BUSINESS AS USUAL?

*Doing gender equality in Swedish
forestry work organizations*

Maria Johansson

Gender and Technology

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Maria Johansson

Luleå University of Technology
Department of Business Administration, Technology and Social Sciences
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Till Manne & Elmer

Från skogens botten stiger jag
Det ljusnar mellan stammarna
Det regnar över mina tak
Jag är en stupränna för intryck.

ur Genom skogen av Tomas Transtömmer

Abstract

The title of this thesis is *Business as usual? Doing gender equality in Swedish forestry work organizations* and while the latter part, the subtitle, is rather self-explanatory, the former part can be read in different ways. The aim of the thesis is to increase the understanding of the doing of gender equality in the male dominated work organizations of the Swedish forestry sector, and thereby contribute both theoretical and empirical understanding regarding how doing gender equality in the forestry sector relates both to notions of gender and notions of organizations. Forestry has traditionally been characterized by physically demanding, manual harvesting work, with practical and symbolic associations with men and certain forms of masculinity. The forestry sector still remains one of the most gender segregated labour forces in Sweden, all while gender equality has been addressed to some extent during the 2000s. The theoretical frame of reference of the present thesis is rooted in feminist organizational research and the doing gender framework. Based on a perspective of reality as socially constructed and by deploying a feminist participatory action research methodology, my analysis focuses on how complexities of meanings are ascribed to the actions and processes, that are framed as gender equality and I have qualitatively analysed empirical material, such as policy documents, interviews and written testimonies of sexual harassment, that explicate these aspects of doing gender equality in organizations. The thesis is built experiences from two different research- and development projects and consists of 5 articles and a synthetizing chapter.

The results highlight how doing gender equality relates to notions of gender as well as notions of organization. In both Article I, where policies were studied and in Article II, that builds on interviews, women are in general constructed as the "other", as people who lack (forestry) skills and competences and who are in need of help, or as contributors of social and emotional competence. Men and masculine norms are mainly absent from the doing of gender equality in this material, just as notions of the organization. But, deploying a feminist participatory action research methodology can bring forward other perspectives on gender equality, as shown in Articles IV and V, such as the articulations of men and masculinities. Further, this thesis shows that gender equality is in general understood by the organizations studied as a process that regards gender, predominantly women, rather than the organization. Put differently, gender equality work in the forestry sector does not to any significant extent, affect what is perceived as the core activities in these organizations. However, the overarching depoliticized and degendered business case framing that mainly evades accounting for the role of the organization when doing gender equality, is disrupted by the testimonies of #slutavverkat explored in Article III. Here, the political dimension of gender equality is highlighted by stories of men's behaviours (reprehended but at the same time sanctioned) in organizations that come at the expense of women's rights to

a workplace free from condescending comments, harassment and sexual violence. While previous research has pointed to the importance of gender awareness, and gender aware leadership, in organizations that wish to succeed with their gender equality work, this thesis suggests that there is also a need for "gendered organization awareness" in order to understand and discuss not only how gender is done in organizations but also how everyday organizational life, such as notions of competence, is *done* and how that in turn relates to gender and power. This underlines the need for organizations to make room for conflicts and politics and to let the otherwise marginalized voices contribute to more nuanced interpretations of gender equality.

The title *Business as usual?* encompasses the starting points for the thesis work as well as the main findings. Read with an emphasis on *business*, the seemingly all-embracing business case rhetoric's that encloses the official narratives of gender equality in the forestry sector are visualized, while emphasizing *as usual* denotes to the sectors resistance to do other than what it usually does. Read as the hole saying, *business as usual*, that title signals that gender equality work is done in ways that not interfere with forestry core activities, thus making gender equality work in the organizations side streamed or de-coupled. Yet, read with emphasis on the question mark, opens up for the subversive potential that nevertheless exists when more multifaceted ways of making sense of gender equality are articulated and as the findings suggests that there are ways to re-gender and re-politicize organizational gender equality work in the context of forestry work organizations.

Sammanfattning

Avhandlingens titel är *I vanlig ordning? Att göra jämställdhet i skogliga arbetsorganisationer i Sverige.* Undertitelns betydelse säger sig själv men *I vanlig ordning?* kan läsas på flera sätt. Syftet med avhandlingen är att öka förståelsen för hur jämställdhet görs i den svenska skogsbrukssektorns mansdominerade arbetsorganisationer, och bidrar därför till ökad förståelse, både teoretiskt och empiriskt, av hur jämställdhet i skogsbrukssektorn relaterar till både föreställningar om kön och föreställningar om organisationer. Skogsbrukssektorn har traditionellt präglats av det fysiskt krävande, manuella skogsarbetet, med praktiska och symboliska konnotationer av män och vissa former av maskulinitet, och sektorn är fortfarande en av de mest könssegregerade arbetsmarknaderna i Sverige, trots att jämställdhet har funnit på agendan under hela 2000-talet. Avhandlingens teoretiska referensram bygger på feministisk organisationsforskning och 'doing gender' som övergripande perspektiv. Med utgångspunkt i ett perspektiv där verkligheten förstås som socialt konstruerad och genom feministisk aktionsforskning som övergripande metod, fokuserar min analys på hur en komplexitet av betydelser tillskrivs de handlingar och processer som förstås som jämställdhet, och jag har kvalitativt analyserat empiriskt material, exempelvis policydokument, intervjuer och skriftliga vittnesmål om sexuella trakasserier, som på olika sätt belyser aspekter av att göra jämställdhet i organisationer. Avhandlingen bygger på erfarenheter från två olika forsknings- och utvecklingsprojekt och består av 5 artiklar och en sammanfattande kappa.

Resultaten visar att skogsbrukssektorns görande av jämställdhet på olika sätt är sammanflätat med föreställningar om kön och om organisation. I både policydokumenten som studerades i Artikel I och i de officiella berättelserna som studerades i Artikel II, är kvinnor generellt konstruerade som "den andra", som någon som saknar skogliga färdigheter och kompetenser och behöver hjälp eller som någon som bidrar med social och emotionell kompetens. Män och maskulina normer är huvudsakligen frånvarande från konstruktioner av jämställdhet i det empiriska materialet, precis som föreställningar om organisationen. Genom en feministisk aktionsforskningsmetodik kan dock andra perspektiv på jämställdhet föras fram, vilket synliggörs i artiklarna IV och V, exempelvis att inkludera män och maskuliniteter i förståelser av jämställdhet. Vidare indikerar resultaten att jämställdhet i första hand förstås som en kvinnofråga snarare än som en organisatorisk fråga. Med andra ord, jämställdhetsarbete påverkar inte nämnvärt vad som förstås som kärnverksamheten i de skogliga organisationerna. Sammanfattningsvis visar avhandlingen att jämställdhet i första hand görs till en fråga om affärsnytta och ökad konkurrenskraft. Denna avpolitiserade förståelse av jämställdhet störs dock av vittnesmålen från #slutavverkat, utforskade i artikel III, där den politiska dimensionen av jämställdhet framhävs genom berättelserna om mäns beteenden (fördömda men samtidigt möjliggjorda) i

organisationer som sker på bekostnad av kvinnors rättigheter till en arbetsplats fri från nedlåtande kommentarer, trakasserier och sexuellt våld. Tidigare forskning har betonat vikten av köns/genusmedvetenhet och köns/genusmedvetet ledarskap i organisationer som vill lyckas med sitt jämställdhetsarbete. Denna avhandling föreslår därutöver en medvetenhet om organisationer som köna(n)de, för att kunna förstå och diskutera, inte bara hur kön görs i organisationer utan och hur organisationens vardagliga praktiker, exempelvis föreställningar om kompetens, *görs* och hur det i sin tur hänger samman med kön och makt. Detta understryker behovet av att organisationer behöver göra plats för konflikter och politik och låter de annars marginaliserade rösterna bidra till mer nyanserade tolkningar vad jämställdhet är.

Titeln *I vanlig ordning?* beskriver både utgångspunkterna för avhandlingsarbetet såväl som de viktigaste resultaten. De officiella berättelserna om jämställdhet inom skogsbruket guidas av begrepp som affärsnytta och konkurrenskraft, samtidigt som jämställdhetsarbetet görs på ett sådant sätt att det inte ruckar nämnvärt på skogsbrukets kärnverksamhet, utan det fortsätter *i vanlig ordning*. Trots det, läst med betoning på frågetecknet, öppnar titeln för den subversiva potential som ändå finns när fler mångfacetterade sätt att förstå jämställdhet formuleras och som resultaten visar att det finns sätt att politisera organisatoriskt jämställdhetsarbete inom ramen för skogsbrukets arbetsorganisationer.

Nyckelord: Feministisk aktionsforskning, Genus, Jämställdhet, Kön, Mansdominerade industrier, Organisation, Skogsbruk

Articles in the dissertation

I. Andersson, E., **Johansson, M.**, Lidestav, G. & Lindberg, M. (2018). Constituting gender and gender equality through policy: the political of gender mainstreaming in the Swedish forest industry. *Equality, diversity and inclusion: An international journal.* 37(8),763-779.

Author declaration: Andersson worked out the overall design of the study and the main theoretical application. Andersson and Johansson have together analysed the material, theorized, written and revised the manuscript. Lidestav and Lindberg have contributed valuable comments on the manuscript.

II. **Johansson, M.** & Ringblom, L. (2017). The business case of gender equality in Swedish forestry and mining - Restricting or enabling organizational change. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 24(6), 628-642.

Author declaration: The authors have jointly worked out the overall design of the study and together analysed the material, theorized, written and revised the manuscript. Ringblom has conducted the material collection in the mining industry's work organizations and Johansson in the forestry sectors work organizations.

III. **Johansson, M.**, Johansson, K. & Andersson, E. (2018). #MeToo in the Swedish forestry sector: Testimonies from harassed women on sexualised forms of male control. *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, 33(5), 419–425.

Author declaration: The authors have jointly worked out the overall design of the study and together analysed the material, theorized, written and revised the manuscript.

IV. Ringblom, L. & **Johansson, M.** (2020). Who needs to be 'more equal' and why? Doing gender equality in male-dominated industries. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal.* http://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-01-2019-0042

Author declaration: The authors have jointly worked out the overall design of the study and together analysed the material, theorized, written and revised the manuscript. Ringblom has conducted the material collection in the mining industry's work organizations and Johansson in the forestry sectors work organizations.

V. **Johansson, M.** (forthcoming). Re-gendering corporate gender equality work – Conflicts in the micro processes of organizational change. Submitted to: *Nordic journal of working life studies*

Other publications

Johansson, M. (2015). *Att göra jämställdhet - motiv, motstånd och möjligheter i det svenska skogsbruket*. Licentiate thesis. Luleå: Luleå tekniska universitet.

Johansson, K., Andersson, E**., Johansson, M.**, Lidestav, G. (2019). 'The Discursive Resistance of Men to Gender-Equality Interventions: Negotiating "Unjustness" and "Unnecessity" in Swedish Forestry'. *Men and Masculinities* 22(2), 177–196.

Lidestav, G., **Johansson, M.**, Huff, E S. (2019). Gender Perspectives on Forest Services in the Rise of a Bioeconomy Discourse. In: Hujala, T., Toppinen, A., Butler, B. (eds.). *Services in Family Forestry*. Cham: Springer, pp. 307-325.

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Acknowledgements

Late in April, in Västerbotten county. The curlew is back, I heard it when I walked the dogs the other night. Its peculiar and rhythmic singing resounded the fields not yet green. The first few notes of its song have a desolate and heavy-hearted ring to it, but nevertheless, it fills me with reassurance every year. It sounds like the wet, partly decomposed, grass from last year smells, and it sounds like the first sheer leaves budding. It sounds familiar and safe, like home. Familiarity, feelings of being at home have accompanied me during these years. At the same time, contradictory experiences of being a stranger or an outsider, of non-belonging. I have felt this in regards to academia with its formal and informal hierarchies (often entwined with notions of class and gender), and in regards to commuting and trying to be in Umeå and Luleå at the same time. Most of all I have felt this contradiction, and recognised this experience in others, in regards to my empirical field of interest, the forestry sector. I never feel more at ease, with all my sense, as when I wander, breathe, hunt, live in the forest. It makes the narrow, sometimes exclusionary, conformity of the forestry sector curious and intriguing for me. I have spent quite a few years now trying to understand this sector. Even if every new insight lead to new questions to ask, I understand the mechanisms at play a little better now. It has however not been a solo expedition; I am safe to say that I would not have come this far alone, and I here would like to take the opportunity to say thank you.

Mostly, I wish to express my deepest admiration and gratitude to the brave and sharp-minded women (and a few men) in the forestry sector that I have met and who have shared their thoughts and experiences with me. Many of you strive every day, through your presence, actions and words, to transform and evolve the forestry sector and you are a true inspiration.

Next, my warmest gratitude to those who have encouraged and supported me throughout these years. First of all, Malin Lindberg, supervisor, thank you for guiding me and for constantly making me challenge my preconceptions. Apart from your scientific contributions to my development, your way of keeping track of the formalities, answering emails faster than lightning and always being focused on solutions have made all the difference. You are one of a kind! Assistant supervisor, Gun Lidestav, your knowledge on the forestry sector has been absolutely crucial in this process, as has your generosity, humour and your way of always having time for me, thank you. Kristina Johansson, assistant supervisor, thank you for teaching me how to navigate academia, for thorough readings and helpful feedback, and for always having my back, like the true friend you are. It has been a blast! I look forward to our next adventures.

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Introduction

In November 2019, the forestry sector was a hot topic in Swedish media (Holmgren 2019). Not because of the current climate debate and its key role in the transition to a more bio-based economy. Nor because of is its acknowledged importance for creating job opportunities, not least in sparsely populated areas. Nor because of its economic contribution as a net exporter, or its perceived significance for regional growth. And not because of its advancements in gender equality. Instead, the forestry sector was in focus because of pin-up calendars, produced in Finland and distributed all over northern Europe, in the name of one of the major machine manufacturers. This took place almost exactly two years after the #metoo movement ignited, which in the Swedish forestry sector resulted in a specific appeal, #slutavverkat, an intensified discussion on gender equality in many forestry organizations and changes in the forester training at the Swedish University of Agriculture (SLU 2018). Pushed by, for example, the grass roots movement NYKS, which is a network for professional women and non-binary people in forestry, the leaders of the major forestry companies and the forest agency point out the obsoleteness of nude calendars and condemn such actions claiming that it is outdated and unworthy of contemporary forestry, a sector allegedly working hard to reduce the gender imbalance of its workforce and its image in the eye of the public. At the same time, those protesting are ridiculed in the online comment sections, condescended to and even threatened (Rogert 2019). This incident highlights many of the aspects of interest in this thesis. One of the most obvious interpretations might be that the Swedish forestry sector is a context where today there is still room for perceived outdated sexist attitudes and behaviour. However, what is also at play here is that this happened against a backdrop of the quite longstanding gender equality work that have been taking place in the sector, where many of the leaders in the sector, at least on record, strongly oppose sexist behaviour. Further, it is highlighted that there is an organized internal resistance uniting women and non-binary people from all across the sector, striving for improved gender equality. Finally, the often confrontational and misogynist tone in many of the online comment sections where this is discussed can in itself be interpreted as a way of safeguarding "the way

things have always been", indicating that traditional structures are, at least in some sense, challenged, which evokes resistance.

This thesis is concerned with the male dominated Swedish forestry sector, the gendered processes of their work structures in general and their practical efforts to promote gender equality in particular. Accordingly, a key concept in this investigation is gender equality, which is here explored as an "empty signifier" (Magnusson et al. 2008) inasmuch as that it is the processes of filling gender equality with meaning that are explored. Or put differently, what happens when work structures in the Swedish forestry sector are claiming to do gender equality? While it is doings of gender equality in the Swedish forestry sector that form my empirical context, notions of *in*equality are just as much at play here, as they could be understood as constitutive of each other in the sense that constructions of gender equality discern what it is not. Different notions of gender equality imply different notions of gender (cf. Squires 2005). Consequently, this thesis is also concerned with gender, here studied as a verb, something that is *done* (cf. West & Zimmerman 1987). Another key concept is work organization. The thesis departs in the notion that to do gender is to do organization and vice versa, and that work organizations thus can be understood as inequality regimes (Acker 2006). That means that if organizations are studied as something that is done, rather than something that is, doings of gender and thereby also conditions for gender equality in organizations, can be made visible (cf. Acker 2006, 2012; Bengtsson et al. 2009). However, this does not mean that organizations are easy to change by "just doing differently", despite the opportunities for change that the perspective offers, organizational structures often meet with restoring processes when challenged (cf. Abrahamsson 2009, 2014).

