



**KTH Architecture and  
the Built Environment**

# Gender structures in the real estate industry

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Building & Real Estate Economics  
Department of Real Estate and Construction Management  
Royal Institute of Technology  
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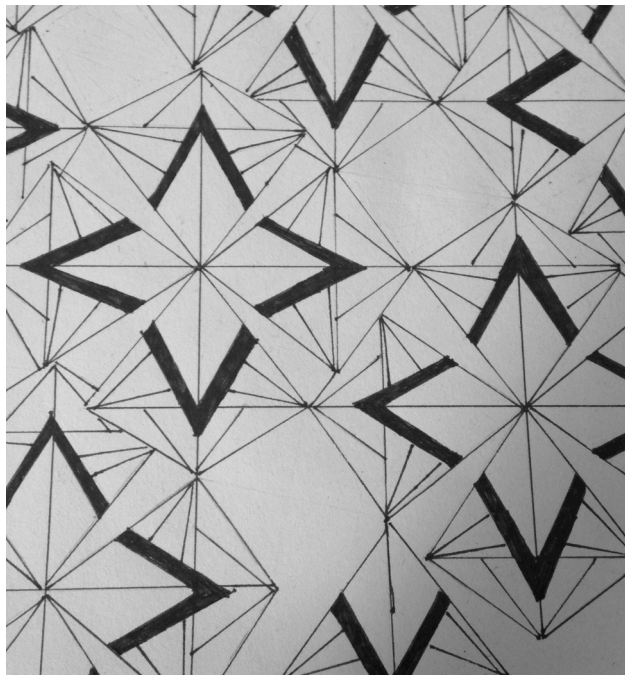
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*To my family*



*Structures by Anna Pauli*

*"There is nothing like looking, if you want to find something. You certainly usually find something, if you look, but it is not always quite the something you were after."*

J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973)

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Malmö, October 2014

*Karin Staffansson Pauli*

## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyse gender structures in the real estate industry in Sweden. The real estate industry is going through a change, from a focus on technical aspects to a focus on services. It is a higher number of women than before attending the real estate programmes at Universities, and this is one motive for doing this study.

In the investigation of the gender structures in the real estate industry, the strategy has been to ask various questions about how gender is 'done' in order to get the "big picture" of the gender structures that exist in the industry.

To fulfil the aim four different questions were asked. Each of these questions were dealt with respectively in the four different articles: (i) How is the gender structure of the real estate industry? (ii) How do the women who work as CEOs and real estate managers in the industry construct their individual femininities and create a career for themselves in traditionally male-gendered positions? (iii) What images of women and men are presented by the industry through the publication of companies' annual reports? (iv) What preferences do students have with respect to the positions that they hope to fill in the industry?

To get statistical facts used as background material about gender in the industry, the distribution of gender in the industry were mapped. The companies that were selected, represent real estate companies that own and manage their own real estate properties. Facts and figures from 22 Annual Reports were used for this task, 12 public housing companies of different sizes and 8 large commercial real estate companies. These statistics dealt with the proportional distribution of women and men employed, in different positions within the industry, including their proportional representation on the board of directors, and as CEO's. The mapping included the years of 2001, 2008 and 2011.

Semi-structured interviews were made, with 12 women and men in different positions that graduated in 2001, and also with 5 women working as CEO's. Photographs including women and men from annual reports in 2011 were analysed, the same 22 companies as above were used. A questionnaire survey was conducted with students in four different years at the real estate management programme at Malmö University including questions about preferences about future careers. Finally, teachers at Malmö University were interviewed. Besides this, a mapping of the largest real estate companies in Sweden is included, and this function as a reference material together with some exploratory interviews that also were made.

The gender structure is pervasive during the studied period. The gender mapping of the industry did not show any greater differences in the gender structure between 2001 and in 2011. The gender structure in the companies is almost the same during the studied period, both the vertical and the horizontal. Men are more often in higher and technical positions and women in supporting position and not as often in the positions as for example as real estate manager. The horizontal and vertical segregation between women and men seems to be sustained and the reason why may lie in gender structures both inside and outside the industry, as the gender structure seem to be pervasive and goes beyond the real estate industry.

Gender is done in interaction not only inside the organization itself but also in interaction with different stakeholders, for example the construction industry. The symbols and images of women and men in the industry are obtained in many ways. In annual reports, the portrayal of women and men reveals both a consciousness and unconsciousness about how gender is done and symbolized, and thereby contribute in doing gender and doing structures. Both men and women are portrayed in a stereotypical way. The study also point out the importance of the University to present the heterogeneity of the industry and what symbols and images that are shown, and discuss gender structures with the students. An essentialist way of looking at women and men is found, which in turn might make it harder for both sexes to enter new terrain because of preconceived notions about being women and men. Finally symbols and images in and about the industry has a prominent role in how gender structures are created and recreated.

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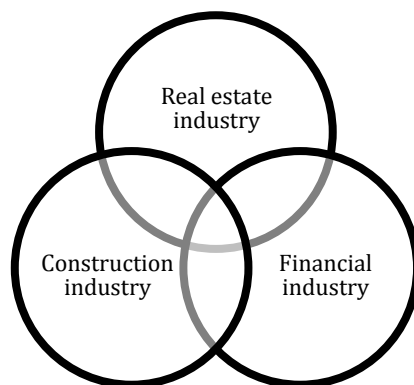
# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction and overview

This dissertation is about gender in the real estate industry in Sweden and, more specifically, about gender in the part of the industry that manages real estate. The real estate industry is changing, as are many other industries. Historically, it was associated with, and partly belonged to, the construction industry. According to Lind and Lundström (2009), the development of becoming an industry of its own started in the beginning of the 1980's. It blossomed as an independent industry after the financial crisis in the middle of 1990's. Thus it took approximately 20 years to become an independent industry.

Within the real estate industry, there are several different kinds of organization. These include commercial real estate companies that own and manage their own real estate, and commercial real estate management companies that manage other companies' real estate, for example, on behalf of a fund. Furthermore, there are public housing companies, real estate units in public organizations, consultancy companies and others, including different kind of associations, such as Riksbyggen and HSB.

Although the real estate industry is considered to be an industry of its own, it remains somewhat intertwined with the construction industry and financial industry.



**Figure 1.** The relation between the real estate-, construction-, and financial industries.

The real estate industry's former association with the construction industry has resulted in a situation whereby its culture has, historically, been strongly influenced by norms and values from the engineering field. In this respect, the physical building was in focus. Today, the industry focuses much more on the services that are offered to its customers and, thus the customer is in focus. This change in focus is due to the fact that a building without tenants has no economic value (Lind and Lundström, 2009).

Malmö University was established in 1998, and, at the same time, a real estate management programme was started. The purpose of the programme was to contribute to the development of the real estate industry (SOU 1996:120). The educational programme at Malmö University is interdisciplinary in nature. The citation below is taken from the final report from the Department of Education concerning the discipline of built environments and real estate management that was planned to evolve at Malmö University:

*"The total housing stock, as well as other aspects of the built environment in Sweden, represents an enormous asset that must be managed well and improved with the help of knowledge and expertise regarding its qualitative properties and defects. Maintenance, modernization, and reconstruction requirements, indoor climate and other similar issues have led to calls for the introduction of new educational programmes in this area. There is currently also a tendency toward a change of approach in this field from a passive management of buildings as technical products, to an active innovation-focused philosophy based on services and service commitments. The management of housing and other features of the built environment can develop into a field of education and research with the same level of importance as construction. This field must be given an interdisciplinary focus, by techniques such as using humanities and social science perspectives to highlight the cultural and social aspects of the built environment.*

*Existing real estate management education is too narrowly focused on economics and engineering." (SOU 1996:120 p 32)*

As originally intended by the Department of Education, the real estate management programme did not become an engineering programme. Instead, it was established as a social science programme, with technical aspects added to it. With this approach, the

ambition was to be attractive to a broader audience of students, and not only students who might be interested in technical aspects. The programme at Malmö University consists of different educational content when compared to other programmes in the real estate field. The other large programmes in Sweden are located at technical universities, and the students receive a degree in engineering when they complete these programmes. From its inception, the interdisciplinary programme at Malmö University has attracted an equal number of male and female students. When the programme was initially offered, the intention of the university was not to attract an equal number of women and men. Instead, focus was placed on attracting applicants who were interested in social science, and not applicants who were mainly interested in engineering. The programme that was launched in Malmö in 1998 exemplifies the change that has taken place in the industry; moving away from a focus on technical aspects, to concentrating on services. Technical aspects are often associated with 'masculinity' and service with 'femininity' (Gherardi, 1995, Blomqvist, 1994), but this association can, of course, also be questioned (Alvesson, 1998).

There does not exist a great deal of previous research on the real estate industry from a gender perspective. Not even when one includes asset management. This paucity of previous research has been confirmed by Dimovski, Lombardi, and Cooper (2013) who conducted a study on women directors on boards of Australian Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT). In their article, they conclude that gender studies are absent in REIT studies.

The *Journal of corporate real estate* is an established journal within the field of real estate management. The journal published two special issues focusing on human resource management in the real estate industry in 2009. It could be expected that any of the articles published in those two issues could have included gender, because the workforce in the industry consists of both men and women, and because gender is a relevant perspective to take into account for developing knowledge about and within the industry. This was, however, not the case.

Haynes (2008) discusses workplace connectivity and office productivity, and concludes that employees can, based on their work styles, be categorized into different work patterns. The author has no discussion about gender.

In the special issue from the *Journal of Corporate Real Estate* focusing on human resource management, Philip and Roper (2009) present a study on talent management. In their article, they discuss different generations of baby boomers, 'Generation X' and Generation Y', and what they value in work, but these authors do not include a discussion on gender. In the same issue, Inalhan (2009) writes about employees and their relation to their workplaces, and how employees perceive changes and their ability to adapt to new environments. Again, Inalhan does not take gender into account.

However, there do exist several studies on gender in the construction industry, both internationally (Agapiou, 2002, Faulkner, 2007), and in the Swedish context (Styhre, 2011, Cettner, 2008), and on the financial industry in Sweden (Renemark, 2007, Snickare, 2012), but not on the real estate industry. Johansson (1998) used public housing companies as an arena in order to focus on several paradoxes of gender stereotypes. Sundin (2002) made a study about 'rationality as a norm', as applied to caretakers and cleaners, including real estate companies in Sweden. In both the construction industry and the financial industry, the studies mentioned above problematized the impact of male dominance and male risk-taking in the financial industry. The present study is focused on gender in the real estate or property industry. That is to say, the main focus in this study is on the real estate industry circle, as illustrated in Figure 1 above. However, since there exist real estate positions or jobs, that can be placed in the intersections between the three industries (the real estate industry, the construction industry, and the financial industry), it is important for the reader of this text to understand the context.

Studying gender in the real estate industry contributes to the field of real estate industry, both to the academic community and to practitioners working in the field. Perhaps more relevant to the study of gender is the observation that the industry is undergoing a change as described above. This change includes a more intense focus on the provision of real estate services. We note that women, to a greater extent than before, are entering

into real estate educational programmes at universities, and that the previously prevailing male-dominated 'engineering culture' probably has been challenged. In light of this observation, I find it relevant to apply a gender perspective on the part of the industry that manages real estate. One hopes that the women and men who complete their university degrees and enter the industry enjoy equal opportunities as they develop their careers in the industry.

The European Union's *Annual Report on Equality between Women and Men* (2013) found that gender segregation remains pervasive throughout Europe. Only 16% of all employees work in 'mixed occupations', that is to say, where the proportion of male and female employees is between 40% and 60%. In 2010, technical occupations were male-dominated, and associate nurses, teaching professionals, and customer service clerks were shown to be female-dominated occupations in the EU. In Sweden, chefs, medical doctors, and university teachers were classified as mixed occupations in 2012 (SCB, 2012).

