



**FACULTY OF FINE ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL SCIENCES**

# **WOMEN IN FORESTRY, A VALUABLE ASSET OR BODIES OUT OF PLACE?**

- An in-depth investigation of what it can mean to be a woman in forestry in Jönköping County.

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Essay/Thesis:	15 hp
Program and/or course:	Master's Degree Project in Gender Studies
Level:	Second Cycle
Semester/year:	St/2018
Supervisor:	Hülya Arik
Examiner:	Olga Sasunkevich
Report no:	xx (not to be filled in by the student/students)



UNIVERSITY OF  
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### Abstract

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Purpose:	This thesis investigates what it can mean to be a woman in forestry in Jönköping County. It asks how the participant experience their situation as women in forestry and what gendered power structures appear in their stories. Additionally, the thesis analyses how the "Forest Strategy for Småland", by Jönköping County Council, perceives and recreates the understanding of gender equality.
Theory:	The analysis is based on Puwars theories of gendered bodies in spaces not created for them; called "bodies out of place". Additionally, the analysis focalises social reproduction theory by Battacharya, research on policy making by Alnebratt and Rönnblom, and research on gender in forestry by Andersson and Lidestav, among others.
Method:	Through reflexive in-depth interviews with 8 participants, the thesis shows how the gendered structures of forestry are recreated in everyday work life.

Result:

The analysis shows how the participants must relate to the masculine norm for forestry in their everyday work life. Furthermore, the analysis shows gendered power structures that promotes men over women and exposes women to sexist harassment, but also how women can sometimes participate in maintaining gendered power structures. Finally, the thesis makes suggestions for a feminist and more progressive forest strategy to achieve an inclusive gender equality.

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## Abbreviations:

RJL – Region Jönköpings län / Jönköping County Council

SCB – Statistiska Centralbyrån / Statistics Sweden

SLU – Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet / Swedish University of Agriculture

## Glossary:

**County** – an administrative unit. The English term “county” can be applied to both geographical areas that I mention in this thesis, The County of Småland and Jönköping County. I will refer to Jönköping county as the local administrative county and use “Småland” to describe the geographical area that consists of Jönköping -, Kalmar – and Kronobergs län/counties. Historically, “Småland” was the administrative unit until a permanent division took place in 1687. “Småland” is still actively referred to in for example tourist advertisement and sometimes the counties choose to cooperate for the benefit of common interests.

**Forestry** (also silviculture) – the use and management of forest for production of raw material such as timber and pulp wood. I use “forestry” to include everything that is not a specific industry or business.

**Forest industry** – cohesive term for industries based on forest such as sawmills, wood furniture producer and wooden house production.

**Forest business** – a private or public business company basing its activity on forest.

**Forest harvester** - a forest harvester fells the tree, de-branches it and cut the trunk in equally long pieces.

**Forest Forwarder** – the forest forwarder gathers the felled trees and lifts them onto an attached trailer.

## 1. Introduction

Sweden's national policy on gender equality in workplaces becomes particularly manifest in regional development plans where development and growth aim to be gender equal. Such mission is assigned to all County Councils in the face of a national gender gap in work- and occupation patterns and becomes prominent in regions that are defined primarily with male dominated industries. The department for regional development at Region Jönköpings län (RJL)/ Jönköping County Council is responsible for this mission in Jönköping County, where the forest industry is a big actor and employer but also strongly gender segregated. To form a positive development with equal impact for women and men of all ages and backgrounds it is necessary to establish a gender equal labour market. RJL has designed a development plan for the County that aim to change the gender gap and educational and career patterns in all forms of occupations including forestry.<sup>1</sup>

The forestry business is one of Sweden's largest industries and provides 8% of GDP and currently employs at least 16 000 people.<sup>2</sup> But even though women constitute 38%<sup>3</sup> of private forest owners and forestry is the second most common profession among self-employed women, the occupation is still male dominated.<sup>4</sup> It is also a male coded and masculinized occupation<sup>5</sup> that is often pictured as heavy and hard to work in. Yet the forest industry say that this image is no longer true, that forestry is a highly technical and digitalised work field, and anyone can work there.<sup>6</sup> In cooperation with RJL, and to further a gender equal regional development, I will investigate what it can be like to work in forestry and the forest industry in Jönköping County, through in-depth interviews with 8 women working in there. 'Forestry' and 'forest industry/business' are used referring to the use and management of forests, both small and large private forest businesses, as well as public institutions and publicly owned forest businesses. These will be examined through the perspectives and lived experiences of 8 women, working in different forestry-related occupations, to better understand the gender structures that define these work places and forestry in general.

My own interest in regional and rural development has been coming on slowly during my adult life. I grew up on a farm in the middle/south of Sweden. My parents own forests and my father and brother work in farming and forestry, and when I grew up I used to help out with all kinds of work

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<sup>1</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d.)

<sup>2</sup> (Skogsstyrelsen (The Swedish Forest Agency) 2017) Statistics in this thesis is based on the two legal genders in Sweden, man and woman.

<sup>3</sup> (LRF Konsult 2017)

<sup>4</sup> According to Statistics Sweden (SCB), the most common occupation for self-employed women in Sweden is hair dresser followed by forestry worker. For men the most common occupation for self-employment is forestry worker, followed by cattle breeding. (SCB (Statistics Sweden) u.d.)

<sup>5</sup> (Lidestav och Egan Sjölander 2007, s 351)

<sup>6</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., s 6)

and spend time in the forest. But I also subconsciously noted that only men seemed to work in these areas and women were often dismissed or ridiculed if they ventured there. As an adult and student in gender studies this has been growing in my mind and my interest was sparked in late 2017, when #metoo calls were made from many areas and occupations in Sweden. In forestry the call was named #slutavverkat (#finalfelling) and women across the occupation told of persisting sexism, racism, homophobia and discrimination as well as assaults. This, together with my own familiarity with sexism to women in farming and forestry, a seemingly invisible LGBTQI-community in the countryside and evident segregation along ethnic and race lines made me curious. The strategies I read, including “The Forest Strategy for Småland” seemed to frame gender equality in terms of the number of women employed and of economic benefits the forest companies.<sup>7</sup> I will therefore critically investigate what it can be like to be a woman in forestry in Jönköping County, and also make suggestions about what Region Jönköpings län could do to improve gender equality in forestry.

## Research purpose and questions

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore what it can mean to be a woman in forestry and the forest business in Jönköping County. I investigate this through interviews with women in forestry and forest industry/business in Jönköping County. This includes three groups of participants (1) women who work at public agencies or in forest companies as employees, (2) women who run/co-run their own business in the forest industry or local forestry, and (3) students who train to become forestry workers. I have conducted interviews with 8 women from the groups mentioned above, about their lived experience of their occupation.

In addition, this thesis aims to highlight women’s lived experience in forest industry and contribute to RJJ’s regional development plans on gender equality and inclusion, by reflecting on the potential limitations of “The Forest Strategy for Småland” in the light of these results.

The main lines of inquiry I use are:

- How do the participants experience their personal and work situation as women within forestry and the forest industry/business?
- What power structures and values concerning gender appears in their stories and how do they further or hinder the participants?
- How do women’s lived experiences and opinions correspond with the measures and actions designed to improve gender equality in “The Forest Strategy for Småland”?

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<sup>7</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d.) (Småland skogar får värden att växa)

In the light of these questions, my participants reflect on their experience as women working in forestry. The analysis shows how the participants need to relate to the masculine norm in forestry in their everyday work life, through lack of work clothes that fit different kind of bodies, or having their competence ignored. It shows how forestry rely on unpaid reproductive work performed by women. The analysis also show that women can partake in maintaining gendered power structures and that class and age play a role in this. My aim is to contribute to an understanding of the issue of gender equality, not only a matter of numbers but of hidden power structures. I hope to start a conversation about how these structures can be addressed by Region Jönköpings län, in future strategies for gender equality, as well as in the future implementation of “The Forest Strategy for Småland” to create meaningful change.

### Limitations

I set out on this research to explore women’s experience in forestry with a critical understanding that takes gender as an identity categorie that is intersectionally differentiated through sexuality, race, class, religion, ability. These intersections make every woman’s lived experience unique. However, the particular social and geographical context, as well as the existing dynamics that shape demographics in Jönköping County and the forest business, have resulted in the recruitment of, as far as I know, white, heterosexual, cis, able-bodied women of Swedish origin. As 6 out of the 8 interviews have taken place via phone call, I do not know exactly what identity my participants wants to belong to. I took different expressions of sexual orientation or ethnic identification into consideration as they came up in conversations and reflected on how those factors shaped my participant’s experience in the forestry sector. Yet such analysis has not been the main focus of my discussion and neither of my theoretical framework and conclusion.

While I draw on “The Forest Strategy for Småland” (The Forest Strategy) for my discussion I do not specifically evaluate the strategy document entirely. For the purpose of this thesis I limit myself to the sections of the forest strategy on gender equality. I focus on how RJL, through The Forest Strategy understands gender equality and how it sustains and aims to change gendered division of labour. A discourse analysis of that strategy would also be a useful form of knowledge production but that would not reflect women’s lived experience of forestry in Jönköping County.



## Background

In this chapter I outline the background for my thesis. I am writing in cooperation with Region Jönköpings län/county which I introduce further below. To provide a better understanding for the reader I also describe parts of the local public administration in Sweden. After this I introduce The Forest Strategy and analyse this strategy briefly.

## Region Jönköpings län and the county of Småland

Småland is one of 25 “landskap”/counties in Sweden that historically had a role in Sweden’s governance.<sup>8</sup> (See pictures 1 and 2 below) Today, Sweden is governed in 21 counties, Jönköpings län/county is one of them. (See picture 3 and 4 below) The three contemporary administrative counties in the area still called Småland, are Jönköpings-, Kronobergs- and Kalmar län. Their residence cities are Jönköping, Kalmar and Växjö respectively, where the nationally appointed local governors reside, who lead the county administrative board. Each län/county also has a publicly elected regional county council that handles health care, public transport, culture and some education (like agricultural colleges) and regional development. In Jönköpings län the county council is called *Region Jönköpings län (RJL)*.



Pic 1 and 2; Smålands landskap/county.

<sup>8</sup> See Glossary on page 3



Pic 3; 21 Swedish län/county and pic 4; Jönköpings län/county

Region Jönköpings län (RJL) serves the 340 000 people living in Jönköping County and have 10 500 employees. The organizations mission is two-fold; first to provide healthcare, dental care and promote public health, and second; regional development, public transport and regional infrastructure like roads, railway and broadband. The goal for regional development is to attract people to live and/or work here and for new enterprises to move or start up in the county, to keep and support those already here and to promote and secure growth. Another important role is to coordinate and cooperate with the 13 municipalities of the county.<sup>9</sup>

The inner part of the geographical area Småland, is a plateau with large forests which has been a traditional provider of income alongside farming. 70% of Småland's ground surface is covered by forests. Today Jönköping county also has a well-established industry with many subcontractors to industries such as the car industry.<sup>10</sup> According to The Forest Strategy<sup>11</sup> (which encompasses all of Småland's area) the forestry in Småland employs 16 000 people. There are 40 000 private forest owners in the area, of whom 38% are women, and the annual turnover is more than 40 (miljarder) billion kronor which is 8% of the regional economy.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> (Region Jönköpings län (Jönköping County Council) 2018)

<sup>10</sup> Other large local actors include Saab Defence Industry who employs some 7000 people, Jönköping University who has 11 000 students out of which 2000 are international students from 70 countries, and Jönköping's city is Sweden's tenth largest and grew by 2000 people in 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Original title "Smålands skogar får värden att växa" – The Forests of Småland makes values grow (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., s 3, 9)

<sup>12</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., s 10)

Småland has a population of 754 000 people, slightly more men than women,<sup>13</sup> which has become a concern due to increased urbanization taking place in the county as well as all over Sweden. Women and young people move from the countryside to the cities to a greater extent than men. According to last year's national statistics about gender equality between men and women in Jönköping County,<sup>14</sup> more men than women live in the countryside and more women than men live in urban areas in all 13 municipalities. In 2004 a governmental investigation found that to achieve gender equality between men and women, and to promote women's access to developmental measures and economic independence is a matter of survival for smaller municipalities.<sup>15</sup> RJJ's part of this work is to promote work opportunities in the countryside to make more women and men want to stay in or move there. Since forests are located in the countryside but forestry occupations are strongly gender segregated it is designed as an important mission to make way for more women to work in this area. In the light of these concerns, the three Counties of Jönköping, Kronoberg and Kalmar decided in 2017 on a common "Forest Strategy" to coordinate their work for growth and development in this area.

## The Forest Strategy for Småland

In this section I summarize the parts of The Forest Strategy that highlight gender equality and development of the forest sector.<sup>16</sup> I use texts from The Forest Strategy, the implementation plan; Plan for Action 2018 - 2020 as well as the status report preceding The Forest Strategy as they help elaborate the understanding of gender equality.<sup>17</sup> The reader will also find a summary of the strategy's 6 goals in a footnote below. I will briefly analyse the strategy and use this for my analysis of the interviews and in my research discussion.

*"The forest business is one of Sweden's most gender segregated sectors. The situation in Småland is no exception. The total quota between women and men in the forest business is 20-80, 20% being women. Increased gender equality is desirable for both economic and democratic reasons. Both the individual company and society at large have a great deal to gain by gender equality. The economic gain with increased gender equality are, among other things an expanded recruitment base, but this is also a way to increased legitimacy in relation to society. The formal ownership is more gender equal, more than a third of forest owners are women. Yet the common image of the forest owner is a man, which raises the question of how this comes to be and what consequences this might have for forestry. Many people derive from a society where women's right to their own forest is less than self-evident. Even if*

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<sup>13</sup> 381 000 men, (50,5%) and 373 000 women (49,5%). (SCB (Statistics Sweden) u.d.)

<sup>14</sup> (Länsstyrelsen i Jönköpings län 2017)

<sup>15</sup> (Ds 2004; 39, s 65)

<sup>16</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d.)