The forestry sector is interesting to study from a gender perspective for multiple reasons. It offers specific conditions when it comes to gender and gender (in)equality due to cultural and professional norms rooted in tradition and history, making it a suitable entry point for studying doings of organizational gender equality work. Few other sectors are as imbued with gendered notions of men and masculinities as forestry. On the other hand, several Swedish forestry organizations are committed to issues of gender equality, at least in some respects. Over the past decades, the Swedish Ministry of Rural affairs has pointed to gender equality as a key factor for the sector to be profitable and sustainable and an attractive employer for a broader recruitment base (SweGov 2011). Many forestry organizations have taken initiatives for gender equality, which enables empirical studies of the doings of gender equality in Swedish forestry. Previously, research on gender equality and gender mainstreaming have been conducted in varying scientific disciplines and empirical contexts. While gender relations in male dominated industrial organizations have been the subject of a

significant body of research (cf. Abrahamsson 2009; Andersson 2012; Kanter 1977; Lidestav & Wästerlund 1999; Lindgren 1985; Pettersson 1996; Vänje 2005), knowledge on gender equality efforts in male dominated industries is rather sparse (Cockburn 1991; Ringblom 2019; Wahl & Linghag 2013). Instead studies focusing on gender equality interventions mainly have been taking place in public sector organizations, and mainly focusing on strategies of gender mainstreaming (cf. Callerstig 2014; Lindholm 2011; Jordansson 2015; Wittbom 2009).

The Swedish forestry sector

Sweden's land surface is to 69% covered by forests and the Swedish forestry sector is credited high significance to the Swedish society, in several respects, and by several actors.
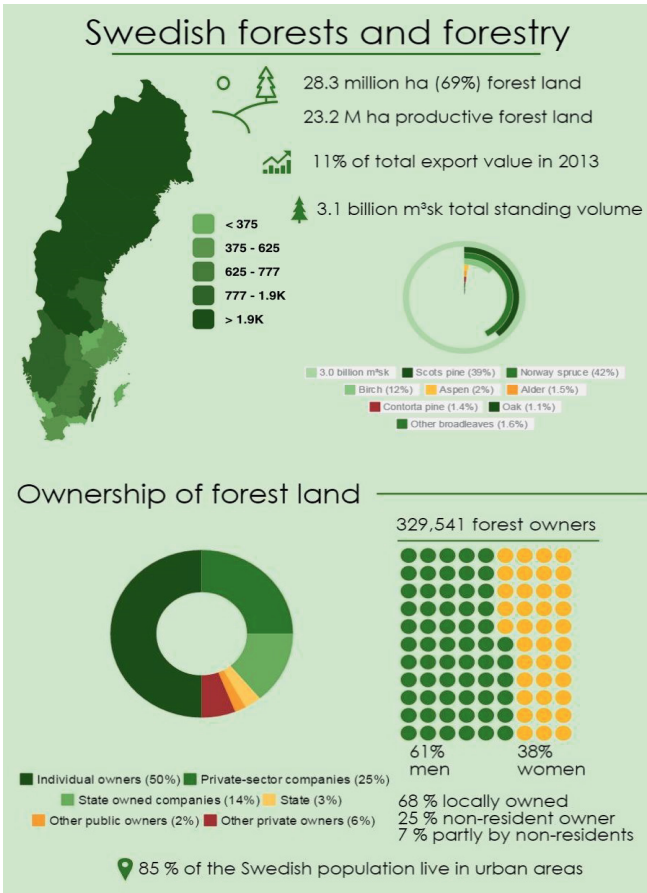

Figure 1. Key characteristics of Swedish forests and forestry. Figure constructed and published with permission by: Ida Wallin (2017) Sources: (SFA 2014; SLU 2016; SCB 2015).

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It is an economically important natural resource industry, contributing to large-scale export income from its role as the third largest exporter of paper, pulp and sawn timber in the world, the forestry sector economically can account for 11% of Sweden's total export value in 2013 (SFA 2014). Moreover, the forestry sector's role as an employer, not least in the more sparsely populated areas of rural Sweden, is often stressed. The forestry sector in Sweden employs about 28,000 people, of which 83% are men and 17% women. When also adding industries that the forestry sector supplies, such as the pulp and timber industry, the number of people directly or indirectly employed in the sector amounts to almost 100,000 people (SFA 2014). Further, the role of the forestry sector in the transition towards a bio-based economy, by substituting oil-based production with the raw material from the forest as a renewable energy source, and by climate mitigation effects from carbon sequestration in growing forests, is often stressed by the industry itself.

Up until the first half of the 20th century, forestry relied on the heavy manual labour of often small-scale farmers who owned or leased farm land for agriculture and animal husbandry and worked with timber logging on a contract basis during winter time (Ager 2014; Lundell 2011). Selective cutting by dimension was gradually replaced by a rotation forestry practice which was established as the dominant silvicultural practice, that included and a number of thinnings before the final felling, all with the major objective to ensure the wood supply for the pulp-and paper industry and for export markets (cf. Enander 2007; Lisberg Jensen 2011) and in order to steer clear of a possible future wood deficit for the industry, regulations regarding reforestation planting were subsequently implemented (Enander 2007). Today, the Swedish forestry sector is characterized by an extensive mechanisation, large export-oriented forest industries and prevailing norms regarding rotation forestry and a strong mutual understanding between stakeholders in the forestry sector, scientific institutions and such (Wallin 2017). Historically, timber production, needs of the industry and the economic dimension of the forest resource have been prioritized in Swedish forest policy (Beland Lindahl et al. 2017). However, since 1993 forest policy in Sweden stipulates that environmental objectives are equally important as production objectives in order to ensure a sustainable use of the forest resource, which applies to all kinds of forest owners. The Swedish forest agency, SFA, is responsible for implementing forest policy through advice, information and training for NIPF owners and to ensure that the policy objectives are met. The Swedish forestry model that can be described as "freedom under responsibility" is characterized by 'soft' steering instruments such as collaboration and voluntary action, and is based on attempts to balance productionist norms with environmental, social and cultural concerns (Appelstrand 2007). The timber production norm is, however, still strong in the sector (cf. Holmgren & Arora-Jonsson 2015), and Beland Lindahl et al. (2017 p. 52) argue that the model can be

considered as a "more of everything pathway" that still prioritizes the economic aspects of sustainability and wood production.

Forest management and planning in regard to the conflicting goals for the forest resource are a complex mix of natural processes, the individual and subjective goals of forest owners and legislative demands, and are made even more complicated by factors such as stakeholder diversity and climate change (Wallin 2017). These processes constitute the area where forest professionals, officers or consultants from the SFA or those employed by a forest owner association or a forest company, as well as timber purchasers or inspectors from the forest owner associations and forest companies, perform their work. Foresters both buy timber from the forest owners and provide advice and services, such as harvesting, thinning, pre-commercial thinning, planting or certification. Research show that the advice that actors in the forestry sector provide to forest owners for silviculture, tend to in line with forest industries' interest in maintaining their timber supply, according to Wallin (2017).

Regardless of the above described, often arbitrary and complex interests, actors within the Swedish forestry sector by tradition co-operate and seek consensus (cf. Appelstrand 2007). This sectorial spirit that is perceived to characterize the forestry sector in the Nordic countries entails an internal consensus on forest related issues and work (Ager 2014; Follo 2008), and the same phenomena is also observed in international research where Reed (2003) discloses the social embeddedness and occupational community that forestry work entails. The value of the forest resource is primarily perceived in economic terms – at least among large, central actors such as public authorities and major forest owners. Lidestav et al. (2011) show how most people working in the sector have been socialized into it through private forest ownership, family contacts or suchlike. Sundström (2005) shows that forestry sector representatives value not only consensus, but also common traditions and educational background. That common educational background often also implies a socialization that contributes to homogeneity and joint cultural understandings of how forestry work is comprehended and organized, and how knowledge is valued and transmitted (cf. Follo 2008; Häggqvist et al. 2010). Lidestav and Sjölander (2007) note that while this specific culture fulfils a communicative function for the sector it also risks being exclusionary and shut off, which leads to loss of knowledge and difficulties in recruiting and retaining competent staff, especially women. Similarly, Holmgren and Arora-Jonsson (2015 p. 238) describe "a gender biased corporatist culture" as actors in the forestry sector are homogeneous in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and educational background.

The empirical context that is investigated in this thesis, is here labelled as "the forestry sector", in which harvesting and silviculture constitute the central activities. Industrial processing of timber in sawmills and pulp and paper mills are not included. The context where the empirical material is collected includes organizations throughout the forestry value chain, ranging from industrial organizations providing hardware for the sector, such as machine manufacturers, to public and private companies that provide harvesting - or silviculture services. It also includes forest owner organizations for non-industrial private forest owners and networks or clusters of subcontractors, as well as public authorities. In regards to my understanding of forest work or forest competence in this thesis, the target is to highlight how it not only applies to the work that physically takes place in the forest, but also to work conducted by forest officials, forestry educated academics and support functions in forestry sector organizations, such as human resource departments and communication departments.

Gender and forestry

Before industrial forestry, forests were domestically used as a resource for self-sufficiency. In the traditional gender division of labour, the forests were used as pasture for livestock on the farm by the women who were often responsible for livestock on the farm (cf. Flygare 1999) whereas men used the forest resources for timber for building houses and for firewood (Ager 2014; Persson 2011). This gender division of labour has been reproduced over time across generations and is still today a reality for many non-industrial private forest owners both in Sweden (Lidestav 2010) and internationally (Follo et al. 2017). At the same time, due to inheritance legislation, forest ownership is today more equally distributed between men, who constitute just over 60 %, and women who constitute just under 40 %, of non-industrial forest owners as figure 1 shows (SFA 2014). As industrial demand for timber grew, forestry work in Sweden, especially in the north of the country, became a way for up to 200 000 men, both locals and migrant workers to support themselves via the forestry industry. Ella Johansson's (1994) historic ethnological research investigated the gendered practices of pre-modern forestry in the first half of the twentieth century in Sweden and found that the seemingly all-male setting that forestry constituted, shaped the ways in which masculinity was constructed in the sector. Personal status in the logging huts was dependent on work performance rather than socioeconomic background, meaning those from a lower class could be judged based on their work rather than on their inherited social position. Men in the rural areas could thereby gain status, money, and independence that were otherwise difficult to obtain for workers without possession of land at the time. Forestry thus functioned as a modernizing force in the northern parts of rural Sweden where men in relation to other men defined the "modern" identity. In other words, the specific forms of masculinity formed among the loggers that she studied were created in relation to other men and this construction of

masculinity and manhood in forestry is still ongoing (ibid). Women as forest owners and forestry workers were, if not absent, made invisible, and mainly recognized in their function as servants and cooks in the huts (Persson 2011). Their involvement in the more practical aspects of forestry work, such as reforestation and more rarely in harvesting, usually remains unmentioned (cf. Fiebranz 2010), possibly due to the perception of the presence of women as temporary and more distant to the core forestry activity of piling up the timber (cf. Lidestav et al. 2019).

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Swedish forestry sector has been urbanized and academized. Over the last few centuries forestry work has been mechanized and streamlined and since the breakthrough of the chainsaw in the 1950s, output, measured in cubic meters per man day, has increased tenfold. Forestry has undergone major changes where technological development and rationalization that together with changes in national forest policy have led to new tasks, skills needed and positions that now characterize the work of forestry organizations, and several of the sector's tasks are now feasible from an urban office instead of out on the field and there is an increased need for university-educated labour (Ager 2014). These changes are often put forward, by both the sector itself and by research, as potential factors contributing to a more gender-balanced workforce. However, despite the changes that the sector has undergone the proportion of women in large-scale forestry with a permanent position has fallen slightly since the mid-1990s (SFA 2014). Today, forestry remains one of the most gender segregated labour forces in Sweden. In the early 1990s 88 % of the employees in large-scale forestry were men and only twelve percent women. By 2014, the proportion of women constituted seventeen percent, however, among the proportion of those with a permanent position in the sector, only six percent of those are women (SFA 2014).

In the early 2000s, the Swedish government found that the rate of change in terms of gender balance in the forestry sector was lower than in other comparable sectors, and in 2000 the Nordic Council of Ministers adopted its first gender equality strategy for agriculture and forestry (SweGov 2004). A few years later, it was again noted that women and men do not have the same opportunities in the sector in the government bill entitled "A forest policy in line with the times" (SweGov 2007), which was also shown in research (cf. Lidestav & Wästerlund 1999). This is reflected in the national strategy for gender equality in forestry from 2011 entitled "Competitiveness requires equality - strategy for gender equality in forestry" (SweGov 2011). The overall wording in the national strategy is in line with the overall national equality policy objectives (SOU 2005:66), and it is stated "Women and men must have equal conditions, rights and opportunities to work in the forestry sector as well as to be active forest owners (SweGov 2011, p. 4)". The highly gender-segregated labour

market has consequences for the sector itself, for individuals and for society at large (SOU 2015:50), and the difficulty in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce is a major contributing factor in the sector's gender equality efforts (SweGov 2011). The gender segregation and the masculine norms that exist in the forestry sector today are also described as worrying by forestry companies, researchers and public authorities, mostly in terms of hampered attractiveness and ability to recruit (and retain) the right competence according to research in both a Nordic context (Lidestav et al. 2019; Rådberg & Svensson 2009; SweGov 2004) and internationally (cf. Coutinho-Sledge 2015; Hansen et al. 2016). For example, Appelstrand and Lidestav (2015) argue in their study on entrepreneurship by women as a pathway to a more competitive and equal forestry sector, that in order to be future-oriented and to continue to develop, the sector must follow social development to attract not only (a certain type of) men. Further, gender equality and a more diverse company culture are also considered to be important elements of the Nordic forestry sector in regard to strategic renewal moving into the bioeconomy (Blaublyte et al. 2019; Lidestav et al.2019). A more diversified forestry, which male dominance is believed to be an obstacle to, is also believed to lead to rural development in general, with goods and services in addition to timber (Umaerus et al. 2013). Thus, practical measures for gender equality are considered necessary, according to the industry, government and research and numerous efforts have been undertaken (Wide & Högvall Nordin 2019).

Understanding the male dominance in forestry

Work is gendered through the structural hierarchies, in practice and in the ways in which workers display their gendered characteristics (cf. Brandth & Haugen 2000). Few other sectors are as imbued with notions of men and masculinity as forestry, and forestry has traditionally been understood in relation to the weather-beaten blue-collar rural masculinity of the rugged logger (ibid.). The physical strength and stamina, which has traditionally been associated with men and masculinity, is no longer as crucial in performing forestry work, a fact which could contribute to diversifying the workforce. Nevertheless, when Brandth and Haugen (2005) explored the variations of doing masculinity in practical forestry work through a temporal analysis of how masculinity is represented in the forestry press they found that the central representation of men as being a man of nature where hard work, wind and weather have marked their bodies had shifted, from being a man of the machine where technical skills are central to a more contemporary management man whose skillset includes business aspects. Their findings indicate that masculinity has been (re)positioned in line with the changes forestry has undergone, from a focus on traditional logging to one encompassing more value-added activities which indicates that the restructuring processes in forestry in some sense contest the hegemonic masculine order. Despite this emerging, more urban "management masculinity" in the forestry sector, physical capacity and technical skills,

practical experience of forest work and rural values still continue to be central aspects when it comes to legitimacy as a carrier of knowledge in forestry work organizations. Similarly, by studying media representations and interviewing forestry workers in regards to conceptions of work environment and risks in forest machine work, Högvall Nordin (2006) uncovered that notions of masculinity, technology, business economy, identity and organization of work could explain how forest work and occupational risks were related to. Although in a various way, masculinity was central to all key archetypes found in the material.

Even if work tasks performed and skills needed in forestry will vary over time, men are persistently represented as carriers of forest culture and forestry skills which was noted by Lidestav and Sjölander (2007) when they explored how job advertisements and Swedish forestry press shifted from 1991–2001. Notwithstanding, the ideal forester continued to be portrayed as a hard-working and nature-mastering man interested in hunting and wildlife, which highlights how gender and gendered practices are, in constant negotiation in some aspects, yet stable in others. Pülzl et al. (2014) note that central in an industrial discourse is the idea of control over the resource which is reflected in representations of the forest workers, also as shown by Brandth and Haugen (2005), in a Nordic context, where control is central to constructions of masculinity, whether it is in regard to nature, machines or business. Noticeable, is that these features do not correspond to general perceptions of "how to be" a woman (cf. Johansson 1994).

When it comes to how previous research has understood women in forestry, Lidestav and Sjölander (2007) note that an increase in the number of female foresters has not brought about any significant change in regard to how forestry professions are gendered, but that when women enter male dominated sectors, forestry in this case, they are often assumed to contribute something new, through their supposed "otherness". This otherness renders them a prefix such as female machine operator or female manager, making the male norm visible. When the ideal image of the forestry worker or forestry professional is based on the male body, women are not assumed to possess the right kind of skills or experiences, are expected to need additional help and thereby are not understood as carriers of knowledge. The spaces accessible for women in forestry have been restricted, women have more often found work in areas related to forest preservation, communication or administration and in public organizations such as the Swedish Forestry Agency while they are less likely to work in harvesting, processing, or as managers (Lidestav et al. 2011). Regardless of the findings described above, when women end up in the top management of forestry industries, adaptation to "being one of the boys" appears to be a norm for female leaders in this masculine context according to Blaublyte et al. (2019), who interviewed female top leaders in

the Nordic forestry industry about their perceptions of gendered culture in the workplace.