The real estate industry in Sweden employs about 60 000 women and men (SABO and Fastigo 2014), where about 40% are women and 60% are men (SCB 2014). If we divide the people who work in the real estate industry in terms of white-collar and blue-collar workers, we note that about 56% women and 46% men perform white-collar jobs, whilst about 24% women and 76% men perform the blue-collar jobs (Fastigo 2014).

When I started the present research project, I considered myself as a part of the real estate industry. This entailed that some preconceived notions needed to be taken care of, in terms of studying the real estate industry from a gender perspective. I had worked as a consultant for several years, and I also worked as the programme director of the real estate management programme at Malmö University. I was also in charge of an association, *Centrum för fastighetsföretagande* (Centre for Real Estate Management), an organization for encouraging cooperation between real estate companies or organizations, and universities in the south of Sweden. This association is further described in Chapter 3. So as to be able to develop an understanding of gender in the context that I was a part of, and partly took for granted, I had to take a step back from the industry. A way for me to do this was to conduct a gender mapping study of the real

estate industry. The mapping was important since it showed three things; first of all, the gender structure in the industry could be considered to be ‘gender balanced’, but that this balance differs between commercial and public real estate management companies. Secondly, regarding the CEOs and the distribution of gender in the boards of directors, it was observed that men were in the majority, even though there has been an increase in the number of women in the board of directors in the commercial real estate companies from a low level. Thirdly, it was observed that the proportional distribution of males and females is stable over time. There were no significant overall changes in the CEO and board of directors groupings.

In the present study, 22 different companies were mapped in terms of the distribution of gender within the companies. This mapping is further presented and elaborated on in Chapter 3; the mapping is also part of Article 1. Of these 22 companies, 14 were public housing companies (Appendix A), which are owned by the municipality (publicly-owned), and 8 were commercial real estate companies (privately-owned) (Appendix B). The gender mapping included statistics reported for 2001, 2008, and 2011. The mappings are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The proportional distribution of women and men who were employed, on the board of directors, and as CEOs, in 22 public housing companies and commercial real estate companies in 2001, 2008, and 2011.

		2001		2008		2011	
		women	men	women	men	women	men
<b>Employed</b>	Public housing companies	37%	63%	37%	63%	36%	64%
	Commercial real estate companies	39%	61%	39%	61%	40%	60%
<b>Board of directors</b>	Public housing companies	29%	71%	34%	66%	32%	68%
	Commercial real estate companies	8%	92%	21%	79%	32%	68%
<b>CEO</b>	Public housing companies	21%	79%	14%	86%	14%	86%
	Commercial real estate companies	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%

Information about the proportion of women and men in the management teams in the business that were studied was also included in the data, so as to complement the information about the CEO and the gender composition of the board of directors. The gender composition of the management teams reveals the positions that are in power in the companies. The management teams include the CEO and the CFO (chief financial officer), and the line managers, including the real estate directors, and other staff members, including the heads of communications and human resources. In the management teams in the public housing companies, the proportion of women and men show an almost mixed gender balance (60-40%), but in the management teams in the commercial real estate companies, this was not the case, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Gender composition of the management teams in 22 housing and commercial real estate companies in 2010.

		<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
<b>Public housing companies</b>		39%	61%
<b>Commercial real estate companies</b>		13%	87%

Table 1 and Table 2 give the reader an overview of the proportional distribution of gender in the real estate companies that were studied. The insights obtained by this analysis are that (i) the industry is gender balanced, (ii) that there are differences between commercial and public real estate management companies, and (iii) that the CEO positions and boards of directors are dominated by men, and have been so for over a decade. These observations guided me towards my research aim and questions.



## 1.2 Aim and research questions

The aim of the thesis is to analyse gender structures in the real estate industry in Sweden. In the investigation of the gender structures in the real estate industry, the strategy that has been used is to ask various questions about how gender is 'done' within the industry, in order to get the "big picture" of the gender structures that exist in the industry.

To fulfil the aim of this thesis, four different questions were asked. Each of these questions were dealt with in the four different articles respectively: (i) What is the prevailing gender structure of the real estate industry? (ii) How do the women who work as CEOs and real estate managers in the industry construct their individual femininities and create a career for themselves in traditionally male-gendered positions? (iii) What images of women and men are presented by the industry through the publication of companies' annual reports? (iv) What preferences do students have with respect to the positions that they hope to fill in the industry?

Below, the four articles that constitute this dissertation are presented. For each article, I also elaborated on the relation between *how gender is 'done'* and *gender structures*. This was done in order to clarify to the reader how I fulfil the aim of the study.

Article 1, "All of my bosses have been men": on gender structures in the real estate industry', introduces the notion of gender structures in the context of the real estate industry. The article is based on an analysis of the distribution of gender within the industry, and interviews made with 12 young male and female graduates from Malmö University. This article lays out the empirical foundation of the present study, and introduces to the reader how segregation, i.e. the division between women and men, both vertically and horizontally in the industry, is compounded.

Article 2, 'Women in the real estate industry', delineates the process whereby women negotiate their femininity in traditionally male-dominated positions. This article is based on interviews with 5 women who work as real estate managers, and 5 women who are CEOs. The article deals with how women who find themselves in male-

dominant positions in the industry challenge the prevailing gender structures by being different, by analysing how femininities are 'done'.

Article 3, 'Representations of gender in annual reports in the real estate industry', deepens our understanding of the symbols and images that companies show through their portrayal of women and men who work for the company, and of men and women who might be considered to be clients of the company. This article is based on the analysis of the photographs that appear in 22 annual reports from the real estate industry in 2011. This article presents an analysis and discussion of how women and men are portrayed in annual reports, it exposes how conscious (or unconscious) businesses in the real estate industry are about how symbols and images are disseminated within the industry and thereby reinforce prevailing gender structures.

Article 4, 'Gender and positions: students' preferences about careers in the real estate industry', presents how male and female students who were enrolled in the real estate management programme at Malmö University view their future positions within the real estate industry. This article is based on a questionnaire survey that was conducted on groups of students spanning 4 different years at Malmö University, and interviews with 5 teachers at Malmö University. This article reports on how students' preferences with respect to future positions in the industry disclose symbols and images about public and commercial real estate companies, but also how these preferences disclose views on gender structures that extend beyond the real estate industry.

I defended my licentiate thesis, entitled *The real estate industry from a gender perspective*, in 2011. For the writing of the first article "All of my bosses have been men": on gender structures in the real estate industry', I used the same theoretical analytical tool that was used in the licentiate thesis. In Article 2 'Women in the real estate industry', the theoretical analytical tools were broadened to include Kvande (2002) and her findings about 'negotiating femininity'. The inspiration for this article came from Kvande's article, 'In the belly of the beast'. In this article, Kvande presents an analysis of women who entered into several engineering organisations in Norway. She identified the different stages of how women construct femininities and how women

who enter these male-dominated organizations go through these different stages. According to Kvande, the first stage is where the woman employee becomes homeless or become 'one of the boys'. At the second stage they either compensate or challenge the norms. By applying Kvande's approach described above to an analysis of how women negotiate their femininity in the real estate industry in Sweden, we gain insight into about how women in male-dominated positions (for example, real estate managers and CEOs) view their positions and experiences in the real estate industry and the gender structure.

My third article, 'Representations of gender in annual reports in the real estate industry', presents a discussion of how gender is done in the real estate industry. Benschop and Meihuizen (2002) inspired me in this respect by their study about images in annual reports in their article, 'Keeping up gendered appearances: representations of gender in financial annual reports'. In their study, Benschop and Meihuizen (ibid) included a number of analyses of representations of gender in financial annual reports of 30 corporations in different industries in the Netherlands. By applying their approach with respect to gendered appearances in annual reports in the real estate industry in Sweden, I contribute to an understanding of how images about women and men are portrayed, and consequently, how gender is 'done' in annual reports in the real estate industry. In my article, I include an analysis of the photographs and the portrayal of women and men in annual reports from the year 2011. The sample consists of the annual reports from the same 22 companies that were mentioned above.

Another important actor that can be associated with the real estate industry is the educational sector. Of interest in this context are the preferences that were expressed by students in the real estate management programme at Malmö University. Article 4, 'Gender and positions: students' preferences about careers in the real estate industry', reports on the responses of students at the real estate management programme at Malmö University. The questionnaire survey was distributed across four classes at different levels. All of the students who were present in the classroom answered the survey. If a student was absent they were not asked to respond to the survey. The survey was conducted in January 2013 and September 2013. In total, 141 surveys were answered and the response rate was 77 %. The purpose of the survey was to discover

the students' preferences about their future positions in the industry. The construction of the survey was driven both from gender and organizational theory and from interviews that were made with CEOs, and young male and female graduates from the real estate management programme at Malmö University who had entered the industry. Interviews were also conducted with teachers at the real estate management programme at Malmö University.

### **1.3 Outline of the thesis**

In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework which underpins gender and organizational theory is presented. In Chapter 3, the research strategy and the different methods that were used in this study are discussed. This includes discussion of the ontological and epistemological stance that is taken in this study, and how the study has been outlined. The study primarily employs a qualitative approach, but I use both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to be able to answer the research questions. In Chapter 4, summaries of the four articles that are included in this dissertation are presented. In Chapter 5, the discussions and findings from each of the studies are presented and several conclusions are made. Finally, in Chapter 6, the contribution and implications of the study are presented.

## 2. Theoretical overview

### 2.1 Gender and organization

The theoretical approach that was used in this study is derived from the field of gender and organizational theory. This approach allows us to invoke 'gender' as a perspective or a tool that we use to give meaning to and make sense of organizational arrangements, thereby reproducing both the people and the organization in gender terms (Kvande, 2003). Gender can be considered to be both something we do, and something we think (Gherardi, 1994).

In the 1970s, feminist researchers formulated the theoretical starting point of gender as being created through relations and processes (Rubin 1975, Kessler and Mc Kenna 1978). From a social constructionist point of view, including the view of gender relations, gender becomes something that is done, i.e. a social practice, and something that produces knowledge. Consequently, it is possible to study gender as 'produced knowledge'.

Gender is not something that is ready to be discovered. Instead, it is something to understand and interpret, as we consider how it is done (Höök 2001, Widerberg 2007). This can also be said about organizations; people create what an organization is, and in this case, people create what the real estate industry 'is'. Acker (1990, 1992) claimed that gender could be embedded in organizational forms and relations. Based on this observation, industries can be seen as gendered. As Linghag and Regnö (2009) state, an organisational setting can be seen as the result of people's earlier everyday practices. In this context, gender is constituted of both symbolic and material aspects. Symbolic aspects include what Gherardi (1994) called 'the gender we think'. Included in the material aspects that constitute gender are the gender structures, i.e. the observable segregation between the sexes in terms of the numerical distribution between women and men; the degree of segregation in various work-related tasks, professions, and positions; and the hierarchical distribution between the sexes (Wahl 1992).

In Table 3, a summary of the theories or frameworks that have been of use throughout the research process is presented.

**Table 3.** Overview of the theories that influenced the research process.

Author	Theory	Knowledge/Inspiration
Acker J (1990, 1992, 1994)	Four gendered interacting processes	Overall road map for the process in all 4 articles
Alvesson M (1998)	Critical interpretive	Critical knowledge about gender and organization
Alvesson M and Due Billing (2009)	Critical interpretive	Critical knowledge about gender and organization
Berger and Luckmann (1966)	Social construction	Overall knowledge
Benschop and Meihuizen (2002)	Images in annual reports	Inspiration for Article 3, 'Representations of gender in annual reports in the real estate industry'
Connell (1995)	Masculinity	Overall knowledge about masculinity
Haraway (1991)	Situated knowledge	Overall knowledge
Hearn J (2004)	Critical studies in masculinities	Overall knowledge
Hirdman (1988)	Gender order	Overall knowledge
Kanter R M (1977)	Organizational and gender structure	Overall knowledge
Kvande E (2002)	Gendering of organizations	Inspiration for Article 2, 'Women in the real estate industry'
Wahl A (1992)	Organizational structure, gender division	Overall knowledge
West and Zimmermann (1987)	Doing gender	Overall knowledge

## 2.2 Doing gender

My view on knowledge is that knowledge is fabricated through our daily interactions between people, and thus knowledge is socially constructed, as outlined by Berger and Luckmann (1966). This view excludes all notion of *essentialism*.