<sup>17</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., s 4)

*gender equality in formal forest ownership is relatively high, there is still a way to go to equal decision making and influence over forestry. The idea about who owns forest and who works in the business needs an update to make more people able to identify with and feel attracted to the forest business.”<sup>18</sup>*

*“(…) To secure the right competence in the future, recruitment to education and jobs in the forest business needs to draw from a wider range of the population. The number of women in forestry educations needs to increase. It is equally important to reach new swedes as it is to reach the rest of the population who lives in cities with long distances, both physically and mentally, to the forest.”<sup>19</sup>*

The Forest Strategy<sup>20</sup> relates to Agenda 2030 with a purpose of local implementation and to improve economy, employment, environment and climate, gender equality and integration. The aim for gender equality is outlined in the status report with the text quoted above. The Forest Strategy states that *“there is a great need to improve gender equality and diversity in forest related occupations for both democratic and economic reasons. An increased gender equality is good for our companies, individuals, society and the regional development”*.<sup>21</sup> To achieve this the following measures for implementations are stated in the plan for action accompanying The Forest Strategy; A declaration of intent where participating actors commits to certain actions and in turn receive education, tools and exchange of best practice examples as well as benefits of gender equality work. A long-term dialog to gather the local needs of competence supply with a special focus on gender equality and diversity. To increase attractivity for forest related education and occupation, a cooperation with schools and student career councillors is suggested, together with information days and student forest camps. A special focus on a gender equal representation in advisory and deciding bodies for wild life management.<sup>22</sup>

The Forest Strategy also aim for *“the forest owners in Småland to become more active and competent, which should lead to increased turnover and benefits for the individual as well as society. More entrepreneurs should offer forest related experiences and small-scale wood processing can meet a growing market”<sup>23</sup>*. This is designed to be achieved through investment in competence to strengthen the forest owner as a business owner, targeting new forest owners, entrepreneurs

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<sup>18</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., 12)

<sup>19</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., 13) My translation

<sup>20</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d.)

<sup>21</sup> Goal 1: Increase attractivity around the forests of Småland and strengthen competence supply within forestry and forest industry. Goal 2: Increase degree of refinement and degree of innovation Goal 3: Increase production and variation to use a greater part of the potential of the forests of Småland. Goal 4: Strengthen the profitable business on the forest farm. Goal 5: Preserve and strengthen our natural values, our common cultural heritage and the outdoor life. Goal 6: Achieve balance between forest and wildlife.

<sup>22</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., s 19-20)

<sup>23</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., s 23 - 24)

focusing on forest related tourism, business support actors and through investigating ownership transferations of forest farms.<sup>24</sup> The Forest Strategy also focuses on age in relation to female and male forest owners. *"The average age of forest owners is rising. A large ownership transition is expected soon (...) but surveys show that many postpones this (...) The risk increases that the forest farm becomes passively run which reduces productivity and creates a risk of losing natural values".*<sup>25</sup> I argue that even though gender is not mentioned in these two priorities, it reveals how the Forest Strategy perceives people and forest owners. Increasing gender gap and ageing are defined as obstacles for production and growth and forest ownerships thus become means for production interests.

I analyse the Forest Strategy from the perspective that a feminist strategy for gender equality need to address more than the absence of women in this male dominated arena. Kerstin Alnebratt and Malin Rönnblom<sup>26</sup> critically evaluates gender mainstreaming as the national strategy for gender equality in Sweden since 1995. Alnebratt and Rönnblom argue that gender mainstreaming has transformed gender equality from a political issue and a power struggle to a matter of techniques and indicators. Gender equality then becomes a matter of what can be measured, such as the number of women board members or the number of women working in male dominated occupations and vice versa. The authors argue that gender equality in this shape obscures the power discrepancies between men and women.<sup>27</sup> Alnebratt and Rönnblom argue that when gender equality become a matter of techniques the political problem is lost in such a way that the reasons for change is no longer discussed and becomes hard to motivate.<sup>28</sup> They argue that when gender equality become a set of numbers or persons, this creates the limit of what gender equality means.<sup>29</sup>

Likewise, the Forest Strategy describes a measurable gender equality where women and men take equal part in decision making, influence and employment. In this research I argue that a strategy aiming for gender equality needs to address the gender specific problems identified in the status report without invisibilizing the gender hierarchies between forest owners through presumably gender-neutral intentions such as focus on students, a conference and student forest camps. In the current form of the Forest Strategy gender equality appears as not a priority area but rather a means to another end, that of competence supply for the industry. I argue that the gender equality perspective should not be there to satisfy economic motives, but to transform existing work and

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<sup>24</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., s 23-24)

<sup>25</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., s 11) My translation

<sup>26</sup> (Alnebratt 2016)

<sup>27</sup> (Alnebratt 2016, s 34)

<sup>28</sup> (Alnebratt 2016, s 14)

<sup>29</sup> (Alnebratt 2016, s 31)

educational patterns and power structures within forestry in the area of Småland. To achieve that, a critical analysis of the present situation in forestry in Småland is needed, to clarify what the problem with gender in-equality is perceived to be and suggest affirmative actions aimed at target areas.

Echoing Andersson and Lidestav's analysis of gender strategies in forest companies I argue that The Forest Strategy places the problem in the details, such as the lack of numbers of women, which can presumably be easily fixed. But it does not address why women, the young and other groups do not seek their occupation in forestry.<sup>30</sup> From a feminist perspective I argue that there is a need to discuss the future of forestry and forest industry from an intersectional perspective where the problems and needs of other groups and identities are addressed. In its current form the Forest Strategy does not call for a critical examination of or transformation of forestry to make it gender equal but recommends merely to add women to existing patterns of organization. Only the public image of forestry is ascribed a necessary makeover, from being heavy and dirty to foreground a modern and technological industry. Malin Rönnblom and Linda Sandberg researched the gender equality plan for the city of Kiruna and found similar strategies which they argue invisibilizes and fail to attend to the existing power structures that made mining (or in my case forestry) a male area in the first place.<sup>31</sup> The authors show that women are added to previously male-only areas and occupations without a critical reflection on gender norms. This turns the question of gender-equality away from challenging power structures.

In this research I base my investigation upon in-depth interviews with women who work in forestry to understand what an alternative approach to gender equality might look like. I structured my interviews to not explicitly inquire what the participants think about The Forest Strategy but to show how their lived experience correspond with the issues mentioned in The Forest Strategy and how RJL can move forward with this new knowledge.

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<sup>30</sup> (Andersson 2015)

<sup>31</sup> (Rönnblom och Sandberg 2015, s 75)

## 2. Theoretical perspectives

In this chapter I outline the theories I use about gender, gender equality, place and social reproduction. I include an overview of the research I use to form an understanding of gender in relation to forestry.

### Gender and place

My research aims to understand what it can mean to be a woman in forestry in Jönköping County. To form an idea about this area where the body is an important aspect of the research, I start of from Judith Butlers theories about gender and performativity. Gender, according to Butler is a norm in the sense that it is a social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects, and an apparatus by which “the gender binary” is constituted. This gender binary means the idea that gender should be interpreted only as “man” or “woman”, which are understood to be distinct and mutually excluding categories. According to Butler *“gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes”*<sup>32</sup>. Butler also cautions that such view of gender is problematic because it misses the critical point that *“those permutations of gender which do not fit into the binary are as much part of gender as its most normative instances”*.<sup>33</sup> Butler states that language and words have a performative power, they create an interpretation. An utterance or action about what is acceptable or not and what norms should be observed and upheld, reinforces that same norm and signifies an allegiance to the norm, that “it” should be undisputed. Yet when someone disrupts a norm, it is a sign that the norm can be contested and subverted from within, and that other ways of being and doing, and indeed be intelligible to others, are possible.<sup>34</sup>

A post-structuralist understanding of gender is the main theoretical framework and the analytical lens in this research, in order to understand the social construction of the norms and values that determine how and where bodies can be. Previously in Swedish history there were rules<sup>35</sup> regulating people’s mobility and basic individual rights based on their gender and race.<sup>36</sup> As Johansson et al explains, previously in Sweden one had to conduct basic military service, which only men were

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<sup>32</sup> (Butler 2004, s 42)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. s 42

<sup>34</sup> (Butler 2004, s 46-47)

<sup>35</sup> Rules such as the prohibition of women to take place in parliament before 1921. From 1907 women with a certain income could be elected for municipality councils. (Sveriges Riksdag 2016)

<sup>36</sup> For example, the Romani peoples in Sweden were forbidden to stay more then three days in one municipality. This prevented them from having a registered address and they were not registered as citizens, their children could not attend schools and had no right to education until 1959. No romani person was allowed to enter or leave Sweden between 1914-1954. (Minoriteter.se (Minorities.se) 2015)

allowed to do, to be accepted to the master program in forest management.<sup>37</sup> While such discriminating regulations have been eliminated, their legacy continue to shape contemporary Swedish society through sets of social norms and value systems.<sup>38</sup> Yet these norms and informal rules are constantly being negotiated and contested by people and bodies moving through them and their boundaries.

I use Nirmal Puwar theories of bodies out of place to ground my understanding of the body, gender and place. Puwar calls people who move through boundaries of space “space invaders” or bodies out of place and argues that space and place are not neutral. They are socially constructed and coded with and around specific ideas and images that fit certain bodies and not others. When “other” bodies enter, they disrupt the particular codes and norms by which a specific place is constructed.<sup>39</sup> Quoting Judith Butler, Puwar states that *“our gendered identities do not exist prior to the performance but they are constituted through the performance (...) and continuous repetition of these acts over time, often years makes them appear natural (...) amounting to a set of ‘cultural fictions’ of what is a real man or real woman”*.<sup>40</sup>

Puwar shows that an arena like the British Parliament, which was built for men and formed by men gives women who enter there a distinct disadvantage. Performance, abilities and capacities necessary in this male coded environment is taken for granted and therefore made invisible to the male MPs (members of parliament). The female MPs are made aware of their differentness by for example sexualized jokes about them, or have their voices and clothes remarked upon when they debate in parliament.<sup>41</sup> Puwar quotes Cynthia Cockburn’s analysis of men’s resistance to equality in organizations, which shows that men use sexualized humour as a way to control and marginalize women, even when women become included in the organization.<sup>42</sup> According to Puwar, this is an exclusionary process regarding who is given respect and authority. *“Because people do not expect the relevant competence to be embodied in a female body, women have to ‘over do’ their performance of these competences to make up for the suspected lack.”*<sup>43</sup> Another important aspect of encoded

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<sup>37</sup> I have not been able to find a year for this change but Johansson et al mentions that the first woman graduated from higher forestry education in 1966 so I presume the change of rules happened in the late 1950s or early 1960s. (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 6)

<sup>38</sup> (Andersson 2015, s 3) Lidestav i Andersson

<sup>39</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 80) Butler, in Puwar,

<sup>40</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 80) Butler, in Puwar,

<sup>41</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 5, 7, 78)

<sup>42</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 87) Cockburn, in Puwar

<sup>43</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 91-92, 103)



spaces that Puwar point to is that the glass ceiling has been cracked for gender but not for people primarily interpreted by other signs such as race.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, forestry and its work environment were shaped by and for men. Women who enter there must relate to male dominance in their everyday work. In my research I use theoretical perspectives developed by Puwar as shaped by Butler's theories to see if and how the participants perceive their bodies, if they fit or if they stand out, by asking about physical situations at work, equipment and work division. I will ask women how their knowledge is perceived and if they are expected or allowed to lead or take on more responsibility at work. Forestry and forest industry is, according to The Forest Strategy, a largely white Swedish business both in the forests and in the offices. I understand that the glass ceiling has not been broken for people of non-Swedish, non-white origin. The results I get in my investigation are momentary glimpses into a local situation and personal experiences and should not be generalized to apply to every similar situation or be seen as a truth. However, looking into reproduction of gender norms through women's lived experience will give insights to how such norms can be effectively changed.

Taking a closer look into gendered divisions of labour, Linda McDowell argues that it is paramount to question the logic behind the social practices that constitute and maintain what is considered an appropriate job for either men or women. Any research or affirmative actions directed at women only, is based on the same naturalized gender categories of men and women. To change this, McDowell argue that feminist research must investigate the daily struggles and power relations between men and women in the work place to find out how acceptable versions of femininity and masculinity are produced and maintained.<sup>45</sup> What arguments and behaviours are used to reinforce gender divisions? McDowell also points out the importance of taking heteronormativity and the construction of masculinities into account in gender research.<sup>46</sup> Drawing on research by Robin Leidner, McDowell show how men sometimes use gendered traits to describe their occupation, such as having a toughness, determination and a "killer instinct" to succeed in a job. The male participants claim that women lack those and could not succeed. The women found their work to be a constant struggle against sexist attitudes from male colleagues and many stopped working.<sup>47</sup> McDowell argues that organizations are *"embedded with gendered meanings and structured by the social relations of sexuality (...)* Organizations reflect masculine values and men's power, permeating all aspects of the workplace in often taken-for-granted ways."<sup>48</sup> McDowell argue that male power is reinforced in

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<sup>44</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 7)

<sup>45</sup> (McDowell 1999, s 135)

<sup>46</sup> (McDowell 1999, s136-137)

<sup>47</sup> (McDowell 1999, s 143-144)

<sup>48</sup> (McDowell 1999, s135-136)

microscale interactions such as jokes. Where men see teasing, camaraderie and strength, women see specifically masculine aggression, competition, intimidation and misogyny.<sup>49</sup> In my research I view the masculinized organization as a changing and contested work place where gender constructions are reinforced and disputed in everyday work life through the kind of microscale interactions McDowell describe.