In an international context, Reed (2003) explore women entering the practices and discourses of forestry work and the consequences that has on the gendering of both forestry work and finds that women's participation in forestry has been shaped by traditional constructions of masculinity, and their status within forestry remains marginalized. Similarly, Storch (2011 p. 175) found that the attitudes of German female foresters towards nature did not differ from those of their male colleagues and that conceptions of women as different "restrain women from simply being 'normal' foresters". This is also noted by Vainio and Paloniemi (2013) in their study of how Finnish forest owners relates to nature conservation. They find that individual forest owners adapt their nature conservation preferences to forestry's masculine socio-cultural context. The consequence of this is that it is possible for women to enter the sector without challenging its general entwinement with certain types of masculinity (Storch 2011; Vaino & Paloniemi 2013).

When entering the gendered sphere that forestry constitutes, women become on the one hand more visible in the sector by standing out, but are at the same time made invisible in light of the stereotypical conception of the "forest worker/professional" (Andersson & Lidestav 2016; Johansson et al. 2019b). Even if gender equality and a broadened recruitment base for the sector is high on the agenda, constructions of a certain types of masculinity nevertheless remain when it comes to conceptions of *who* works in forestry and it seems that regardless of the proportion of women in the forestry sector, the stereotypical forest worker/professional is portrayed as a man with interests in hunting and nature. The extent to which these gendered notions of competence and forestry work continues to influence the forestry sector in its relation to gender equality work is one of the themes examined in this thesis.

Aim and research questions

While previous research in the context does offer relevant insights in into gender equality, less is known about how doing gender equality challenges and/or reproduces both notions of gender and notions of organizations. As shown, the gendered norms in forestry have been addressed in previous research to some extent, both in regard to being a forest owner (cf. Follo et al. 2017; Lidestav 2010) and in regard to representations of forestry professionals (cf. Brandth & Haugen 2000, 2005; Lidestav & Sjölander 2007) and by forestry professionals themselves (cf. Andersson & Lidestav 2016; Johansson et al. 2019b; Reed 2003). In parallel, increased gender equality in the forestry sector's work organizations is highlighted as an important and prioritized area, politically and by the sector itself. But how gender equality work is done as meaningful

and what the implications of such doings may be is less discussed. This inevitably poses questions regarding not only how gender is constructed in this context which previous research, as shown above, has unveiled, but also what gender equality means to the sector and how it is *done*. The above-described studies are mainly conducted before or in parallel to the national strategy for gender equality in forestry from 2011 (SweGov 2011) or uses material from around that time as Johansson et al. (2019a, 2019b) does, and explore how constructions of gender are entwined with notions of forestry.

Specifically, having gender equality as the empirical basis, rather than notions of gender, motivates the thesis' investigation of how Swedish forestry companies approach and manage efforts to promote gender equality – by offering new theoretical and empirical understandings of doing gender equality in male dominated organizations. In light of this, this thesis is inspired by the need to advance the knowledge regarding how doing gender equality in male dominated industrial organizations of the Swedish forestry sector is intertwined with gendered norms. This complements previous studies of how the arguments for gender equality shape the conditions for organizational change (cf. Squires 2005). Further, previous studies have primarily focused on individuals, rather than organizations in regards to gender equality (cf. Johansson et al.2019a), and this thesis thereby extends the scope of previous studies focusing on gendered representations to also include the doings of gender equality in Swedish forestry work organizations. The thesis is also motivated from an applied perspective, where improved understanding of the conditions for gender equality is important, not only to the forestry sector as a whole as argued above, but also for those working in male dominated industries who, through the #metoo-movement for example, showed that gender equality is a matter of freedom from sexist oppression at work, not only a matter of industrial competitiveness.

In order to contribute to filling this research gap, the aim of this thesis is to increase the understanding of how gender equality is done in the male dominated work organizations of the Swedish forestry sector. The aim is fulfilled by investigating these three research questions (RQs):

1. How do constructions of gender equality affect the conditions for organizational change through gender equality interventions? This is mainly addressed in Articles I and II.

2. How are organizational patterns and practices that facilitate gender inequality constituted? This is mainly addressed in Article III.

3. How can new knowledge on organizational gender equality work be engendered by a feminist participatory action research approach? This is mainly addressed in Articles IV and V.

Apart from this introductory chapter, this thesis consists of five articles, four peer-reviewed and published and one submitted. The articles and the results in them are more comprehensively presented in chapter 4, but here follows a brief introduction to the main focus of the articles, the empirical material that they are based on and how they relate to the research questions of the thesis. Article I: *De-politicizing gender equality in policies,* starts from the national gender equality strategy of the Swedish forest industry, where ten of the largest forestry companies committed themselves to gender mainstream their policies and, based on that, focuses on the varied and conflicting meanings and constitution of the concept of gender equality (Andersson et al. 2018). In Article II: *Making sense of the business case of gender equality*, it is explored through interviews how company representatives construct gender equality as a business case, which is also central in the national gender equality strategy of the Swedish forest industry (Johansson & Ringblom 2017). Both articles discuss from different perspectives how these constructions shape the organizational realities that restrict and/or enable change in terms of increased gender equality in these organizations, and relate to research question 1.

Article III: *#Metoo – Women's testimonies of gendered organizations*, uses the testimonies within the Swedish forestry sector #metoo-appeal, #slutavverkat, to analyse the gendered structures/cultures and notions of organizations in the Swedish forestry sector, highlighting how gender equality is not merely related to business benefits but also concerns the personal safety and freedom from oppression and harassment for the minority of women in forestry and discusses the organizational patterns and practices that facilitate harassment, which is addressed by research question 2 (Johansson et al. 2018).

Article IV: *Men and gender equality – highlighting intersectionality*, explores how gender equality work in organizations is intertwined with conceptions of gender, class, and place and how awareness of organizations as inequality regimes potentially affects gender equality work (Ringblom & Johansson 2020). Finally, Article V: *Re-politicizing gender equality in practice*, investigates and highlights conflicts in the micro processes of gender equality work is in organizations, in order to nuance and thereby challenge the sometimes hegemonic critical perspectives on gender equality as depoliticized in feminist research (Johansson *forthcoming*). Both Articles IV and V deploy a feminist participatory action research methodology as a way of addressing organizational gender

equality work, and discuss the promises and pitfalls by doing so, which is related to research question 3.

Disposition

Apart from the five articles, four peer–reviewed and published, and one submitted, this thesis consists of a synthesizing chapter that contextualizes and discusses the research in a comprehensive and overarching way, aiming to introduce to the topic and context of the study, its theoretical framing, and the methodological starting points, as well as an overarching concluding analysis in relation to the aim of this thesis. Next, an account of the theoretical frame of reference and the key concepts gender, gender equality and work organization is given in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 delineates the methodological approach where feminist participatory action research has guided the knowledge production on an overarching level. Following this in Chapter 4, each of the included articles are summarized in regard to the most important questions asked, their empirical material and the most central findings. In Chapter 5, I revisit the aim and research questions and the comprehensive findings of my research are discussed together with concluding remarks, the thesis' contributions, notes on future as well as some implications for practice

Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the key concepts and theoretical framework of the thesis are presented and contextualized. The key concepts in the thesis are work organization, gender equality and gender. Below, I present a comprehensive account of said concepts and discuss how I use these concepts, and how they relate to each other, when analysing the empirical material and in what ways they are helpful in this thesis. In each of the included articles, the more specific theoretical concepts used are elucidated.

The thesis deploys a frame of reference rooted in feminist organizational research, where gender and gender equality are studied as socially constructed. This means that the ways in which we understand, interpret, ascribe meaning to and articulate, for example, gender, always occur in a social, historical, political and cultural specificity (cf. Burr 1995). In other words, there is no pre-given essence of fixed meaning in concepts such as man, woman or forester. This perspective enables analyses of gender equality work as processes or practices wherein systems of meaning are expressed, created, reproduced, and challenged. What is being studied in the included articles, whether the empirical material be written policies, the short and concise testimonies of Instagram posts or the more overarching and complex processes of building joint knowledge in the form of R&D-projects, is the organizational processes and practices of gender and gender equality as a product of, and producer of, shared systems of meaning which this perspective facilitates an understanding of (cf. Acker 2006). Much of the empirical material studied was in the form of language, in text or spoken at interviews or workshops, and the perspective enables an analysis of language as not only describing but simultaneously constitutive of what is talked about (cf. Ashcraft & Mumby 2004; Perriton 2009). Hence, *doing* in the sense that structures, norms and conceptions are constituted in social and discursive practices, is the overarching focus in all articles. However, the different theoretical frameworks that the thesis relates to have approached doings in somewhat different manners depending on how social and discursive practices are emphasized and differentiated. This allows for different aspects of doings to be highlighted.

Power plays an important part in the thesis' theoretical framework. One way to understand how power relations both exclude and include actors, issues and interpretations is to consider power as discursive. Bacchi (1999) defines discourse as language, concepts and categories used to delineate a question, and her definition, like many others, is based on Michel Foucault's approach (cf. Foucault 1982). Through discursive processes, notions of what is true, meaningful and "desired" are established, and certain actions and interpretations are made possible and others impossible. Put differently, dominant discourses are established through constructions of the normal, the true and the right, and by excluding or degrading "the other" as abnormal or false. In this, power resides, not in any factitive way but in what is perceived to be the common (cf. Magnusson 2014). Norms are thus constituted in relation to their opposite, by naming what is non-normative. In this way, for example, designations such as female machine operators or female timber purchasers are based on the exclusion of women and so-called female characteristics, thereby making women gendered, while men have the privilege of not being defined as gendered but represented as the normal, or "an unmarked category where power and privilege cluster" (Choo & Feree 2010 p. 147). This illustrates one of the cornerstones of feminist analysis, that gender is done and that this production is characterized by power. This perspective allows for examinations of, for example, how constructions of gender, gender equality or work organizations are (re)produced and potentially challenged, and to explore how some constructions are favoured while other are marginalized.

Work organizations as inequality regimes

Formal work organizations have traditionally, in both research and practice, been understood through a framework of rationality, control and predictability. This includes conceptions of long-standing, formal structures including economic, political, social and technological systems that support actions, decision-making, communication and responsibility, and an expectation of coherence and clear goals (cf. Abrahamsson 2005; Meyer and Rowan 1977), and thus gender neutral. Feminist organizations and working life researchers have nevertheless repeatedly shown that organizations are far from gender neutral, but are rather gendered, in the sense that they do as well as sort gender (cf. Acker 1990; 1992). This way of conceptualizing organizations is used in research as a way to understand and explain how gender patterns can continue in organizations despite obvious injustices such as Abrahamsson (2009) and Johansson (2015) do. Deploying a feminist perspective on organizational research is a rejection of this traditional understanding of organizations as logical, rational and meritocratic and instead recognizes that organizations are political arenas for, for instance, gendered practices. In the words of Acker (2006), work organizations are inequality regimes.

The concept of inequality regimes is helpful in understanding the complex organizing practices and processes in the male dominated organizations that produce and uphold inequalities. Acker (2006 p. 443) defines inequality regimes as "loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations". Acker shows that, depending on organizational context, the processes and patterns vary, meaning that their output in terms of visibility, severity and legitimacy will also alter from organization to organization making the inequality regimes persistent, yet fluid and changing depending on surrounding society and its culture, politics and norms. Wage setting, recruitment processes, routines and informal interactions at work are examples of organizing practices in which inequalities are (re)produced. Acker's studies enable studies of gender equality efforts as an organizing practice that (re)produces or challenges power dynamics and inequalities. She concludes that inequality is made unreflected and integrated into daily organizational practice. According to Acker, gender segregation and thus gender formation takes place through the organization's structures and symbols as well as through individuals' relationships and identities. Structures refers to the vertical and horizontal segregation found in all workplaces. Men and women are usually found at different levels and in different parts of the organization. What men do is commonly valued more highly, which is materialized as discrepancies in salary, degree of influence or career paths. Symbols refers to central parts of an organization's culture that prescribe how women and men should behave or dress. Interactions refers to formal and informal contexts in which inequality is recreated, such as meetings or at coffee breaks. Identity work is influenced by the conditions given in the organization and a prominent pattern of how inequality is restored is that men are given better conditions for development and career than women.

While some inequalities are considered, at least on the record, unacceptable, (for example the engagement of the Swedish forestry sector in gender equality work signals that gendered inequality is unacceptable), other inequalities are more unproblematized and to some extent even naturalized, as Acker (2006, 2012) shows. Class-based inequalities are an example of, within contemporary neoliberal discourse, a naturalized inequality. Just as gendered and classed power structures are understood as relational, places are also being continuously constructed in relation to other places, where perceptions of center and periphery shape the power dynamic. An intersectional perspective on inequality (cf. Crenshaw 1991; Mohanty 2003) can be used as a tool for deconstructing power structures, and it highlights how social categorizations are complex and contradictory and negotiated in relation to each other (Atewologun & Mahalingam 2018; Reed & Davidson 2011). In the context of work organization in

Swedish forestry, the workforce is comprised of more than 80% men. At the same time, many of them are working class and many live in more peripheral rural areas (Brandth & Haugen 2000), suggesting that intersecting power dynamics of special interest here is class and place.

In relation to industrial work organizations, previous research has shown how industrial work and technology relates to gender, noting that technology has a masculine connotation (cf. Abrahamsson 2009; Cockburn 1985; Wajcman 2004). This interconnectedness between gender and technology is manifested in how men are expected to be more technically skilled. Cockburn (1985, p. 12) writes: "femininity is incompatible with technical competence", making men the perceived "natural" user and developer of technology. This highlights how technology can be understood as social knowledge, practices and products, and that constructions of technology are related to how power is distributed in society (Cockburn 1985; Wajcman 2004). In contrast, when women enter the forestry sector they are predominantly found in areas such as nature preservation or communication or found at public authorities, and valued for their social skills, and their presumed ability to create a nice atmosphere (cf. Johansson et al. 2019b). This way of constituting femininity and masculinity in relation to each other highlights a heterosexual norm which is also makes sexuality a part of the ongoing production of gender, which influences gender relations and gendered interactions in organizations (Acker 1992). This is particularly noted in male dominated industries and organizations, where sexualized forms of male control through sexual harassment for example seem integrated in organizational practices (cf. Cockburn 1991).

Doing gender equality

Previous studies show that gender equality as a concept can be filled with different meanings, definitions and understandings depending on the context, and hence also includes a variation of actions, implementations and outcomes (Callerstig 2014; Lombardo et al. 2009; Magnusson et al. 2008). When analysing gender equality discursively, it is highlighted how gender equality is done in the context at hand, in order to understand how gender equality is implemented and how political subjects (categories such as 'men' and 'women') and their 'subject positions' are constituted within the doing of gender equality. Previous research highlights how different gender equality strategies reflect different notions of gender and are thereby constitutive of different subject positions. Three strategies of gender equality that have been distinguished are *inclusion*, *reversal* and *displacement* (Squires 2005). Strategies of *inclusion* have a "gender neutral" ambition, meaning that men and women should have equal opportunities and be treated equally, which risks implementing a masculine norm. *Reversal* strategies have a complementary view, recognizing differences between men

and women and strive to upgrade what is traditionally regarded as 'feminine', with a risk of essentializing differences and failing to acknowledge dynamics of power. To avoid these pitfalls, *displacement* strategies aim at understanding gender as a construct instead of something essential and therefore aims to deconstruct operating gendering regime, which facilitates acknowledgement of power within gender equality interventions, but does not necessarily challenge inequalities.

Gender equality is, as previously stated, an explicit goal in the contemporary Swedish forestry sector, both in policy and in most forest companies, and gender mainstreaming is often perceived as the means to achieve that. Wittbom (2009) investigates the functionality of control processes when formal requests from macro level demand gender mainstreaming at the micro level in a male dominated transportation sector and finds that organizational transformation requires a high level of gender awareness and that both knowledge and practical actions are needed. Knowledge and gender awareness are perceived as crucial aspects when implementing gender equality in organizations (cf. Andersson & Däldehög 2012; Callerstig & Lindholm 2011; Wahl & Linghag 2013). On the other hand, reducing gender equality to a problem related to knowledge can be understood as a bureaucratization of political issues. Gender mainstreaming as a strategy can be problematized as a way of turning political issues into bureaucracy and administration according to Edenheim and Rönnblom (2016). Gender mainstreaming nevertheless implies that despite the gendered nature of organizations and institutions, they have the capacity to change, in regard to specific organizational cultures, structures and conditions (cf. Bacchi 2017). That being said, the extent to which gender mainstreaming is deployed as a forestry sector strategy can be discussed, and gender equality work is here studied as an organizational process (Choo & Ferree 2010), where complex power relations are constituted, challenged, and upheld in relation to each other (cf. Acker 2006).

The business case of gender equality

In order to make sense of negotiations of gender equality work in a specific organization, linking the organizational doing of gender equality on a workplace level to wider societal processes is necessary (cf. Härenstam 2017). Mulinari (2016) shows in her historical analysis that discourses of gender equality have been negotiated and (re)formulated in the political arena in Swedish in close relation to women's participation in the labour market and thus subjected to neoliberal discourses and policies in contemporary Sweden. It can be argued that discourses constructing gender equality as a means to economic growth or business benefits remain silent about the structural and historical dimensions of inequality (cf. Elomäki 2018).