The point of departure in this dissertation is the 'doing gender' perspective (West and Zimmerman, 1987), which entails an understanding of gender as a routine accomplishment that is embedded in everyday interaction. West and Zimmermann argue that gender is not a set of qualities, nor is it a variable or a role. Instead, it is a result of "social doings of some sort". They too contend that gender is created through interactions.

Various types of professional positions can be gendered. For example, in the real estate industry, outdoor maintenance work is considered to be 'masculine', whilst indoor maintenance work is regarded as 'feminine' (Johansson, 1998).

'Doing gender' is now a widely-used concept for theorizing and researching gender in organizational studies. By looking at 'doing gender', the focus shifts away from treating women and men as self-evident categories in academic research, towards seeing gender as a social practice. There are major differences in how doing gender is conceptualized and operationalized. It is a heterogeneous and a complex concept that is used within different theoretical traditions (Nentwich and Kelan 2014).

Nentwich and Kelan (2014) analysed 17 articles in North American and British academic journals covering the period between 1991 and 2009. These articles were based on empirical research within the field of 'doing gender' as applied to the work and organizational context. They found five central themes that are highly relevant for the understanding of 'doing gender'. These themes are (1) Structures, (2) Hierarchies, (3) Identity, (4) Flexibility and context specificity, and (5) Gradual relevance and subversion.

The first theme is 'doing gender' as 'doing *structure*'. Gendered structures are embedded in jobs and enable the construction of gender identity. Furthermore, the gender of the job 'rubs off the people who do them' (Cockburn, 1985, p 169). In order to fulfil the expectations that are attached to a job, or in other words, to do the job properly, the employee often has to enact a certain gender identity according to these structures. Gendered structures (re-)inforce gendered interactions. Gender is part of the prevailing occupational or organizational structures, and forces certain kinds of gendered interactions, either as a doing of femininity or as a doing of masculinity (Nentwich and Kelan, 2014).

'Doing gender' seen as 'doing *hierarchies*' is similar to doing structures. This theme helps us to see the asymmetry of gender hierarchies, which eventually lead to inequality. Research focusing on hierarchies looks at the symbolism that is attached to certain activities in which the 'masculine' is seen as superior to the 'feminine'. What is gendered as 'masculine' receives higher status, is perceived as being more professional, and is seen as representing competence (Heilman, 2001; Ridgeway, 1997). Doing masculinity and doing femininity should be analysed as different doings and different practices (Martin, 2001, 2003).

Gender *identity* is the third theme and central to 'doing gender'. It is commonly assumed that there is a link between doing gender at work and doing gender in terms of gender identity. Because gender is constructed hierarchically, the consequences for identity construction in gender-atypical contexts are different for women and men. Powell et al. (2009) show how women in engineering contexts use several 'coping strategies' to deal with their identity in a male-dominated field. The female engineers who were studied, however, did not distance themselves from what could be labelled as 'male engineering'; instead, they denied their femininity. Focusing on the construction of gender identity while doing the job makes doing gender even more complicated. The issue is not only that structures require the individual to do gender but, in addition to this requirement, doing gender does not necessarily lead to a certain gender identity. Gender identities can be constructed through stressing or downplaying specific aspects of the job, for example.

The fourth theme that was identified is described as flexible and context-specific 'doing gender'. This theme showed that the asymmetry of gender relations is repeated and reproduced through referencing the fairly stable binary pair; 'femininity' and 'masculinity'. It is also made apparent that that which is defined as 'masculine' and 'feminine' is actually flexible across time and space.

The fifth theme, according to Nentwich and Kelan (2014), is that gender identity is not made relevant in each and every situation and can even be enacted as challenging, and hence subvert the gender binary. It can also reveal situations where gender is made less relevant (Deutsch, 2007), or where gender is enacted in challenging ways. There is no



easy way to understand gender, since one must pay attention to how the relevance of the gender binary opposition changes from one situation to another. Being a woman or being a man may be enacted quite differently in different contexts, and might even be irrelevant in others (Deutch, *ibid*). An example of how gender is done, in a subversive way in the real estate industry, is provided by Johansson (1998). In her study different patterns emerged when men entered traditionally female work arenas, from when women entered traditionally male ones. In this transformation process, traditional dualistic gender stereotypes were present and absent

Structures are seen as influencing how gender is done, and it is important to note that 'doing gender' also involves 'doing hierarchies', which normally results in the masculine is placed in a privileged position over the feminine. Nentwich and Kelan (2014, p 131) argue that 'doing gender' whilst one is analysing the relevance of gendered structures demands that one move to a perspective of 'doing structures'. Studies on 'doing gender' can thus draw on a wealth of perspectives which can be used to explore how gender is done. Kvande (2003) and Nentwich and Kelan (2014) further argue that there exist strong structural and symbolic contingencies on the practice of gender and we can see how structures are produced.

According Nentwich and Kelan (*ibid*), one of the key limitations of 'doing gender' as a theoretical and empirical concept is that it is often used in a merely ceremonial way. By being more specific about which particular aspects of doing gender are focused on, the researcher can contribute to the development of theoretical sophistication. In this study the main focus is how gender structures are made.

The use of the concept 'doing gender' is currently seen as embracing an all-round approach or perspective. For example, the concept appears to function as means for the expression of a processual view on gender, according to Linghag and Regnö (2009, p 3). Gendered processes are, according to Acker (1990, 1992), multifaceted angles on social systems, and should be studied through daily practices. 'Doing gender' has, thus far, become an influential concept in Scandinavian gender research (Korvajärvi 1998, 2003, Kvande 1998, 2003, Andersson 2003, Vänje 2005). Joan Acker's (1990) seminal article, 'Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: a theory of gendered organizations', marked the start of the processual view on gender in organizations.

Gendering in organizations can occur on different analytical levels (Acker 1990, 1992). Firstly, gender is constructed in organizations because of the gender-differentiated division of work, which is based upon institutional lines of division between the labour market, family, and the state. Secondly, gender is constructed in organizations through the use of symbols and images, and language and ideology. This construction both reflects and places into stark contrast the actual division of labour between men and women. Thirdly, concrete relations and patterns of interaction between women and men contribute to giving gender importance in organizations. Fourthly, these processes, contribute to the creation of the individual's identity within an organization. This, in turn, constructs the gender division and structure. This will further be elaborated in Chapter 2.4.

To analyse the prevailing gender structures, I had to broaden the scope of the theoretical framework so as to include men and masculinities. Hearn (2004, p 50) argues that critical studies on men include, "a range of studies that critically address men in the context of gendered power relations". The term *masculinity* has been criticized for being imprecise, essentialist, and even anti-feminist (Collinson and Hearn 2005). I argue that to understand how gender is done in the real estate industry, it is necessary that we note that an understanding of 'doing masculinities' reduces the risk that we interpret femininity and masculinity as a essential, stable, and homogeneous categories. In studies of men and masculinities, we find that organizations instantiate an important arena where masculinities and men's power are reproduced and played out (Collinson and Hearn 2005). For example, *homosociality* is defined by Lipman-Blumen (1976 p 16) as the "seeking, enjoyment and/or preference for the company of the same sex". This is a pivotal part of gender segregation within organizations. Lindgren (1996 p 4) has developed the concept further, and she calls homosociality "the logic of brotherhood". Holgersson (2003) shows that homosocial practices contribute to the reproduction of unequal gender patterns, not only in organizations, but also in society at large.

Connell (2008) distinguishes between culturally-dominant forms of masculinity or 'hegemonic masculinity'. By *hegemonic* he refers to the dominant cultural ideal of masculinity, which need not correspond exactly with the actual practices or

personalities of the majority of men. Instead, it refers to a cultural code or a norm, which men may relate to in a variety of ways. Hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to femininities, and in relation to subordinated masculinities. Connell (ibid) claims that the hegemonic ideal of masculinity in current western culture is an independent, risk-taking, aggressive, heterosexual, and rational man. When Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) discuss the review and critique of the concept 'hegemonic masculinity', they state that, even after almost 20 years of discussion, hegemonic masculinity is the most common pattern in the everyday lives of boys and men.

The gender order is a pattern that one can observe when one examines society on a general level (Hirdman, 1992; Connell, 2008). In different cultures, times, local situations, and local organisations, there are variations in the gender order. According to Abrahamsson (2003), there are two main logical systems that are operative in the gender order; segregation and hierarchisation. Segregation refers to the stereotypical segregation between women and men, and between femininity and masculinity. Hierarchisation entails a gender-based hierarchy, with men at the top, a place where men and masculinity are ascribed a higher value than femininity. Under such conditions, there is often male domination and female subordination.

### **2.3 Organization and structure**

Wahl et. al (2001) describe structures, leadership, symbols, and change as important factors in the study of gender and organization. Of importance is the gender blindness in classical organizational theories. Kanter (1993) was one of the first researchers to discuss structural aspects. She claimed that structural factors – opportunity, power, and numbers – influence performance and success. Wahl et. al (2001) describe the construction of leadership as being similar to the construction of masculinity. Symbols that are present in the organization signify cultural manifestations from a gender point of view. One signification of such cultural symbols is found in the use of gender symbols and gender marks. Different professions are gender-marked. The manager of the human resources department is often a woman, as it is with the information manager. Women often have the role of providing a service within the organization.

Kanter (1993) argued in her pioneering work, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (originally published in 1977), that “the job makes the person”. She explored how organizations influenced the people who worked in them and how these people, in turn, came to reflect their situations and their behaviour. She showed that gender differences in organizational behaviour are due to certain structures, and not due to the characteristics of women and men as individuals. She identified three central explanatory dimensions that are relevant to structural determination. These dimensions include (i) the structure of opportunity, (ii) the structure of power, and (iii) the proportional distribution of people of different kinds (i.e. the social composition of peer clusters). I looked for these dimensions in my first empirical study, which included the gender mapping of the real estate industry, and in the second and third empirical studies, which included the interviews.

The structure of opportunity refers to expectations and future prospects. The structure of opportunity of mobility and growth is determined by matters such as (i) promotion rates from particular jobs; (ii) the ladder steps that are associated with a position; (iii) the range and length of career paths that open up from a particular position; (iv) access to challenges and an increase in skills and rewards; and, as a variable for each person, (v) the individual’s prospects relative to others of his or her age and seniority.

The structure of power is determined by both formal job characteristics and informal alliances. Kanter uses the term *power* in a sense that distinguishes it from hierarchical domination. Power is defined as “the ability to get things done, to mobilize resources, to get and use whatever it is that a person needs for the goals he or she is attempting to meet” (Kanter, 1993 p 166).

The variable of proportion refers to the social composition of people in approximately the same situation. Kanter argues that it is a simple quantitative matter to investigate how many people there are of different social types in various parts of the organization, for example, the proportions of women, men, blacks, ethnic minorities within an organization. Being different is a matter of how many similar people that the work force is composed of.

