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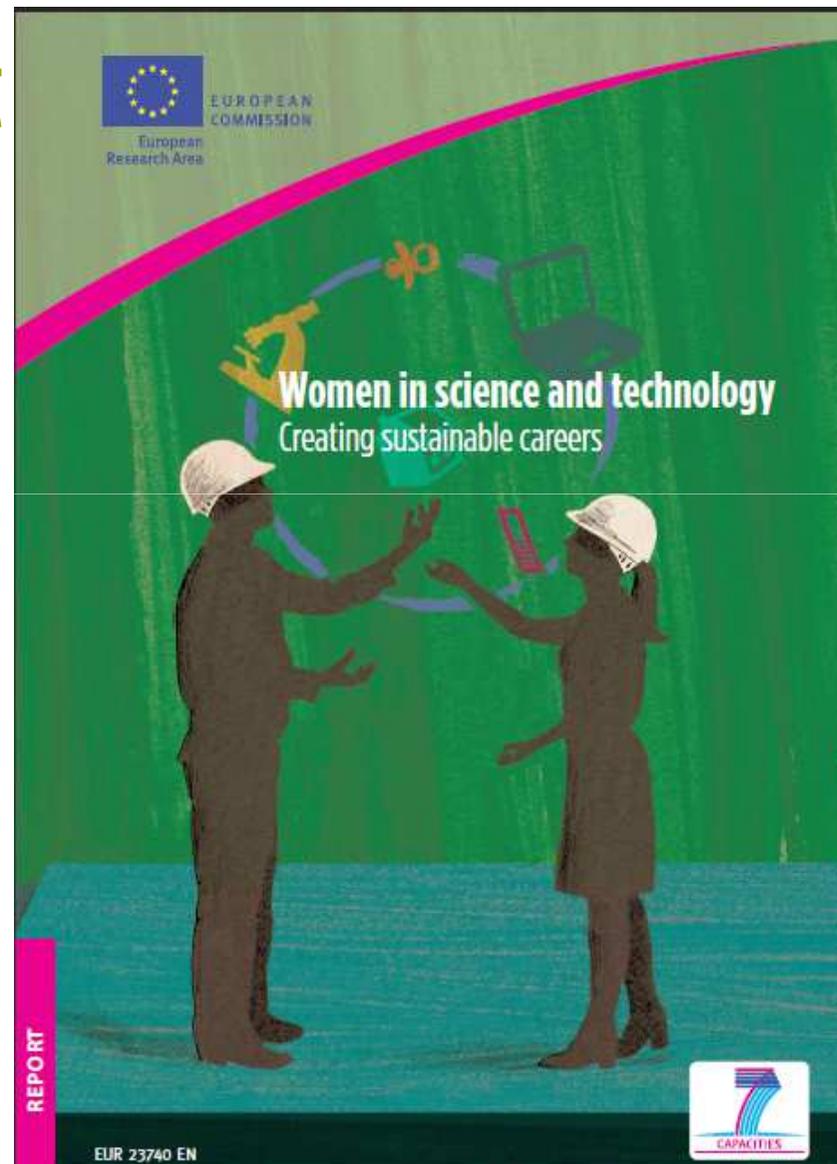
Gender and organizational culture in engineering

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About the project

- Original work was part of WiST (Women in Science and Technology) EU project
- In depth interviews with women scientists and engineers in EU companies
- This presentation is focused on women engineers in 3 companies in the energy sector— *for details of how to access the full paper co-authored with Suzan Lewis and Anne Laure Humbert see final slide for reference.*



Research questions

- How do women engineers experience promotion and advancement processes and opportunities in multinational corporations?
- How do they make sense of and respond to these experiences in the context of motherhood?
- To what extent are these responses/strategies influenced by local context?



Key concepts

- Leaky pipeline neglects the complexity of structural constraints and denies **women's agency in responding strategically** to such constraints
- Conflation of valued work behaviour with hegemonic masculinity produces a notion of **ideal workers** as those who demonstrate commitment by unbroken career trajectories and constant availability and visibility
- Nuanced relationship between their identities and expectations as **global workers in local cultural and social conditions** is of particular interest

Success depends on...