This is consistent with a more general shift in constructions of gender equality in companies, just as in the public sector, in the Western world during the last couple of decades, from a social justice approach to a more specific focus on competitive advantage (Dickens 1999; Mayes & Pini 2014; Perriton 2009). Studies show that organizations in corporate contexts are often influenced by a more overarching neoliberal discourse (cf. Crowley & Hodson 2014). According to Boréus (1994) there are three key aspects in this discourse: a striving for a minimized governmental influence in order to strengthen the free market; a perspective on capitalism as a producer of social harmony; and a notion of individualism, where all individuals are considered equal in regard to the market, as rational and thus responsible for their actions. The normativity of neoliberal discourse means that societies and subjects are shaped and transformed in a certain way as a result of the neoliberal norms (Fahlgren et al. 2016; Brown 2008), meaning that political proposals and policy documents are also permeated by neoliberal ideas, allowing the needs and desires of the corporate world to influence policy formulation to an increasing extent, which is not least visible in gender equality politics (cf. Rönnblom 2008). Rather than deploying a structural perspective on equality and oppression, discrimination is conceptualized as an expression of non–individualism (Perriton 2009) which contributes to the naturalization of an underlying androcentric norm in organizations, making gender equality into an issue for and about women. Within such framing of gender equality, structural inequalities are, in general, absent, and discussions on the accountability and agency of men in power are left out (cf. Kusterer 2014; Riley 2002). Gender equality is commonly framed as what Mouffe (2000) refers to as "pain-free politics", beneficial for all. Lombardo et al. (2010 p. 109) state that "Meanings of the concept are fixed for some time, shrunk within or stretched beyond particular labels, and bent to fit particular policy frames. These discursive dynamics have their consequences for gender equality". One such consequence is degendering, implying that gender as a dimension of political matters is being reduced, neutralized or abolished. Depoliticizing is another consequence, thorough which elements of conflicts are neutralized. That in turn risks, according to Rönnblom (2009), concealing power relation and closes off the space for articulating the relationship between women and men in terms of conflictual social relations. Emphasizing consensus by focusing on, for example, performance, efficiency and employment needs, rather than on gender itself, or gendered conflicts of interests, when discussing equality in workplaces, is an example of degendered equality work (Ikävalko & Brunila 2017).

When it comes to male dominated industries, Mayes and Pini (2014) show that the constructions of gender equality consist of four major rationales: industry skills shortage, wider industry and social benefits, the closely interrelated benefits of increased workforce diversity and women's difference. Other studies show that in the

forestry sector, issues of gender equality are often linked to industrial needs and as a way of securing the supply of skills and competitiveness (Appelstrand & Lidestav 2015; Holmgren & Arora-Jonsson 2015; SweGov 2011). To achieve this, the sector is striving to increase the number of women, an ambition that is often structured around a notion of women as contributing something different to the organizations. Women are often assumed to be more sociable, contribute to a better, "nicer", psychosocial work environment and to be more interested in and/or suitable for, in the context of forestry, aspects such as forest preservation, communication and administration (cf. Johansson et al. 2019b). Attributing women 'difference' is almost inevitably a process of 'othering', while claiming difference can often be understood as a form of resistance (cf. Bacchi & Eveline 2009; Brown 2008). Hence, through the process of "othering" women, the masculine norms of forestry are not particularly challenged by an increased proportion of women. Further, a higher ratio of women, within a business case framing of gender equality, is perceived as a marketing strategy: it is a way of showing that the organization is equality-friendly, up-to-date and a preferred employer. In contrast, an increased number of women are rarely motivated by arguments concerning equal access for women to a high-wage industry (Mayes & Pini 2014).

The feminist critique described above of how gender equality is conceptualized as degendered and depoliticized and how gender equality is carried out in policy and practice is considered to be valid and important in many respects. Nevertheless, it has been argued that the critique is one-sided in some regards, and consolidates hegemonic discourses on gender equality where multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings risk being made invisible (Lombardo et al. 2010). When the interpretation and assessment of gender equality work is dominated by this critique it can be difficult to theoretically and empirically capture and highlight the feminist resistance that does exist in gender equality work, as pointed out by Ikävalko and Kantola (2017) (cf. Bacchi 2009b). Lombardo et al. (2010, p. 114) argue that this hegemonic view of gender equality work in feminist research "risks overlooking the fact that discursive processes can be enabling and productive as well, and not only restraining". In other words, the elements of conflicts and gendering in organizational gender equality work that nevertheless exists needs to be highlighted, and recognized, in order to fully understand how gender equality work is related to organizational processes of change.

The ongoing negotiations characterizing gender equality work in working life do not fully encompass differentiating frames of interpretation of the concept and related conflicts. There is a close relation between equality policies and the needs of the labour market and the market-oriented power relations of working life (Edström & Brunila 2016), which is also a tendency noted in the forestry sector (Holmgren & Arora Jonsson 2015). Above, I described how gender equality tends to be diminished to a

business case for the forestry sector or for the individual companies. That does not, however, reveal anything of the driving forces of those working to achieve gender equality in organizations, but merely that the discursive space for arguing for gender equality favours competitive arguments. Keisu and Carbin (2014) show how gender equality practitioners are performing a balancing act between feminist ideals for change and neoliberal management trends.

Doing gender

Gender is investigated in this thesis as something that is *done* rather than something that *is*, meaning that our actions and statements are not explained by gender, rather it is in the structures, norms and practices that negotiations and (re)constituting of gender can be discerned. In the theoretical stream of doing gender, the gendered subject is studied as constructed and socially negotiated, rather than dependent on any internal quality or an essence (West & Zimmerman 1987). Doing gender has its theoretical roots in feminist sociology and was introduced by West and Zimmerman in 1987, as a critique of the gender role theory that was often applied then. Doing gender can be perceived as an ethnomethodological alternative to more text-focused discourse analytic approaches to constructions of gender, studying constructions as interactional and social rather than as a matter of linguistics. West and Zimmerman depart from Goffman (1976) in their focus on social interaction and the subject's capacity to perform social acts in relation to the discursive power that produces the subject. That signals a theoretical difference from a purely poststructuralist approach, namely in the issues of agency and social structure and thus in the understanding of the existence of the gendered subject.

Constructions of gender may, according to West and Zimmerman (1987), be understood as a routine, that is methodical and recurrent in ongoing social interaction in accordance with the normative views surrounding binary gender categories. This makes it possible to study how gender is performed or enacted, how this is understood or perceived and in addition to report on the subject as a 'doer'. West and Zimmerman frame this as a matter of accountability, meaning that those who fail to do gender in accordance to what is expected of them are held accountable for their actions. Accountability links routinely social interaction to the continuity or repetitiveness of how gender is continuously done in a rather exact manner. This does not remove agency, intent or resistance in the doing of gender, instead the notion of accountability contextualizes it and highlights the need to recognize how inequality is upheld in interactions. With this perspective, gender is neither "a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but a product of social doing" (p 129). Gender is, however, here understood as something more than a display or an act or performance that it is possible to step in and out of. On the contrary, the authors argue that gender as a doing must be

understood as an interactional scaffolding, a social structure maintained through social control.

Although the impact of norms and social structures on the individual is highly present in doing gender, interactional routines are still relatively unreflected (West & Fenstermaker 1995). Doing gender is a repeated, often unconscious act or subjectification of social structures. Doing gender as a theoretical frame is often used to understand how inequalities are reproduced, in relation to social change. West and Fenstermaker elaborate on how class and race are also mechanisms with similar effects on how power is exercised and inequality reproduced where difference also becomes a continuous ongoing achievement through social interactions. The doing gender perspective has been criticized because, in its application, it usually focuses on how gendered power differences are maintained and reproduced (Connell 2010). It has been discussed whether it is possible to undo gender and if that in turn is the solution to gender inequality. Some scholars have argued that this is possible (Risman 2009) but it is perhaps more an issue of the routineness and repetitiveness imbued in doing gender that is being challenged? Consequently, such events may rather be perceived as gender being redone and done differently, which in turn might improve the understanding of how the structures of accountability may be transformed in a more non–oppressive direction (West & Zimmerman 2009). The doing gender approach thus makes it possible to study gender equality as something that is being done not merely in the written or spoken word, but also in social interactions, by means of a feminist participatory action research methodology, which is elaborated in subsequent sections.

It is in an organizational context that doing gender as a theoretical framework is perceived as particularly useful, when investigating how gender is continuously created in the relationships between people (cf. Gunnarsson et al. 2003), in a way that is routine and methodical, and which has consequences for how women and men are categorized in relation to space, resources and work tasks. Gender, or more specifically conceptions of gender, is a highly present aspect of doing work and organization, according to previous studies (cf. Abrahamsson, 2009; Acker 1990, 2006). An example of this is how knowledge is embodied in organizations, and ascribes different values to different bodies, which in turn controls what the individual in an organization is assumed to master (Acker 2006). In the forestry sector, for example, this is shown by the fact that men are often the norm, men's bodies are assigned a higher value, and thus to a greater extent than women are assumed to possess knowledge (cf. Johansson et al. 2019b).

Doing masculinity

Connell (2005) describes gender as a way of organizing social practice, or doings, where actions are configured in larger units. Masculinity and femininity are ways of conceptualizing or naming configurations of gender practice. These concepts, masculinity and femininity, are inherently relational and constituted in contrast to each other. The concept of masculinity is pivotal in critical studies of men and masculinities as gendered and the problematization of man as the starting point for the perceived universal human, and studies in the research field show how perceptions of manhood and male norms affect men's behaviour and the expectations men meet in society (cf. Hearn 2004; Mellström et al. 2014). Masculinity in several aspects is linked to power and the maintenance of patriarchal structures, making the notion of hegemonic masculinity important. It refers to the norms for men, situated in context and history, that legitimize and uphold male dominance over women and hierarchizes certain groups of men over other, more marginalized, groups of men. Studies conclude that problematizing men's power positions need to be linked to questions about class, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, age, etc. Different men have different possibilities to be regarded as men (Connell 2005). In relation to the forestry sector, its symbolic connotation with blue-collar work and the nature-mastering ideals that the closeness to and dominion over natural resources provides, entails a certain way of doing rural masculinity (Campbell & Bell 2000; Reed & Davidson 2011). Or, as Brandth and Haugen (2015 p.15) puts it, "when rural men work in the forest, they do masculinity as is considered appropriate for rural men". While this construction of rural masculinity functions as a norm in forestry, in relation to gender equality rural men are instead perceived as outdated and "backwards" and constituted against the perceived modern urban masculinities (cf. Bye 2009; Stenbacka 2011), highlighting relational hierarchies between men (Connell 2005).

Studies show how men in organizations and social life tend to create male networks both formal and informal or in associations, and the concept of homosociality can describe the tendency of men to identify with and orient themselves towards other men, a phenomenon that was noted by Johansson (1994) when examining how forestry workers' constructions of masculinity are done in relation to other men. Homosociality includes men's financial as well as emotional investment in male communities and how men seek confirmation from other men at the expense of including women (Holgersson 2006; Lindgren 1996; Lipman-Blumen 1976). Exclusion of women occurs partly because women disrupt the male atmosphere but also because in men's eyes women do not have the economic, political and social resources that make socialization beneficial. Men's lifestyle and leisure time is related to professional success and is therefore also a cause of the unequal power structures that permeates the organization of working life. In her thesis on the historical

prevalence of hunting societies for male managers in the industry, Nordlund Edvinsson (2010) finds that homosociality were central in maintaining conservative structures. In the hunting club, men were allowed to depart from the strictness of more formal contexts, and make use of humorous jargon interspersed with admiration.

Men's privileges and men's resistance to equality

Studies on men and masculinity have often investigated men's relation to gender-equality interventions (cf. Cockburn 1991; Hearn 2001; Kimmel 2013; Pleasants 2011). A part of gender equality work often involves challenging dominant gender structures and norms, thus identifying and highlighting how gendered norms have exclusionary consequences. This tends to evoke resistance from those who enjoy the privileges of being normative (Squires, 2005). As stated, masculinity and men's practices are interlinked with power and privileges, in terms of how working life is structured, presumptions of skills and competence and the opportunity to engage in social settings. For example, notions of forestry are – according to previous studies - imbued with masculinity, meaning that *male* machine operators or *male* managers in forestry practices are rarely talked of, usually simply machine operators or managers. This makes men an invisible category of power, on the basis that they may represent the "ordinary", which constitutes the norm (cf. Choo & Feree 2010).

Making visible and questioning the privileges that come with being the norm, and breaking expected patterns often evokes reactions among men. Men are often unaware of these patterns and may feel questioned or criticized when this is pointed out (Mellström et al. 2014). Even if many men support gender equality, men's resistance to change in gender relations is nevertheless there (Connell 2005). Oppression and inequality are not as visible to the privileged group as to the subordinate groups. McIntosh (1990) argues that one of the most obvious privileges of the advantaged group, is to avoid seeing the oppression of subordinate groups, thereby avoiding thinking of themselves as privileged. Part of this privilege is also a sense of entitlement, for example to a certain job (Kimmel 2007) or a certain salary (Hogue et al. 2007), and if this is not met, it can result in explicit resistance and emotions of anger over having been deprived of privileges that they perceive themselves entitled to (Kimmel 2013).

One example of how resistance against gender equality is expressed is by explaining women's subordination in women themselves. Women's underrepresentation as leaders, for example, is then explained by an assumption that women lack the interest or capacity to become leaders (cf. Squires 2005). In forestry, this is noted in how Johansson et al. (2019a) investigated the discursive resistance expressed by men in the forestry sector against the industry's ongoing gender equality initiatives. The results

show that it was not resistance to equality itself that was expressed but rather to the way the respondents perceived gender equality interventions were carried out, which they understood as both unfair and unnecessary. The ambition within the sector to recruit more women was seen as a departure from the meritocratic principles that these men perceived to be governing in the forestry sector and this was thought to create an unfair quota for women. Further, the problem of gender inequality was attributed to "prejudiced old men" and this was reflected in an understanding of today's industry as "modern" and "woman-friendly", and that time would contribute to a more gender balanced sector. This way of placing the problem among a perceived "prejudiced other" is another strategy regarding gender equality, and a part of how men understand themselves is by acknowledging the problem of inequality and attributing the responsibility for this to certain men other than themselves, thereby not only preserving male privilege but also the privilege of seeing themselves and being understood as "good men" (Pleasants 2011). As previously shown, in forestry issues related to inequality are attributed to older men in rural areas who are constructed as representing the misogynist forces that prevent the sector from being equal (Johansson et al. 2019a). This highlights how several masculinities operate simultaneously and how power asymmetries and struggles between different categories of men and notions of masculinities are hierarchically arranged (cf. Connell 2005; Hearn 2004). By considering power as discursive, as described above, it becomes possible to highlight the relationship between power and resistance. On the same note, it could be argued that the norm always needs a counterpart to be constituted against and that this counterpart is also a potential challenger of the order or discourse that dominates. If a resistance hardens, it may be interpreted as a sign that something is happening, that a dominant discourse is being questioned or challenged (cf. Kimmel 2013; Squires 2005).

Research process and material

Here I set out my epistemological points of departure and describe how I have investigated doing gender equality in practice. The chapter further contextualizes my research process by presenting the R&D projects that have informed this thesis, before I delineate the overall methodological perspectives encompassing the research process and the empirical material constituting the base of the thesis. My general approach to analysing the empirical material will be accounted for, as well as the quality aspects of my research in relation to the positioning of the study and the considerations these are based on. Last, I reflect on the ethical aspects of my research.

Research context: two research and development projects

In December 2013, I started my doctoral studies within the research and development (R&D) project *From 'Macho' to 'modern': Gender equality in forestry work organizations*. The project was initiated through a dialogue between the forestry sector and academia, and was run by a research group consisting of Prof. Lena Abrahamsson, Prof. Malin Lindberg and Dr Kristina Johansson, PhD at Luleå University of Technology in 2013–2015 with funding from the governmental agency VINNOVA. The project closely collaborated with a project with similar scope run by the Swedish University of Agriculture under Associate Prof. Gun Lidestav and Dr Elias Andersson, PhD at the Department of Forest Resource Management. This collaboration encompassed both practical aspects, such as jointly arranged workshops, and theoretical aspects, such as joint analyses and scientific publication. In addition, an organizational consultant, Helena Österlind, was engaged as process leader for the project's operative processes in the participating organizations. The point of departure in the project was the male dominance of the forestry sector described in the introduction and the effort to increase gender equality among companies and public authorities in the forestry sector. The aim was to explore patterns and dynamics of gender (in)equality in forestry work organizations. Four forestry organizations that had worked with issues of gender equality for some time participated and who, with the help of a team of gender researchers, wanted to expand this work. Sveaskog, which is Sweden's state forestry company and the Forest Technology Cluster, which is an association of about ten

companies in the regions of Västerbotten and Västernorrland, that supplies "hardware" to the forestry sector in the form of, for example, complete harvesters or forwarders, or specific parts of forestry machines, plus two companies that are associated with Forest Technology Cluster, Komatsu Forest and Indexator. The project examined ongoing gender equality efforts in the participating organizations and aimed to identify and develop new ways of addressing gender equality.