To be able to understand women and men in the organization, Kanter distinguishes four group types that can be identified on the basis of different proportional representations of people in these groups, namely, (i) uniform groups, (ii) skewed groups, (iii) tilted groups, and (iv) balanced groups. Uniform groups contain only one kind of person; one significant social type. The group may develop its own differentiations, but may be considered homogeneous in terms of sex, race, or ethnicity. Skewed groups are those in which there is a large preponderance of one type over another; up to a ratio of perhaps 85:15 according to Kanter. Members of the minority portion in a skewed group can appropriately be called “tokens”, and are often treated as representatives of their groups, as symbols, rather than individuals. Tilted groups display less extreme distributions and produce less exaggerated effects; in this situation, with ratios of perhaps 65:35, the dominant members are just a “majority”, and tokens become a “minority”. Minority members have potential allies among each other, according to Kanter, and can form coalitions and affect the culture of the group. Minority members begin to become individuals who are differentiated from each other, as well as being a type that is differentiated from the majority. At about a ratio of 60:40 and down to 50:50 the group becomes balanced.

Kanter argues that the relative rarity of tokens is associated with three perceptual tendencies: visibility, contrast, and assimilation. Tokens get attention, thus they have higher visibility than dominants alone. This is present in the real estate industry by, for example, women working as real estate managers and women working as CEOs.

Contrast, or polarization, and exaggeration of differences constitute the second perceptual tendency. In uniform groups, members and observers may never become conscious of the common culture and type, which remains taken-for-granted and implicit. The presence of a person bearing a different set of social characteristics may increase the level of self-consciousness of the numerically dominant population, such that they become aware of their shared commonalities, and their differences from the token. To preserve shared commonalities, the numerically dominant population tries to keep the token slightly outside, so as to create a boundary between the tokens and the dominants (Kanter, 1993 pp 210-211).

Assimilation, the third perceptual tendency, involves the use of stereotypes, or familiar generalizations about a person's social type. Tokens are, according to Kanter, more easily stereotyped than people who are found in a greater proportion in the population, and, as Kanter (1993 p 211) points out, "tokens are ironically, both highly visible as people who are different and yet not permitted the individuality of their own unique, non-stereotypical characteristics."

Wahl (1992) constructed the idea of 'gender structure', which includes three different distinctions with respect to gender within organizations. Gender structure, it is claimed, includes three different traits that reveal the gender division within the organization. These distinctions are (i) the number of women and men within the organization; (ii) the segregation between the sexes in occupations, professions, and positions; and (iii) the hierarchical division between the sexes, and influence and power possibilities. Note that the intersectional perspective is not taken into account in Wahl's idea of gender structure.

When I gender mapped the annual reports, I looked for the number of women and men according to Wahl's Distinction 1. I also looked for the segregation between women and men in different positions; thereby invoking Distinction 2. The number of women and men and the segregation among between and men was also discussed in the interviews. Hierarchical division between the sexes, Distinction 3, was also looked for in the mapping and was also discussed in the interviews.

The gender order is central to organizational theory, and the power relations between the sexes are similarly important and are expressed through structures and symbols. This entails, according to Wahl et al (2001), that there will be a gender order in every organization, but this order is changeable. To be able to understand the gender structures, I analysed how 'gender is done'.

Acker (1990) argued that no organizational structure is gender-neutral; abstract jobs and hierarchies assume a disembodied and universal worker. She claims that a theory of gender and organizations is needed for a number of reasons. The first reason is that organizations constitute an arena in which widely-disseminated cultural images of gender are invented and reproduced. Another reason is that some aspects of individual

gender identity, perhaps masculinity in particular, are also products of organizational processes and pressures. Theories of organizations have historically ignored sexuality; a gender-neutral structure is also deemed to be asexual. Gendered organization, according to Acker (1990, p 146) means that “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine”. This can, of course, be criticised as giving expression to an essentialist approach to organizational theory, but Kvande (2007, p 96) counters this potential criticism by claiming that Acker “illustrates how the link between gender as a social construction and women and men can be established historically and contextually rather than essentially”. Gender is not merely an addition to on-going processes that are conceived as gender-neutral. To the contrary, it is an integral part of those processes which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender.

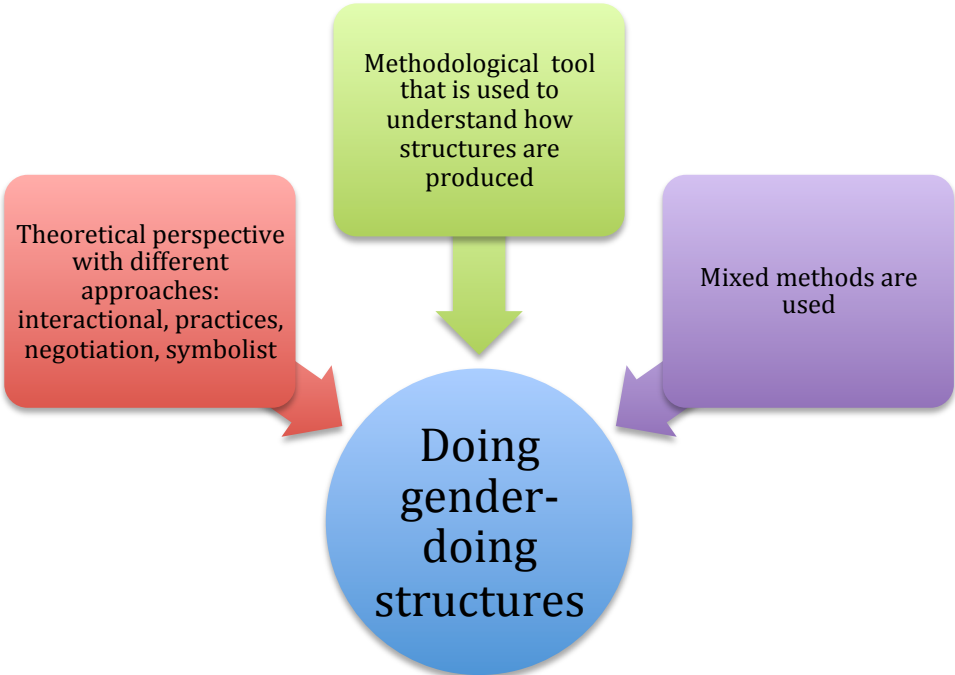
#### **2.4 ‘Doing gender’ and ‘doing structure’**

Kvande (2003) uses the concept ‘doing gender’ as a theoretical perspective that comprises of four different approaches. These approaches are (i) the interactional approach, (ii) the practices approach, (iii) the negotiation approach, and (iv) the symbolist approach.

The *interactional approach* is concerned with how gender is continually created in situations between people, every day, and in a myriad of settings, or how we “do gender”, as West and Zimmermann (1987) put it. The *practices approach* focuses on people’s visible practices and social relations. Acker (1990) applies the concept of ‘gendered practices’ to point out that practices are a local situational matter. The *negotiation approach* highlights the fact that organizations are embodied within people who are engaged in negotiating, collaborating, or even fighting in order to secure their interests in the organizational power structures. From a gender perspective, this approach dictates what men and women are allowed to do within an organization, how they are allowed to behave, and how men and women are to be ranked and valued. Women have to negotiate and choose their own strategies in this context. This approach represents a relational understanding of gender, and it focuses on how masculinities and femininity

are constructed in negotiations between men and women, but also within each gender group. The *symbolist approach* argues that we are guided by perceptions of femininity and masculinity, which, in turn, become tools of orientation for our practice. We use our images of gender as a tool when we orient ourselves, negotiate with others, or do gender.

Understanding structure as process, as activities through which people produce, distribute, coordinate, regulate, and organize social life can be a fruitful practice when one thinks about structures. According to Kvande (2003), structures can be illustrated by studying everyday practices. ‘Doing gender’ can also be seen as a methodological tool in the examination of how structures are actually produced (Korvajärvi, 2003, Kvande, 2003). West and Zimmermann (2009 p 116) state that *any* method that captures members of society’s “descriptive accounts of states of affairs to one another” can be deployed for the study of doing gender, and, in turn, the study of prevailing gender structures.



**Figure 2.** The interpretation and use of ‘doing gender’ and ‘doing structures’.

I use the concept of ‘doing gender’ as a theoretical perspective, and as a methodological tool to understand how the structures in the real estate industry are produced. In doing so, I have used different (mixed) methods, such as gender mapping, interviews, photograph analysis, and quantitative surveys .



Acker (1990, 1992, 1994) identifies four different interacting processes as points of entry into the on-going flow of actions and interactions that constitute organizational life. These processes are analytically distinct, but are parts of the same reality. Gendering may produce gender-explicit or gender-neutral practices. It occurs through concrete organizational activities, and its processes also have class and racial implications.

The first point of entry is through the ordinary, often daily, procedures and decisions that, while they are part of the work that is performed in the organization, also segregate, manage, control, and construct hierarchies in which gender, class, and race are involved. The division of labour, permitted behaviours, locations in physical space, power, the institutionalized means of maintaining the divisions in the structures of labour markets, and the division between the family and the state all construct gender divisions. For example, the highest positions of organizational power are almost always occupied by men. Managerial decisions often initiate gender divisions, and organizational practices maintain these divisions. This state of affairs can also be related to Wahl's (1992) three different distinctions with respect to gender division within the organization.

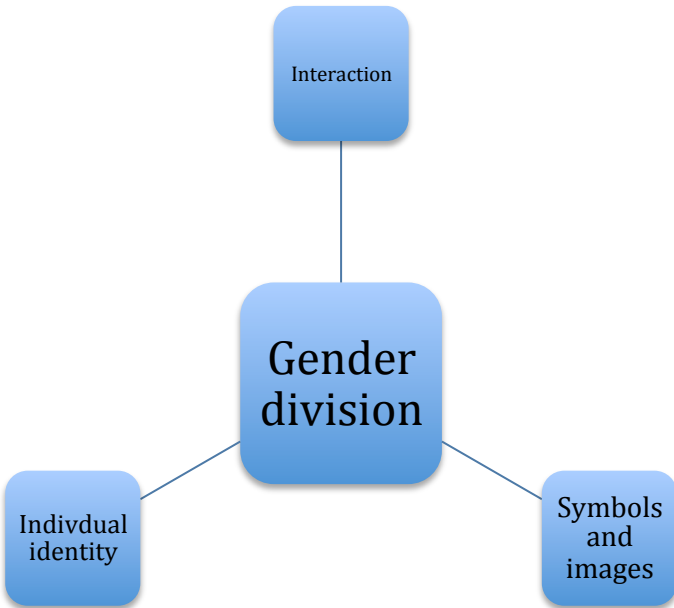
The second point of entry is the construction of symbols and images that explain, express, reinforce, or sometimes oppose the divisions mentioned above. These symbols are derived from many different sources or forms in language, ideology, popular and high culture, ways of dressing, the press, and television, to mention but a few sources. The image of 'the top manager' or 'the business leader' is an image of successful, forceful masculinity. The organization itself is often defined according to Acker (1990, 1992, 1994) through metaphors of masculinity of a certain sort. They are lean, mean, aggressive, goal-oriented, efficient, and competitive, and are rarely empathetic, supportive, kind, or caring. Organizational participants actively create these images in their effort to construct organizational cultures that contribute to competitive success.

The third set of processes that produce gendered social structures, including organizations, are interactions between women and men, women and women, men and men, including all those patterns that enact dominance and submission. According to

Acker (ibid) men are the actors, and women are the emotional support. Interactions may be between supervisors and subordinates, between co-workers, or between workers and customers, clients or other outsiders. Interactions are part of the concrete work of organization, and the production of gender is often “inside” the activities that constitute the organization itself.

Fourth, these processes help to produce gendered components of individual identity, which may include consciousness of the existence of the other three aspects of gender. These components may be realized in organizations in terms of choice of appropriate work, language use, clothing, and the presentation of one’s self as a gendered member of an organization. This may also include the creation of a ‘correct’ gendered persona, and hiding unacceptable aspects of one’s life, such as homosexuality, for example.