Theory of social reproduction explained by Tithi Battacharya argues that although workers are necessary for the capitalist system to function and produce commodities, the workers need to regenerate and reproduce as persons to be able to work.<sup>50</sup> This regeneration takes place outside of the work place and consists of such things as sleeping, eating and physical and psychological support and care from families, as well as regenerating the work force through childbirth. Most of this work is performed by women as unpaid and invisibilized domestic work and care for children, spouses and parents. Battacharya argues that the capitalist social system need the reproductive work to be continually performed. Therefore, it is in the interests of capitalism as a system to prevent any broad changes in gender relations, because real changes to gender will ultimately affect profits. If women could rely on public child care and male spouses to do their share of domestic chores and unpaid care, then women could pose a threat to the capitalist system by demanding change.<sup>51</sup>

The Swedish governmental investigation "There is slow progress"<sup>52</sup> explains that in family forestry-business the ownership is often constructed as a private company where one family member (often a man) is registered, but more family members take part in the work. This makes women's work invisible and does not give them a share of the income, thus affecting life income and pension. There have been public measures to support women in the countryside, like "housewife vacation" and "harvest day-care", but such measures are no longer in place.<sup>53</sup> Echoing Battacharya, this describes how women's work is necessary for the economic and patriarchal system but is not valued and is invisibilized. The governmental investigation argues that the view of women as a resource is founded in a traditional, patriarchal view of politics and democracy. *"From this viewpoint affirmative actions*

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<sup>49</sup> (McDowell 1999, s 135-136)

<sup>50</sup> (Battacharya 2013)

<sup>51</sup> (Battacharya 2013)

<sup>52</sup> (Ds 2004; 39, s 65)

<sup>53</sup> "Harvest -day care" was a temporary day care initiated by The Swedish Farmers Association in 1985. (Lantbrukarnas Riskförbund (LRF) u.d.) The "house-wife vacation" was an organized vacation for exhausted house-wives that existed between 1946-1979. (Nationalencyklopedin u.d.) The first work-time-law in 1938 stipulated two weeks paid leave for all employees in Sweden. They were later extended to three, four and in 1978 five weeks. But the social democratic government soon realised that approximately one million women was not included in this benefit as they were not formally employed. In 1946 the state started organizing recreational vacation weeks for housewives to get away from home- and family demands. 80 000 women took this opportunity in 1948 alone, while their household was taken care of by a neighbouring house wife. (SydÖstran u.d.)

*for women is seen as promoting a special interest and measures to improve women's situation will therefore not fulfil their needs but work for the purposes of patriarchy.*<sup>54</sup> The social reproduction theory provides me with ways of explaining the foundation for the gendered work-patterns that has established forestry as a masculine job. It helps me understand women's lived experiences in forestry. Battacharya uses examples from the USA, which are not entirely applicable in the Swedish context with its' different welfare system of public childcare, paid sick leave and strong unions. But I view The Forest Strategy through this critical lens to find the implicit conditions for the strategy's reasoning.

## Gender and forestry in Sweden

Research about gender and forestry in Sweden highlight several important perspectives that I will use in my research.<sup>55</sup> Sweden is often described as one of the most gender equal countries in the world, but in forestry (as well as many other areas) there are still crucial hierarchies between men and women. Half of the land area in Sweden is covered with forest and half of that is privately owned, 38% of those owners are women, (approximately 133 000). That means women own 3,5-million-hectare of forest worth 65 billion kronor.<sup>56</sup> But a report for the United Nations, "Time for Action" on the gender situation in forestry in Europe, point out that women's ownership in Sweden is different from men's. Women co-own their forest to a greater extent than men and the share of women owners decrease as the property sizes increase.<sup>57</sup>

Forestry was historically an important economic factor in Sweden, and a male dominated industry where women's labour has constantly been erased. Lars Östlund and Anna-Maria Rautio argue that women participated in forestry in the past to a greater extent than is commonly known.<sup>58</sup> Women often worked in the domestic sphere; took responsibility for house, family and farming while the husband was away working in the forest. Young women often worked as cooks and even as buyers and organisers on location in logging camps. This constituted a supportive system for the forest industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but women's reproductive labour was not seen as a part of the "real labour" as it did not produce material values. Women also worked in the forest, especially

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<sup>54</sup> (Ds 2004; 39 2004, s 66)

<sup>55</sup> See for example (Andersson 2015), (Follo et al 2017), (Johansson, et al. 2017) and (Lidestav och Egan Sjölander 2007)

<sup>56</sup> (Föreningen Spillkråkan (The Black Woodpecker Association) u.d.) The numbers are mentioned frequently and appears on different websites concerning forest business and statistics. I choose to refer to the website of "The Association of Female Forest Owners" because it has the easiest summary as opposed to for example Statistics Sweden.

Today 65 kronor transfers to 7,12 USD. Women own forest in Sweden worth 9,1 billion USD.

<sup>57</sup> (FAO 2006, s 91) Time for Action – Gender and Forestry

<sup>58</sup> (Skogssällskapet (The Swedish Forest Society Foundation) 2017)

young women in families with daughters only, but mostly with tasks deemed fit for women such as planting, de-barking and de-branching. The heavier work such as felling was performed by men. Östlund say women played an important role in forestry from the 1880s to 1950s but since these women do not fit the ideas of forestry their contribution has disappeared from history.<sup>59</sup>

Gun Lidestav and Annika Egan Sjölander show that female foresters today often find themselves working in organizations and structures dominated by men in both numbers and occupations.<sup>60</sup> The authors find that even though an increased number of female professionals have entered forestry this has not affected the main process of gender coding within the forestry field.<sup>61</sup> They suggest that women seem to have the best chances of becoming accepted and esteemed by becoming experts in specialized fields or when working with education. Lidestav and Sjölander also find a pattern of making gender a non-issue, maintained by both men and women in the studied material. They suggest that for women, this is a more or less conscious strategy to gain access to and be accepted in the field. For men and the organizations, they argue that it is a way to maintain status quo.<sup>62</sup>

Ownership emerges as an important concept in understanding forestry and forest business in relation to gender. As I mentioned earlier approximately 133 000 women own forest in Sweden. But when it comes to ownership, women have only recently been recognized as forest owners.<sup>63</sup> Follo et al, explain that this is due to the close attention paid to active management and self-employment in forestry in common understanding of what forestry means. Historically this was performed by men and because of this forestry was understood as “what men do”, thus rendering women invisible. Another aspect of gender and forest ownership is decision making. Follo et al show that there is a difference in how men and women as groups makes decisions and partake in the management of their own forest. Men are more likely to make decisions by themselves than women. Follo et al argue that “*the interest in forestry is affected by socio-culturally established understandings and norms*” to the disadvantage of women.<sup>64</sup> There also appears to be a gender hierarchy in access to forestry competence which is spread and developed primarily, through inherited knowledge as well as formal and informal networks among men.<sup>65</sup>

Some women forest owners actively try to counter such a disadvantage in forestry competence by creating formal female networks, for example the national network of “The Black Woodpecker

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<sup>59</sup> (Skogssällskapet (The Swedish Forest Society Foundation) 2017)

<sup>60</sup> (Lidestav och Egan Sjölander 2007, s 352)

<sup>61</sup> (Lidestav och Egan Sjölander 2007, s 352, 360)

<sup>62</sup> (Lidestav och Egan Sjölander 2007, s 358)

<sup>63</sup> (Follo et al 2017, s 175)

<sup>64</sup> (Follo et al 2017, s 179)

<sup>65</sup> (Follo et al 2017, s 180)

Association” or the southern “The Dryads”. Elias Andersson and Gun Lidestav analysis six women’s networks in Sweden as alternative forms of organisation that offer a forum for exchange of knowledge, experience and contacts. They argue that these networks can “*challenge the hegemonic and gender-neutral articulation of the forestry sector*” and counter the experiences of marginalisation within male dominated structures and practice of forestry.<sup>66</sup> Andersson and Lidestav describe the networks as important for women as groups to contribute to the development of the forestry sector and to speak from their position and identity as both women and forest owners. This kind of supportive activity is sometimes counteracted by the large forest companies. Some of the companies previously had their own network for female employees but according to Andersson and Lidestav this changed after the national strategy for gender equality in forestry was launched in 2011. Some of these internal networks were discontinued based on arguments that it was discriminatory to single out women for special support.<sup>67</sup> The United Nations-report “Time for Action” on women forest owners explain that this argument is used in situations concerning gender equality based on the presumption that when “equal opportunities” are offered, they are per se gender-neutral.<sup>68</sup> This is an interesting form of resistance to gender equality-measures disguised as anti-discrimination, but it covers up the underlying gendered structures that created the un-equal situation in the first place.

What is the purpose of “gender equality” in the forest industry/business? Andersson and Lidestav also analysed the gender-equality policies of the 10 largest forest companies in Sweden, finding that arguments for gender equality was driven by business motives such as increased efficiency and profit. Their analysis primarily showed an understanding of gender equality as being about women and not about gender hierarchies or organizations responsibility. Andersson and Lidestav argue that when gender equality is described as beneficial to all, it tends to hide questions of power and any political dimensions. They describe a focus on technical and administrative aspects which turns gender equality into a technical problem the organization can control, evaluate and adjust without highlighting power structures or conflicts between men and women.<sup>69</sup> Likewise in this research I examine how The Forest Strategy understands and explains it’s gender-equality efforts.

Malin Rönnblom and Linda Sandberg found similar patterns in their research about gender equality-strategies, in the likewise male dominated and masculinized mining industry.<sup>70</sup> The scholars analyse the gender equality strategy for Kiruna municipality and how understandings of gender interact with

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<sup>66</sup> (E. Andersson 2016, s 39, 41-42)

<sup>67</sup> (E. Andersson 2016, s 39)

<sup>68</sup> (FAO 2006, s 21)

<sup>69</sup> (Andersson 2015)

<sup>70</sup> (Rönnblom och Sandberg 2015, s 59 ff)

the understanding of place. They show that the strategy primarily aims to change the image of the town Kiruna, from being associated with heavy mining (which is the dominating industry) and frames this in terms of gender equality and 'HBTQ-friendliness'.<sup>71</sup> Rönnblom and Sandberg describe a strive for the town of Kiruna to be seen as developed through adapting the features connected with modernity in the Swedish context, gender equality and 'HBTQ-friendliness'. They find a political wish to make more women want to stay in Kiruna or move there with a spouse or even start working in the mines, as the underlying reason for the gender-equality strategy. Here the inclusion of women in former male-only areas and occupations take place without challenging gender norms, which in turn make gender-equality a matter of numbers of women and not power structures.<sup>72</sup>

Studies have also shown that active measures for gender equality meet with resistance. Kristina Johansson et al, found that some men perceive gender-equality interventions as a challenge to their position and undermining of the significance of merit, through which they believe they earned well deserved advancement. Johansson et al add that this reasoning reproduces the meaning of forestry work and competence as associated with men and masculinities. Their research suggest that men believe the increased number of women in all parts of forestry will eventually lead to a natural improvement in gender equality and any concrete actions for gender-equality are therefore unnecessary.<sup>73</sup> Affirmative action was understood as being incompatible with equal treatment and discriminatory against men, and that gender-equality measures are introduced into otherwise gender-neutral organizations. This study also show men arguing that a certain group of men, older men, are the main obstacle for gender equality but as they are "older" the problem will disappear in due time and no affirmative action is needed.<sup>74</sup> Johansson et al, quoting Pleasants, explain that men's intentional or unintentional resistance to feminism serves not only to preserve male privilege but also to maintain their own image as "good people" rather than perpetrators.<sup>75</sup> Men's resistance should be understood not only as individual resistance but as a reflection of the gendered cultural discourse they draw on to make sense of their organizational experience. The authors assume that such acts of discursive resistance constitute the source of the gender-equality measures to which they respond.<sup>76</sup>

From this overview I conclude that the feminist agenda behind gender equality, to change society so that men, women and everyone are treated as equal, have been lost in the process of becoming an

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<sup>71</sup> The referred strategy uses the term 'HBTQ-friendliness', not LGBTQI.

<sup>72</sup> (Rönnblom och Sandberg 2015, s 73)

<sup>73</sup> (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 9-10)

<sup>74</sup> (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 11-13)

<sup>75</sup> (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 2) Quoting R. K. Pleasants (2011).

<sup>76</sup> (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 3)

applied routine in forestry. In my research I have come across arguments along the same lines outlined above; that it seems unfair and counterproductive to gender equality to, for example hold a forestry education for women only, or that older men are the main obstacle to gender equality but this will be solved when they retire. My aim is to create an understanding of the local situation in Jönköping County and start a discussion to contribute to better substantiated gender equality strategies in forestry.

### 3. Method

In the following chapter, I outline the in-depth interview method I use, the feminist approach to methodology and my own reflexions from the interview experience. I also introduce the participants and discuss ethical considerations concerning my research.

When I decided to pursue this project, I was certain I wanted to use interviews as a method. Whereas a questionnaire survey would have given a broader basis for understanding with access to more participants and generalizable results, the interview method offers the possibility of understanding the participants lived experience. Another possible method could have been participant observation, which I refrain from due to time and logistical restrictions. Sociologist Martyn Denscombe argues that the benefits of the interview as method is the possibility to receive deep information and personal stories that could otherwise not be accessed.<sup>77</sup> Denscombe also notes that there can be a reward-aspect for the participant, who gets to share their experiences and ideas with someone whose purpose is to listen and take note. However, Denscombe also cautions that even if the interview can be enjoyable it can also be the opposite, an invasion of privacy or tactless and uncomfortable.<sup>78</sup> I performed in-depth interviews to gather knowledge with a feminist approach where, as Karen Barad puts it; the researcher does not have an exterior observational point. With a feminist approach *“we do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because ‘we’ are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming.”*<sup>79</sup> The in-depth interview is never an observation of a fixed phenomenon. It is a co-creation of understanding between the interviewed and the interviewer, relying on a shared interpretation of language and its meanings as

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<sup>77</sup> (Denscombe 2010, s 192)

<sup>78</sup> (Denscombe 2010, s 193-194)

<sup>79</sup> (Barad 2008, s 146-147)

well as body language. A problem for the researcher is that interpretation of language and body language is not necessarily shared, which means my conclusions could be wrong.