Subsequently, the R&D project *Inclusive growth in the forestry sector through innovative collaboration* was initiated and managed during 2015-2017 by the same research team at Luleå University of Technology and researchers from Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. The aim was to consolidate an interface for businesses, academia and society in developing and sharing knowledge, experiences, methods and innovations in regard to equality and equity. The project was financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the County Administrative Board in Norrbotten and Region Västerbotten. During the project, we explored and analysed existing methods for increasing gender equality in forestry organizations and initiated joint knowledge and methods development. The project made it possible for the already established relations from the first project to continue and the participating organizations included those who participated in the initial project as well as additional organizations.

Within the R&D projects, a number of activities were carried out. As researcher, I, along with my colleagues, functioned as knowledge provider and sounding board, primarily to the function in each organization who had the overall operative responsibility for designing gender equality work and coordinating participation in the project. The purpose of this was to anchor the gender equality work of the organizations in existing research to avoid pitfalls, to formulate strategies and to manage resistance. At the same time, we as researchers were able to closely monitor how gender equality had been done in each organization and how it had affected the gender equality processes in the organizations. We had the chance to investigate and analyse the governing policy documents in many of the organizations and also to give feedback on our analysis in meetings and seminars. Further, in both projects multiple workshops, seminars and educational efforts were initiated to provide knowledge support to specific parts of the organizations, develop new knowledge and perspectives on themes such as gender equality, resistance and competence and to share experiences with others. Apart from the working material and field notes from these activities, numerous policy documents, telephone meetings with gender equality committees and steering committees, formal interviews and informal small talk contributed to inform this thesis on doing gender equality in the forestry sector.

Overall, the two projects where I carried out my research engendered a vast and multifaceted corpus of empirical material. The projects presented a possibility to explore *doing gender equality* in the forestry sector and to extend both theoretical and practical knowledge on how gender (in)equality and gender patterns in Swedish forestry related organizations are created, maintained, and challenged. Parallel to my process, similar questions of gender, equality and organizational change were investigated in relation to the mining industry in Sweden, by a team of researchers at the same department at Luleå University of Technology, Dr Eira Andersson and Dr Lisa Ringblom lead by Prof. Lena Abrahamsson. This led to opportunities for fruitful discussions, joint learning and exchange of experiences on gender equality and male dominated industrial work in more general terms. This collaboration also resulted in two jointly authored articles, II and IV in this dissertation, where mining and forestry are analysed together.

In the fall of 2017, something unexpected happened. The #metoo-movement gained momentum internationally and in Sweden, and in forestry, just as in many other spheres in Sweden, specific appeals collected testimonies regarding work-related sexual harassment. These appeals were launched through the social media platform Instagram, and have since resulted in demands on forestry training entities to incorporate gender equality in their activities, a general increased awareness regarding issues of sexual harassment and equality, as well as the formation of a sector-wide network for women in forestry. This presented an opportunity to explore aspects of gender *in*equality seldom expressed or addressed in the official narratives of gender equality found in the gender equality action plans or when interviewing company representatives, and it was, in my perception, very helpful in understanding the sector and its conditions for organizational change.

Material

The corpus of empirical material that the two projects engendered is vast and multifaceted. The numerous workshops, educational inputs, conferences, work place visits, and the ongoing sounding board dialogue were documented through field notes, photos, and meeting minutes. In total, during the course of the thesis process, I participated in and documented around 25 workshops and seminars, studies of the gender equality policies in ten of the largest forestry work organizations that in three different organizations also included feedback seminars, 6 interviews with people with special insight into and of strategic importance to the industry's gender equality work, 2 sectorial conferences and 4 project conferences, around 10 workplace visits, and ongoing sounding board dialogue with participating organizations. Apart from the documentation during the projects processes, logics and discussions, the opportunity to closely follow multiple forest related organizations also generated a more tacit

knowledge that is sometimes hard to grasp or pinpoint to a specific material. This tacit knowledge is given more room in Article IV, but played an important role in contextualizing and validating analysis and conclusions which I elaborate on under the heading *Analysing doing gender equality in work organizations.*

In each of the articles included, the specific empirical material used is described in detail. In Article I, the empirical material consists of gender equality action plans (GEAP) from ten organizations that contributed to the work on the national strategy for gender equality in the forestry sector (Swegov 2011). The ten GEAPs were analysed as practical texts in the sense that they are simultaneously constitutive of the organizational reality of which they speak (cf. Bacchi 2009a). Article II is based on semi-structured interviews with people of strategic importance for and special insight into organizational gender equality work and was carried out as initial orientation and knowledge development regarding the participating organizations in one of the R&D projects. I perceive the interview as an example of the joint knowledge production as previously described, a social practice and a specific type of situated interaction (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann 2014; Roulston 2010). The interview guide was developed together with my co-author Lisa Ringblom who studied gender equality in relation to the mining industry, and the material was analysed together with interviews with four corresponding representatives in the mining industry which made it possible to explore male dominated basic industries in a broader scope.

In the middle of my PhD studies, the #metoo movement erupted, and one of the Swedish appeals was #slutavverkat, a campaign against sexual harassment taking place in the forestry sector. Under this hashtag, more than 162 testimonies from women and non-binary people were anonymously shared on the social media platform Instagram. The first 100 testimonies were analysed in Article III, focusing on organizational aspects of sexual harassment. Article IV builds on the experiences and tacit knowledge of the two R&D projects in forestry combined with two R&D projects examining the mining industry and in Article V the process of one specific organization was more thoroughly investigated. In both these articles documentation form participatory observations in workshop, seminars, lectures and interviews constitutes the empirical material. The empirical material analysed is of different character which is a strength in regard to building a more comprehensive understanding of doings of gender equality in the work organizations of the Swedish forestry sector.

The table below provides an overview of each of the articles, the empirical material they build upon and my contribution to each article.

Table 1. Overview of each article

Article I	Material	My contribution
Andersson, E., **Johansson, M**., Lidestav, G. & Lindberg, M. (2018) Constituting gender and gender equality through policy: the political of gender mainstreaming in the Swedish forest industry. *Equality, diversity and inclusion: An international journal.* 37(8), 763-779.	10 gender equality action plans from forestry related workplaces	Elias Andersson worked out the overall design of the study and the main theoretical application. Andersson and Johansson together analysed, theorized, wrote and revised the manuscript. Gun Lidestav and Malin Lindberg contributed valuable comments on the manuscript.
Article II **Johansson, M**., & Ringblom, L. (2017). The business case of gender equality in Swedish forestry and mining - Restricting or enabling organizational change. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 24(6), 628-642.	4 in-depth interviews (+ 4 interviews in mining)	The authors jointly worked out the overall design of the study and together analysed, theorized, wrote and revised the manuscript. Lisa Ringblom conducted the material collection in the mining industry work organizations and Maria Johansson in the forestry sectors work organizations.
Article III **Johansson, M**., Johansson, K., & Andersson, E. (2018). #MeToo in the Swedish forestry sector: Testimonies from harassed women on sexualised forms of male control. *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, *33*(5), 419–425.	100 anonymous testimonies on social media platform Instagram	The authors jointly worked out the overall design of the study and together analysed, theorized, wrote and revised the manuscript.
Article IV Ringblom, L. & **Johansson, M**. Who needs to be 'more equal' and why? Doing gender equality in male-dominated industries. Manuscript accepted in November 2019 by *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal.*	Participatory observations in two R&D projects described above (+ two R&D project carried out in mining)	The authors jointly worked out the overall design of the study and together analysed, theorized, wrote and revised the manuscript. Lisa Ringblom conducted the material collection in the mining industry work organizations and Maria Johansson in the forestry sector work organizations.
Article V **Johansson, M.** (*forthcoming*) Re-gendering corporate gender equality work: conflicts in the micro processes of organizational change. Submitted to *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*	Participatory observations from the process of one company that took part in one of the R&D projects described above.	Complete

Feminist participatory action research

The R&D projects were conducted within an applied research tradition where a participatory research methodology was deployed. Participatory research approaches appear in a number of forms (Johannisson et al. 2008), since the research is performed in a variety of academic disciplines each with its own historical and scientific traditions (Mattsson 2004). Here I use the term feminist participatory action research, which reflects my overall perspective on knowledge, as well as the project's aims and methods (cf. Coleman & Rippin 2000; Frisby et al. 2009). Two main principles of both the participatory research tradition and the feminist research tradition is the idea of knowledge as contextualized and situated, and the ambition to achieve social change (cf. Rönnerman 2004; Maguire 2006). Feminist research has highlighted how seemingly neutral and objective scientific knowledge is not as unaffected by perspectives, politics and values as it is sometimes suggested, and argues instead that knowledge is not something that is but something that is created in a given situation or context (cf. Haraway 1988; Thomsson 2002). This characterizes also a participatory research tradition, here exemplified with what Herr & Anderson (2005, p. 10) write: "At different times, in different social contexts, what constitute valid ways of creating knowledge will vary". Knowledge development is in itself a participatory process, and raises the critical question of whose knowledge is important, "true" and valuable. Action research rests on the epistemological assumption that the purpose of research is not only to describe, understand, and explain the world but also to change it (Coghlan & Brannick 2014), which is also central to feminist ideology and research (Reinharz 1992).

Ambition to change starts with an understanding that things can be "better" (cf. Reid 2004; Reinharz 1992). If knowledge is understood as contextual and ideological, the interrelatedness of knowledge and change is implied, bringing to the table issues of for whom, in what direction and in what ways change should take place. Feminist claims of justice and a different, more equal distribution of power and resources, less restrictive constructions of gender or more widespread recognition and representation are examples of different approaches to such change (cf. Fraser 2005). In both the national strategy for the forestry sector, "Competitiveness requires gender equality" (SweGov 2011), and in individual companies, a desire to change in terms of becoming more equal is expressed, but what does that mean? In line with the sector's stated, if not always implemented, ambition to increase gender equality, and after some years of dialogue between academia, the business sphere and society, the first project was started in 2013. The shared understanding of the need for changing gender patterns should, however, not be confused with a common problem description regarding gender patterns and male dominance, nor solutions in terms of how and why the gender patterns can change or what gender equality means.

The aim of the projects was to jointly create both practical and theoretical knowledge on gender (in)equality in forestry work organizations and thereby also contribute to knowledge on gender and male dominated industries in general. This corresponds to a central aspect of the participatory research approach deployed in the projects, where researchers and stakeholders in the participating organizations together develop new knowledge, which stipulates openness and reciprocity in the relationship between the participants (cf. Aagaard Nielsen & Svensson 2006). Johansson and Lindhult (2008) describe two general paradigms in participatory research: the pragmatic and the critical. The pragmatic paradigm is characterized by a striving for consensus in the group, while the critical paradigm to a greater extent understands the dialogue between researchers and other participants as a way of developing new ways of reflecting and reasoning about the theme being investigated. This creates opportunities to discuss power relations and conflicting interests and critically problematize both problem descriptions (inequality) and solutions (equality) (Aagaard Nielsen & Svensson 2006). Like all research, these projects investigated organizations operating in a specific ideological context, in which certain notions of gender equality appear more logical than others. When it comes to understanding the complexities of how gendered power structures are (re)constituted and (possibly) challenged, the critical paradigm offers a scope for understanding said processes. Problematizing and discussing is highlighted as a success factor for gender equality work by both action-oriented gender researchers (cf. Andersson 2012; Callerstig & Lindholm 2011) and gender researchers in other traditions (cf. Wahl 2014). Hence, the approach in this thesis is in line with the critical paradigm (cf. Johansson & Lindhult 2008), where the researcher is understood as someone who stimulates conversation and dialogue around jointly identified central themes.

In this process of joint knowledge production, knowledge previously overseen or made invisible and previously overlooked perspectives were obtained on the themes identified as relevant (Aagaard Nielsen & Svensson 2006). This does not mean that there were no conflicting interests, but rather that conflicts and different perspectives were addressed and brought to the table. This visualization of different perspectives and interests in the empirical material and the analysis advanced the research process. An example of this is how the main focus of the forestry sector was to solve their problem in terms of impaired provision of skills due to male dominance and masculine norms by increased gender equality. In contrast, my research interest is based on an ambition to critically examine how power operates and how constructions of gender, gender equality and work are formulated in this male dominated context. This highlights how practical change and critical knowledge development are interrelated, and it often refers to dual agendas that pose both possibilities and challenges (cf.

Coleman & Rippin 2000). It is often within a narrative of business advantages that issues of gender equality had been given a space in these companies, and my ambition was to problematize conceptualizations of gender, resistance, masculine norms, and ideology governing different perspectives on gender equality in order to offer a more nuanced understanding of these issues. In other words, during the course of the projects, I asked questions rather than providing the answers that the participating organizations often seek, but also contributed to insights that made it possible for the participants to develop their own understandings and solutions of these issues.

Analysing doing gender equality in work organizations

The articles included all examine, in different ways, doings of gender (in)equality and hence also constructions of gender and organizations. Article I, which examined how gender equality was done at a strategic level in the forestry organizations' policy document, used the analytical framework 'What is the problem (represented to be)' developed by political scientist Carol Lee Bacchi (1999, 2009a). The results were structured in accordance with how Judith Squires (2005) categorizes gender equality interventions as strategies of inclusion, reversal or displacement. Article II, which, through interviews with staff in the companies, such as human resources managers or management representatives, does the work on gender equality, explored with the aid of a discourse analytic approach how the construction of gender equality as a "business case" has consequences for the scope of action created in the organizations (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009; Perriton 2009). Article III analysed the gendered structures/cultures and notions of organizations in the Swedish forestry sector through the testimonies of #slutavverkat using a conventional content analysis (cf. Krippendorff 2004; Hsieh & Shannon 2005), which enabled an empirically grounded exploration of a seldom researched phenomenon such as the sexual harassment and sexualized forms of male control in the forest sector. Article IV deployed a feminist action research methodology as a way of discussing organizational gender equality work and did so by using a thematically inspired analytic framework with a sensibility in regard to power, as called for by Cho et al. (2013). Also, Article V were based on a feminist participatory action research methodology and here, reflexivity on "feminist taboos" (cf. Lombardo et al. 2010) in tandem with the discursive-deconstructive reading of concepts as proposed by Ikävalko and Brunila (2017) guided my analysis of the central themes. A more detailed account of the specific methods of analysis used in each article, are accounted for under the method description in each of these articles. The writing of the introductory chapter of this thesis offers the possibility to reflect upon my more over-arching analysis of the studied context and the research questions guiding said analysis. In order to do so, the relationship between the conceptual framework and research design is in focus, meaning that this relationship forms the boundaries of *what* it is that I can develop knowledge on, and *how*.

As said, I do not perceive nor study language, written or spoken, as secondary to change but as simultaneously constitutive of it. To exemplify, the political subjects affected by gender equality interventions, men and women, are constituted in the representation of the problem of inequality. Examining how gender is written into the organizational policy documents and accounting for how the process of meaning making is materialized in different notions of gender and subject positions, allows a scrutinizing of the transformative potential embedded in these processes of change (cf. Bacchi 2009a). Departing in a perspective on reality as socially constructed or made meaningful, my analytic approach focuses on how complexities of meanings are ascribed to the actions and processes that are framed as gender equality. Aiming to understanding these processes as enacted in symbols, language, and social interactions, through which the social world is continuously constructed has guided me to assemble and analyse empirical material that explicates these aspects of doing gender equality in organizations.

The overall strategy of making sense of the empirical data, the process of interpreting and understanding, has not been a linear course of action but rather a complex and overlapping process of gradually building my analysis. Important tools in this process are the theoretical concepts outlined in the previous chapter and detailed within each article, and by letting the empirical material and context, previous research, theoretical concepts and my own analyses engage in a dialog, the analysis grew. This abductive process, moving between inductive observations in the empirical material and the more deductive understandings based on theory, has been characterized by a pendulum like movement between the empirical organizational practices and the conceptual frameworks that can interpret and explain these practices (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009). For example, an initially open analysis led to tentative assumptions about useful analytical concepts that were then tested on the material again. In this way, the analysis was refined in an interplay between empirical readings, theory and relevant research literature. The moving back and forth between theory and practice was not the only pendulum movement. I also transferred between a close reading of specific sections of the material, a field diary note or a testimony from #slutavverkat, and contemplating more comprehensive overarching notions of the processes studied. This process has been characterized by free thinking and creativity, as well as by more systematic and tangible sorting of the empirical material in its most material sense, thus moving between higher and lower levels of abstraction.

