a few large private industries? Do they intervene, formulate public opinion and intervene to a great degree in political life and political decisions on a national and on an international level, in order to open roads through national boundaries in search of a larger world market, while restricting or limiting the role of national governments? 5) Does the technological industry promote the **commonality of cultures, cultural commonality and/or the loss of cultural identity**--- something that will lead to "**absolute control**"?, etc.

In addition, another problem that needs to be studied is that of **LANGUAGE**. Many young people have become accustomed to communicating not only briefly, but also with incomprehensible forms of language. A characteristic example of this is the H/Y version of Shakespeare's "2B or not 2B!!!! ("to be or not to be"), and another is the so-called "greeklish". Does this make possible the gradual elimination of the Greek

alphabet/language, and not only! A virtual or metaphysical –transcendental virtual environment is being created, through which we will receive our information. We are being bombarded by images, the result being that we have a new type of **illiteracy**, a so-called “**virtual-techno-illiteracy**” which is much more difficult to confront and eliminate, since we do not know how to interpret all these images as we have been traditionally taught and accustomed to understand, interpret and learn from the written word.

In order to begin discussing such problems, not to mention confronting them, interdisciplinary communication is required, as we pointed out in our first two draft proposals³ Other than the many unresolved problems handed down to us from the industrial and postindustrial society, today we must confront new ones for which there is a lack of preparation as far as a completed theoretical framework, structure, theorems, assessments, methodologies is concerned. However, if we examine and study the characteristics of information society, on an interdisciplinary level, and find the preconditions that create such problems, only then can we even begin to achieve some understanding and propose and implement suggestions and solutions. In other words, we must first examine this society and determine, through our research, how we can formulate actions and strategies and begin progressing in the right direction. However, we need to first define the problems, define the public and private sectors, etc..

II. Education:

A true democracy demands the participation of the citizen in decision-making. However, decisions without knowledge and adequate sources of information lead in the wrong direction. All-important technological changes and developments have been based on knowledge and know-how, access to which the majority of the population has been denied. Furthermore, the nucleus of new technologies is in the processing of information and not just providing information, which also requires know-how, education and specialization. This is the primary distinctive factor of technology. One of the two basic keys to progress to the information society, is the issue of “application-processing”. If we have applications/processing that are accessible financially and user-friendly--easily used by anyone-- then anyone, any gender subject, can be incorporated and acquire the benefits and privileges of information society.

However, first and foremost, in order to achieve all of the above, the most fundamental requirement is that of basic-preliminary education. The institutionalization of mandatory technological training/education in the public school system's curriculum, beginning in **kindergarten**. Only in this way can the process of exclusion be eradicated and, in the long run, inclusion into Information Society achieved. In addition, Education or technological training of specific social groups, namely non-mainstream groups, and primarily women of the lower socio-economic classes, must be a major priority. In a democratic society exclusion can be abolished only through educational reforms, legislation and policies.

³ Sent to Nancy Pascall for the CONSULTATION WORKSHOP ON GENDER AND TECHNOLOGY, BRUSSELS, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Information Society Directorate-General Miniaturisation, Embedded Systems, Societal Applications, on 2/02/05 and 11/02/05,

An educational curriculum stimulated with specific teaching methods as well as with methods of learning that will contribute to the gender subject's progression or future incorporation into an information society, a society of production of information, and **not one that which will simply lead the gender subject into an Information Society of Consumers or an Information Consumption Society.**⁴ To reiterate, we must look for solutions, not in the framework of the traditional economic profit rationale, but in that of a **socio-economic-biocentric rationale, and the formulation of a technoethos/technoethics**, namely an 'ethical code' for the Information Society and the virtual environment.

⁴ A large part of the EU population, that does not only include women, will continue to be rejected or marginalized, if educational reforms and interdisciplinary research are neglected, and access in this sphere of economic activity not secured. The result will be a terrible social regression, and the creation, in the framework of Information Society, of a space that could be defined as "Virtual Servitude", since this excluded part of the population will be the servants or the lower hierarchy under the new elite. They will not be involved in operational procedures, and will possess the characteristics of fear, technophobia, alienation and marginalization.

PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH GROUP

1. The establishment of a network of researchers, including gender research groups, that take into account intercultural aspects, and alternative processes of research and development.
2. The promotion and support of research in the social sciences could provide us with a clearer picture, a topography of the excluded social groups in the European Union.
3. Researchers or research teams from the social sciences, the sciences, including gender research and collaboration between the fields of gender research and technological research. Namely, the establishment of an international, intercultural network of researchers from various interdisciplinary fields: gender studies, the social sciences, women's studies and technological research and development, in order to 1) influence mainstream IST development and formulation from a gender perspective, 2) broaden and enhance diversity and perspectives, 3) technological support and technological education and further training designed for both genders, etc. We would like to reiterate that the educational reforms we had proposed at the two workshops in Brussels will have very limited or restricted results if research is not promoted. Interdisciplinary research, namely from the social sciences in collaboration with the technology industry or technological research, and, as a sub-area of this, gender research needs to be encouraged and promoted. Only in this framework can basic research play an important role.
4. In order to promote basic research aimed at eliminating social exclusions, indiscriminate cooperation between researchers, the citizen and the state is absolutely necessary.
5. The examination of questions and issues such as 1) What is the electronic personality? 2) How can technological education become attractive and motivating for larger parts of the population and in the long run inspire and provoke an engagement in its design? 3) How can it be made inclusive for both genders? And most significantly, 4) How can a virtual ethical code be formulated and established? A question which requires a study on the Disrespect and exploitation of the electronic personality, an exploitation beyond the free-will, 5) What are the results, or the social repercussion for the European Union of this major social problem--- namely the exclusion of the non-mainstream groups and nations from technological globalization? , etc.
6. Taking into account results from international and intercultural gender research will lead to a more diverse approach to technological development. The perspectives of women and on women may lead to an opening up of technological culture, a broadening of perspectives, and may eventually result in a broader band of technological composition.

7. Further studies should examine questions, such as 1) under what social conditions or prerequisites is the principle of difference and inequality or gender difference activated? Under what conditions does it function as an element of exclusion? 2) The results of the process of exclusion, 2) which social groups or social subjects have been excluded from technological education, developments and the use of modern technologies-- based on gender, race, socio-economic class etc. In Greece for instance, according to our pilot study (which we presented at the first workshop), exclusion was not due to technophobia, but was related to the subjects socio-economic level. Specifically, discrimination was related to the socio-economic level of the school area or the social space. **What is the case in other EU countries?** For instance, in modern Greek society, a consequence of current developments and progress, the speed of which is determined by technological know-how, is that a large sector of the Greek community has developed a phobia, a technophobia-- since the average Greek citizen does not have the necessary preconditions or the required knowledge to participate in these progressive developments. This technophobia has its origin in Exclusion, namely the socioeconomic discrimination in the country's public school system. In our pilot study we observed great differences or discrimination in relation to the technological infrastructure in the Greek public school system, which were directly related to the socioeconomic levels of specific geographical areas in the country's capital.

The more technology develops, the more social exclusions are increased in the EU. As we had agreed in our first workshop, the technological culture excludes the perspectives of women and other non-mainstream groups. Consequently, there is a real threat that 'digital despotism' may in the end succeed in drawing the boundaries of exclusion for many social groups and women in particular, despite Information Society's bottom-up (egalitarian) development. This 'virtual elite's' key objectives are to gain control over technological research, design, development and its applications.

EGDIS Advisory Group (- Terms of Reference (ToR))

22/4/2005

Rationale

While the need to increase women's participation in science & technology endeavours, within and without the IST and the entire FP6 has long since been agreed, reality shows that however much was done it would not suffice.

DG Information Society of the European Commission has set up a Gender Expert Action Group – GEAG. The Group has undertaken to work towards initiating and implementing activities in order to fully integrate women in technology and above all, to change the current gender distribution at all levels of the Information Society.

The Group has concluded that to aid and enhance such a change, along with the necessary Action Programme required to materialise it, it would be highly recommended to form an Advisory Group that would serve as a source of inspiration and help in communicating the ideas evolving in the Group as well as its work to a wider audience of decision-makers in IS, FP6 and the EU in general. This document sets out to propose the structure, functions and composition of the proposed Advisory Group.

Official Name

- ✓ The proposed Advisory Group shall be called: " Even Gender Distribution in the Information Society" – EGDIS Advisory Group.

Structure

The EGDIS Advisory Group shall consist of high level personalities invited to participate in the group by the Director General of DG Information Society and when necessary the Commissioner for Information Society, to serve for a period of two years with possible extension of another two years. It shall appoint from its membership a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson. The EGDIS Advisory Group shall review, comment and make recommendations on proposals initiating in GEAG. The EGDIS Advisory Group shall be able to form, from its members, permanent or ad-hoc internal committees as it sees fit. Such internal committees shall be informal, aimed to enable better contact between the members of the EGDIS Advisory Group and to produce its draft and final Reports.

Resolutions and recommendations of the EGDIS Advisory Group shall be reached by means of consensus. All Committees' decision shall be sanctioned by the plenum.

Functions

The EGDIS Advisory Group shall operate at the highest level – that of function (talking to Commissioners and European ministers, CEOs, top representatives of EU associations / federations). It shall particularly act:

- To generate all-European support to activities aimed at the improvement of evenly spread gender distribution in participation in science and technology related endeavours, particularly so in IST activities.
- To formulate, publicise, promote and enhance such policies that promote evenly spread distribution of gender participation and mainstreaming and disseminate such policies, action plans and training activities evolving from them both within the Commission and in public.
- To inspire and take active role in raising awareness in the public and within the Commission to the all-social need in better gender equality and promotion of participation of women, at all levels, in science & technology related activities.
- To advise, express its opinions and promote such policies and actions aimed at the enhancement of evenly spread distribution in participation in science and technology related endeavours, throughout the European Union and within the Commission and in particular, within the IST domain.
- To guide, and approve the work of GEAG and to promote the necessary means to enable implementation of such work.
- To promote such related ideas and action plans associated with the better understanding and enhancement of Gender evenly spread distribution and to then oversee and attempt to arrange for ample preparation to materialise these ideas.
- EGDIS will meet minimum twice a year and will deliberate on a precise agenda previously prepared by GEAG and endorsed by EGDIS participants.