Barad, drawing on Butler, Foucault and Niels Bohr, argues that even though language has a large part in our understanding of the world it has been given too much power. Barad argues that with a performative understanding of discursive practices, 'matter' itself is given agency in relation to its surroundings. This is a part of rejecting the notion that it is possible to observe a fixed entity or "truth". The observer and the observed (a phenomena) are created in what Barad refers to as intra-action through an "apparatus", that are themselves dynamic performances through which exclusionary boundaries are enacted. Language in this understanding are not "words" but material-discursive practices through which boundaries are constituted.<sup>80</sup> Barad argues that language from this perspective is not what is said, it is that which constrains what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements.<sup>81</sup> The knowledge derived from my research is my interpretation of the language used by the participant,s to tell of their experience and understanding of a phenomenon, that I have been part in creating through my investigation. My questions set the framework, based on my knowledge and suppositions, my identity affects the participant and the language set up limitations through its constructive and interpretive form.

I used interview method to gain insight into the participants experience of their profession and the forest industry. To achieve that I conducted the interviews in-depth semi-structured with the questions divided into categories. The conversations wandered freely between them and I tried not to interrupt or give to many affirmative noises, but this also depended on the interview, sometimes laughter was a large part of the conversation. I first asked the participants to tell me something about themselves, their background and how they choose their occupation. The other question categories were as follows; *work/school*, which concerned workplace and forestry as occupation, co-workers/other students and teachers, equipment, clothes and shoes, salaries and physical conditions. *Network and business* support, to find what kind of support they had or wished for. *Personal experience of forestry* as a profession, expectations and attitudes, ideas and norms. *Gender and gender structure in forestry*, norms and ideas about women and men, resistance and change, values and descriptions about forestry workers. *Inclusion*, perceived possibilities for more women, queer- and trans-persons as well as immigrants, to start working in forestry. The questions differed somewhat depending on who I interviewed and can be found in appendix 1.

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<sup>80</sup> (Barad 2008, s 121, 134-135)

<sup>81</sup> (Barad 2008, s 137)



I found the interview experience rewarding but also very demanding. The effort to listen and take part, at the same time as keeping structure and ask relevant questions often made me frustrated afterwards, when I realised I had missed opportunities to follow up or lead the conversation in a different way. I performed the interviews via phone call in six cases and through personal meetings in two cases. During my personal meetings with one participant I noted that the mobile phone I used for recording, placed between us, acted as a focal point for the participants eyes and voice. She spoke in a way that I perceived as louder and clearer when the conversation was recorded, but that may be because I listened more intently then. Thomsson argues that the recorder can make the participant uneasy and make them consider more carefully what they say and how they formulate themselves. This can affect the quality of the interview.<sup>82</sup> During the telephone interviews I did not perceive such deliberate talking to the recording.

## Finding participants

It has been a very interesting and rewarding experience to find participants from among women working in forestry in this county. My initial concerns were how to define any categories and which ones to include. I settled on three groups, (1) women who work at public agencies or in forest companies as employees, (2) women who run/co-run their own business in the forest industry or local forestry, and (3) students who train to become forestry workers. Women take part in forestry as forest owners as well, 38% of the privately owned forest is owned by women. However, I have decided to not include them as participants since they are not in a position to be directly affected by RJL's forest strategy. Some participants may be both forest owners and work in the forest business, which I view as an interesting experience within the limits of this thesis.<sup>83</sup>

After deciding on focus categories I listed every forestry actor I knew off, made calls and sifted through the web and forest related magazines in search of any kind of forest related organisation or company in or connected to Jönköping County. I called and sent invitations to 11 organisations and several individuals, who could be relevant or could lead me further. I finally interviewed 8 participants, six who work in a public agency or forest company, one woman who co-run her own business and one forestry student. To maintain the anonymity of the participants I will only give general directions as to where they work. This has given me cause for concern since some

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<sup>82</sup> (Thomsson 2010, s 87)

<sup>83</sup> Initially I planned to interview women from three categories, one would be women students in forestry, another would be women working in different areas of forestry and the forest industry. The last would have been women work at the office in the local forest companies. The idea was to find five women in each group to have a reliable foundation for an analysis. This proved very difficult to accomplish however, due to the few women available in each occupation in Jönköping County.

participants could easily be identified as the only person in their area of occupation. Some have also spoken very openly with me and stepped out of their role, in trust that I will not give them away. Therefore, I will not give an extensive presentation but rather introduce the participants with given names and basic information as I move through the analysis. As I performed most of the interviews via phone call, I am not sure how the participants would want to be described, that is I don't know if I interview people of colour, transgender- or able-bodied persons or persons wearing religious attributes.

## Analysis and reflexivity

To make an analysis that is honest and transparent I will reflect on my own influence over the interviews and the analysis. As I mentioned in the introduction I grew up on a forest farm and experiences from this area of society has shaped my perception towards gender/sex and forestry in a rather bleak way. I expected there to be persistent sexism, a rather macho jargon but also both silent and loud resistance from women, because I have seen a lot of that as well. I worked hard not to let this show in the interviews and I missed some follow up question because I did not want to sound critical or uncomfortable. I strongly believe that unequal social structures should change from a feminist and intersectional perspective and this is also why I study gender studies. My background in gender studies set the physical and intellectual framework for the interview and one participant even joked about whether she had given the "right answer". This showed me how much the participants expectations of me could affect their response to my questions.

My interviews covered topics that could possibly be sensitive such as issues of harassment and #metoo. In my interviews I anticipated that identifying myself as a woman, who would understand and empathize with my participants' feelings, would create a positive and safe environment. The subject of gender equality and women in male dominated occupations is a political issue as it concerns changes in social and power structures, and personal as it concerns the individual work situation and could lead to personal difficulties. There is a risk that the participants may feel like they are being evaluated by me in comparison to gender equality as the outspoken norm for Sweden. My strategy for this was to foreground my countryside-forest-farming background through the invitations I sent out and in my presentation in the initial chat or telephone call. I told of my interest in forestry coming from real life experience in my upbringing in hopes that I would not be perceived by the participants as a kind of "bird-lover" descending on rare birds with large binoculars.

In the interviews I ask questions based the research referred above, as well as based on my interests in the subject of forestry and my own knowledge. But I recognize that my knowledge is also limited due to my outsider status to the forest industry, which might lead me to ask questions that are not

important to the participants or I may not follow up where I ought to. In addition, the participants may say something that I might interpret differently. Therefore, in the interviews I have deliberately downplayed the academic terminology to make the conversation more relaxed and accessible and to have a shared understanding. Thomsson urges that the interviewer does not shy away from contradictions in the material but to look closely at their own ideas and perceptions.<sup>84</sup>

To have a clear understanding of the interviews I transcribed them in full, with exceptions for interruptions (for example when a colleague walked in for a brief exchange with one participant). I tried to do this the same day or the day after and finished by taking notes of my general impressions of the interview. One interview was partially ruined due to technical problems with the recording. I can only hear my own questions and comments for the first 30 minutes, after this the participants voice enters the recording. Luckily, I took some notes while listening and my comments to her story helped me remember some of it but not all. I analyse the interview transcriptions through close reading of the interviews to find commonalities and shared themes. I focus on what is said in the interviews as well as what is left unsaid. After this I compared the interviews to find commonalities and differences between them all. Common themes and stories could be there because I asked for them and I try to keep this in mind when I compared my findings with the theories I use for this research.

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<sup>84</sup> (Thomsson 2010, s 90)

## 4. Working in forestry as a woman

In this chapter I outline and analyse the stories from my 8 participants to form an understanding of what it can be like to be a woman in forestry in Jönköping county. I will use the theories to make sense of the participants lived experience and foreground the norms and idea that can structure forestry in Jönköping County.

### The personal connection to the forest

I have sometimes heard working in forestry described as a lifestyle. At other times I have heard complaints about the sometimes-harsh conditions since there is no escaping the weather, and the travel distances are often long. As I am curious about how the participants view their work environment or at least the raw material that their work depends on I asked them to describe forestry and what the forest means to them. I also asked what they thought of the possibilities for underrepresented groups, such as immigrants or LGBTQI-persons, to start working in forestry.

**Karin**, who is around 60 years old, own and run a forest farm with her husband. She says the forest is her big interest that she shares with her husband. *“It means a lot to me. To develop one’s own forest, I wouldn’t want to work in someone else’s forest but to follow, from planting, clearing and felling. To follow the forest all that time, that is interesting to me.”* Karin say they have passed on their interest and all their children, daughters and a son, own or run some amount of forest. **Beatrice**, who is in her late 20’s and works as a buyer at a forest company, describes her background in the countryside with the forest around the corner. *“Grandpa taught me what should be felled and what should be cleared, and I was around five years old. The forest is what we live for in my family (...) This is a lifestyle, you become a little ‘nuts’ when you work with forest.”* **Victoria**, a woman in her thirties who works as a timber measurer, tell me that she grew up on a farm with dairy cows and forest farming. *“It is the future I would say! It is very rewarding; the forest is amazing since it is renewable. You are part of a cycle, it’s pretty cool that as a forest owner you cut down trees that are a hundred years old, and plant new ones. I will never see them as big as the ones we felled but I get to follow them for a long time.”* **Sara**, who is in her mid-forties and oversees timber revisions at a forest company, describe her love for her work; *“I don’t care if it rains or the sun shines, its lovely. I get my dose of vitamin D every day, and there are wonderful people in forestry.”* **Cecilia** has just finished her forestry education. *“I was always interested in nature, forest and biology. But then I got interested in forest machines, I thought they where cool, maybe I could drive one of those (...) There is a great sense of community, it’s very cosy in a way.”* These quotes show that there is a deep sense of connection to the forest, both a personal feeling and a professional fascination for this environment, and they use it in making sense of their own place in the industry. Some of the participants did not express a personal opinion

about the forest. They say they might have gotten their job more or less by accident and described it as a job, but as I perceived it, with a tone of pride and interest in the job.

I wanted to investigate whether the participants think working in forestry can be learned or if a personal “connection” to the forest is perceived as necessary. For example, is it necessary to grow up in the country side or on a forest farm? **Beatrice** say that *“There are very few who doesn’t come from a forest farm, I could name some who come from a city and choose a forest path, but they are very few.”* But she adds that she thinks everyone is well received and taken care of in the forestry, as long as you know what you’re doing. **Karin** thinks a personal connection is a good thing, but she says she doesn’t think it is necessary. With the right training anyone can learn.

The participants shared many different thoughts and impressions of forestry when we discussed the possibilities for immigrants to start working in forestry. I argue that some of these thoughts recreate a sense of authenticity and belonging, who can be an authentic forestry worker and owner, and likewise of who cannot. *“I don’t think it’s much of a problem. (...) We are a little bit special with our family forest farming but a person from a big city in Sweden knows as little of family forest farming as someone from another country”* say **Victoria**. But she thinks that for LGBTQI-persons it might be more difficult to begin with. *“The is to some extent a macho culture and quite a few forest owners who are... Well if you consider the age range for those who owns forest they are pretty old and that might be a problem. They are not very allowing and maybe not very well-read, about LGBTQI.”* **Maria**, who is a woman in her fifties and work at a public agency say that we are far away from immigrants working in forestry to any large extent. *“It is a bigger problem that we have a low proportion of immigrants (...) What little understanding I have of this is that they (recently arrived immigrants) think forestry is strange and they don’t bring with them what a Swedish person has or use to have. To walk in the forest and pick berries and mushrooms”*.<sup>85</sup> **Maria** mentions that a lot of Swedish youth have really low forest competence as well. In that way immigrants are not so different *“but to take the step and enter the forest might be longer and to find the love of the forest that many here have.”* But she thinks there wouldn’t be a problem for gay or lesbian persons to work in forestry *“I don’t get any ideas like that from anyone at all. Well someone might have a jargon about it but not in a homophobic way. (...) But for transgender people, I don’t think we have become that modern”*. **Beatrice** say her company have a lot of people with foreign background employed in the forest.

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<sup>85</sup> For the benefit of the reader I will explain the Swedish “Allemansrätten”, translated into “Right of public access”. The right of public access gives everyone access to Swedens nature, independently of whether you own land or not. Everyone has the right to for example walk, paddle a kayak, go climbing or picking berries, flowers and go camping in the forest. But there are also obligations, best summed up as “don’t disturb, don’t destroy”. The right of public access in Sweden is based in customary law as well as legislation. (Naturvårdsverket - Swedish Environmental Protection Agency u.d.)

*“When people (from Sweden) don’t want to work in forestry there are many from the Baltic countries willing to come here. But then you need to have a forest interest to begin with. But I don’t see anything negative with this and not the forest industry either, because this is being discussed a lot right now.”* These conversations indicate to me that while there are different views on inclusivity for immigrants and LGBTQI-persons in forestry, there is a general sense that the present situation in forestry is not open and welcoming. In line with Rönnblom and Sandberg I argue that Marias expression of forestry not being modern enough for transgender people show how the idea of modernity is connected to ideas of gender equality and inclusivity. Rönnblom and Sandberg argue that the idea of modernity often is connected to the idea of urbanity, or the centre. In the same way the idea of un-modernity or conservatism relates to the idea of the countryside or periphery.<sup>86</sup> This help me make sense of Marias expression, as if forestry has not yet arrived at a modern, gender equal and inclusive idea.