Throughout the process, I have strived for credible and robust analysis and a part of this was to continuously discuss the findings and the analysis made with supervisors, fellow researchers and co-authors. The proximity to the sector was also important in

order to validate my analysis (cf. Nowotny et al. 2001). For every workshop and seminar, for every opportunity to act as a sounding board and for every opportunity I had to meet the sector's actors at conferences or the workshops arranged to exchange experience, my knowledge about and understanding of how gender equality, gender and work in the forestry sector are co-constituted, increased. Implementing the R&D projects, carrying out project activities such as workshops or seminars, conducting interviews and taking field notes, reading policies, engaging in conversations with the participating organizations, studying existing research both theoretical and empirical, analysing the collected material and writing articles and conference papers, preparing lectures, and discussions with fellow research colleagues all contributed to my analysis of organizational gender equality work in the Swedish forestry sector. Furthermore, the published articles underwent a thorough peer-review processes.

The final, and perhaps most challenging, step in the analysis was the writing of the coherent story of doing gender equality in the Swedish forestry sector that this thesis constitutes. At the core of my epistemological approach is the scientific value of joint knowledge production, where researchers and practitioners jointly contribute in developing scientifically and societally relevant knowledge. This has been key in the implementation of the R&D projects and also to some extent in writing the articles. As an example, I have had multiple opportunities to present my analyses to the sector in different ways and these instances have been important in validating the interpretations and analysis made. Nevertheless, at this stage in my research process I act alone and I take full responsibility for the overall analysis put forward in this thesis (cf. Herr & Anderson 2005).

A reflexive approach to research

So, what makes research feminist? Just as there is no single definition of feminism, feminist research is, in my perception, more about an overall perspective that grounds and guides the on-going decision-making that constitutes the research process. That being said, there are nevertheless some core aspects that can serve as a starting point in understanding feminist research that I have strived for throughout my research process. First, feminist research acknowledges a patriarchal social order where gender is an aspect in oppression and inequality (cf. Maguire 1987), and allows for that to take place in research, meaning that empirical feminist research is guided by feminist theory (Reinharz 1992). Second, feminist research is concerned with social change. Reinharz (1992) argues that the point of research is not only to describe, understand, and explain the world but also to change it. Finally, researcher reflexivity has been something key I have striven for in my research process, which Harding (1993) argues is a defining feature of feminist research, and a prerequisite for what she refers to as strong objectivity. Reflexivity aims for an understanding of one's research as situated in the

same social world as the phenomena being studied, making knowledge production by necessity situated and partial. One part of this reflexivity is in line with my aim of achieving transparency and openness regarding my own conceptual points of departure, and the research process. Another part of reflexivity concerns my own position as a researcher. A reflexive approach to research and my own position as a researcher is, in other words, part of the feminist research tradition where knowledge is perceived as situated and my access to knowledge goes through the same social world that I study. In this section I have chosen to present two examples of how my interactions with the researched context is shaped by the multiple and sometimes contradictory subject positions available to me.

The first example concerns how I experienced the initial response when meeting with company representatives for the first, more formal, encounter. In general, the initial contacts with companies were handled by my supervisor prior to my employment where the outer frames for the research projects interactions with each of the companies was negotiated. Typically, my first interaction with each company was a seminar or a workshop with company representatives and researchers, and the meeting would start with presentations from all the participants. Apart from my name and role in the project, at those occasions I talked about my educational background within gender studies, behavioural science and my master's degree in leadership and organizations and the ways in which I thought that would be relevant when investigating gender equality in forestry work organizations. Nevertheless, almost every time I was asked the same question by someone of the company representatives, either in front of everyone or at the first coffee break. Never was I asked to elaborate further on my knowledge on gender equality processes in organizations, but instead I was frequently asked *"what do you know about forests?"* It became obvious to me that being relatively young, female, and an academic does not engender trust or confidence in the context of forestry work organizations. Instead, it is in the informal small talk where I talked about my gun dogs, my life style as a moonlighting farmer and my experience as a small-scale forest owner where I gained credibility and access in many cases. Noticing this pattern evoked ambivalence. On the one hand, I was eager to get people to invite me in and open up to me, but on the other hand the prevailing norms of who is seen as competent and "worthy" became very evident. Accentuating the parts of my identity that could feed into the blue-collar and rural values that through history have been central to the construction of forest work and competence felt like a way to legitimize and uphold the very same norms that have been, and still are, exclusionary and limiting.

The other example concerns my experiences of meeting women in the forestry sector in more informal settings. On many of these occasions, I felt that being a woman, an

academic and a feminist, of similar age meant a lot for my possibility to gain confidence and build mutually candid relations. One woman I met when I was invited to a company to present the study of the #metoo appeal in the forestry sector told me afterwards that having their stories written about in research made her feel validated, that her experiences were important. In general, I was often met with appreciation from women in the sector stressing that they felt empowered by the fact that their everyday situations in a male dominated industry are important to study scientifically. Their desire to share their perspectives on gender equality in forestry work organizations was often founded on our perceived similarities and their way of confiding in me has been humbling.

By these two examples of how the researcher's position influences interaction, I do not mean to judge whether my positioning was "good or bad" but instead I aim to highlight how in different ways the researcher's position is part of the knowledge production and I argue that it has been useful to reflect on how the participants viewed me as a researcher. The examples illustrate the complexity of the research process and the fact that a variety of power relations are involved, and that I, as a researcher, co-create the material in dialogue with the participants. My identity and my own experiences are important both for how I ask questions and for how my informants perceive me as a person and what they choose to share with me. With these examples, I also wish to highlight how I, as a researcher, participate in constructions of gender, rurality, competence, etc. This is inevitable when being a part of the social world studied, and a reflexive approach to research helps me navigate in these constructions. The examples show that inclusion and exclusion and its relations to the prevailing norms are constitutive of each other, where the position as deviant needs the normative to buck against just as much as the normative needs deviation to constitute itself as norm.

My situated-ness as a researcher influenced how the searchlight was aimed, what it was possible for me to discover and interpret and what questions it was possible for me to ask. As said, a feminist approach to research entails an acknowledgement of the partiality of knowledge production, and in line with the onto-epistemological underpinnings of this thesis, I make no claims to provide a full story of the doing of gender equality. As an example, while touched upon, aspects such as class or sexuality, are just that, touched upon and could in themselves form a research field.

Making research useful

Scientific knowledge production, like knowledge in general, can be understood as discursively specific, with its specific norms. Scientific knowledge production can thus be valued in relation to the norms and rules that exist within specific paradigms (Fejes

& Thornberg 2009). Given this, it is also important to note that the thesis itself is a second-hand construct. Quality is a key aspect of the research process, both for my academic research and for the specific interests of the participating organizations in the results of the projects, meaning that questions related to quality and value have been discussed in an ongoing reflexive process in which I, my supervisors, other colleagues, relevant literature, peer-reviewers and parts of the forestry sector have engaged. I have striven for transparency and reflexivity throughout the research process as well as in the written text, and I have striven for consistency in terms of coherence between research questions, theoretical assumptions, methodology and analysis.

Studies can be evaluated by discussing their validity and reliability, concepts that are mostly found in a positivist scientific paradigm (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014), leading to questions of what validity criteria are of relevance to this type of study, and how I as a researcher can strive to fulfil them (cf. Lindhult 2008). It has been my ambition that my research and the R&D-projects would spark joint learning processes and thereby contribute to "socially robust" knowledge, meaning that knowledge is jointly developed with actors with the specific empirical context in question, and can hence only be evaluated in regard to robustness in this context (cf. Gunnarsson 2007; Nowotny et al. 2001). As a result of this, specific validity criteria, as presented and discussed by Herr and Anderson (2005), were found to be particularly useful and hence adhered to. Result validity refers to the extent to which the results of my research have been able to contribute to practical change, and this is perhaps mainly applicable in terms of constituting a base of knowledge for the sector to take into account when pursuing gender equality in their organizations. An example of this is how several companies participated in seminars building on the policy analysis made in Article 1 with the group of people responsible for revising their gender equality action plans, and that my input has been used in the reformulation of their policies. Similarly, many of the participating organizations expanded their scope with regard to gender equality work adjacent to the R&D-projects.

Process validity is another concept that I have found relevant as a way of assessing the extent to which the research processes have been joint and reflexive. The ongoing sounding board dialogue and the project conferences have been vital parts as channels for feedback and reflection. Further, relevant to assess in regards to this thesis is its heuristic value and the potential to stimulate further thinking. A validity criteria that corresponds to this aspect is that which within a participatory research tradition (cf. Andersson 2012; Lindberg 2010) is referred to as rhizomatic validity, meaning the ability to challenge established approaches and develop alternative understandings (cf. Lather 1993). Within the R&D-projects, stimulating conversations on new perspectives on gender and gender equality was key and, as Article IV shows, the shift

from focusing on primarily women in gender equality work and instead also addressing men and masculinities is an example of how established approaches have been challenged. My focus is on qualitative data that can disclose how meaning is made of processes, with the consequence that my results are primarily analytically generalizable where the conclusions drawn may be applicable in similar contexts (cf. Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

This thesis does not include empirical material from other forestry actors, such as entrepreneurs, subcontractors, forest industries, saw-mills or non-industrial private forest owners, who have been studied in regards to gender previously (cf. Follo et al. 2017; Lidestav 2010). Parts of the results are nevertheless applicable and of relevance for these parts of the forestry sector also, due to the above described sectorial spirit and the close relations in the sector, with overlapping identities of forestry professionals and non-industrial private forest owners. In light of the above described sectorial spirit (Ager 2014; Follo 2008), the Swedish forestry sector is here studied as both a sectorial and an organizational context. This thesis uses the national strategy for gender equality in forestry from 2011 (SweGov 2011) as a backdrop and covers both policy level and official organizational narratives on gender equality, as well as processes related to gender (in)equality on the micro level of everyday organizational life. By combining empirical material from a more overall macro/meso level, such as policies and official organizational narratives with the micro processes of doing gender equality in everyday organizational practices, and the individual, yet collective, experiences of sexual harassment I aimed to contribute insights in the interconnection between notions of gender and organizations with ways of doing gender equality.

Ethical considerations

The Swedish Research Council's guidelines for ethics in research stipulates certain requirements to adhere to (Vetenskapsrådet 2017). The most central issue in relation to my research was that of information, consent and confidentiality. By informing the participants about their rights, what my purpose for the study was, and in what way the material may be used, the information requirement was complied with. At meetings, workshops and seminars with project participants, I presented myself and my role as well as what it was I wanted to investigate, the purpose of the study and how the material would be used, with the emphasis that my aim was not to review or "judge" either individuals or the organization.

Once given the relevant information about the research, its aim and its methods, the participants were prepared to take a stand in regards to the second requirement, consent. This means the participants explicitly agreed to participate in the research. The project was already up and running when I started as a doctoral student, meaning

that the organizations as such had already agreed to participate beforehand. Nevertheless, and in line with the overall methodological approach, it was my ambition to create transparent processes in which the individuals in each of the participation organizations had an opportunity to know what they were agreeing to when choosing to take part in project activities or interviews, that they were given the correct information and that they could, at any time during the process, withdraw their consent without further explanation. When I conducted interviews, it was important to always inform participants, prior to the interview, about the ethical principles that apply in research and what their rights as respondents are, that they were free to end the interview at any time or refrain from answering certain questions. Everyone I met during this process not only consented to participate but also expressed an interest in engaging in conversations on gender, gender equality and the forestry sector.

With regard to the third requirement, confidentiality, my research is not of a personal nature as such but sensitive information can nevertheless emerge. In many of the project activities, representatives of both the employer and employees participated, and given the power imbalance that exists in work organizations, potentially sensitive information might emerge. If or when that happens, such information must be handled with caution. One example of this occurred during a seminar where sensitive information about a manager was shared by an employee lower in rank. At that time, I chose to take a note of this in my field diary that I kept for myself, but leave that information out of the official minutes that would be shared with the entire organization.

Apart from my personal field diary, notes and working material from project activities, audio files and interview transcripts are in my possession, and are not to be used by anyone else, or for purposes other than research.

Summary of the articles

In this section I present a comprehensive overview and the key finding of each article. These are discussed in the subsequent chapter. Both theoretically and empirically, my research is cross-disciplinary, and the keywords to describe my interests are gender, equality, work, organization and forestry. This is shown by the diverse set of journals that I and my co-authors submitted the articles to. One article is published in a journal that focuses on forest research, and one is published in a journal concerned with gender and work organizations. Two of the articles are published in a journal that centres around equality and the last article has been submitted to a journal where working life in a Nordic context is the focus of attention.

Article I: De-politicizing gender equality in policies

Andersson, E., **Johansson, M**., Lidestav, G. & Lindberg, M. (2018). Constituting gender and gender equality through policy: the political of gender mainstreaming in the Swedish forest industry. *Equality, diversity and inclusion: An international journal.* 37(8),763-779.

This article investigates how gender and gender equality is constituted in policy in the ten largest companies in the Swedish forest industry. As a part of the strategy for gender equality in the forest industry, launched by Swedish Ministry of Rural Affairs and entitled "Competitiveness requires gender equality" (SweGov 2011), these companies were to gender-mainstream their policy documents. This was, however, not done. So instead, we analysed the gender equality action plans (GEAPs) of these companies and explored the promises and the pitfalls of this type of policy implementation process in this specific context and its specific implications of gendering and the constitution of political subjects. By applying a theoretical framework and analytical tools that focus on the doing of policy through the construction of the problem (Bacchi 1999; 2009a) we examined how these constructions were materialized in the notions of gender and subject positions in different gender mainstreaming strategies to uncover the connections between documents and practice.

The empirical analysis illustrated not only how the gender equality policy processes of Swedish forestry shape the meaning of these issues, but also how the construction of politics and the political are co-constituted. The results found that most of the ten companies studied had been working with gender equality issues for at least some years, but only a few had started the process of gender-mainstreaming their steering documents. Although there were some differences in the structure of the documents and how the gender equality work was organized, most of the documents studied addressed comparable themes, in which different aspects of gender (in)equality were defined and handled. When these documents constructed the problem of gender inequality, two main strategies from the Squires (2005) conceptualization of gender equality strategies, inclusion and reversal, were recognized, while the third strategy *displacement* was mostly absent. Recurrent empirical themes were *salary, parenthood, recruitment, managerial position, offensive treatment, physical* and *psychosocial work environment, discrimination, attitudes and values* and *women's network*.

The first way of classifying gender equality interventions can be understood as a strategy of inclusion, which aims to accomplish "gender neutrality" and to "objectively" offer equal treatment and thus equal opportunities for men and women. This was often apparent in the themes concerning *salary, parenthood, managerial position, physical work environment, offensive treatment, discrimination* and *attitudes and values*. The problems and solutions defined in the GEAPs analysed here, were guided by a hypothesis that people are rational and once enlightened, they will make rational, gender-equal and 'neutral' choices. The strategy of inclusion risks realizing a masculine norm and these assumptions tend to obscure power relations, conflicts, institutional norms and organizational structures that enable offensive treatment, discrimination, few women in leading positions and so forth, benefiting those who are already gaining from the present organization. The strategy of reversal on the other hand, aims to identify and value traits, skills and competences conventionally understood as feminine. The strategy of reversal was present in all of the GEAPs to various degrees, and was predominantly found where issues of *physical and psychosocial work environment, recruitment (supply of competence)* and *networks for women* were addressed. Reversal as a strategy risks emphasizing a conceptualization of men and women as essentially different. Also in this strategy, the role of men in the organizations, power and greater access to both formal and informal networks, and the organization itself, with its institutional norms, gendered structures, rationales, mentalities and physical and social spaces, are left unproblematized.

A strategy of displacement means viewing gender as social constructed, something that is done, instead of something that is, and therefore aims to deconstruct gendering

routines. This strategy to a greater extent than both inclusion and reversal acknowledges power and conflict within gender equality interventions. There were a few traces of a deconstructionist understanding of gender and the organization but this was mainly absent in the GEAPs. Gender equality in the GEAPs analysed were strongly motivated by business logics in terms of increased efficiency or better financial results. This can be understood as a way of articulating the aims of gender equality in 'neutral' terms, and hence leave the gender, race and age of privileged 'normal' actors' unmentioned or unproblematized. In the GEAPs, Women were constructed as in need of help and lacking skills and competences. Focusing mostly on women and leaving men unmentioned or unproblematized, obscures the relational and conflictual dimension of gender equality, which in turn leaves gender and gender equality depoliticized in the organizations studied and the overall policy context.

Article II: Making sense of the business case of gender equality

Johansson, M., & Ringblom, L. (2017). The business case of gender equality in Swedish forestry and mining - Restricting or enabling organizational change. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 24(6), 628-642.

This article starts from the forestry and mining industry's expressed ambition to move from gender-segregated to more gender-equal workplaces. We explore how gender equality on an organizational strategic level, i.e. from an employer perspective, is constructed as a business case and discuss how these constructions restrict and/or enable gender equality in these organizations. Their ambition to move from traditionally gender segregated industries is motivated by the idea that gender equality can imply competitive advantages. During the last decades, gender equality has been increasingly linked to competitiveness, profitability and sustainability (cf. Dickens 1999; Kantola & Squires 2012; Rönnblom 2009). But if companies see themselves as rational and business-driven, and gender equality is assumed to be good for business, how come unequal structures still exists? This business case framing of gender equality seems to entail both new openings and new restraints for gender equality in these male dominated work organizations.

