



**#mentoo : The challenges
of gender neutrality to the
movement against VAWG**

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A metaphore for starters

At a conference on road accidents involving bicycles, several experts speak. From the start, they admit that, of course, cyclists are not the only victims of road accidents, that drivers also can be victims. They appear apologetic for focussing on bicycle accidents. However, a couple of people in the audience ask the same questions time and again : How dare you talk only about bicycle accidents ? Why do you treat car accidents as a taboo ? Is this a conspiracy of the bicycle lobby ? The facilitator has a hard time to bring the debate back to the topic of bicycle accidents.

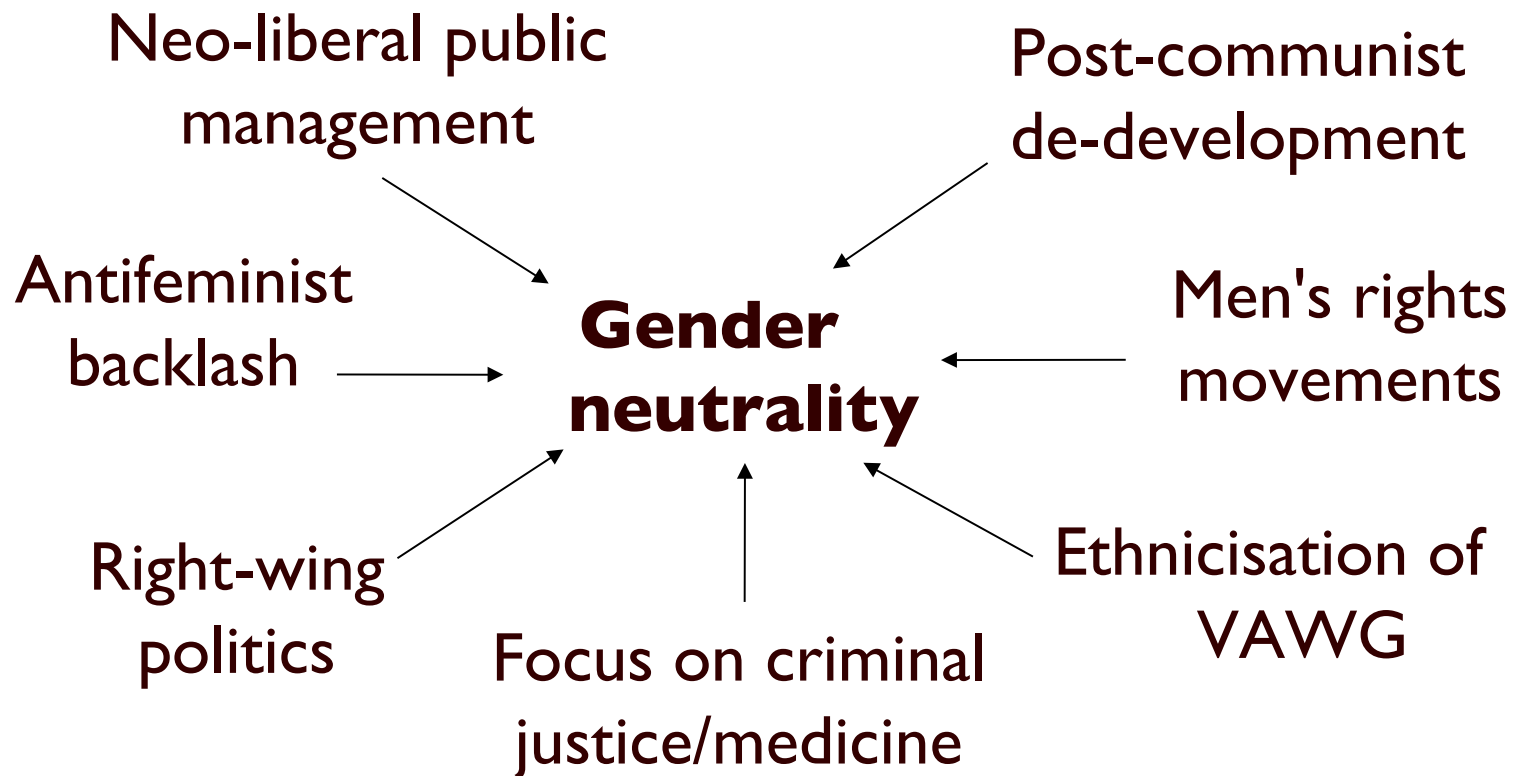


What is gender neutrality ?

- ➔ Mirroring oppression : « men, too, are victims of violence »
- ➔ Rendering the larger context of gender inequality invisible
- ➔ 1977 : Susan Steinmetz writes on battered men
- ➔ Consequences :
 - Anti-violence policies and laws formulated in gender-neutral terms, neglecting specificities of VAWG
 - Ungendered statistics on violence, CTS
 - Funding of men-specific or generalist services while reduced funding for women-specific services
 - Pressure on women-specific services to cater to men
 - Communicative strategies closing the debate on VAWG



Where does it come from?





Gender discourse on violence

Three discourses on violence and gender:

- ➔ Feminist discourse: VAWG = sexist discrimination
- ➔ Critical masculinities studies: VAWG + against LGBTIQ people + against children
- ➔ Gender-symmetric discourse: everyone has a gender, so every violence is gender-based. Focus on individual identities + stereotypes erases power relations



What to do about it

Choose your strategies and tactics carefully and share those that work (see brochure) :

- ➔ Flight
- ➔ Argumentation: internal, external, subversive
- ➔ Semantic Defence
- ➔ Confrontation



What to do about it

Know thy enemy and deconstruct their rethoric:

- ➔ Point out whenever gender inequality is not presented as a fact
- ➔ Reclaim the systemic interpretative repertoire
- ➔ Bring the debate back from extreme examples to what is common



What to do about it

Use GN's internal inconsistencies to develop your arguments :

- ➔ One-size-fits-all does not meet men's needs.
- ➔ Men-specific measures neglect subordinated and marginalised masculinities.
- ➔ VAM is not a taboo, but the result of generalising the masculine norm.
- ➔ VAM is not an obstacle to gender equality.



What to do about it

Create alliances:

- ➔ Create and maintain safe spaces for self-care
- ➔ Find experts who support gender-specific approaches
- ➔ Share the burden with other gender equality actors
- ➔ Share the burden with other social movements



Plus d'informations



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