Along the same line, **Cecilia** suggested that she perceives a lot of *“hateful thoughts about gay, queer or transgender persons, both at school and throughout forestry one hears people express such sentiments. Like, it’s simply not right. To be a person like that and start a forestry education one would need to be very very very strong.”* Her view of the possibilities for immigrants to work in forestry was equally bleak. *“The jargon is the same about immigrants, that they don’t belong here, they can’t do this, and they are not as good as us, which I think is very sad because I’m sure they would do a very good job in the forest. I know several who train (newly arrived) people to clear and to handle a chainsaw, but when it comes to the felling machine, I think people would have a hard time accepting that.”* I ask if the big heavy felling machine can be viewed as a kind of territory, a symbol for what is mine, not yours? Cecilia agrees, she say it is a symbol for manliness. To follow McDowell’s research, I argue that construction of the forest machine different from other parts of forestry work, demanding a (masculine) man to handle it creates the machine as a symbol of manliness. McDowell explains how such kind of preservation of male domination, creates a gendering of skills, and to insist that one set of skill is superior to another makes it valued higher. McDowell also argue that this kind of claims make it more difficult for women to become successful.<sup>87</sup>

**Sara** is convinced that immigrants could well work in forestry, at least with her employer, as long as they have the right knowledge or are willing to learn. She says the problem is that many who has come to Sweden recently can’t discern between a fir- and a pine-tree. *“It’s possible to employ a timber measurer from Sweden because they’ve grown up with our pine-forests (...) I don’t think it’s*

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<sup>86</sup> (Rönnblom och Sandberg 2015, s 59)

<sup>87</sup> (McDowell 1999, s 141-144)

*that simple, in some ways forestry is a feeling, not an occupation. You get a feeling that in some way, it becomes Swedish, because forestry is so big in Sweden and one who has grown up here sees the point of it.*” Sara’s understanding of this occupation is shaped by a special understanding of the land and the forest which ends up being exclusionary. I ask Sara what she thinks of the possibilities for persons with an LGBTQI-identity to start working in forestry. *“Unfortunately, it’s a bit old-fashioned compared to other industries. (...) A former co-worker was homosexual, and he became extremely denigrated by the truck drivers. Not to his face but when he wasn’t there it was constantly alluded to. (...) Prejudice in forestry are greater than elsewhere, that’s my feeling”* say Sara. **Sofia** is in her late twenties and works at a saw mill. She says she would not have any problems working with a transgender or queer person but *“many of the older men at my job would not accept it, unfortunately (...) they have a hard time adapting. There would be a lot of talk behind the back.”* **Agnes** works at a saw mill and is in her mid-twenties. She shares the sentiment that it would be problematic for an LGBTQI-person to start working in forestry. *“It’s sad really, but that’s the way it is. Some chauvinists might not handle that people are different. (...) I don’t care where the person is from or what they do as long as they don’t harm anyone (...) but few men share this sentiment.”* But Agnes think it would not be too difficult for people with a background other than Swedish to work in forestry, *“I hope they would be treated well”* she says.

The different experiences expressed by the participants give me an insight into the patterns of acceptance and resistance towards minority groups entering forestry. In Sara and Maria’s stories I see how a sense of Swedishness and belonging appear. I argue that the idea that people from Sweden share a special understanding of the forest, which immigrants cannot learn, constructs an essentialist understanding of what it means to be Swedish. It creates a sense of inclusion for oneself into the Swedish majority group, and exclusion of persons perceived as different, such as people of colour or immigrants, which upholds the domination and implicit authenticity of white Swedish people in forestry. Furthermore, I argue that the ideas expressed by the participants about how LGBTQI-persons would be received in forestry, reveal the centrality of heteronormative white masculinity to the understanding of forestry and the “true forestry worker.”

I continue along the line of including minority groups, to discuss what some of the participants said about women in the forestry work force. **Sara** raises the issue when she tells me of how she started working in forestry. Her work life background was not in forestry but in commercial trade. In 2005 and 2007 there were two hard winter storms, called ‘Gudrun’ and ‘Per’, that flattened the forests in

the south of Sweden.<sup>88</sup> Soon after, Sara was asked to start working in the forest industry because of the acute lack of labour power. Two more participants tell me that they perceive a change going on in forestry, that women have been coming into the occupation to a larger extent than before.

On a different note, some participants do not share exclusionary ideas of who can work in forestry. **Beatrice** say that *“Forestry is an open business area. There is a lot going on in forestry, in research, and forest owners are very open to that and I think to people coming there. It is a very pleasant group to work with (...) it is the individual and not the gender that matters.”* The idea expressed by Beatrice, as well as by some of the other participants, that gender is not an issue in forestry, as long as the person has the right competence, could be understood with help from research by Lidestav and Sjölander. The authors found that making gender a non-issue seemed to be joint interest between men and women, within the forestry discourse. They argue that for women in particular seemed to use this as a conscious strategy to be accepted in the field, to avoid a kind of ‘feminist stigma’.<sup>89</sup>

## Recreating gendered work structures

Everyday practices and behavior patterns constitute a significant way in which gender norms are maintained in society.

**Maria** thinks that to get along well in forestry *“you have to change your way of behaving, you follow the male norm. If you do that, there is no problem. I must say I have, I have become more masculine in my behaviour. (...) you can turn it on and off a bit, you need to take part in the male game, in the male behaviour and then it’s no problem. But it can be a problem if you don’t understand that game, then you don’t become understood.”* Maria’s words explain the centrality of masculinity as the normative code of behaviour in forestry. I interpreted Maria’s words to suggest that constantly relate to the masculine norm chafes a bit; that it becomes tiring and leads to resentment. And Maria followed up to agree with me and said that it actually chafes so much women give up and leave the occupation. *“The forest owners expect a male game and male rules.”* Sometimes when she was younger forest owners did not take her seriously, she almost had to tap their back to get their attention. In line with Butler and Puwar, I argue that the option of turning a masculine behaviour on and off is a strategy to blend in and become accepted. Puwar explain that when women’s bodies are out of place, they are put in the spotlight. That spotlight puts women under a form of super

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<sup>88</sup> For the benefit of the reader I want to illuminate the extent of damage caused. In January 2005, a storm called ‘Gudrun’ felled 75 million cubic meter forest. In 2007, a storm in January called ‘Per’ felled 12 million cubic meter forest. (Skogssverige u.d.)

<sup>89</sup> (Lidestav och Egan Sjölander 2007, s 358-359)



surveillance, where their behaviour is more closely examined than men's and any mistake is more likely to be noted. Based on Puwar I argue that it takes women longer to be heard and respected is central to exclusionary practices in forestry.<sup>90</sup>

In line with Maria's story, **Karin** tells me that her presence and work in the forest makes people turn their head, especially when she drives the forest forwarder. *"But to me it's only natural because I started driving a tractor when I was eight years old and have always been interested. I asked what these reactions could be like? "When I say what I do they go 'Oooh!' and ask how that works out or if it isn't hard. But Karin say she doesn't notice any resistance towards herself as a woman. "A lot is changing, many women work in the large forest companies, I don't think it's a big problem. I think it gets more accepted. A lot has happened in the last ten to fifteen years."* Similarly, **Beatrice** shares the experience that people become surprised to see a woman in the forest. *"There are a lot of members in their eighties, there has never been a woman in their forest. They often think it is fun and very positive. Every occupation is better off with a mix of people."* She explains that there are no special expectations on her as a woman. *"There is no distinction made, I do what everyone does."* Likewise, **Sofia** say that people outside of the workplace often become surprised when they learn about her occupation in an industry. *"Oh, how do you get along with that as a girl?"* I asked Sofia if, in her experience, difference has been made between her and male co-workers? She said *"Yes, for example if things need fixing or if something breaks, they don't turn to me to ask what's wrong. Instead they find a male co-worker and asks him instead of asking me, who might have given the exact same answer. So, it's like women don't really know, many thinks that, I notice that."*

**Sofia** adds another dimension of gender segregation within forestry. She describes that there are a few women in her department at the sawmill and one other department, but no woman works with the actual saw, only men. This implies a horizontal segregation within the occupation that separates women's tasks and men's task yet agien. I ask about the salary, and Sofia explains that the basic salary is the same, but the managers appoint additional responsibility to chosen employees and increase their salary accordingly. *"And there is no woman among them (...) but no woman has ever been asked to take on that, so basically men's salary is higher."* Sofia adds that these appointments are not known in advance and no-one applies for them, the manager chooses and so far, the manager has chosen men. There are no female managers that Sofia knows of she says. **Victoria** described when she and her husband met the timber buyer for the first time at their newly bought forest farm. *"I had to tell him a few things, my thoughts and ideas about things and that I knew what I was talking about, before he asked or listened to me at all (...) and he is hardly fifty years old. But I*

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<sup>90</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 92)

*immediately felt 'so, you brought the wife to the forest'.*" But after that initial meeting Victoria said the buyer treated them both as involved and knowledgeable. Victoria's and Sofia's experiences give me examples of how gender segregation in forestry can be preserved. The informal power structures that Sofia told of, where managers distribute power to other men, preserves sexism and discrimination in the work place. I argue in line with Follo et al, that forestry competence is not neutral, but loaded with value judgement.<sup>91</sup> The tacit norm of decision making that appear in the quotes above support the theory by Follo et al, that men have the right competence and men can make the necessary decisions, while women become understood as non-competent. Sofia and Victoria both have to prove or argue for their competence, as well as Agnes have too, which I will show below. Research by Andersson and Lidestav into women's forestry networks, show that this is a common experience among women in forestry. Their participants describe how *"forestry professionals primarily attempt to communicate with the husband/male partner in the family, even though they may not be involved in forest management or even own the forest."*<sup>92</sup>

On a different note from women turning heads, some of the student **Cecilia's** course mates are bothered by her presence she says, both of her wanting to drive a forest machine and of her wanting to be in the forest. *"When we practice driving the forest machines the other course mates often stand by and watch, and I've heard from some course mates that there is a lot of negative comments when I drive in particular, 'oh look, she doesn't do this or that'. One guy even said to me, 'women can't do anything', and that I am an idiot."* There are some teachers that appear to look the other way from this kind of behaviour Cecilia say, but she also gets support from the teachers closest to her. I asked her about safety and training during school hours, and Cecilia tells me there is a disparity in how the teachers regard safety when she practices felling trees, as opposed to when her male course mates does the same. *"With me its safety safety safety, it's very exact, but the guys could fell trees on each other and fell them so that they get stuck in another tree and that didn't matter at all (...) but I thought that was normal and think safety is important, but I noticed that they were treated differently."* These are examples of how the masculine norm continues to be reinforced through the gender practises in everyday life. Puwar show how women are suspected of lacking the relevant competence, which it is not expected to be embodied in a female body. Therefor women have to over-do their performance of these competences to make up for the suspected lack.<sup>93</sup> In addition, I want to highlight how the experience from educational institutions show us what we can expect

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<sup>91</sup> (Follo et al 2017, s 180)

<sup>92</sup> (E. Andersson 2016, s 41)

<sup>93</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 103)

from the rest of society when we start working. Therefore, I argue that it is vital to evaluate what norms are preserved by such educational institutions.

**Agnes** work-life experience is that of supportive co-workers, which she says is a relief. In a previous workplace she got bullied because of her gender but in her current workplace *“everyone is very supportive, no one makes a distinction about a girl (...) I might get a little more help in the workshop”* She doesn’t perceive different expectations towards herself. *“I think I have proven what I can do. Someone might have questioned if I can really drive that machine, but I told him I used to drive a much larger and then he apologised.”* Agnes also expresses how much the others enjoy having a girl around because it breaks the male dominance. *“It is very important, some say female only workplaces are yappie but its just the same with male ones. It’s important to break that off.”* I perceive this as an example of what Puwar calls space invaders.<sup>94</sup> I argue that through her presence as a woman, Agnes recreates the workplace atmosphere. The workspace is coded as an all-male area and Agnes’s body changes the code and understanding of this space. But it also reinforces the understanding of women and men as distinct groups with essential characteristics that are not interchangeable.

It appears to me that some of the participants have the idea that resistance towards gender equality and women’s presence in forestry must be spoken against, for example when Cecilia’s course mates say, ‘women shouldn’t be in forestry’. Mere jokes and questions appear to be taken as an ordinary part of conversations. Following Butler and Puwar’s theories, I argue that it is in everyday practices that masculine domination is created. Being confirmed or made invisible in a conversation, or not being taken seriously can be like a constantly looming threat/reality that could come down on you at any moment. I argue that the participants always need to relate to the male norm and adjust, adopt or give in to it when it reveals itself through such everyday actions such as being ignored or listened to. Puwar explains that when the hitherto outsiders comes in proximity to the ‘inside proper’, the somatic norm; *“while they now exist on the inside, they still do not have the undisputed right to occupy the space.”*<sup>95</sup> I argue that experiences such as Sofia and Victoria’s physically reveal the dispute of whether or not, women’s presence in forestry is acceptable. But Agnes positive experience of helpful co-workers become a different embodiment of the perception of difference between women and men. I understand the experiences outlined above in light of Puwar’s description of social spaces, which she describes as *“they are not blank and open for any body to occupy. There is a connection between bodies and space, which is built, repeated and contested over time.”*<sup>96</sup> I argue

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<sup>94</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 7)

<sup>95</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 1)

<sup>96</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 8)

that women who work in forestry are perceived as a threat by their male co-workers, because women's bodies visibly and materially change the conditions for the occupation. By disputing women's capacity and competence men recreates themselves as the proper forestry worker with undisputed and exclusionary rights.

In line with the examples in Linda McDowell's research, I perceive in the quotes above what McDowell calls *"a struggle for the women to deal with sexist attitudes from their male co-workers."*<sup>97</sup> McDowell argues that *"organizations reflect masculine values and men's power, permeating all aspects of the workplace in often taken-for-granted-ways."*<sup>98</sup> The logic behind the reasoning of what women should or shouldn't do is based on an essentialist presumption about the difference between the sexes. As I argued above, forestry competence is not perceived as neutral but something that is deeply connected with masculinity. The quotations above show how the participants need to relate to this in their everyday work life.