- Being visible
 - *[when you are part time] you don't get the highly visible projects with a lot of exposure to the rest of the organisation which is generally seen as the best way to go to have a good career*
- Being willing to travel
 - *To go abroad for the company is very important for [your] career ...what you can say when you work here is if you want to be a manager and so on it's very important to travel*
- Being in the right place at the right time
 - *I could have had a promotion but ..I missed the opportunity when I was pregnant and I had to wait for 3 years. It's difficult to say, no-one will tell me it's because you were pregnant.*
- Being the right age
 - *I do not have the opportunity to be head project manager because I am too old - this kind of position is for the younger ones...from 47 to 60 is a long time in this same position*

- Navigating mysterious career paths:
 - *My career plans are not very clear .. It is very difficult to see what you could do as a career path... I find it very difficult.*
- Moving from technical to managerial paths
 - *my senior limit is reached, at least in my discipline it is ...I will probably be able to only climb up one more step*
- Having the right line manager
 - *It was an opportunity and someone from my management gave it me. I didn't put in for a vacancy or anything*
- Working full time
 - *generally in our system, jobs aren't advertised as part-time which is already kind of a barrier to even applying... So you're already starting from a negative position, trying to negotiate that.*

Transitions to motherhood

- Ideal engineer and ideal mother stereotypes are experienced as being mutually incompatible (Jorgenson, 2002; Faulkner, 2009; Kelan, 2010)
- ‘no longer one of the boys’ (Ranson, 2005)
- Motherhood (rather than just gender) was widely believed to undermine career opportunities
- Successful women often considered themselves and were described by others as lucky or ‘exceptional’



Attitudes to motherhood

there tend to be a lot of assumptions made about what mothers can or can't do. There are all kind of trips being discussed: "lets' not ask [S] because she can't go." ...Maybe I'm not able to go but I'd at least have liked to have been asked

Roos - DutchCo

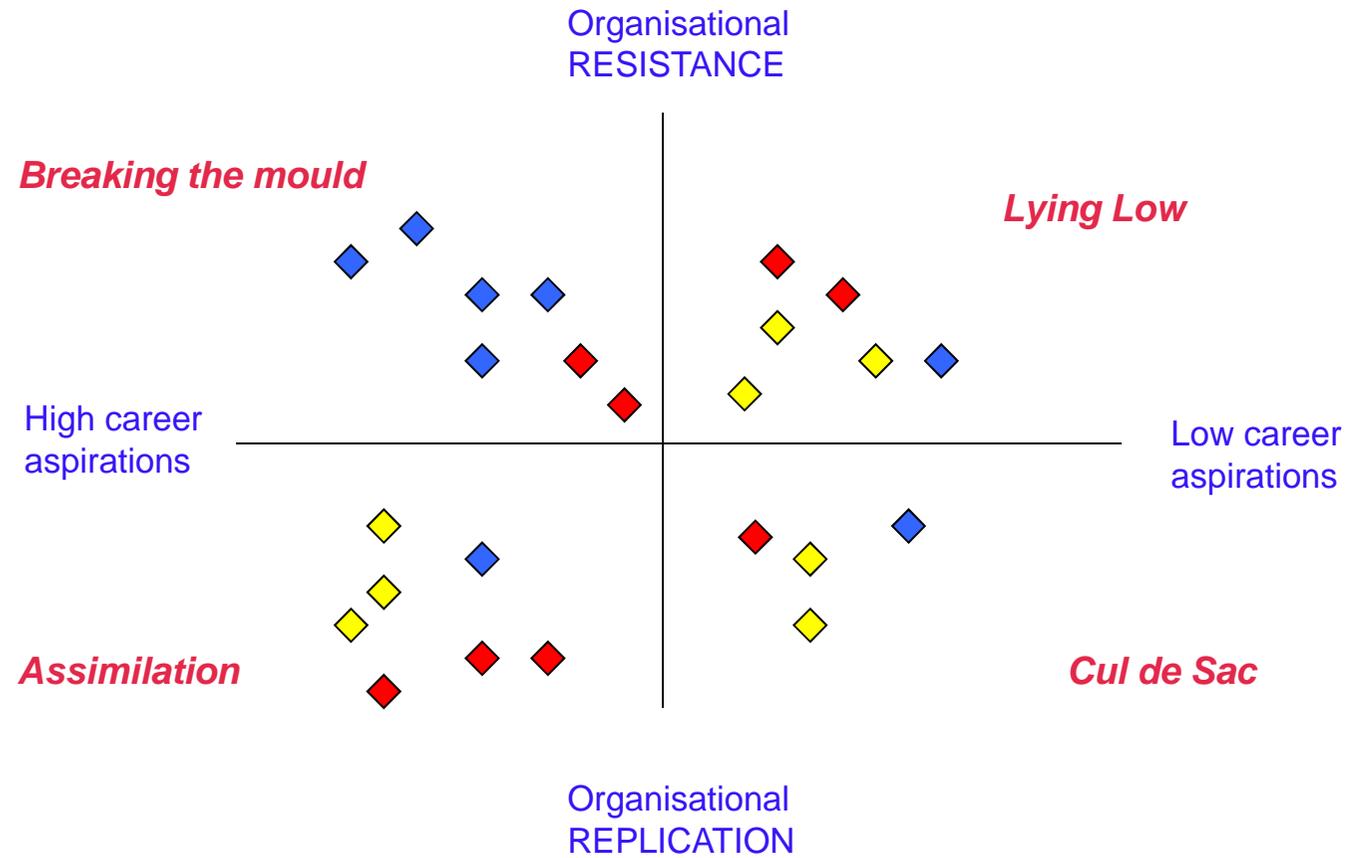
the problem is there is discrimination against women becoming mothers. Half the people here are women but there are few women - 2 or 3% who are in management roles, there are so few that I know them all by name! They are all an exception to the rule[...] I think it's a cultural thing. The whole industry is for real men and I think that it is possible to change but I don't think this company wants it to change