In the present study, I analysed structures and used Acker’s conceptualization as a ‘roadmap’ in order to understand the gender structures in organizations. I agree with Korvajärvi (2003) that Acker’s (1990, 1992) conceptualization is the production of gender division, where the other sets of gendered processes support and contribute to the production of gender division.



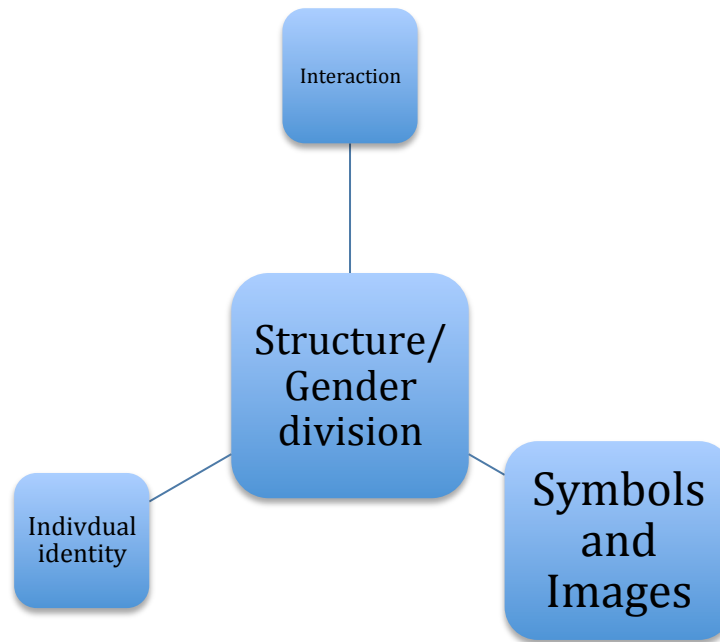
**Figure 3.** Acker’s four different gendering processes.

The practices discussed above are supported by the assumption that work is separate from the rest of life and that work has first claim on the worker. It may be of interest to relate this view to what takes place within family businesses, where the separation between work and the rest of one's private life is not that distinct.

Acker's theories about gendered processes have inspired several studies, for example, Vänje's (2005) study of gender practices and leadership in industrial organizations, and Cettner's (2008) study of women in the construction industry in Sweden. Of note is Linghag's (2009) description of the transition from staff to management in a banking company, and in particular how gender is done in this process. Persson (2011) examined gender relations in the Swedish Armed Forces, and used a 'doing gender' perspective in her discussion of these relations.

Gendered processes are concrete activities, and are realized in what people do and say, and how they think about these activities. Acker's model of gendered processes is particularly useful as an analytical tool for developing an understanding of how gender is done, and is thus relevant to my analysis of the gendered structures in the real estate industry.

I interpreted Acker's sets of gendering processes in such a way that it is claimed that the *structures* form the *gender division*. This is made manifest in *symbols* and *images*, and in the interaction that forms the identity of the persons in the organization. This identity, in turn, forms the *structures* and *gender division*, and also the other way around. If it is not questioned and openly discussed, the organization reproduces the gendered processes that form the structures and gender division. In this study however, the processes of symbols and images take a greater part in this process than interaction and identity do, as presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** An interpretation of Acker’s (1990, 1992, 1994) four sets of gendered processes that are used in this study. (The size of the fonts symbolizes the focus made in the study.)

To see whether, and how, gender is produced and integrated in the on-going activities and interactions, I used Acker’s four sets of gendered processes during the construction of the interview guides. These four sets of processes were also referred to when I analysed the interviews and the photographs in annual reports, and when I developed the questionnaire survey. The gendered division was the starting point that I looked for when I mapped the distributions of gender in the real estate industry. The other three processes were also looked for when I constructed the interview guides. The results from the mapping and the interviews were used when I conducted the questionnaire survey with the university students. In Table 4, Acker’s four sets of gendered processes are presented and some general examples are given.

**Table 4.** Four gendered processes, according to Acker (1990, 1992, 1994).

Four gendered processes (or points of entry) according to Acker (1990, 1992, 1994)	Examples in general
<p><b>Construction of gender division</b> – the division of labour, of allowed behaviours, of locations in physical space, of power, including the institutionalized means of maintaining the divisions in the structures of labour markets, the family, and the State.</p>	<p>The highest positions of organizational power are almost always occupied by men.</p> <p>The manager’s decisions often initiate gender divisions, and organizational practices maintain them.</p>
<p>Construction of <b>symbols and images</b> that explain, expresse, reinforce, or sometimes oppose those divisions. Organizational participants actively create these images in their efforts to construct organizational <b>cultures</b> that contribute to competitive success.</p>	<p>These have many sources or forms in language, ideology, popular and high culture, manners of dress, the press, and television.</p> <p>The image of the top manager or the business leader is an image of successful, forceful masculinity.</p> <p>The organization itself is often defined through metaphors of masculinity of a certain sort. They are lean, mean, aggressive, goal-oriented, efficient, and competitive, but rarely, empathetic, supportive, kind, or caring.</p>
<p><b>Interactions</b> between women and men, women and women, men and men, including all those patterns that enact dominance and submission. Interactions may be between supervisors and subordinates, between co-workers, or between workers and customers, clients or other outsiders.</p>	<p>Men are the actors, women the emotional support.</p> <p>Interactions are part of the concrete work of an organization, and the production of gender is often “inside” the activities that constitute the organization itself.</p>
<p>Processes that help to produce gendered components of <b>individual identity</b>, which may include consciousness of the existence of the other three aspects of gender.</p>	<p>Choice of appropriate work, language use, clothing, and presentation of one’s self as a gendered member of an organization. This includes the creation of a ‘correct’ gendered persona, and hiding unacceptable aspects of one’s life, such as homosexuality.</p>

### 3. Research strategy and methods used

#### 3.1 The role of the researcher

I was inspired to perform the present study by Asplund (1970), who argued that doing research is like solving a mystery; it involves connecting one clue to another in order to try to solve the great mystery about gender structures in the real estate industry. What then is possible to solve? Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that the *ontological* question should be discussed by the researcher. This question addresses how I, as a researcher, view the nature and form of reality and what is possible to know about it. The *epistemological question*, on the other hand, addresses the nature of the relationship between me as a researcher and what can be known. Finally, the *methodological question* is concerned with how the researcher can find what she believes can be known.

As mentioned earlier, the real estate industry initiated a new form of higher education which included a social sciences approach to real estate management at Malmö University in 1998. This new form of education was realized as the real estate management programme. The first group of students who graduated from the programme entered the industry in 2001. I took part of designing the programme with help from representatives of the industry. One step towards generating a closer relationship with the industry was to start the association *Centrum för fastighetsföretagande* (CFFF, Centre for Real Estate Management), which was founded in the year 2000. This centre was also one way of introducing the programme to a wider group of companies in the industry. I was in charge of this association until the end of 2008. I was also head of a unit at Malmö University between 2004-2008, thus my organizational and managerial knowledge was complemented by my knowledge of the industry.

I was tired and angry when I started the research process. To be able to reflect on the industry, I thus decided to step back away from the industry. I vacated my position at the *Centrum för fastighetsföretagande*, realizing that, from the intention of the present study, this was a necessity. My taken-for-granted knowledge about the industry would have restrained my ability to capture knowledge about the industry and gender. My

dissertation supervisor inspired me to write a diary, both as a tool to function as a log of the activities I did, and as a tool for reflexive practice throughout the PhD process. I wrote in the diary regularly, and especially during the first year it was to prove that something was being done. I recall that my supervisor told me to go running or to take a walk while I was doing research: 'You are still working', she told me. I looked at her, not understanding what she was talking about. I was becoming socialized into something else and I often wondered if walking or running would work whilst doing research. Reflexivity involves reflecting on the way in which research is carried out and understanding how the process of doing research shapes its outcome (Hardy et al, 2001). As in my case, reflexivity assumes that a researcher who enters the field is carrying cultural 'baggage' and implicit assumptions about the nature of reality (Bryman and Bell, 2007). By keeping a research diary, I was made aware of the importance of my own part of reflexivity in the research process, and as Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009, p9) claim "reflection can be defined as the interpretation of interpretation and the launching of critical self exploration of one's own interpretations of empirical material."

I wrote frequently in my diary, every day, during the first three years of the research process, but more seldom thereafter. An interesting observation was why wasn't it important for me to write in the diary during the later part of the research process? I might guess by saying that I had become more and more socialized in being a PhD student and more confident with my work. This experience can be compared to an experience that I had during one of my teenage years as an exchange student in the USA. I disliked the first half of the stay, and so wrote in my diary every day. After a while, I moved to a wonderful family and felt more secure about being a foreigner and everything was fine. I stopped writing in my diary.

In my research diary, I wrote about what books or articles that I read. I wrote reflections about the texts that I read and the interviews that I made. I also wrote about the learning process and about my knowledge about gender. Below, are some excerpts from the diary from my first, second, and third year as a PhD student.

April 23, 2009

*Tonight I woke up and I wondered about gender and decided to write my thoughts down in order to understand this concept. In the discussion about gender in the literature, there is the dichotomy about sex, i.e. only two categories: women and men. Post-structural feminism, for example, Bell Hooks, has problematized this concept by claiming that only white, middle class women have given a voice to women, not black women or women from other classes. But notwithstanding this, in research, we are left with the dichotomy of women and men anyway. Why?*

May 11, 2009

*Writing the course paper on gender theory, I wonder about Kimmel. He argues that men only relate to each other, that they act homosocially. Everything is just spinning around in my head. If Kimmel is right, then nothing will ever change...?*

November 4, 2009

*What do I do about intersectionality? Maybe it can be problematized through gender?*

May 4, 2010

*I have realized that I have too much of a variable perspective (counting the amount of women and men in annual reports) and that is not enough in order to do research. It is too obvious. I have to go deeper in order to understand gender. I have to do interviews with representatives from the industry.*

April 11, 2011

*It is so very interesting, the knowledge process. When my knowledge increases, about gender for example, and when I read a text again, I see new things in the text that I haven't noticed before. In this way, knowledge is perpetual. When do I know when to stop? When do I have enough?*

My systematic writing in the diary enabled my thinking about the research practice and my assumptions. This has been very valuable to me, especially during the writing of the dissertation overview. Nadin and Cassell (2006) argue that all researchers should systematically use a research diary. What is needed, first and foremost, is a commitment



to the pursuit of reflexivity and an awareness of one's own *epistemological* assumptions. One of the most fascinating discoveries for me is that I entertained an essentialist view (Alvesson and Billing, 2009) with respect to gender when I started the research process. This observation is probably the most important insight that I have garnered through the research process.

### **3.2 My background and situated knowledge**

Before my employment at Malmö University, I worked in the construction and real estate industry for about 10 years. Working as a real estate consultant at a technical consultancy company, I was one of the first female consultants working in the company. During this time, I attended a trainee programme for future senior consultants and leaders within the company. I was also given the opportunity to develop an education division for the company.

After some reflection, I realize that I was socialised into being a consultant in a technical consultancy company. However, today I consider such a position symbolized as a masculine gendered position. Now that I can be critical of my position at that time, why did I end up with developing an educational division, and nothing else, i.e. something technical?

I was the "female token" as described by Kanter (1993), since I was one of the few women working as consultants at that time. I felt privileged and was portrayed in photographs in the annual reports, and I represented the company in other public situations. After working for nine years in the company, it went bankrupt and I continued my career at Lund University.