### Gendered work structures supporting forestry production

In this section I will foreground the supporting structures I discern as described by the social reproduction theory. This helps me understand the underlying social structures that enable forestry production. Some of my interviews suggest that working in the forest can be a lonely and time-consuming occupation. **Cecilia**, a student in forestry, told me that many of the forest machine drivers she met during her school practice placement seemed to be rather lonely. She said some did not have family and many worked long days. She started her forestry education because she wanted to drive a forest harvester, but she told me she changed her mind. *"I want to be a buyer or a teacher (...) I could work as a forest machine driver but not for long. (...) You get the idea that it is very lonely, they don't live with anyone, they work like all day until very late, only to make ends meet. I feel that there is a strong pressure, some may not be like that, but many are like, you need to drive, drive, drive, get it out. I don't like that pressure, many get stressed."* I argue in line with the social reproduction theory that the focus on production can only take place within a context of reproductive support from one's family.<sup>99</sup> When Cecilia and her course mates drive forest machines in the woods, the school day is often much longer than usual, they start early and are told to work until their part is done. Before such a day the teachers used to tell the whole class to prepare a lunch to bring along; "it's your responsibility". But Cecilia says the other students did not make any food. *"Just because I'm*

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<sup>97</sup> (McDowell 1999, s 143)

<sup>98</sup> (McDowell 1999, s 136)

<sup>99</sup> (Battacharya 2013)

*a girl I must look out for the boys. From the beginning I made the food baskets for us before we went out, but after a while I thought, 'I don't care about this anymore', I don't eat any food anyway when we're out so I just; 'you have to do this yourselves'. I wanted to be kind at first, I realised that if I didn't make lunch there wouldn't be any. But then I perceived the pattern, that the boys used it."*

Following Battacharya I argue that this quote show how those aspects of everyday life, that are not consciously decided still continues to happen in line with habits that are determined based on gendered power structures.<sup>100</sup> In this case, the teacher's disinclination to make an equal structure where responsibility is shared, substantiated the male habit of relying on female support. The structure was revealed and contested only when Cecilia stopped making lunch for her course mates.

Those of my participants that work shifts tell me of the sometimes problematic combination of worktime and family life. **Agnes** works shifts on a saw mill and lives with her boyfriend, who works long days at their farm. I ask if she plans to take part in the running of their forest, but she doesn't think that will be the case. *"I might help out (...) but I have my job and when I come home I clean and cook because he works such long days (...) I'd rather spend time with him than ask him to do those tasks"* Agnes tells me. Since I know from my personal experience that it is difficult to make life on a farm gender equal in terms of work responsibility, I confirm Agnes way of thinking in our conversation. But I also notice how these two male dominated jobs, the saw mill and farming, depend on a woman doing the house work, and I wondered where the time was for Agnes to rest and recover? According to the social reproduction theory, the worker needs to regenerate outside of the work place. The regeneration includes aspects such as resting, eating and recovering, to make the worker able to go to work.<sup>101</sup> In line with this, in our conversations Agnes expressed some worry about the prospect of having children. *"I think it would be easier if I worked daytime. I hope they will be able to help me (at work), that I can work daytime when I have children. (...) A colleague of mine, a man, sometimes take time off to care for sick children, but we solve that extra work. One might have to work extra hours or go home and come back and work some more (to cover for his absence)."*

Similarly, **Victoria** who has two children, tell me she thinks it's going to be a problem for her to work full time on shift with children in day care, especially since she receives her schedule only a week ahead. *"I often work every other week morning or evening, sometimes daytime. I usually don't get two evening-weeks in a row (...) there is seldom flexible worktime since I work in production and it's strict time-control there."* I ask if she thinks the possibility of combining work with family life will affect how she works in the future? *"I have a very good dialogue with my boss (...) but if that wasn't the case it would be problematic."* Victoria's story shows how her family life depend on a single

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<sup>100</sup> (Battacharya 2013)

<sup>101</sup> (Battacharya 2013)

person, the understanding manager. But I argue that this in turn reveal the superior interest of production, because it appears as though the manager is lenient, otherwise a more difficult work situation would require additional support structure at home.

Likewise, **Sara's** story reveals how she adapted her private life to the demands of her work. She used to work shifts where she said work hours were in-flexible. During those years she never went to the dentist or made an appointment at a hairdresser. She says an appointment with the dentist would cause disruption throughout the work chain. When her children got sick, she had to take a full day off and that could be covered by someone else, but she could not be away just a few hours. Her husband stayed home with the children as well, and Sara says her boss was understanding. *"But it was stressful to not be able to make appointments. (In case of an appointment) you became a nuisance at work, 'you're going to the dentist, what are you thinking? You're supposed to work from 6am to 2pm and you have an appointment at 10am, who will cover for you?' So I tried to avoid those situations to be smooth."* In a similar way **Sofia** tells me about a female friend at work and her boyfriend, who both work every other shift, so they hardly see each other. Is it possible to change shift or work daytime I ask? *"The managers don't really want that, but it should be possible. But it's best for them if you work shift."* These quotes reveal how the focus on production, and pressure on forestry workers to work long hours, demands a kind of ground service at home, that can handle family needs and everything else apart from work. Since forestry has been shaped by and for men the burden of reproductive labour, which is a support system that includes domestic labour is put on women. Such division of labour and support system as described by Östlund and Rautio appears to be still in place, otherwise the forest industry could not focus on production in the demanding way I have heard of from my participants.

Most of the unpaid work at home as well as emotional support that my participants describe above, as when Sara foregoes her own needs for the benefit of the productions process, is performed by women as unpaid and invisibilized domestic workers. Battacharya argues that the capitalist social system needs the reproductive work to be continually performed. Therefore, it is in the interests of capitalism as a system to prevent any broad changes in gender relations, because real changes to gender will ultimately affect profits. The social reproduction theory provides an explanatory framework to understanding the foundation for the gendered work-patterns that have established forestry as a masculine job and make sense of the conditions that shapes women's lived experiences in forestry.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> (Battacharya 2013)

## Matter that matters

Those who work in forestry require special equipment, for example customized hardy work clothes and special shoes. In my interviews, almost all participants agreed a lot needs to change in this area. Clothes and shoe-makers reinforce the male norm when they only provide clothes in sizes and shapes for a male standard body. This also affects smaller men to some extent, but it sends a clear message about who is expected to work in forestry, like a distant invisible resistance. *“There are only male clothes, the gloves are like size ten and like, everything is too big for me (...) I don’t even think there are female felling clothes, not even trousers. I have told my teachers they need to get this (...) all the time one gets reminded that you’re not supposed to be here”* says **Cecilia. Agnes**, who work at a sawmill, tells a similar story *“the trousers are always too long (...) and the machines are a bit, well the newest suits me rather well, but I always bring a pillow to use behind my back to get a little more forward.”* **Sofia** thinks the clothes are well adapted but not for shorter people and many women are shorter than the men she says. *“It’s tricky around the machinery, I sometimes get to crawl or climb and it’s not easy when the clothes don’t fit.”* **Beatrice**, a buyer at a large forest company, say the clothes have become much better in recent years. She explains that her company uses a supplier with a lot of clothes for women to choose from, *“But overall I think they have some kind of male-shaped fit. They are not made for hips or bum, so they don’t fit well. There is still some work to be done there.”* In these quotes I perceive a feeling of frustration over not having one’s ability and body confirmation as an important part of forestry. As if the women are an anomaly that can be ignored by the clothing producers.

Dressing rooms and toilets are areas where the male norm creates a material encumbrance for female workers. **Sara** laughingly tells me that when she works on location in the forest she pees behind a shrub, several of the other participants answer likewise. **Victoria** measures timber in several different facilities. She says some places are well equipped but in other places she needs to walk a few hundred meters to a toilet, which might be in an office area or in the break room where people are sitting. *“And you can’t leave production, so you must do it on the break. So you don’t use the toilet that often, and being pregnant in the seventh or eight month was not very smooth when I had to use the toilet. There is a lot to wish for.”* I ask how the participants handle their period under these circumstances and one say it is tricky. **Cecilia** mentions that this may affect people’s choice of occupation. *“They might think that no, I won’t be able to handle this (...) It’s hard to tell one’s employer because that’s often a guy and they don’t understand you know”* Cecilia say that a cabin would be a good thing for everyone working in forestry. *“Most would want a toilet. I think many men want that too, a cabin to go to when it’s cold outside. It’s nice to leave the machine as well, not sit there and eat.”* The quotations above describe what the physical work situation can be like for

women in forestry and I observe the same feeling I mentioned above, of frustration about the lack of work place facilities for women.

The lack of dressing rooms is a similar part of work life conditions. This of course affects anyone who work on location in the forest, male, female and others. In the industry the lack of dressing rooms for women signals a lack of consciousness from the leadership of basic power structures between men and women. **Victoria** says one in fifteen facilities have dressing rooms. **Sofia** tells me her workplace was refurbished a year ago and there is now a dressing room for women. *“But before that there was only one big room, so I changed at home. So, it was about time they fixed that”* I asked her how long women have worked there and Sofia said: *“well, its fourteen years now, so it was about time”* and she laughs. These stories show me that women need to push for the change that will enable them to have a comfortable workplace. Women’s resistance to the male norm makes that norm visible in ways that appear to be provoking for men or managers. Earlier in the interview, Sofia told me of how one of her bosses was heard saying they didn’t want to employ women, because *“women were whining”*. She didn’t know exactly what he was referring to, but we both thought demanding separate dressing rooms might explain this opinion. It is speculation of course but the sexism is still there, men get to change and shower at work, but women don’t unless they do it with their male co-workers.

An additional part of material limitations for women in forestry is machinery. According to the Forest Strategy the machinery is technically advanced, but I wonder if the interior is adapted for different kinds of bodies?<sup>103</sup> **Karin** tells me that she drives a forest forwarder which she is pleased with.<sup>104</sup> The interior is adaptable to her needs she explains. **Cecilia** on the other hand, describes herself as short and say it is difficult to adapt the seat and controls to suit a short body. When the seat is set low, the spring system becomes less absorbing of the forest machines heavy movements, and Cecilia say she sometimes bounces off the seat. **Agnes** share a similar experience which I quoted above. She says she is short and always bring a pillow to put behind her back, to sit better at the timber measuring station. **Victoria** describes similar experiences of un-ergonomic seats, in the different timber measuring stations she works in. She tells me that most stations were built in the 1970s, and not much has changed since. But some stations have been refurbished lately, and she say she is pleased with how they turned out.

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<sup>103</sup> (Länsstyrelsen Jönköpings län u.d., s 13, 35)

<sup>104</sup> The forest forwarder gathers the felled trees and lifts them onto an attached trailer. A forest harvester fells the tree, de-branches it and cut the trunk in equally long pieces.



Research by McDowell help to shed some light on the experiences of material workplace limitations. Mc Dowell show that organizations are themselves embedded with gendered meanings and structures, by the social relations of sexuality. Male embodiment and masculine sexuality, McDowell argues, structures the work place in often taken-for-granted ways.<sup>105</sup> The quotes above support this theory by showing an unwillingness from the companies to acknowledge the different needs of different persons and bodies. When work place structures implicitly reinforce male domination through lack of dressing rooms and work clothes, the experience of women working there are continually ignored and invizibilised.

### How is 'gender equality' understood in forestry?

In this section I will discuss how the participants appear to understand what gender equality means and highlight the resistance or acceptance for this term and affirmative actions.

I ask all participants if they know if their employer or the forest industry carries out any gender equality work or affirmative actions. **Victoria** laughs at my question *"Of course they do, for example when recruiting they encourage everyone to apply, people with diversified backgrounds, and that they have gender equality plans and such things. But there is no-one, I can't name anyone who actively works with it, that I can notice among the supervisors or my co-workers."* I ask what she thinks the purpose of the gender equality work is? *"Since there are so many men in the whole business, I suppose their purpose is to get more women into the arena as well."* I argue that this quote reveals a lack of understanding in the organizations of the purpose of gender equality and gendered work place structures. **Cecilia** tells me that during her education, she has not heard of any gender equality measures from the forest companies. Several forest companies have held information days at her school, but none of them mentioned their gender equality work. She says it would be positive to hear about any gender equality program, to know of their goals. *"Something that shows that they care, but I haven't heard anything."*<sup>106</sup> The forest companies hold information days at schools to encourage students to come and work for them. I argue that avoiding the subject of gender equality, makes the actual intent of the affirmative actions in recruitment processes questionable, if not hypocritical.

Recruitment also appear in **Maria's** reflections on gender equality in the public agency. She says there are many women in the agency, but its' not fifty fifty. *"But that is not our aim since this is not*

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<sup>105</sup> (McDowell 1999, s 138)

<sup>106</sup> For the benefit of the reader I want to mention that The Northern Forest Owners association shared in the yearly Gender Equality Prize in 2016. (Forum Jämställdhet /Forum Gender Equality u.d.)

*the case in higher forestry educations either. We cannot recruit more women than is available, that would be wrong in the opposite direction.*" She says there are many women in leading positions and they understand the problem with gender inequality. She said that at one point the director sent out information about master suppression techniques to everyone in the agency *"and the others (the men) just, 'but why did we get this, what does this mean?' And we (the women) were just like; 'oh my god, you don't see anything!'"* Maria said that the men never *"hit the wall"* in the same way a woman does when she reaches the glass ceiling or transcends a gender norm. During a time, the agency's representatives were urged by management to use affirmative measures towards female forest owners. *"If there is a man and a woman present, you should address the woman they told us.* Maria said that they did but then the woman always said *"no, talk to my husband, no I don't know anything about this' and then she referred to the man or an agent. Even if she owned 100% of the forest! Very sad."* Maria's story reveals an understanding in the agency's leadership of how power structures can work. There appears to be a consciousness of the importance of language and how it creates and preserves norms and gender structures. Referring to similar affirmative action plans, Alnebratt and Rönnblom, and Andersson and Lidestav's research of gender equality strategies, show that a critical understanding of power structures is often lost in gender equality work in both public institutions and civil society.<sup>107</sup>

Along a different line of gender equality, the Forest Strategy bring up the gender pay gap as a priority area for gender equality measures. When I ask the participants about salaries, some say that there is little or no difference, some brush the issue aside. **Agnes** says she asked about the salaries when she started working at the sawmill, but the answer was a firm assurance that there was no difference between men and women and there shouldn't be. **Victoria** tells me that no-one gets individual salaries by her employer, there are five steps and advancement is strict. Previous work life-experience might grant a starting salary at level two or three but not above that. *"I even know of two person who left and went back to driving forest machine even though they didn't like the loneliness, because of the salaries."* None of my participants raised salaries as a matter of concern. Not even **Sofia**, who's story I brought up earlier of excluding practices in forestry. Sofia's manager only selected men for additional responsibility, which brought them additional pay raise, but Sofia did not describe this as a gendered pay gap to me. I argue that the disinclination to acknowledge the gender pay gap acts as a preservation of the same gap, but also shields women from engaging in a fight over un-equal work conditions.