Gina ItalianCo

Attitudes to motherhood - 2...

I worked full-time after my first child – one thing was quite annoying – a lot of women with babies are not working full-time so I was considered as not working full-time – I WAS working full-time but I was a mother so I couldn't get the job I wanted. They considered that I wasn't working full-time.

(Christine - FrenchCo)



FranceCo ItalyCo DutchCo

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Assimilation

if I just go by the hours that I am working here it's about 11 hours a day - up to around 50 or 60 hours. I work in the evenings if I have to ...[when I go abroad] my parents look after him but sometimes I take him with me - if I go back to the Middle East then I'll take them along and pay for it myself. They come and have a holiday and [my son] is in the pool.

(Ineke – DutchCo)

Cul de Sac

You have a choice to make between your children or your career. If you choose your career you're frustrated because it's at the detriment of your children, and on the other hand, you can manage to work and take care of your children at the same time but you'll stay frustrated because you know you can't focus on your career. I'm 38, a lot of colleagues at 35 are managers, and I know I won't catch up; there will always be a period in my career where there was no evolution. And also for my retirement. I made a choice for today that I will pay for later

(Marie – FrenchCo)

Breaking the Mould

[Working part-time] did affect [my career] at a certain moment of course because you are not going as fast as someone who is working for five days. But you recover very quickly thereafter..., it's about performance and also doing the right jobs and being selective in that and then it's possible to keep on going with your career..... When I say I worked twelve years part-time people raise their eyebrows and say 'really?' You can't see it in my position today a person who's worked twenty years at [DutchCo] working twelve years part-time.... So for me it is really your own mentality and the confidence and just knowing what you want [...] You know what you want yourself, what you want to achieve, or why you're working, what is your drive, then it's clear for others.” (Sanne -DutchCo)

Lying Low

Well it's clear that if you want to take care of your children, you have to focus less on your career. It's the choice I made for now. Now you work longer, I'll probably work until I'm 65 and more, so I have time to make a career. I'm 38, I take care of my children first, because they won't wait for me to grow up and I want to take care of them while they're young. I'll focus on my career later, when they're old (Nanette, FrenchCo)

ItalianCo

<p>Breaking the Mould Not likely - few senior women role models</p>	<p>Lying Low Promotion barriers too difficult and age related</p>
<p>Assimilation Motherhood prioritised but strong extended family support enables continuation of career</p>	<p>Cul de Sac Not likely due to strong professional identity</p>

FrenchCo

<p>Breaking the Mould Childcare provision Motherhood and career is socially acceptable</p>	<p>Lying Low Acceptability of taking slow route while children are young – in fact it is EXPECTED</p>
<p>Assimilation Notion of ‘sacrifice’ commonly given</p>	<p>Cul de Sac Unlikely to opt out as career and motherhood seen to be compatible</p>

DutchCo

<p>Breaking the Mould Some examples of high achieving women but seen as exceptional</p>	<p>Lying Low Strong cultural push to prioritise motherhood during early years</p>
<p>Assimilation Choice between motherhood and career</p>	<p>Cul de Sac Frequent choice because of practical childcare considerations and social acceptability</p>

Conclusions

- Gendered organisations continue to replicate and perpetuate cultures that inhibit women's progress in their professional careers – even if they have good equality and diversity policies.
- Many of the barriers linked to doing motherhood and SET are the same across countries and organisations. But national policies and provisions influence the ways that parents can manage the professional/motherhood equation, and local cultures/ contexts mean women's understandings of how they negotiate these barriers and how they do motherhood are expressed differently.
- Examining the lived experiences and narratives of women engineers enables us to assess to what extent organisational cultures are changing, especially at key transition times such as motherhood, when underlying assumptions tend to surface.

Reference

For a full version of this paper see:

Herman C., Lewis S. and Humbert A., (2012) *Women Scientists and Engineers in European companies: Putting Motherhood under the microscope* **Gender Work and Organisation** (available online from Feb 2012)