After a while, I joined Malmö University where I was part of the team that was tasked to develop the real estate management programme. This was part of the aim of professionalizing the industry. I also realized, looking back on those years, that being socialized as a consultant (who was always looking for new commissions and doing business) was different to working at a university. I did not understand the full extent of the difficulties that arise whilst one is socialized into a new position in a different context. I now know that the culture that I was used to was a fast, 'on the go', and 'a doer'

culture that was completely different from the more reflective university culture. But the position of head of a unit at the university was not any different from being head of a unit outside the university. The big difference, however, was the different hierarchical order at the university, compared to my previous workplaces.

As a woman working in the real estate industry, my curiosity about gender structure increased. This curiosity was present at the beginning of the research process, and was fuelled mainly from the point of view of being a woman. I felt and saw things that I did not like which were related to gender issues, but I did not possess any theoretical framework to refer to at the time. For example, when I was a young woman working for a municipality, I experienced sexual harassment from a male colleague. I was sometime assumed to be the office secretary by customers, when I was actually a project manager. I was treated differently by an older woman (who was in a service position) than the male colleagues, and was told, more than once, that I would be a great human resource manager. But it is also very important to note that I was generally treated very well and had both female and male support and mentors. Given this background information, we note that one's previous life journey will influence the research process. According to Donna Haraway (1991, p 189), 'situated knowledge' refers to the observation that objectivism is impossible to attain. She argues that no one can be 'guilty' of relativism, since it is only possible to see something *from a position*. My position today, which can be described as a middle-aged woman with previous experience in the real estate industry and working at a university, affects what I see. I believe that science is as everything else is, namely, socially constructed.

When I started the research process I was very angry about the gender structures both inside and outside of the real estate industry, but now as I approach the end phase of being a doctoral student, I do not know where to put the anger anymore. Getting to know more about myself has been an interesting process. For example, as Collingwood (1994, p 163) puts it, 'self knowledge is desirable and important to (wo)man, not only for its own sake, but as a condition without which no other knowledge can be critically justified and securely based'. My self-knowledge has affected the research process, in the sense that I am more reflective about my anger and my knowledge about gender. (This might, of course, be an obvious consequence of the research process.) My anger remains, but it is concerned with how I act and do gender myself, and how I contribute to the

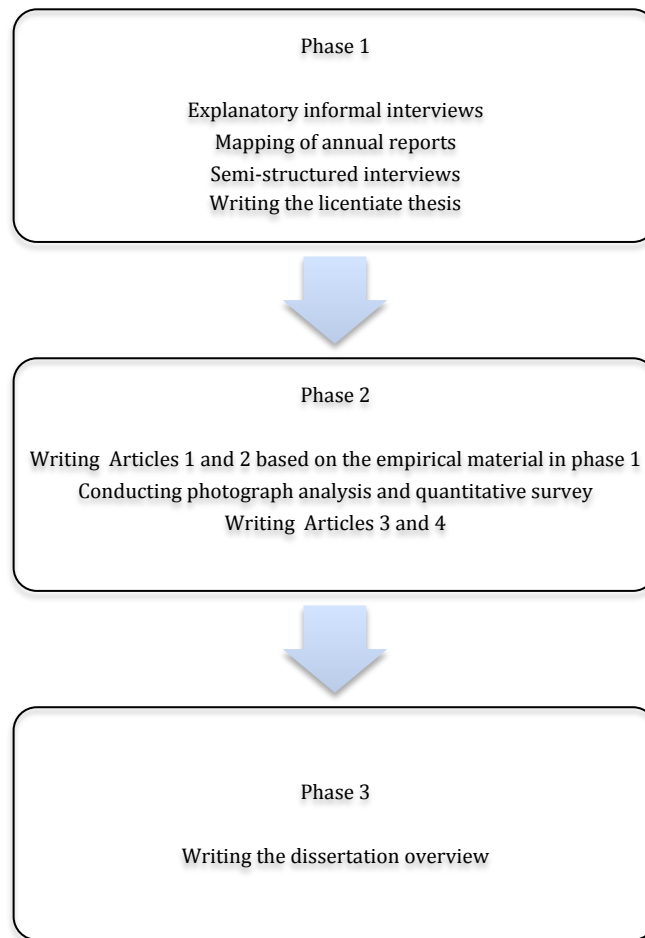
feminist project by doing gender in my everyday life. I was also told that getting into gender theory might end up in me falling into a personal crisis and divorce, but, for me, it has been the other way around. I have become more tolerant and more understanding about gender issues. Moving away from an essentialist view (and for me, an angry state of mind) on gender, to a more critical interpretative view, has been a very meaningful personal life journey.

### **3.3 The research approach and the methods used**

In the following sub-sections, I present a discussion of the research approach that was used in the study.

#### **3.3.1 Research approach**

With regard to the purpose of analysing gender structures in the real estate industry, an interpretive approach has been used, in conjunction with a mixed methods approach. Research methods are much more free-floating than is sometimes supposed in research, but my intention in the present study has been to give preference to qualitative methods. The use of mixed methods involves integrating quantitative and qualitative research within a single project (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The research process in the present study can be understood in terms of three different writing phases. The first phase was the writing of a licentiate thesis. The second phase included the writing the four different articles, and the third, and final, phase was writing the dissertation overview.



**Figure 5.** The three phases of the writing process.

The research process began by conducting exploratory informal interviews in an effort to establish the point of departure of the study. This was identified in terms of what is important to the industry and what challenges lie ahead for the industry. The next step was to obtain a number of statistical facts about gender in the industry. These statistics dealt with the proportional distribution of women and men in different positions within the industry, including their proportional representation on the board of directors and as CEO's. To this purpose, 22 different companies were mapped. Interviews were made with young male and female graduates who were working in different positions, as real estate managers, leasing agents, working with finance, and with women who were working as CEO's. After the statistical work and the interviews were completed, I interpreted the data and reflected upon it. The outcome of this research was the licentiate thesis.

After the licentiate thesis, I wrote 2 articles that were based on the empirical material that was established from the mapping and the interviews. After a period of reflection, I began to examine the annual reports of several companies in the real estate industry. I became curious about what the photographs in the annual reports were expressing in terms of the self-conscious gender tales that were being narrated by the industry (see also Dougherty and Kunda, 1990). Article 3 was written and presented an analysis of the photographs in the annual reports. My interest then turned to examining how the university presented or introduced the real estate industry to prospective and enrolled students, and how the students viewed the industry. After obtaining information about their preferences with respect to their desired future positions in the industry, Article 4 was written. The final phase was to reflect over the whole research process and write the dissertation overview.

A fundamental theoretical assumption that is held in the present study is that knowledge is socially constructed. As discussed briefly earlier, and as outlined by Berger and Luckmann (1966), in the *The social construction of reality*, a central premise within the social constructivist view is that it is impossible to develop knowledge that is based on any “pure” sense-data observation. Since the social world is a product of social processes, there cannot be any given or (pre-)determined nature to the world or people. Consequently, there are no ‘essences’. Most researchers are now sensitive to the notions of ‘gender’ and ‘essentialism’ – the idea that women and men can be defined in terms of a universal, enduring basic quality, thereby avoiding any ‘biological’ explanations of gender (Alvesson and Billing, 2009).

It is through our daily interactions with other people that our versions of knowledge become fabricated. Consequently, social interactions of all kinds are of great interest. What we regard as Truth, i.e. the current, accepted way of understanding the world, is a social product. Truth is deemed not to be a function of objective observations of the world, but, instead, it emerges via the action of social processes and interactions, in which people are constantly engaging with each other. The ways in which we understand things and phenomena and the ways we acquire knowledge are, therefore, historically and culturally relative (Burr, 1995).

Mixed methods research was used in the present study, as mentioned before. I integrated quantitative and qualitative methods in the hope that they would be mutually illuminating with respect to answering the research question (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Arguments against mixed methods research tend to be based on either one or two types of arguments. The first argument invokes the claim that research methods imply certain epistemological commitments, such as positivism or interpretivism. The second argument proposes that quantitative and qualitative research methods belong to separate and, ultimately, incompatible research paradigms (ibid). Notwithstanding these arguments, Kanter (1977) used mixed methods when investigating Indisco as a 'case study of a single organization'. For my purposes in the present study, the use of a mixed method approach has been of tremendous value with respect to understanding gender structures in the real estate industry.

We claim that gender is to be regarded as socially constructed and the categories of 'women' and 'men' are not to be taken-for-granted. This idea is echoed by one of the most famous lines in Simone de Beauvoir's *The second sex*: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (de Beauvoir 1953, p 267). The content of what is regarded as male or female varies over time, place, and social context. Note that both women and men recreate the gender system. This fairly general interpretation of 'doing gender' is what Wickes and Emmison (2007) have called 'ceremonial' referencing. It is the result of an effort to position the authors or the text as gender researcher, but, according to Wickes and Emmison, such texts do not necessarily take up the concept in a conceptual discussion or include it properly in the research methodology. However, I *do* intend in this dissertation overview to discuss the concept 'doing gender', as was done in the previous theoretical chapter, *and* in this chapter, the discussion of the research methodology. I also discuss briefly the interpretation and relation between gender and sex.

*Gender or sex?* It is important to define these terms because they are sometimes used synonymously and sometimes not. *Sex* is ascribed by biology, and *gender* refers to the behavioural aspects of being a woman or a man. *Sex* is a function of an individual's genetic inheritance, whilst *genders* are produced in and via multiple dynamic social processes (Prasad, 2005). As Acker (1992, p 250) puts it, gender is the "patterned,

socially produced distinctions between female and male, feminine and masculine". However, both concepts of 'sex' and 'gender' are problematic. Alvesson and Billing (2002) state that even biological sex is socially defined and must, therefore, be understood as a cultural phenomenon. In addition to this claim, we observe that certain biological features themselves can be subject to medical modification and are therefore not strictly immutable. As a consequence of this overlap, in terms of social definitions and changeability, many researchers use the words *sex* and *gender* as synonyms in their studies, as is done for example by Wahl et al (2011). I agree that *sex* and *gender* can be seen as synonyms. In the present study, I choose to use the word *gender*, since I wish to emphasise the fact that gender is a socially changeable construct.

The epistemological view on *feminism* can be classified across three main perspectives in terms of Harding's (1987) original distinction, and in conjunction with Alvesson and Billing's (2009 p 25) modification of the terminology. In the first perspective, women and men are treated as rather *robust categories*. In the second perspective, gender is believed to be an *organizing principle*. Finally, the third perspective is *post-structural feminism*. The post-structural perspective of feminism questions the gender categories that were taken for granted in the previous perspectives. I can rightly question the common significance between myself as a woman in different ages and also myself in relation to other women in different contexts. The meaning of *woman* is not universal, but varies with the language contexts, i.e. discourses, in which it is used as a *floating signifier*. This is said to hold true for other words, such as *masculinity*. Alvesson and Billing (2009) also discuss a fourth perspective, which they label the *critical-interpretive* perspective. This perspective includes a sceptical view or perspective, which contains some degree of scientific rationality, as opposed to post-structuralism. The view that I maintain is that I have to take scientific rationality into account in order to answer the research questions that are posed in this study. Kvande (2003) employs a series of metaphors in order to provide an understanding of gender in organizations. These metaphors are based on the word classes noun, adjective, and verb ('being', 'becoming', and 'doing'), and are related to the three main perspectives described above. Robust categories are described in terms of gender as a noun: *being*. The organizing principle, the standpoint position, is described in terms of gender as an adjective. The metaphor

that invokes images of *becoming*, and the post-structural perspective, is described in terms of a verb, i.e. *doing* gender.