Empirically, this paper is based on eight semi-structured interviews with nine interviewees (4 in forestry and 5 in mining), where we asked the respondents about how, who, when and why in relation to gender equality and gender equality interventions in their company as well as in relation to the industry, (forestry or mining), in general. Increased gender equality is assumed by both the forestry and mining sectors to strengthen their competitiveness in a number of ways. For example: improved ability to attract well-trained staff, increased development capacity, enhanced creativity and innovation, better work environment, an improved public image for forestry or mining work were some aspects mentioned.

Three central dimensions of the business case of gender equality were found in our interviews. *Marketing (as) gender equality* indicated that both mining and forestry companies are working actively on what the respondents refer to as 'changing the image of the business' by, for example, working with gender-aware recruitment ads. The masculine ideals that forestry and mining are understood to represent are assumed to discourage women from entering these businesses and are perceived as mainly an image problem. Marketing a new image of forestry or mining is consequently regarded as a gender-equality action in itself by the respondents. The theme *Uncovering the male*

norm showed that the constructions of gender equality expose the masculine norms of these organizations which is also reflected in some of the gender equality actions taken, such as special recruitment and communication strategies assumed to attract women or programs targeting youths. Given this logic, gender equality is not understood as something concerning men within their own organization or an unequal distribution of power favouring men. Instead, inequality is understood as a lack of women, meaning that women outside of the organization are assumed to provide the solution to the organization's gender inequality. The third theme, *Gender equality as a depoliticized value*, highlights how gender equality as a business case within this industrial context is more focused on individuals than on social and political understandings of gender that uphold structural, normative and discriminatory power relations. Connecting gender equality to perceived positive values, in terms of both business–related issues such as output and results and social issues such as pleasant work environment and nice atmosphere, gender equality is constructed as a consensual issue rather than a politicized and conflicting concept.

To conclude, business logics can be used as a rhetorical resource that has opened up for companies to acknowledge and take responsibility for issues concerning gender equality themselves (cf. Kantola & Squires 2012). This can be seen in how gender equality issues have risen on the sectors' agendas over recent years. On the other hand, the prevalence of unequal structures can be understood in that there are advantages to be gained from them, indicating that gender equality is a political issue of conflicting interests between those who gain in an unequal system and those who lose. Since the interventions carried out in these companies, framed as a 'business case', only partly challenge current power relations, the long-term effects can be discussed.

Article III: #Metoo – women's testimonies of gendered organizations

Johansson, M., Johansson, K., & Andersson, E. (2018). #MeToo in the Swedish forestry sector: Testimonies from harassed women on sexualized forms of male control. *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, *33*(5), 419–425.

While the dominant masculine culture and its implications for the work organization and for individual men and women in the forestry sector is well established in research, aspects such as sexuality or the more violent aspect of masculine culture have been given less attention. In October 2017, the hashtag #metoo went viral all over the world and in Sweden this was manifested in a prominent number of industry-specific appeals. When #slutavverkat was launched in the Swedish forestry sector, this happened in the context of previous industry-specific appeals and the 'genre' these constituted. By analysing and discussing the testimonies within #slutavverkat as a potential aid to understanding the gendered structures and notions of organizations in the Swedish forestry sector, this article provides insights on the entwinement of sexualized forms of male control and gendered organizational inequalities in forestry related workplaces. The first 100 stories published on the social media platform Instagram between 19 December 2017 and 26 January 2018 were analysed through a conventional content analysis focusing on meaning-making, patterns and commonness, through a perspective where language is understood as not only descriptive but constitutive of lived reality. Sexual harassment is defined as "unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power" (MacKinnon 1979 p. 1) spanning over a continuum of practices from verbal comments, jokes and sexual gestures, to actions such as touching, coercion into sexual interaction and rape. This article studies sexuality as a part of the ongoing production of gender and gendered interactions and relations, making sexual harassment understood as sexualized forms of male control.

The analysis revealed three recurring themes and issues among the stories. The first theme; *Objects of male desires – difference and differentiation,* portrays the features of the sexual harassment. This includes the objectification of women in a wide range of situations from 'heedless compliments' to studious attempts to scare and silence women. Apart from being objectified, women are also reduced to being just a body, while their competence, experience and educational background are made irrelevant. As being objectified, diminished and ridiculed, is one part of the stories in #slutavverkat, others testify about sexual harassment and sexual violence. The ways in which sexual harassment and sexual violence are talked about in many of the stories,

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signals that these seem to be prevalent and 'naturalized' practices that women in the industry need to acknowledge and take into account. The second theme *Unsafe spaces - gendered spaces* elaborates on the time and place of the testimonies and includes everyday organizational events such as job interviews, meetings or coffee breaks where women and men interact. Instances portrayed when it comes to physical abuse more often seem to occur during social activities and in the evenings. The sauna is one space that stands out in the descriptions and occurrence of alcohol and the predominant tendencies to objectify women adds to the vulnerability of women. If they choose not to participate because of this, they experience missing out on conversations and interactions. The third theme *Reproducing practices and resistance* highlights how these inequalities and harassment are reproduced as part of the culture of both the sector and its organizations. The stories highlight how women, within the sector, have developed various forms of strategies to handle the situations, because these behaviours and sexist practices are normalized as a part of how men and women are socialized into the culture. Some of the stories even describe how women are warned about companies with a remarkably unsuitable work environment or about co-workers that are "foul-mouthed". This underscores how women in the sector are attributed responsibility to "handle" male sexuality. 'Ruining the mood' seems to be one of the greatest social taboos according to the testimonies, whether it is by not laughing or by questioning the practices or jokes.

In this context, the varying forms of sexual harassment described in the testimonies of #slutavverkat can be understood as gestures that control women and diminish their sense of power in the sector. This body politics has the effects of forcing women to navigate around and manage men and men's sexuality, in order to feel safe. Thus, this study also shows how the sexualisation of social relations in organizations has consequences for women, particularly in male-dominated contexts. Different bodies are structured within different spaces, making the processes and practices of body politics constitute subject positions and associating them with specific meanings, and therefore specific spaces of action and agency. This highlights how sexuality and gendered-based violence are entwined with the gendering of forest-related competence and organizations. Further, the testimonies reveal a culture of silence, which is crucial for the persistence of sexual harassment and violence in organizations.

Article IV: Men and gender equality – highlighting intersectionality

In this article, we explored how notions of gender, class and place emerged in the context of when male dominated industrial work organizations are 'doing' gender equality, and how these notions are intertwined. Gender equality work is studied as an organizational process (cf. Choo & Ferree 2010), in which multiple power relations are constituted, challenged, and upheld and we start from Acker's (2006) notion of organizations as inequality regimes that throughout their organizing practices, (re)produce inequalities. Our participation in different research and development projects concerning gender equality in these industries, made us notice the recurring discussion of *who needs to be 'more equal' and why?* Starting with this question, the article uses empirical examples from four research and development projects and our tacit knowledge of doing gender equality in forestry and mining, rooted in empirical observations within a feminist participatory action research framework, revealed that when 'working with gender equality' something more was happening in the organizations in relation to power. We conducted a thematic analysis with an analytic sensibility in regard to power (cf. Cho et al. 2013) and analysed the material with specific attention to the manifestation of intersecting power structures in how gender, class, and place are constructed when doing gender equality. When issues of gender equality were addressed in these organizations, gender equality was commonly understood as a question for and about women, making men an unmarked category of power and accordingly, the organizational norm. However, by interacting with these companies, it was key to articulate gender equality as a matter of power and gender relations. Therefore, it was possible to highlight how constructions of gender equality simultaneously evoke notions of gender, class and place.

Our findings suggest that doing gender equality activates notions of class. Blue-collar workers were excluded from many of the material benefits of concrete gender equality interventions but at the same time seen as part of the problem of gender *in*equality due to their perceived lack of knowledge. For this reason, in some of the organizations they were targeted by educational interventions. Many of the companies that we met in the projects stated that gendered positions and work tasks are problematic for the work organization but possible to change thorough gender equality work. This is a major difference with regard to how classed work tasks are not understood as problematic but rather as self-evident states of work organizations. Similarly, notions

of place were activated when doing gender equality. The natural resources extracted by mining or forestry are commonly located in sparsely populated rural areas, often in the north of Sweden. The headquarters of many companies are, on the other hand, often located in urban areas along the coast of northern Sweden or in the capital Stockholm.

The R&D-projects aiming to explore and contribute solutions to inequality mainly interacted with the industries at the (urban) headquarters, making it possible to place the problem of gender inequality elsewhere. Apart from the perceived practical and logical organizing of gender equality efforts and R&D collaborations with universities, this also says something about how power operates and where. In our material, stereotypical rural masculinities were often targeted by gender equality work when focusing on matters of gendered norms. Gender inequality problems are hence attributed to a certain masculinity in the rural context, with which modern enlightened urban masculinities are contrasted.

In previous research on gender equality it has been shown that women are constructed as both 'the problem' (the lack of women) and 'the solution' (more women). Feminist participatory action research methodology and the engagement in theoretically informed discussions with the participating organizations has contributed to shifting their focus from a perspective where gender equality concerns women to an understanding of gender equality as a matter of gender relations. However, when men are the focal point of gender equality work and negotiations of masculinity take place, our findings showed that it is a certain type of masculinity co-constructed with class and place that is focused upon. In other words, the blue-collar workers in the rural context against which the perceived modern, enlightened urban masculinities are contrasted. We argue that it is a part of the privilege of problem formulation that this representation of blue-collar masculinity is denied heterogeneity. Through this class and place-based inequalities in forestry and mining risk being reinforced. We conclude that the way these companies undertake gender equality work highlights other power relations, but also possibly permits scrutiny of inequality regimes in their work organizations by underlining how gendered inequality is co-constituted with class-based and place-based inequalities.

Article V: Re-politicizing gender equality in practice

Johansson, M. (*forthcoming*). Re-gendering corporate gender equality work - Conflicts in the micro processes of organizational change. *Submitted to Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*

While many studies of corporate gender equality work show that it tends to be depoliticized and consensus-oriented, this article investigated and highlighted the conflicts that nonetheless appears to be an inevitable part of gender equality processes. Here, I am using the experiences from a R&D-project exploring how male dominated forestry companies worked with gender equality. Starting from a feminist participatory action research methodology that allows for a theoretically informed scrutiny of organizational power relations, this article investigates the processes in one particular forestry company as a case study. Corporate gender equality work tends to be highly depoliticized, degendered and consensus-oriented, as pointed out by contemporary critical feminist research. This also applies to the Swedish forestry sector where a predominantly depoliticized and conflict free approach to gender equality is pointed out in both policy (Andersson et al. 2018) and practice (Johansson & Ringblom 2017) by on-going research. Hence, it can be argued that understanding gender equality work as depoliticized and free from conflicts, is part of the hegemonic discourse on gender equality. Included in this is an inclination to explore how gender equality is bent or stretched in mainly negative ways according to Lombardo et al. (2010). Nevertheless, it is obvious that on a micro level, conflict is a central part of corporate gender equality work.

When exploring conflicts on a micro level, two themes reoccurred in the discussions in the company's gender equality processes. In the first theme, the concern about what men in the organization would feel when presented to knowledge about, and perspectives on gender (in)equality in relation to forestry and society in general was in focus. This concern was widespread in the organization, and the ways to argue for gender equality in order to "market" the concept trough out the organization was given much attention. When discussing alternative approaches, such as addressing gendered power relations in terms of conflicting interests between men and women as groups, for example in relation to recruitment where it would be possible to articulate that if more women are to be hired, there will be room for fewer men, a human resource representative said:

> *I don't know, it's like, all of a sudden it is so political when you put it like that...* (human resource representative, telephone meeting, spring 2015)

The organization valued consensus in general and the reluctance to be "political" in gender equality work was obvious. In that process, it was possible for me to explore what this fear of being political consisted of, and to support them to investigate different approaches than the consensus-driven rut they usually travel.

The second theme centres around a numerical goal for their gender equality work that was much debated. In this company, as in forestry companies in general, key figures, monitoring and auditing processes that are supposed to be predictable are built into the labour processes as well as into the organizational logics of production, and organization value and take pride in this. In light of this, it is easy to understand why the executive committees formulated a numeric, measurable, goal for their gender equality work. However, this stirred emotions and the engagement in debating whether or not the goal was realistic indicated that the goal seemed to be a pressing topic in the organization. When interpreting the disputes around this specific goal, it is possible to link the resistance the goal has encountered with how it puts a finger on the fact that more women would mean less men, thereby highlighting the political and conflicting aspects of gender equality overall and this goal in particular. Further, reducing the number of men collectivizes men, which is rarely done, since their individual traits are presumed to have given them access to the industry rather than normative understanding of who is a forestry worker or forestry professional.

This paper shows empirically that it is not foremost gender equality interventions in themselves that are depoliticized but gender equality work is motivated by and framed within organizations. The numerical goal is one such example that can be understood as a way of doing gender equality into an administrative routine. On the other hand, framing the goal in terms of reducing the male dominance instead emphasizes the conflictual aspect of what an increased proportion of women in the organization would mean. That in turn opens up for a possibly more subversive take on gender equality. The hegemonic understanding of gender equality work as depoliticized and free from conflicts is challenged by highlighting the conflicts in the organizational micro processes of gender equality work that nevertheless exist. The need to address and make room for conflicting interests in gender equality work and the need to acknowledge that there are multiple conflicting meanings of what gender equality is and can be in a corporate context is highlighted here and that puts the challenges of the researcher's contribution to the processes of gender equality R&D contexts, as well as the organizational capacity to deal with conflicts, in focus.

Notions of gender and notions of organization

In this section, I discuss my finding and offer some implications for theory and practice, in regard to the thesis' main aim to increase the understanding of how gender equality is done in the male dominated work organizations of the Swedish forestry sector. By empirically basing this thesis on the doing of gender equality as I have done, it has been possible to identify and discuss how gender equality is made meaning of. Further it has also been possible to trace in the doing of gender equality how both gender and organizations are made sense of which, in turn, shapes the processes of implementation in this given context. The articles all discuss, in different manners, how doing gender equality relates to notions of gender and organization. Each of the research questions highlights different aspects of these relations as briefly summarized in Table 2, which will be elaborated subsequently. The discussion therefore focuses on two analytical themes that permeate each of the articles included in this thesis: 1) Doing gender in gender equality work, and 2) Doing organizations in gender equality work. These themes cut across the research questions in the following way:

Table 2. Comprehensive overview of the findings

	Theme 1: Doing gender in gender equality work	Theme 2: Doing organizations in gender equality work
RQ 1 How do constructions of gender equality affect the conditions for organizational change through gender equality interventions?	Producing gendered subjects when doings gender equality	Notions of organizations as absent in gender equality work
RQ 2 How are organizational patterns and practices that facilitate gender inequality constituted?	The objectification and silencing of women	Making oppression possible within organizations
RQ 3 How can new knowledge on organizational gender equality work be engendered by a feminist participatory action research approach	Re-gendering gender equality work	Organizations as inequality regimes

The statement found in the title of the national strategy for gender equality in Swedish forestry, "Competitiveness requires gender equality" (SweGov 2011), is central to the findings in this thesis. In connection with previous research (Appelstrand & Lidestav 2015; Holmgren & Arora-Jonsson 2015), issues of gender equality in the sector can be understood as decoupled from political discussions where equality has an intrinsic value or a democratic value, and is instead linked to the needs of the sector and as a way to ensure the supply of competence and competitiveness, being more attractive as an employer, and credibility and legitimacy in order to be perceived as a modern and contemporary sector (cf. SweGov 2011). This is also shown in the parts of my empirical material that consist of official narratives, such as policies and interviews with those in organizations responsible for gender equality work. Construction of gender equality is here mainly framed within a business case logic consistent with the overall neoliberal framework that these organizations act within, which is elaborated on in both the first and second article.

Doing gender in gender equality work

Previous research on how gender and gendered norms in forestry is done have concluded that even if a dominant masculine norm admittedly has been repositioned in relation to the changes that forestry has undergone (Brandth & Haugen 2005), men persistently are represented as taken for granted carriers of forestry culture and forestry skills (Lidestav & Sjölander 2007; Vainio & Paloniemi 2013). Women, on the other hand, are commonly constructed and positioned as the other, are not assumed to possess the right kind of skills or experiences, and the spaces accessible for women in forestry have been restricted, as studies have shown (Lidestav & Sjölander 2007; Johansson et al. 2019b). These gendered notions of forestry work have continually influenced the forestry sector even if gender and gendered practices to some extent has been (re)negotiated. Also constructions of gender equality produce gendered subjects and imply certain gender relations (cf. Squires 2005). My findings suggest that when doing gender equality in this context, gender seems to be constructed in accordance with what previous research in forestry has found, which is one of the main contributions of this thesis. Put differently, the ways in which the forestry sector up until now have been doing gender equality does not seem to challenge established notions of gender in any major extent.

