

Summary of the lecture of Yvonne Benschop at the FFNT conference.

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Universities have their set of informal principals. Academia is based on:

- Meritocracy, there is a moral of objective measures: the best wins
- Gender neutrality: we go for quality that can be a man or a woman.
- There exists an abstract ideal of the academic: a person that devotes his (!) whole life to academia, dedicated intellectual who is living and breathing academia.

In the actual academic practice there are more influences:

- Few vacancies
- There is no level playing field: talent is defined by our ideology of power. Do we recognize talent when we see it? Men identify men, because they recognize behaviour. Different behaviour is difficult to recognize as talent. E.g. who recognizes talent in young women.
- When there is a vacancy, the committee looks for the sheep with the 5 legs: excellence in research/publication, education, project management, networking and acquisition. Most applicants though have 4 legs: for men suitability is fine, women are rated on the 5 legs. So there is a double standard.
- Excellence is reputation that means it is given.
- Our societal image of females (caring for others) doesn't fit with the dedicated intellectual of the academic ideal. Women are perceived as part-time workers and without ambition, even if they work as much as men. In academia female scientists work almost as much hours as male scientists. There exists a perception that academic excellence takes everything of you. Think scholar equals think male. The norm of gender neutrality doesn't coincide with everyday practice: academia is organized in a male way.
- So the norm of gender neutrality is an ideology: we want it to be true and so we don't see it isn't true.

An example is the recruitment procedure: 60% of all the recruited professors are recruited by a closed procedure. This means that official recruitment protocols aren't used, so the danger of a biased procedure is quite high.

What can we do to get more women at the top?

- You have to form part of networks in order to be selected. Women participate less than men in networks. So incentive women's participation in strategic networks.
- Special programs are necessary until we have a critical mass of female professors. Quotas or benchmarks are important to raise the number of women at the top.
- Challenge the rhetoric of academic excellence. Is that quantity: large working hours results in a lot of publications or is it quality: excellent content?
- Have a strict monitoring system of recruitment and promotion: Explain why you didn't recruit or promote the required target of females.
- Create a gender knowledge centre.