### **3.3.2 An exploratory approach**

The research process started with an exploratory approach. Informal or unstructured interviews were conducted with five representatives of the real estate industry in the south of Sweden. The respondents were chosen from the network of people who I knew in the real estate industry in the south of Sweden. They were chosen as representing a variety of different experiences and knowledge about the industry. Unstructured interviews are similar in character to a conversation (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Discussion about their views about the past-, present-, and future real estate industry was important as an input to the study. The respondents represented different positions in commercial real estate companies, a public housing company, a construction company, and a consultancy company. (See Table 5.) From information obtained during the interviews, it was noted that there was a change taking place in the industry. This change involved a number of components, for example, the increased focus on the tenants. Another claim was that there are more women working in the industry than previously. In conjunction with this, it was also reported that opportunities to employ women as real estate managers had increased in recent years due to the real estate programme at Malmö University. Although these changes are taking place in the industry, it remains an industry that is dominated by men.

The importance of diversity within the organization was brought up in the interviews. One respondent stated that diversity would contribute to a better culture in the organization. The high school subject, 'Construction Engineering' still forms a common educational background for many people who work as real estate managers.

Most of the people who I interviewed initially thought of women and men in an essentialist way, i.e. man and woman as possessing different qualities. The interviewees said that they hoped for change in the industry with more women and new generations entering the industry. These remarks gave me an awareness of the fact that I had not really understood or problematized gender in depth. To me, internalising gender theory



provided me with the insights that gender is done in interaction and that it varies in time and place.

**Table 5.** Exploratory interviews.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Background /education</b>
Woman	40	Project manager at a construction company, previously worked in an association for the real estate industry	Civil engineer surveying
Woman	60	Human resource director at a public housing company	Bachelor of Science Economy
Man	47	Real estate director at commercial real estate company	Construction engineer
Man	60	CEO of a commercial real estate company	Bachelor of Law
Man	60	CEO of a consultancy company working with the real estate industry	Construction engineer

### **3.3.3 Article 1 and Article 2**

Initially, I was interested in gaining knowledge about how the real estate industry was constituted, in terms of the distribution of women and men in the industry, and the distribution of gender in different positions in the industry. To this end, I wished to either confirm or dismiss preconceived notions.

I first decided to map the distribution of gender in the industry. Facts and figures from 22 Annual Reports were used as a background material for this task. I choose 12 public housing companies of different sizes and 8 large commercial real estate companies. Most of the companies were located in the south of Sweden but I also picked companies from Stockholm and Gothenburg. The companies that were selected for study represent real estate companies that own and manage their own real estate properties. Initially, the

mapping included the years 2001 and 2008, but later on during the research process, reports from 2011 were also included in the database.

8 commercial real estate companies and 14 housing real estate companies were mapped, since, by definition, commercial real estate companies include all real estate companies except housing companies. I primarily used the companies' annual reports to count the number of women and men who were employed in the companies, the composition of women and men on the board of directors, and the gender of the CEO. The choice of information that was mapped was theory-driven, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Mapping the distribution of gender in the industry.

<b>Information that was looked for in the annual report</b>	<b>Information about</b>
<b>Business concept</b>	Business concept
<b>Employed</b>	Variable of proportion according to Kanter (1993), Distinction 1 according to Wahl (1992)
<b>Employed women/men</b>	Variable of proportion according to Kanter (1993), Distinction 1 according to Wahl (1992), Gender division according to Acker (1990, 1992, 1994)
<b>Board of directors women/men</b>	Structure of opportunity and power, variable in proportion according to Kanter (1993), different distinctions according to Wahl (1992), and gender division according to Acker (1990, 1992, 1994)
<b>Chief executive (CEO) woman/man</b>	Structure of opportunity and power, variable in proportion according to Kanter (1993), different distinctions according to Wahl (1992), and gender division according to Acker (1990, 1992, 1994)
<b>Management team women/men</b>	Structure of opportunity and power, variable in proportion according to Kanter (1993), different distinctions according to Wahl (1992), and gender division according to Acker (1990, 1992, 1994)

When I selected the companies which I were to map, my initial intention was to select companies that only conducted their business activities in the south of Sweden, but I

actually ended up with a more varied geographical sample of companies. It seemed to be a rational move to choose members of the *Centrum för fastighetsföretagande* (CFFF, “Centre for Real Estate Management”), which, as mentioned above, is an association with the purpose of establishing closer relations between the real estate industry and universities in the south of Sweden. My research interest also lay in other, larger companies from Gothenburg and Stockholm.

All of the public housing companies that were initially chosen for study were in business throughout the period spanning 2001 to 2011. For the commercial real estate companies, a large number of changes took place during this period; new companies were formed, companies were sold and bought, and companies were divided. One notes, however, that the public housing companies remained, to some extent, unchanged in their organization, and many of the commercial real estate companies were altered as they were bought or sold, and as their business concept changed.

Since I held the preconceived view that the industry employed mostly men with an engineering background or men with little formal education, and but a few women, it was important for me to interview those people who had recently entered the industry with higher education qualifications, but with enough experience to give knowledgeable answers during the interviews. Therefore, the decision was made to conduct semi-structured interviews with 12 graduates, seven women and five men, from the real estate management programme at Malmö University, (see Table 7). The respondents consisted of women and men who attended the very first year of the real estate management programme in 1998 at Malmö University and worked in the south of Sweden. These former students at the real estate programme graduated in 2001 and started to work in the industry the same year. Both the unstructured and semi-structured interview process is flexible and the emphasis was placed on how the interviewee framed and understood the issues and events that I asked questions about (Bryman and Bell, 2007). I made an interview guide with a list of questions that I wished to ask the interviewees. The interview guide is presented in Appendix C. All of the interviews, except one, took place at the respondents’ respective workplaces. One interview took place at my office, since the respondent was on parental leave.

**Table 7.** Brief description of the young male and female graduates who were interviewed.

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Place of interview</b>
1	Woman	public housing	real estate manager	respondent's office
2	Woman	public housing	real estate manager	respondent's office
3	Man	commercial	real estate manager	respondent's office
4	Man	commercial	real estate manager	respondent's office
5	Man	commercial	real estate manager	respondent's office
6	Woman	commercial	real estate manager	respondent's office
7	Woman	municipality	real estate manager	respondent's office
8	Woman	municipality	real estate manager	respondent's office
9	Man	municipality	leasing agent	respondent's office
10	Woman	commercial	leasing agent	my office
11	Woman	commercial	establishing/leasing agent	respondent's office
12	Man	commercial	trader	respondent's office

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The first informal exploratory interviews that were conducted were not recorded and transcribed. Once I had reflected over the process and became more confident in becoming a researcher, I began to understand how important it is to record and transcribe such interviews. It helps the researcher to establish a more thorough examination of what people say, by enabling the researcher to repeatedly examine the interviewees' answers. These transcriptions also allow other researchers to evaluate the original analysis. It also allows the data to be used in ways that were not originally intended from the beginning, for example, in the light of new theoretical ideas (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

During the interview sessions, I began to present the gender mapping of the industry, i.e. facts and figures about the industry. At that time, the mapping included the years 2001 and 2008. My wish was to use the mapping as a starting point; something that the

respondents could react to and discuss their view of the real estate industry in light of their understanding of the mapping. The respondents were asked to describe how they pictured the industry. The respondents' description of their picture of the real estate industry was more or less congruent with their position and with the kind of organization they worked. The most common items that were discussed were about buildings, people, customers, and money. Three of the respondents (two of whom worked as real estate managers in public housing companies) discussed issues in the industry that went beyond just the buildings, and so did one respondent who worked with leasing in the municipality. I argue that the descriptions that were provided to me in the interviews can be seen as visual objects. Visual objects of different kinds have been used, in recent years, to understand social knowledge of a specific community or society; see Meyer, Höllerer, Jancsary, & van Leeuwen, (2013). A summary of the respondents' descriptions of how they might draw the real estate industry, is presented in Table 8. Visual objects were further used when I analysed a series of photographs in the annual reports, as in Article 3.

**Table 8.** If you were to draw a picture of the real estate industry, how would you draw it?

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Position</b>		
1	Woman	Public housing	real estate manager	estate	"Happy people in the middle with a lot of activities in different situations in life, around the buildings that support the people in their daily activities." <sup>1</sup>
2	Woman	Public housing	real estate manager	estate	"A big house filled with different kinds of activities such as retail, small boutique, collective, care, home, and also everything you can work with. I fill it with people and I do not think of money."
3	Man	commercial	real estate manager	estate	"A house with customers and money."
4	Man	commercial	real estate manager	estate	"A house with customers."
5	Man	commercial	real estate manager	estate	"Different kinds of operators, some with the interest in long-term ownership and some short-time ownership."
6	Woman	commercial	real estate manager	estate	"Agreements and communication, a lot of meetings generates business."
7	Woman	municipality	real estate manager	estate	"The house or the project in the middle and around it customers/tenants and administration, construction companies, power distributors,

<sup>1</sup> The interviews are translated from Swedish

8	Woman	municipality	real estate manager	finance, everything around the house. "As a circle with happy customers and money."
9	Man	municipality	Leasing agent	"A limited area with a lot of people, and there are some companies taking care of them, and we have the government that are responsible for planning; the goal is that the people will have good housing, meeting places and to be part of a greater society, a town or a city."
10	Woman	commercial	Leasing agent	"I would draw buildings."
11	Woman	commercial	establishing/ leasing agent	<i>No description made</i>
12	Man	commercial	trader	"A building with a wad of money."

The empirical material from the 12 interviews was used in both Article 1 and Article 2. Some people might claim that interviews produce data that is biased. A key approach to avoid such criticism is to use numerous, and highly-knowledgeable informants who view the focal phenomenon from diverse perspectives, in their roles as actors from different hierarchical levels (Eisenhard and Graebner, 2007). Therefore, the decision was made to conduct semi-structured interviews with strategic working women, i.e. Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) as per Table 9. The CEO's were chosen by using a snowball technique, since the number of women who were working as CEOs in the real estate industry were few and far between. These CEOs were identified in dialogue with my supervisor. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), a snowball sample is when the researcher makes initial contact with a person or a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then use these people to establish contacts with others. A snowball sample is somewhat random, because there is no way of knowing the precise size of the population from which it will be drawn. The CEOs were interviewed so as to obtain a longitudinal view of the experience of women who had worked and made careers in the industry. The interview guide is presented in Appendix D. Four of the five interviews were telephone-interviews, and one interview took place at the workplace of the respondent. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews with the female CEOs were used in Article 2.

**Table 9.** Chief executive officers.

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Background/Education</b>
Woman	51	CEO public housing company	Bachelor of Law
Woman	54	CEO public housing company	Civil engineer
Woman	53	CEO public housing company	Civil engineer
Woman	58	CEO commercial real estate company	Civil engineer
Woman	44	CEO public housing company	Bachelor of Real Estate Science

In the beginning of the research process, the real estate industry was treated as more or less as a single industry. However, I later found out by conducting the interviews, a deeper understanding, that the industry is divided into a number of different sub-industries. Two major distinctions were made between public housing companies and commercial real estate companies. The industry was treated more or less as a single entity in Article 1 and Article 2, since I treated the CEO and real estate manager position as a position in the same context. This can now be questioned, since the context in a public housing company is different to that in a commercial real estate company.

### **3.3.4 Exploratory approach again**

After I wrote the licentiate thesis, I decided to do conduct exploratory interviews with two women who both had a civil engineering background. One woman (47 years old), with previous experience from real estate management, worked as a site manager at a large construction company. The other woman (37 years old) worked as an financial analyst at a large commercial real estate company.

What I found most interesting from these two exploratory interviews was that one of the women said that she *“preferred working with men”*, and the other woman, the female site manager, said that *“men in my organization do as I say, but women often question what I say”*. She also stated that she had not thought about gender a great deal

throughout her career. For me, these were once again expressions of an understanding about how gender or sex is perceived, and also reminded me that we all do gender.

### **3.3.4 Article 3 and Article 4**

As described above, now understanding the different contexts in the industry, I paid greater attention to the difference between public housing companies and commercial real estate companies in Article 3 and Article 4. In Article 3, a comparison was made between photographs in public housing companies' annual reports and the photographs that were published in the commercial real estate companies' annual reports. In Article 4, I established that the industry is heterogeneous when I constructed the questionnaire survey that the students at the real estate programme at Malmö University responded to.