My studies showed that gender equality is commonly constructed as an issue that relates to women. That in turn reproduces unequal political subjects; women became the object of the gender equality intervention or policies, as is shown in both Article I examining gender equality action plans and Article II that drew on interviews with company representatives. Women is thus, also when doing gender equality, in general

constructed as the "other", as someone who is lacking skills and competences and is in need of the help that gender equality work is assumed to supply. Meanwhile, men and masculine norms are mostly absent from the doings of gender equality. The strong focus on women is making men invisible in gender equality work, which also means that the relational dimension of gender equality becomes missing. Retracting gender relations from the aim of gender equality, the gender, race and age of privileged actors are left unproblematized, which is evident both in the policies analysed in Article I, and in the interviews of Article II. If gender relations in organizations were constructed instead as power relations in the doing of gender equality, it would be possible to account for the conflictual dimensions of gender equality and hence also to politicize gender equality, which could, for example, encompass issues like how resources are allocated, how decisions are made or how norms are upheld or men's privileges in their capacity of constituting the norm (cf. Fraser 2005).

The previously described association between forestry skills and men's bodies that is a consequence of women being constructed as "the other" in gender equality work is enhanced also in how oppression or inequality is practiced through sexual harassment. This was shown in Article III, that examined the testimonies from the #metoo appeal in the forestry sector, #slutavverkat. What the study highlighted was how processes such as the structuring of different bodies within different spaces, provides various subject positions and associates them with different meanings and therefore also diverse spaces of action and agency. The sauna was one such example of how different bodies, men's in this case, have more access to being included, and are thus constructed as 'the norm' while others, women, are being constructed as the deviant. The stories of harassment of women in forestry from #slutavverkat highlight the entwinement of sexuality and gendered-based violence with the gendering of competence. By objectifying women's bodies, women forestry professionals are reduced to being foremost women rather than carriers of skills and competence, and in tandem the processes of segregation and exclusion separates women from the dominant, normative male body upon which forestry knowledge is imprinted. One consequence of the gendered constructions of forestry knowledge, as demonstrated by previous research, is that women professionals are assumed to lack skills until proven otherwise, and women's careers in forestry are thus understood as a deviation from the meritocratic principles that are assumed to guide forestry workplaces (cf. Johansson et al. 2019a, 2019b). The analysis of #Slutaavverkat in Article III contributed to refine that knowledge by explicating how social relations in organizations are often sexualized.[1]

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[1] While Johansson et al. (2019a, 2019b) were published later than Article III (Johansson et al. 2018), the studies were conducted prior to #slutaverkat. Johansson et al. (2019a) was available online already in 2017. Hence the argument that Article III further refines and develops knowledge from previous studies.

By showing how women are objectified, silenced and forced to navigate around and manage men and their sexuality in order to avoid feeling, or being, unsafe in certain spaces and occasions, both formal and informal, highlights how organizational patterns and practices that facilitate oppression/inequality are shaped. The consequences that this has for women is a pressing reminder that gender equality work is not only a conflict-free, consensus oriented matter of (business) benefits but also a matter of oppression, violence and women's right to not be harassed at work, and in turn a matter of the organizations in which such actions are made possible, which I argue is one the most important contributions of this thesis.

Articles IV and V provide insights into how feminist participatory action research methodology can be used in organizational gender equality work. The methodology can be used as a mean to bring gender and gender relations to the conversation thereby contributing to a re-gendering of gender equality. The results show that even if the methodology deployed can advance a discussion on men and masculinity in gender equality work, stereotypical constructions of gender nevertheless risk being reinforced. In Article IV, it was found that when men are brought into the conversation on gender equality, it was a specific form of blue-collar masculinity in a rural context that was attributed issues related to gender *in*equality. Against these constructions, the perceived 'modern' and enlightened urban masculinities were contrasted. This highlights how gender, class and place are simultaneously constructed when doing gender equality in male-dominated work organizations. Previous research showed that the restructuring of the labour processes in forestry, that have taken place due to, for example, technological development, to some extent contest the hegemonic order by repositioning masculinity (Brandth & Haugen 2005). Similarly, I argue that doing gender equality potentially could be understood as a restructuring process that both challenges and reproduces gendered notions of forestry work as I showed above. Attributing the traditional blue-collar rural masculinity of forestry problems of *in*equality, is a way of "othering" them and thus position oneself as one of the good ones (cf. Pleasants 2011). The resistance against gender equality that the othered men assume to possess is perhaps more a reaction to a loss of authority of the traditional identity that restructuring processes might engender, and the struggles that entails (cf. Brandht & Haugen 2005). All while feminist participatory action research methodology has contributed to shifting the focus from women to gender and gender relations thus evoking negotiations of masculinity, the discussions nevertheless tended to circle around individual "problematic" men rather than masculinity. It remains to scrutinize the organizations as an inequality regime, in order to also be able to address the complexity of power structures that became visible in gender equality work.

Doing organizations in gender equality work

The forestry sector, in line with an overarching neo-liberal ideology (cf. Crowley & Hodson 2014; Fahlgren et al. 2016), links gender equality to sustainability, modernity and competitiveness (cf. SweGov 2011). Using business rhetoric such as the supply of competence and competitiveness in advocating for gender equality has in some aspects opened up for the companies themselves to acknowledge and take responsibility for gender equality, which in Article II is shown in how this issue has risen on the agendas of the sector over recent years. In order to be transformative, which requires a deconstructionist understanding of gender, aspects of power and conflict in gender equality work needs to be acknowledged according to previous research (cf. Ikävalko & Brunila 2017; Squires 2005). These aspects of gender equality are not recognized or discussed in either the policies studied in Article I or in the interviews in Article II. Instead consenting ideas of gender equality were the main focus in both policy and the official narratives, where the motives for gender equality were strongly driven by business logics rather than as matter of organizational structures and power. This way of framing gender equality risk obscuring the gendered practices of forestry work and forestry organizations which, as argued in both those articles, inhibit the possibilities for transformative change in the organizations.

When gender equality is conditioned, as it is, for example, in the policies studied in Article I, gender equality is positioned as subordinate to the organization and its goals, which decouples gendered power structures form the organization. As a consequence, the space for politicizing gender and challenges how 'normal' and 'gender-blind' organizations are constituted is shrunk (cf. Perriton 2009). The policy process of gender equality is also separated from other processes in the organization, which contributes to doing gender equality as a women's issue, instead of as a matter of gender relations and organizational change. By not constituting the organization as the subject of the policy but rather women, as described above, the responsibilities to achieve gender equality are, in a sense, placed on individuals in the organization, rather than on organizational practices.

What the study of #slutavverkat in Article III nevertheless highlighted was the sexuality and the body politics of organizations in the Swedish forestry sector, where sexual harassment was understood as controlling gestures that diminish women's sense of power in the sector and maintains the dominance of men by limiting safe and inclusive spaces and cultures for women. This perspective thereby contributes to the understanding of inequalities in the forestry sector as organizational. While men's bodies are unproblematic and taken for granted in the sauna, at the meeting or in the forest, women are forced to adhere to male norms, navigate around men's sexuality and, to a higher extent, prove their worthiness. This shows the importance of

understanding the problem of inequality in organizations as being imbued in the structures and daily practices throughout the organizations or in other words, understanding the organizations as gendered (Acker 1990; 2006). Acker (2006) describes sexual harassment as an informal interaction taking place while doing work but in spite of what Article III showed, these organizations do not primarily view themselves as 'doers' of gender *in*equality. Instead, issues of gender and gender equality remain something besides the ordinary processes, structures and interactions of the organizations, something that can be "added on" if needed/wanted. This tendency leaves the prevailing unequal structures and the conflicting interests between those who gain in an unequal system and those who lose out of scope in gender equality work and is a missed opportunity to politicize gender equality.

As previous research, has pointed out (cf. Callerstig & Lindholm 2011) and as the experiences from the research- and development projects carried out in the last couple of years' highlights, the engagement in theoretically informed conversations with the participating organizations can contribute to other perspectives on gender equality being put forward. By continuously conveying a norm critical perspective of gender equality, i.e. the articulations of men and masculinities as a highly relevant factor in gender equality work, it is possible to shift focus from a perspective where gender equality is constructed as something that concerns women to an understanding of gender equality as a matter of gender relations. Doing gender equality with a focus on *gender* rather than on *women* inevitably invites negotiations of masculinity. But just as the problem of gender equality was previously placed on women, the tendency to "place the problem somewhere else" has led to notions of class and place being activated in the negotiations and positioning of masculinity. Problems of gender inequality are attributed a certain masculinity in the rural context against which perceived modern, enlightened urban masculinities are contrasted, and this tendency is a part of the privilege of problem formulation. This is a partly different way of doing gender equality than traditionally, which potentially offers new solutions, and new pit-falls, to inequality. Nevertheless, when the problems of inequality are still explained by individualistic arguments, it risks reinforcing class and place-based inequalities in forestry and it does not hold the organization accountable as an inequality regime (cf. Acker 2006).

Business as usual or transformative potential?

The title of this thesis is *Business as usual? Doing gender equality in Swedish forestry work organizations* and while the latter part, the subtitle, is rather self-explanatory, the former part can be read in different ways. It can be read with an emphasis on *business*, referring to the seemingly all-embracing business case rhetoric that encloses the official narratives of gender equality in the forestry sector. The title can also be read with an

emphasis on *as usual* denoting the ostensible resistance or inertia in the sector to do other than what it usually does. It can also be read as the whole saying, business as usual, which signals that gender equality work in the forestry sector not to any significant extent with what is perceived as the core activities in these organizations, thus making gender equality work side streamed or de-coupled. Lastly, the title can be read by emphasizing the question mark, thus opening up for the subversive potential that nevertheless exists when more multifaceted ways of making sense of gender equality are articulated. My findings have suggested that there are ways to regender and repoliticize organizational gender equality work, and how that might be a margin to capitalize (cf. Bacchi 2009b). Doing gender equality in the forestry sector relates to both notions of gender and notions of organizations and the thesis shows that gender equality is in general understood by the organizations studied in the Swedish forestry sector as a process that regards gender, predominantly women, rather than organization. While previous studies have highlighted how persisting inequality can be upheld in organizational practices and processes (Abrahamsson 2009; Johansson 2015), what is specifically highlighted here, is how also gender equality can also be understood as an organizational process that risks reinforcing inequality by distancing issues of gender from the organization. By empirically studying how this is made possible in the processes of doing of gender equality in a forestry context, this thesis adds to knowledge on how organizational *in*equality can proceed in spite of the often obvious problems related to these inequalities. The results expose that the ambition for gender equality efforts does not primarily concern the organizations as inequality regimes, but is linked to market arguments such as the business case of gender equality and neoliberal ideas connected to individuality and recognition.

When engaging in conversations on gender equality with the organizations that have been part of the research and development projects described above, I, as gender researchers, emanated from a preunderstanding of organizations as gendered and gendering, or in the words of Acker (2006), an inequality regime. Meanwhile the organization itself has a self-understanding as meritocratic, rational and logical. One of the tools in feminist participatory action research when it comes to investigating gender equality is the doing gender perspective (West & Zimmerman 1987). The perspective can be used in order to investigate how gender is relational, interactive and above all not static. In the experiences from the R&D-projects, addressing gender as a doing is in many ways unproblematic at first glance. Understanding gender as a doing, which is used in seminars or educational efforts in order to highlight how prejudice gendered expectations can be a self-fulfilling prophecy has been a fairly easy understanding of gender to convey, and have seldom been me with questioning or resistance. But, attempting to deploy a doing gender perspective into a traditional understanding of the organization becomes problematic, contradictory even, due to

the ontological disparity. An example of this is when I and my colleagues encouraged conversations on masculinity and mean structures and norms that are male-coded in the organization and, the participating organizations understand this as an opening to discuss which specific category of men are "problematic" and unequal. Another example of this is how the R&D-projects have tried to discuss how competence is done, and how that in turn is intertwined with conceptions of gender, and while gender as a construction is an accepted point of departure, competence as a construct clearly collides with the perception of meritocracy and rationality. Put differently, when discussions on masculinities in the organization is made into a matter of specific men (blue collar, rural men), it partly relates to the conception of the organization as rational and logical rather than as an inequality regime. The organizational understandings of the doing gender perspective is not as routinely, social interactions with consequences for how women and men in organizations are categorized in relation to space, resources and work tasks (cf. Gunnarsson et al. 2003; West & Zimmerman 1987). Instead the interpretation of doing gender is in line with neoliberal individualistic ideas of "we are all different" (cf. Boréus 1994; Fahlgren et al. 2016). Consequently, rights to b recognized as an individual, and how the organization can benefit from these differences, is understood as the objective of and guiding to gender equality work, instead of redistribution of power, influence and resources which could be other guiding objectives for efforts for gender equality (cf. Fraser 2005). Previous research has pointed to the importance of gender awareness, and gender aware leadership, in organizations that wish to succeed with their gender equality work (cf. Wahl 2014). This thesis however suggests that perhaps there is also a need for "gendered organization awareness" in order to understand and discuss not only how gender is done in organizations but also how everyday organizational life, notions of competence and so forth are *done* and how that in turn relates to gender and power.

Bringing the organization to work: Implications for research and practice

While this thesis empirically shows how and with what consequences the processes of doing of gender equality in a forestry context evoke both notions of gender and notions of organizations, there are several aspects of gender equality work in male dominated organizations that need to be further explored and theorized. Apart from the need for more intersectional research in male-dominated organizations in general and in forestry in particular (Article IV), I would particularly like to stress the need to pay more attention to sexuality in research. This in order to better understand the part sexuality plays in the gendering processes within the forestry sector and its organizations (Article III), which could contribute to explicate, and thus challenge, the ways in which sexualized forms of male dominance contribute to notions of forestry work. Further, my research contributes to feminist (participatory)

organizational research by highlighting the nuances and traces of politics that do exist in the negotiation of gender equality work in organizations (Article V). It also contributes to praxis by encouraging organizations to explore the possibilities of acknowledging the conflicts and controversies that inevitably surround gender equality work. But as shown above, the ontological disparities made visible when feminist organizational research meets industrial male dominated work organizations would benefit from further exploration.

Moreover, it can be argued that the perhaps deliberately broad formulations on gender equality in both policy and from management communication in organizations, often focusing on the business case of gender equality (Article I and II), provides a space for alternative interpretations and resistance at the micro level in organizations where gender equality interventions are implemented. This thesis has investigated gender equality interventions on both the macro and micro levels in organizations but there is still a need to more closely examine the linkage between gender, gender equality and core business. Similarly, as Wittbom (2009) argues, there is a need to further develop the understanding of the processes which link the rather general rhetoric of gender equality in policy or corporate leadership to the concrete action taking place in the everyday life of the organization. Whether gender equality is done as a top down intervention using the formal structures of policies or official narratives in organizations or a bottom-up initiative address informal structures as in the case of the #metoo movement, the interrelation between policy processes on national and organizational level, and the everyday practices of organizational life need to be analysed further. Explicating the link between the macro and micro levels of organizations is thus a crucial next step in order to understand the processes that include both the formulation of gender equality goals and policies and the practical actions carried out in organizations. Next, while this thesis has focused the work organizations of the Swedish forestry sector, I argue that it would be valuable to contrast these findings against the ways in which other forest related organizations do gender equality. An example of this could be the grass roots movement for professional women and non-binary people in forestry, NYKS, who have a more explicitly critical perspective on gendered norms and power. Another example would be the hunting community, who share many of the characteristics of the forestry sector but at the same time is mostly organized around leisure activities.

The thesis highlights a need for policy-makers and employers to intensify and broaden the scope of gender equality interventions in the forestry sector, in addition to the achievements made so far. Gender equality work in the forestry sector so far has mainly focused on women, the absence of them in the sector, ways to recruit more broadly and to facilitate the situation for women in the sector through networks and targeted

efforts. Less focus has been placed on mechanisms that make room for sexist behaviour and harassment in forestry-related workplaces and in forestry education. This thesis underlines that this needs to be targeted by forestry organizations, by talking about the responsibility of men in upholding a culture where this can take place (Article III). Further, there is still much to be learned about challenging organizational inequalities, and from an organizational perspective, an added awareness of the co-constituting power relations can help organizations sharpen their processes of change in a more gender equality direction (Article IV). The results in this thesis provide insights for both researchers and organizations on how feminist action research methodology can potentially provide a framework for understanding and changing the inequality regimes of organizations.

Lastly, while this study adds to the understanding of how gender equality is constructed in forestry work organizations, and while I touch upon how these constructions shape the opportunities for more gender equal organizations in for example Articles I and II. The depoliticized and degendered constructions found on an overarching level, in policies and in the official organizational narratives, influences the micro processes in everyday organizational life by diminishing the room for conflicts when doing gender equality as primarily a business case (Article V). This order is disrupted by the testimonies explored in Article III, where the political dimension of gender equality is highlighted by stories of men's (reprehended but at the same time sanctioned) behaviours in organizations that come at the expense of women's rights to a workplace free from condescending comments, harassment and sexual violence. Next, I strongly encourage organizations to be aware of how gender equality as a concept and as a practice travels not only from the macro level down, but also is allowed to travel from the micro level up. This emphasizes the need for organizations to make room for conflicts and politics and to let the otherwise marginalized voices contribute to articulating more nuanced interpretations of gender equality.

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