Composition

The EGDIS Advisory Group shall consist of highly distinguished personalities that represent such activities and walks of life related to science and technology, social thought and interest in the promotion of evenly distributed gender participation in science and technology related endeavours. Their number should be about 15.

Possible composition of the EGDIS Advisory Group could be:

4 Politicians (Members of Parliament or the European Parliament related to and/or Science and Technology, Equal Opportunities. They will be chosen to represent Member States (smaller and bigger) as well as the newly accessed States and Associated States.

6 members of Parliaments from countries other than those represented by the ministers.

3 Members of Group and/or Directors Generals and/or CEOs from technological large corporation or otherwise highly distinguished.

2 Distinguished academics (possible nominees or winners of Nobel Prize in sciences.

The Commission will be represented in the Group by Dr Rosalie Zobel, Director of Directorate C responsible for the Gender and Technology file. The Commission will in addition assure the secretariat of EGDIS and in this role prepare the logistics of all meetings including the EGDIS agenda. The chairperson (or deputy chairperson when necessary) will also participate as observer.

EGDIS would ideally consist of comparable numbers of males and females (7 to 8).

Nominations for EGDIS

The Commission will investigate the possible participants of the EGDIS and will prepare the invitations according to existing protocols. The GEAG will propose and agree on the nominees before the actual nominations



GENDER EXPERT ACTION GROUP
(GEAG)

COMMENTARY/OBSERVATIONS TO RESEARCH GROUP, APPOINTED AT THE LAST WORKSHOP:29-04-2005

Dr. Irene Kamberidou
Email: ikamper@phed.uoa.gr

Exclusions from knowledge in Information Society are inconsistent with European values. The more technology develops, the more social exclusions and technophobia are increased in the EU—since digital illiteracy and technophobia are the results of exclusion. How can this eventually be eradicated? What can be done? As a member of the research group I need to reiterate the necessity for:

1. The promotion and support of **Research** in the social sciences and the humanities. Interdisciplinary research in collaboration with the technology industry or technological research, and, as a sub-area of this, gender research and a research network should be encouraged and promoted by the EU. Only in this framework can basic research play an important role.
2. Taking into account results from international and intercultural gender research will lead to a more diverse approach to technological development. A narrow view on technological culture not only excludes the perspectives of women, but also those of other non-representative/ non-mainstream groups. The perspectives of women and on women may lead to an opening up of technological culture, a broadening of perspectives, and may eventually result in a broader band of technological composition.
3. **Education:** educational reforms, such as mandatory technological education programs or Information technological education program as a nucleus. a) The promotion of educational programs related to technological know-how, b) securing and preserving the democratic operation of these programs on a long-term basis, providing long-term continuing education or training programs. And all this resulting from c) continuous dialogue or collaboration, not only with experts, but also with citizens and non-mainstream groups that have diverse needs and diverse users. We had observed and proposed in our first workshop, the institutionalization of mandatory technological training/education in the public school system's curriculum, beginning in kindergarten and elementary school. Only in this way can the process of exclusion be eradicated and, in the long run, inclusion into Information Society achieved. In a democratic society exclusion can be abolished only through educational legislation and policies. However, even the above proposed educational reforms will have very limited or restricted results if research is not promoted.
4. An equitable and indiscriminatory distribution of a technological infrastructure. For instance, since university research or research projects are administered, determined and conducted by an elite, established through strong non-academic political connections-- there are many difficulties confronted by the researcher, or in the funding of qualified scientists/researchers and research programs. As a result, countries like Greece, exhibit a democratic deficiency, as regards the equitable and indiscriminatory distribution of a technological infrastructure.
5. **Research:** The continuous, high-speed technological explosion requires a direct and more systematic study (research) and evaluation of ethical problems that have arisen in the absence of the citizens. As we had agreed in our previous workshops, the formulation of an 'ethical code' or 'technoethos' is absolutely necessary. In order to promote basic research aimed at eliminating social exclusions, indiscriminate cooperation between researchers, the citizen and the state is absolutely necessary. As we had agreed, in order to remove/eliminate the impasse that has been created, the formulation of an ethical code (technoethics) can play a significant or rather major role.

Through such actions and policies—in the medium and long term—social stereotypes of demarcation and dichotomy, reproduced primarily in direct relation to socio-economic levels or class, will eventually be wiped out.