

# Processing People? A Labour Sociologist's Perspective on Risk Management in IT-Offshoring Projects

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## Background of this presentation

***“Offshoring's double embeddedness: On the quality of labour relationships in transnationally operating IT-companies”***

Headed by Prof. Dr. Volker Wittke,

worked on by Dr. Nicole Mayer-Ahuja and Patrick Feuerstein

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## The sociological perspective: Organizing knowledge work

IT-work as a kind of 'knowledge work'

Innovative and creative character of knowledge work

Limited scope for task fragmentation and division of labour

Replacement of hierarchical forms of coordination and control by normative or indirect forms

Management of knowledge work relies on self-coordination of the employees

Employees need to be granted a high level of autonomy in planning and executing their working tasks

⇒ Knowledge work used to be considered very difficult to transfer globally

## The impact of Offshoring on IT-work

Is there a unique tendency towards IT-Offshoring?

What kind of contradictions occur in the labour process, considering different Offshoring strategies?

Does the nature of "knowledge work" limit the standardization of IT-work and poses special work-organizational problems to IT-Offshoring projects?

## Impressions from case studies

### Company A

Indian service-company, 60000+ employees

Interviews in 2 teams: maintenance & support,  
application development

### Company B

German product-company, 40000+ employees

Interviews in 1 team developing a module of a new  
software package

## Conclusions:

It is possible to standardize IT-work to a large extent in order to increase the productivity of projects, but even the highly standardized labour process of service companies is still dependent on the employees' commitment

Bangalore with its booming IT industry offers a lot of job-opportunities for IT professionals, enabling them to be very demanding regarding the job they want to do

In this context, the implementation of strong business processes and a more structured approach to software development might cause additional organizational problems without solving the old ones

Thank you for your attention!

More information about the study at

<http://www.sofi.uni-goettingen.de>

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