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<sup>107</sup> (Alnebratt 2016), (E. Andersson 2016)

On the contrary, gender equality is described by some participants as the number of women employed in the forest industry or working in the forest. Some participants mention that forest industries aim for 20-30% female employees, as this is the number of female students in higher forestry education in Sweden today.<sup>108</sup> **Maria** say the public agency aim for 30 % female employees, and **Beatrice** say her forest company aim for 20%. She clarifies that this include other gender identities as well. This supports Puwar's theory, that women become representatives of their gender, which in turn consolidates the gender binary. According to Puwar, the expectation that women should and could shift the power structures of male encoded area simply by entering that area appears unrealistic.<sup>109</sup> Following Puwar, I argue that the invisible power structures that helped build the organization are still operating without being challenged in the forestry industry as well. Such limited approach to gender equality follows the lines of Rönnblom and Sandberg's analysis of the gender equality strategy for the city of Kiruna. The equality strategy construct women as agents of change simply through their inclusion in the city and in the mining occupation. Rönnblom and Sandberg argue that the integrated conflicts in gender-inequality, and power discrepancies between women and men remain hidden in this view of gender equality.<sup>110</sup> Following these theories, I argue that implementing only percentage-based affirmative actions for recruitments in forestry, reinforces beliefs that women and men are essentially different and fail to address the root causes of gender inequality.

When the participants discuss who reinforces gender-inequality, some mention older men as carrier of "old values" where women's competence is less valued or disregarded. Those older men are described as the main carrier of values that resist women's entry into the forest. Some mention older forest owners as the main problem and not the men working in the forest companies or industry. In two interviews the participants tell me that time will inevitably change this, and it is a matter of generation. **Beatrice** wish for forestry knowledge to be a greater part of elementary school as a way of changing the gender structures in forest ownership. *"The forest owners we have today might have grown up in a society where girls played with dolls and the father would rather go hunting with the son than the daughter (...) but as time goes by, more will happen in this area."* But **Beatrice** also say that she is very well received by the forest owners and they are very pleased with her work contributions. I think it is important to reflect on the argument that older men, or a particular group

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<sup>108</sup> (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 6) The first female student in Sweden with a master's degree in forestry graduated from the Royal College of Forestry in 1966 and the numbers continued to be low through the 70s and 80s. During the 1990s the forestry went through changes in terms of gender when more women started to study and work in the occupation.

<sup>109</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 105)

<sup>110</sup> (Rönnblom och Sandberg 2015, s 73-75)

such as forest owners, are described as the main problem with gender inequality? What understanding of young men does that create, and what about older and younger women? Where does this leave their agency in society structures? Johansson et al, suggested that by *“assigning the problem of gender inequality in forestry not to men in general, but to a specific group of men (...) helps sustain gendered and organizational hierarchies.”*<sup>111</sup> I argue that the quotes above contribute to a similar discourse which waves accountability for institutions and individuals. In this case, “old values” and “older men” are foregrounded as a façade behind which sexism and gender inequality in forestry hidden. If one group of men are described as problematic but another isn’t because of their age, it also becomes more difficult to detect and call out sexist behaviour in the group you did not expect it from.<sup>112</sup>

A similar way of avoiding gender inequality appears when some of the participants describe affirmative actions as unfair and counterproductive to the gender-equality idea. To hold a forestry education for women only as an affirmative action, is described by **Karin** as gender-unequal. Karin, who co-runs her own forest farm, say *“I think it’s better if we are together with the men. I think it’s easy for us women to feel that we don’t know as much as the men, but I don’t think it’s like that. (...) There are so many men who doesn’t know much either. At one point I said this in a course I took, that I think it’s a bit silly to hold a course for women only, because we know as much as the men really. Many of us at least.”* Research by Johansson et al, argue that when people try to make gender equality and affirmative actions irrelevant, they effectively express that gender equality interventions introduce the issue of gender into otherwise gender-neutral organizations.<sup>113</sup>

Research by Andersson and Lidestav found that women benefit from networking with other women, and some forest companies kept their own networks for women.<sup>114</sup> Some also discontinued the networks arguing that it was discriminatory to benefit one group but not the other. No one of my participants are a member of a network and some have not heard of any. **Sofia**, who co-runs a forest farm with her husband, say she might want to join one when the children are more grown, right now she doesn’t have the time. **Beatrice’s** employer, the forest company, does not run a network specifically for women, which she says is quite all right. *“I am a bit against making women a special group. I believe in mixing men and women. Is it gender equal if you have only women or only men in a group? It’s not like we have special men’s meetings.”* She adds that the company has arranged forest

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<sup>111</sup> (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 13)

<sup>112</sup> Johansson et al, argue that the construction of older men as problematic and younger men as unproblematic point to hierarchies between men in forestry, which would be an important intersection of gender, age and class, to take into account in further research. (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 15)

<sup>113</sup> (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 12)

<sup>114</sup> (E. Andersson 2016)

information evenings for women, but participation has been low. The United Nations report, “Time for Action” show that arguments like these are based on the false presumption that an ‘equal opportunity’ is per se gender neutral, anyone who wants to, has the same access to it.<sup>115</sup> I argue that my participants understanding of affirmative measures, (such as female networks or women only courses) as unnecessary or as a confirmation that women know less or need extra support because of this, obscures the gendered structures that formed society and forestry.

## Sexism, representation and harassment

The recent #metoo-call from forestry told of persisting sexism and harassment. In my interviews, I wanted to hear if the participants have experienced some kind of harassment. In addition to this, I am curious of how they are received and treated as women at the workplace or in relation to their experience of harassment.

When **Victoria** started working at the saw mill she was well received she say, and one co-worker happily exclaimed *“but this is great, with a woman here it might suddenly be fun to go to work”*. But at one point she also got to hear that *“it’s great to have a woman here, now we might get some curtains again”*, an expectation Victoria say she quickly dismissed. Other than that, someone might have called her sweetheart (*lilla gumman*) but she says she has always been well treated. There is also a clear understanding from management that harassments might take place Victoria say. An incident revealed by an employment survey was immediately dealt with and follow up with information to all employees of routines for reporting incidents. Likewise, **Maria** mentions that the #metoo-calls in 2017 led to an internal inquiry at the agency, to check for experiences of harassment. Then she laughs and say *“but none of us could think of any! My boss asked me, but I couldn’t think of any. Can’t I see it? And I thought there’s got to be something, statistically there has to, we are a large public agency.”* She says that as a woman she is expected to experience harassment, because her boss asks her about this and she jokingly answers *“No, still nothing.”* Maria also told me of one time when she clearly felt she was given a task only because she was a woman. Soon after starting her new job at the public agency, she was asked to lead an information day for children. When she protested that she didn’t even have children and knew nothing about pedagogy, but all her male colleagues had children and knew more, her boss laughed in an embarrassed way and apologized. These quotes show the seemingly harmless way in which gendered expectations on women can be a part of everyday life.

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<sup>115</sup> (FAO 2006, s 21)

On a more forceful note, **Sofia** tells me of the sexist comments she has received at work. *“Well it’s not physical in any way but there are a lot of comments. Girls should be in the kitchen, and (they should) be there for their men. They say it a bit jokingly, but I don’t think it’s a joke every time.”* What would happen if you object, I asked her. *“I contradict them. And then they get a bit, if you question them about what they mean, then they don’t really want to answer because then it was just a joke. (...) But I don’t stay quiet!”* I ask if she knows of any support structure within the company, but the only option would be the workers union *“or maybe the CEO, but I don’t know what he would do about it.”* Sofia’s experience reveals to me how exposed a woman’s work life situation can be, with sexist comments from co-workers and no visible support lines from management.

An even more forceful story was shared by **Cecilia**. *“I have experienced some harassment. A lot lately when I have been alone with some of the boys without a teacher, I have been called stupid and an idiot. I didn’t feel harassed, but I felt sad, but above all I felt scared. I told the teacher that I was afraid of some of the boys in my class, because they get so very violent when they get angry and I don’t think I should have to be scared all the time.”* Cecilia says her teacher went to the principal, and there were stern measures taken against one student. When I ask Cecilia about #metoo, she says her class *“hates feminists, as if they’re scared of the truth (...) they say; ‘feminists are idiots and #metoo is f\*\*\*\*d up, like they lie and make it up’. So I never discussed this in class, it wouldn’t be a discussion. I haven’t even heard the teachers mention it, which I think is sad.”* Cecilia’s experience of her course mate’s behaviour was rather upsetting for me to hear, and I told her so. She said that if she were to bring the subject up in class, she would get the whole class against her. But she also says she feels supported by her closest teachers. To me as an outsider, there appears to be a fear among school staff to talk about harassment and #metoo. Out of curiosity I ask what Cecilia thinks would happen if a boy or man at school, went against this masculine and sexist jargon and behaviour and expressed support for feminism and #metoo? She says they would probably be called meek, or gay. *“Like, you’re so foolish, are you a girl or what?”* When Cecilia’s course mates silence her, (and any others who might disagree with them) and denigrates girls and feminists, I argue that they recreate what Puwar calls ‘a shared sense of masculinity’.<sup>116</sup> Puwar explain that men talk about women in sexual terms among themselves, to exercise control over women and reinforce this sense of shared manliness. Cecilia says she has met with people who doesn’t want to shake her hand and doesn’t look at her in a group. Cecilia also tell me that some teachers address the class with “Hello guys”, and kept referring to the class as ‘guys’, which make her feel excluded she says.

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<sup>116</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 87)

On the contrary, some of my participants do not share the experience of harassment at all. **Agnes** explains that she has never been exposed to harassment *“and when there is joking it is moderate. Some might think that in male workplaces there is a lot of sexism, but it is, to a certain extent you see. I am like that as well, and joke about those things but it doesn’t get out of hand, its always on a normal level.”* I argue that playing along with sexist behaviour can be understood both as an adaptation to the masculine norm, and a confirmation as it also preserves the same structures. Likewise, **Beatrice** says she has not experienced any harassment. *“But there is always that percentage with an old way of thinking, that one must be a man to work in the forest. They are there, but they are so few that one shakes it off when 300 others are so good. But when you find one of those, I suppose that’s what’s happened in that #metoo-group.”* I argue that Beatrice story creates an understanding of harassment and badly-behaved men as an exception and not the norm. To dismiss harassment conceals the aggressive masculine heteronorm in society, which #metoo challenges. This quote show how women can be a part of reproducing gender-inequality as well as men.

In a similar manner, **Sara** argues that #metoo should also be turned the other way around, that the attention for #metoo might have become too one-sided. *“The sad part is that when I (meet men at work in the forest) there are those I have met a few times, we might not hug but you put your hand one each other’s shoulder and ask how they are. They have said ‘oh maybe I shouldn’t do that anymore, you might want to report me for #metoo?’ (...) That made me think, aren’t we allowed to be men and women anymore, aren’t we allowed to like each other and where is the line? (...) This interplay between men and women with its rituals of flirting, where will that go?”* I find Sara’s argumentation very interesting as it reveals a discussion taking place in forestry about #metoo, sexual harassment and what kind of behaviour is acceptable. What perception of sexual harassment and everyday relations will be the outcome after #metoo and #finalfelling? As I mentioned above, Puwar argue the men use sexualised humour to keep control over women, by including them and at the same time marginalizing them.<sup>117</sup> I argue that the ‘rituals’ and ‘flirtation’ which Sara describe re-enact an expected heterosexual norm for female and male bodies. I think Sara’s story, like Beatrice’s above reveal how women can take part in the reproduction of gender-inequality and heteronormative social structures.

As I move on to discuss the contribution my research can make, I summarize my own experience of the research process as rewarding through the sense of connection with my participants during the interviews. It has also been both compelling and thought provoking to analyse and make sense of the interviews.

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<sup>117</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 87)

## 5. Discussion

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore what it can mean to be a woman in the forestry and the forest business in Jönköping County. Here I discuss my research questions and findings in the light of theories about gender roles and sexual divisions of labour. I also offer directions for future research of gender equality work in relation to forestry and make policy relevant recommendations for RJJ

### Women in forestry

This section will answer the first two of my research questions; “How do the participants experience their personal and work situation as women, within forestry and the forest industry/business?” And “What power structures and values concerning gender appears in their stories and how do those further or hinder the participants?”

My research show how forestry competence is not perceived as gender neutral but loaded with values of who the competent forestry worker is. On the one hand, a woman in forestry in Jönköping County can be received with welcoming encouragement and supportive co-workers. On the other hand, a woman in forestry must face a lack of material assets, such as appropriate work clothes that fits different body types, or access to toilets and dressing rooms that are safe and comfortable to use, for women and others. The attentive welcome, as well as the masculinized environment is a tacit reminder that men are perceived to be the naturalized forestry worker and reinforces the notion that women are anomalies to that norm.

In line with Puwar, I have shown that it takes my participants longer to be heard and respected as competent forestry workers.<sup>118</sup> The participants describe how they need to prove their competence, while their male co-workers are simply assumed to have the required knowledge. Puwar argues that social spaces are not neutral and open for anyone but encoded and shaped with norms of who belongs there. Puwar calls people who cross such lines of belonging for space invaders, because their bodies reveal the norm and changes the social structure of that area.<sup>119</sup> I argue that my participants presence in forestry are received as such space invaders. Their stories reveal how they can be met with both surprise and sometimes resentment from co-workers and forestry owners. My analysis shows an essentialist understanding of men, as inherently capable forestry workers and women as an invader of that space, who has to prove her right to be there. In line with Butler and Puwar, I have

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<sup>118</sup> (Puwar 2004) s 92

<sup>119</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 7)



shown that some of the participants, such as Maria, describe how they change or adapt to the masculine behaviour to become understood and respected.<sup>120</sup>

In line with this, I have shown how women who enter the masculinized area of forestry, must relate to the male norm recreated in everyday work life. Following McDowell's research of how male embodiment and masculine sexuality shapes work places, I have shown how gendered structures in forestry reinforce a taken-for-granted male domination.<sup>121</sup> Material structures, such as male shaped work clothes or lack of dressing rooms, reinforces the norm of male forestry workers, and continually ignore and make women's lived experience invisible. A feminist contribution to change this could be an investigation of the material work life situation in the forest industrial facilities to increase knowledge of women's work life situation. My research has also shown examples of how new gendered structures can appear when another change, such as when women enter male dominated arenas like forestry. Sofia's experience from the sawmill, where women relatively recently entered the work force, is an example of this. Sofia's story showed how the manager recreated gender hierarchies by appointing men, but not women, for additional responsibility, which in turn lead to additional salary.

On a different note, my research has shown how the production system in forestry, with its long work days and shift-work, rely on women's unpaid reproductive support to function. Battacharya argue that the capitalist system relies on unpaid social reproductive structures, like domestic labour, caring for family members and providing support and rest for the worker, so that 'he', the presumed male worker, can continue to produce.<sup>122</sup> My participants lived experience support Battacharya's theory, through their adaptations to production structures. Some participants told me of how they change clothes at home, avoid making dentist appointments and negotiate leave days with the manager to care for sick children. I argue that since forestry is shaped by and for men, the burden of reproductive labour is put on women. The heteronorm in society prescribes that a male employee has a wife or female family member, and the production structures of forestry rely on that woman to provide the support needed, that enables the man to work long hours and shift-work. Furthermore, I argue that the Forest Strategy for Småland is an example of the apparent reluctance within forestry to change its ways, to accommodate the needs of women and family members. The Forest Strategy focuses on the number of women employed in forestry but does not account for the social

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<sup>120</sup> (Butler 2004, s 52, Puwar 2004, s 93-94)

<sup>121</sup> (McDowell 1999, s 135-136)

<sup>122</sup> (Battacharya 2013)

reproductive structures that could pave the way for this change. An example of this could be to make child care available for those who work night shift.

In line with this, I have showed a lack of critical understanding of gender equality and gendered power structures in forestry. Research by Alnebratt and Rönnblom of strategical work for gender equality, argue that such a critical understanding of gendered power structures in society is often lost in discussions of, and strategies for gender equality.<sup>123</sup> The Forest Strategy and my participants argue that gender equality is a matter of the number of women employed in forestry. Following research by Rönnblom and Sandberg, I argue that this perception obscures the conflicts integrated in gender in-equality, and power discrepancies between men and women.<sup>124</sup> Contrary to this, Maria's story revealed her employer, the public agency, as an exception who appears to understand that power structures, such as the use of language, are gendered and have gendered implications.

My research has also shown how some of the participants argue that gender is not an issue in forestry and that affirmative actions, such as women-only courses, are unnecessary. The United Nations report; "Time for Action", and research by Lidestav and Sjölander, argue that making gender a non-issue can be a conscious strategy for women to be accepted in the field and avoid a feminist stigma.<sup>125</sup> The interviews with Karin and Sara exemplify how women can participate in maintaining gendered power structures by arguing against the need for affirmative actions for women. Research by Andersson and Lidestav show how women's network can provide a safe space where women can learn about forestry and participate on their own terms, without sexist harassment.<sup>126</sup> I argue that when my participants deny other women the opportunity of creating alternative spaces in forestry, it might become even harder for women to legitimize the need for such spaces.

To be a woman in forestry in Jönköping can also mean, according to my participants, that one is exposed to sexist harassment. Puwar argues that men use sexualised humour to dominate and keep control over women.<sup>127</sup> My research supports Puwar's theory through the lived experiences of Sofia and Cecilia, who both relate stories of sexist comments, and in Cecilia's case being effectively silenced by her course mates. Some of the other participants dismiss sexist behaviour and harassment in forestry, arguing that the men who perform it are exceptions. Beatrice describe them as a certain group of men, such as older forest owners, which uphold 'old values', and argue that the situation will inevitably change when they retire. Following the research by Johansson et al, I argue

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<sup>123</sup> (Alnebratt 2016, s 14, 52-55)

<sup>124</sup> (Rönnblom och Sandberg 2015, s 73-75)

<sup>125</sup> (Lidestav och Egan Sjölander 2007, s 358-359) (FAO 2006)

<sup>126</sup> (E. Andersson 2016)

<sup>127</sup> (Puwar 2004, s 86-88)

that to assign the problem of sexism and gender inequality in forestry to a specific group of men, evades accountability for individuals and institutions.<sup>128</sup> I argue that forestry and forest industries are not gender-neutral institutions, and to dismiss harassment conceals that the aggressive male heteronorm, present in society today, also operates within forestry in Jönköping County.

On a finale note, I ask myself if storms can be feminist? When the storms “Gudrun” in 2005 and “Per” in 2007 wreaked havoc in south of Sweden, they caused an acute staffing problem in the forest industry according to Sara. This enabled a form of feministic change and paved the way for more women to come into forestry. Of course, winds do not concern itself with feminist ideas, but I argue that it is worth considering how a crisis can bring about a change in social structures. I argue that further analysis would be beneficial to investigate how external factors such as harsh storms, could possibly alter society structures.<sup>129</sup> Yet, waiting for storms to come along and change society will not do as a feminist strategy. Instead, I argue that feminist strategic work for gender equality, need to address the gendered work life patterns, which appear in the experiences my participants shared with me.

### **How can Jönköping County Council work for gender equality in forestry?**

This section will answer my third research question; “How do the experiences and opinions expressed by the participants correspond with the measures and actions in ‘The Forest Strategy for Småland’?”<sup>130</sup>

I find a discrepancy between the affirmative actions suggested in “The Forest Strategy for Småland” and the results from my research. Following Rönnblom and Sandberg, I argue that the Forest Strategy understands the problem with gender inequality as a lack of women to recruit to safeguard the future of forestry, a problem that can be solved by including women into existing workplace and power structures.<sup>131</sup> I argue that this representation avoids recognizing and addressing patriarchal structures in forestry, which rely on unpaid social reproductive work and preserve women’s subordination.

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<sup>128</sup> (Johansson, et al. 2017, s 12)

<sup>129</sup> I compare this with the western Anglo-Saxon experience from World War II, which saw men leaving their jobs to go to war and women in large numbers took their place. When the war was over the work force patterns had changed to some extent and women had gained access to the labour market. Women kept working outside the home to a greater extent than before the war.

<sup>130</sup> Jönköping County Council/Region Jönköpings län: [RJJ](#)

<sup>131</sup> (Rönnblom och Sandberg 2015, s 75)

From a business perspective the strategy appears logical, but from a feminist perspective it is one-sided and does not investigate women's lived experience and perspective. The Forest Strategy's economic motives for gender equality make it dependent of the market logic. What will happen if it is no longer deemed profitable to promote gender equality between men and women? What happens if inclusion of underrepresented groups become a 'special interest' and not a human right to have access to all parts of society? I wish to highlight the need of including men in future gender equality strategies. Gender equality is not about women only, it is about women, men and LGBTQI-persons. This need to be reflected in strategies on county level. A starting point to achieve this would be to evaluate men's situation to find out what it can be like to be a man in forestry in Småland? What can work life experience be like for men who want to break with traditional masculinity and change the perception of forestry?

The measures described in the Forest Strategy does not correspond with the lived experience of my participants. The Forest Strategy aims its affirmative actions towards women but not towards men. Yet some of my participants argue against this kind of gendered division and affirmative actions. A possible explanation for this reluctance could be that women do not find them useful or necessary in the intended way. When Karin argue against a women-only course, she says that women know as much as men, but the gender separation implicates that women's competence is lower. Furthermore, I argue that the Forest Strategy need to recognize that areas which lacks formal regulation, such as informal appointment of managers, is managed through informal regulations and structures, in this case it benefits men whom the manager already knows. To achieve gender equality, informal structures must to be highlighted and evaluated to change gendered structures.

How then, can RJL promote that more women, people with a foreign background, immigrants, LGBTQI-persons and other underrepresented groups start working in forestry in Jönköping County? Following my research, a more valid gender equal measure could be to provide access to child care for those who work night-shift, or an opportunity to switch to dayshift for a period of time, to improve the possibility to combine work and family life. These measures must be available for families of all kinds and shapes. To further gender equality, I argue that it is fundamental to acknowledge existing gender hierarchies and the work place structures that reproduce them. To address this, a progressive forestry policy can approach gender equality by using an intersectional approach, to create affirmative actions that transforms forestry to an occupation where everyone can work. An initial policy recommendation to RJL and forestry companies is to focus on those internal factors in forestry that can be controlled, such as work place climate and facilities. I argue that the implementation of the Forest Strategy, should initiate discussions about values, power, norms and gender in-equality, across forestry in Jönköping County as well as in individual work

places. Finally, I argue that making machinery adaptable for all kinds of bodies and to engage with work-clothes producers to demand a wider range of work clothes for female bodies, are necessary measures to promote equality in forestry.

My research can be a contribution to such discussions about the gendered structures in forestry today. The possibility to generalize my results are limited due to the small number of participants interviewed, as well as the limited area where I carried out the research. The results should be seen as illustrative examples, rather than a truth. I argue that this thesis can be the beginning of a discussion and an ambition for change, but more research is needed to increase feminist understanding of what it can mean to be a woman in forestry.

### **For future research**

To improve my research and widen the perspective, I would want to talk to women who has left forestry as an occupation, to find out why they left. To follow all women who start higher forestry education in a longitudinal study, to see who goes on to what profession, and what affects their decisions, could give generalizable results that could improve future affirmative measures for women. I have also realised that my research would have benefited from more questions regarding support structures, to increase my understanding of my participants lived experiences. This area seems important in the light of the participants experience of shift-work in forestry, which I had not considered before. Furthermore, it would be useful to investigate the effects of #metoo in gendered work spaces like forestry. In addition, I argue that it would be useful to interview men and compare their lived experiences with women's. A question that has come back to me several times during this research, is how men fare in an occupation characterized by traditional masculinity? What happens to the men who want to alter the norms of the occupation, and what happens to low- and middleclass masculinities in an era of re-structuralization? Following this, I argue that an analysis would benefit from an age- and a class-perspective, to investigate how gender and class structures are reproduced, and reproduce the understanding of forestry occupations. Finally, the situation for LGBTQI-persons in forestry need to be investigated in its own right. I wish anyone who wants to pick up these trails the best of luck!

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## Appendix 1

### *Women in forestry in Jönköping County – Interview guide*

#### Interview structure:

During the interview we will talk about you, your background and choice of education, about your job/school and your personal experiences of forestry. In addition, I will ask different questions about what it can be like to be a woman in forestry and also how you perceive the situation for others. I want to assure you that I will anonymize the information I use for my thesis. I will use given names and give general directions to occupation, so you should not be identified.

#### Background:

Tell me about yourself, who you are and where you are from? When did you first start considering working in forestry? Do you have any family connection to the forest or previous experience in forestry? Did anyone train you?

Do you own forest, or do you want to own forest? If you have inherited forest, did you gain knowledge about that forest from someone? Has any distinction been made between you and other family members regarding the forest?

#### Working as an employee:

Tell me about your job and how it is that you work in forestry or the forest industry? What kind of education and work life experience do you have?

What do you think about work hours in the occupation? Is it possible to combine the job with other parts of life? What is the salary like, do you know if there are differences between men and women?

What kind of equipment do you use? Is it adaptable to be used by different bodies? What about shoes and clothes, do they fit different kinds of bodies?

What about safety equipment, machinery and other technical equipment, do you receive regular training with those or do others get easier access to it?

What is work like on location in the forest or on your workplace? Is there anywhere you can step inside, are there toilets or dressing rooms?

Do you receive training in leadership or do you have leadership experience?

#### Self-employment:

Tell me about your company. What is your main task or area of expertise? Who started the company, who owns it and what structures for decision making do you have? Who is in charge of economy? Who makes the finale decision, who represents the company and how are you received if you do? Has anyone treated you differently as a woman?

If you run/co-run your own company, or think about starting one, have you been in contact with a bank or business support provider? If so, what do think about that meeting? Do you know of any

business support and how did you learn about it? Does that kind of support fit in with the kind of business you run?

Network:

Do you know of any network or support structure for women in forestry? Have you been in contact with a network for women who own, or work with forest? What did you think about that contact?

Personal experience:

How would you describe forestry as professional area? What does the forest mean to you?

What expectations did you have before starting the education or work? What attitudes do you perceive from co-workers or people outside your occupation?

Have you experienced any distinction being made between you and male co-workers? Have you experience anyone treating or receiving you differently as a woman? Are there differences between different actors, such as forest companies, public agencies, private companies or forest owners?

How are you received when you drive heavy forest machinery or performed everyday work tasks?

Have you experienced harassment of any kind? Did you hear or read about the #metoo-call #finalfelling? What did you think of the call and the initiative behind it? Have you heard about this from anyone else?

Gender structures in forestry:

What norms and ideas about men and women do you think is present in forestry today? What attitudes do you meet in you job, what body language and what choice in words? What do you think about this, is there anything you wish to change? Have you protested against any of these norms, what happened?

Do you think the situation is different for men? Is it easier to be a man in forestry?

Do you know if your employer has a gender equality strategy? How is that going, what do you think about it? What is the purpose with the strategy as you perceive it? Have you heard about the gender equality work by the large forest companies?

Inclusion:

What do you think needs to happen to make more women start working in forestry?

What do you think about the possibilities for queer or transgender persons to study, start working or start their own company in forestry?

What do you think of the possibilities for immigrants or women and men with a foreign- or non-white non-Swedish background, to study, start working or start their own company in forestry?

What do you think a public institution like RJL can do to promote more women, LGBTQI-persons or immigrants to start working in forestry?

That was all my questions. Do you have any thoughts you wish to discuss or questions I didn't know I should ask?

What do you think about the interview?

Please keep my email and phone number, if there is anything you think of, or anything you wish me to withhold from the thesis, just let me know and I will not use it.

Thank you very much for your participation, it is very valuable to me.

- *If I question what they say, they don't really want to answer and claim it was just a joke. But I don't stay quiet!  
Women who work in forestry are in minority, but what does that mean to the individual woman? This thesis explores what it can mean to be a woman in forestry in Jönköping County.*