If we all do gender, then how is gender done in practice, for example, as shown in the industry's annual reports? There has been an increase in the number of analyses of visual objects occurring in photographs. Visual means of communication have generally been regarded as a secondary research method in social and cultural research. We live in a society where visual images proliferate, and our ways of seeing and our experiences of and responses to such images are central to our understanding of who we are and where we belong (Ali, 2012). Photographs provide a particularly important source of data in studies of organizational culture and symbolism (Gagliardi, 1990). Dougherty and Kunda (1990) analysed photographs of customers who were represented in annual reports in the computer equipment manufacturing sector. They focused their study on annual reports because they were comparable across organizations and could be studied over time. They state that 'much can be learned from the contrast of seemingly innocent photographs and the self conscious tales they tell.' (Dougherty and Kunda, 1990, p 204).

Representations of gender in texts, figures, and photographs all contribute to gender structures in organizations. Benschop and Meihuizen (2002) argue that the cultural representations of gender in annual reports produce meanings that both constitute and reflect the symbolic gender order in organizations. Thus, as I proceeded along the research process, I became interested in how the visual image of gender is presented in the different companies. How are women and men portrayed in annual reports? I chose



to use the same 22 companies that I had used previously, when I mapped the industry. I produced an excel sheet where each photograph which depicted either a man or a woman in the 22 annual reports from 2011 were analysed. In total, 249 photographs were analysed. I noted whether the person in the photograph was alone or not; whether the photograph showed a person who was employed by the organization, or not; whether the person was alone or together with another person; and, finally, I noted the type of situation in which the person was depicted. The study of the photographs is presented in Article 3.

I became curious of the preferences that the students at the real estate management programme at Malmö University held about their future positions and careers in the real estate industry. The programme started 1998, and almost 15 years have passed since then. So, how do they view their future positions in the industry? I conducted a printed questionnaire survey that was handed out in the spring and fall of 2013 to four different years of students. In total, 141 students (67 women and 73 men) took part in the survey. The survey is discussed in Article 4. I also conducted interviews with 5 teachers (3 women and 2 men) at the real estate management programme. I choose respondents who represented different topics within real estate science, including law, construction/installation, economics, and property development. Also included in the interviews was the programme director who also teaches finance within the programme.

The ambition, according to the programme director, is to include different representation from the industry in the real estate management programme at Malmö University, both in terms of gender and from different organizations. Not many study visits or site visits are included in the programme. Site visits are only made in two courses: the course in 'Installation', and in the 'Property Development' course. In 'Property Development', there is a study visit at a commercial real estate business, since the students study real estate development within a commercial real estate context. In 'Installation', there is no specific kind of organization or company represented. This is not important. The only issue of importance for the course is to find an installation that is of interest technically. During the last couple of years the site visit has taken place at the local public housing company. In the courses in law, there are no study visits and nor do any representatives from the industry visit the courses. In the beginning of the first

year of the programme, several former students in the programme who now represent the industry visit the university and tell the current students about their jobs and careers. Some guest lecturers from the industry take part in some courses, including ‘Property Development’, since this course includes an applied study of an actual building.

### 3.4 Reference material

When I wrote the dissertation overview, additional reference material about the real estate industry was needed so that I could compare the reference material with the previously mapped material in the study (i.e. the 22 different companies). Therefore, a broader sample of companies was examined, as representatives from the Swedish real estate industry. These companies included 33 of the largest real estate companies in Sweden, in 2013. The selection of the particular companies was based on their size in terms of their market value. Some of the companies that I examined as a reference material in 2013 were also included in the previously mapped material.

In terms of the gender mapping that I performed, the industry can be said to be heterogeneous. In Table 10, I present the number of women and men in the largest real estate companies in Sweden (in terms of their market value).

**Table 10.** The proportion of women as employees, working as CEOs, and in management groups in the largest real estate companies in 2013 (Appendix H)

Owner/business concept	Percentage of women in the company	Percentage of CEOs who are women	Percentage of the management teams who are women
State pension fund 5 commercial companies	37%	0%	37 %
State commercial 3 companies	25%	67%	42 % (Indicates a mixed gender balance in the management team)
Municipality/ 12 housing companies	47% (Indicates a mixed gender balance in the total number of employees)	33%	44% (Indicates a mixed gender balance in the management team)
Listed companies 13 companies	34%	15%	31%

In the material, it was noted that no woman worked as CEO in the state-run pension funds, and that there is the same proportion of women, 37% as employed, as in the management teams. In the state-owned commercial real estate companies, two women worked as CEOs out of three possible positions. The real estate in these companies represent special purpose properties. The employed women are 25% and the management teams consist of 42% women.

In 33% of the public housing companies, the CEO position was occupied by a woman. When we examine all of the CEOs in the public housing companies in Sweden in 2014, we note that the proportion of women who work as the CEO is about 16% in all the public housing companies. This indicates that the largest public housing companies employ women to work as CEOs. The proportion of women employed is 47% in the public housing companies. This indicates that they have a mixed gender balance. In the management group, there is also mixed gender balance of 44% women.

In the listed companies there is a female CEO in 15% of the companies. The two different real estate companies which have a woman as a CEO work with retail and housing. The proportion of women as employed and in the management teams is almost the same, namely 34% and 31% respectively.

My finding from the reference material is that only in the public housing companies do we observe that there is a mixed gender balance, both with respect the proportion of women as employed and in the management teams. In the state-owned real estate companies, we observe a mixed gender balance only in the management teams.

The commercial (listed) real estate companies do not display a mixed gender balance, neither with respect to the proportion of women who were employed, female CEOs, or in the management teams.

### **3.5 Summary of the research strategy and methods used**

As described above, the study consists of different types of methods and empirical information. These are presented in Table 11 below.

**Table 11.** Summary of methods and overall understanding.

<b>Method (research technique)</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Aim</b>
Informal interviews (exploratory)	2009	Informal interviews with two women and three men in the beginning of the research process, representing the real estate industry in the south of Sweden.	Create background information about the industry in an informal way. It functioned as a way of discussing the industry and to check my thoughts and beliefs about the industry.
Diary	2009–	From the start of the research process in 2009, I wrote a diary of what I had done and my reflections over my learning.	Create a learning process throughout the study, and function as a distance to the field, and also about my own reflection about the research process.
Mapping of the industry	2009–	Annual reports from 22 companies, 14 housing companies and 8 commercial real estate companies were used. Initially the years of 2001 and 2008 were mapped and later the year of 2011 was included. Theory driven from Kanter (1977), Wahl (1992) and Acker (1990, 1992).	Create an understanding about the numerical gender structure in the real estate industry.
Semi-structured interviews	2010	12 Graduate younger women and men. 7 women and 5 men in different positions in the real estate industry in the south of Sweden. Theory driven from Acker (1990, 1992) Kvande (2002).	Create an understanding of how young graduates understand the real estate industry.
Semi structured interviews	2011	5 Women working as CEO in public housing or commercial real estate companies. Theory driven from Acker (1990, 1992) and Kvande (2002).	Create an understanding of how women who have made a career in the industry understand the industry.
Informal interviews (exploratory)	2012	1 woman working as an analyst in a real estate company and 1 woman working as a site-manager in a construction company, both with previous positions in the real estate industry.	Create an understanding of how women with civil engineering backgrounds and with high positions and long experience of the industry understand the real estate industry from a gender perspective.
Analysis of photographs in Annual Reports	2013	22 Annual reports in 2011; 14 housing companies and 8 commercial real estate companies. an excel sheet was created. Theory driven from Benschop and Muihuizen (2002).	Create an understanding of how photographs in annual reports tell self conscious gender tales. (Dougherty and Kunda, 1990)
Questionnaire survey	2013	Students at the real estate management programme at Malmö University. Four different years were captured; in total 141 students, 67 women and 73 men.	Create an understanding of students' (young people) preferences about their future position in the real estate industry, and an understanding of these young peoples' views on gender

		Theory driven from Wahl (1992), Acker (1990, 1992), and Kvande (2002).	structure.
Interviews	2013	5 teachers (3 women and 2 men) at Malmö University, teaching different real estate management different courses in law, construction, economy, property development, including the programme director.	Create an understanding of how the real estate industry is presented in the real estate management programme.
Mapping of the largest real estate companies	2014	Mapping of the number of women as employees, working as CEOs, and in management groups in 8 Swedish state involved real estate companies, 12 public housing companies, and 13 listed real estate companies. (For further information, see Appendix H.) Annual reports and homepages from 2013 were analysed. Theory driven from Kanter (1977), Wahl (1992), and Acker (1990, 1992).	Create a reference material for the study, including the largest real estate companies in Sweden in 2013/2014.

To summarize the research process, I can conclude that I started out with an essentialist view with respect to gender. Referring to Alvesson and Billing (2009) as mentioned earlier, the epistemological view on gender entailed that I had to go through the stages of women and men as robust categories, women and men as organizing-principles, and an awareness of the post-structural view of women and men as floating signifiers, in order to obtain an overview of gender in the real estate industry. I also argue that using mixed methods in capturing gender in the real estate industry enabled me to rationally capture the “big picture” of gender structure in the industry, which would have not been the case if I restricted myself to using one single method.

## 4. Summaries of the papers

### 4.1 Summaries and overview of the articles

In this section, a summary of each article is provided, where I briefly present the methods and results for each of the articles. Taken together, the articles represent a view of gender structures in the real estate industry. In Table 12, I present an overview of the methods and the empirical material that was used in each article.

**Table 12.** Overview of the articles.

	<b>Article 1</b>	<b>Article 2</b>	<b>Article 3</b>	<b>Article 4</b>
<b>Title</b>	‘‘All of my bosses have been men’’: on gender structures in the real estate industry’	‘Women in the real estate industry’	‘Representations of gender in annual reports in the real estate industry’	‘Gender and positions: students’ preferences about careers in the real estate industry’
<b>Method</b>	Mapping of the industry and interviews	Interviews	Analysis of photographs in annual reports	A questionnaire survey and interviews
<b>Empirical material</b>	Recordings of interviews with 12 women and men who graduated from the real estate programme	Recordings of interviews with 5 female Chief Executive Officers and 5 female Real Estate Managers	Photographs taken from 22 annual reports	Responses from students from four different years at the real estate management programme at Malmö University, and 5 teachers at Malmö University

### 4.2 ‘‘All of my bosses have been men’’: on gender structures in the real estate industry’

This paper is based on my licentiate thesis and was published in *Property Management*, 2013, Issue 5.

The overall aim of this article is to create an understanding of was to present a detailed account of the prevailing gender structure in the real estate industry. The purpose of the study was to describe how young male and female graduates who work in the industry react with respect to the prevailing gender structure in the real estate industry.

The data was collected in two steps. The first step was to map the gender structure in

the industry. This was done by using the annual reports of 22 commercial real estate companies and housing companies in Sweden. In the second step, interviews were conducted with twelve young male and female graduates who were working in the industry.

The finding in this article was that there exist vertical and horizontal divisions between women and men in the organizations. To a greater extent than women, men occupy the CEO position, and men are more often found in technical positions. Women are more often found in the supporting positions within the companies that were studied. Nothing had changed with respect to the gender structure between 2001 and 2008 in the companies that were studied. The young graduates' reactions to the gender structure were made manifest in diverse opinions; generally speaking, none of the respondents were surprised. Regarding the reason why the structure is constituted as it is, there were also diverse opinions, expressed both by women and men. Notwithstanding this, the hegemonic masculinity that is apparent in the industry is one explanation for gender structures and that image-, interaction-, and identity- processes in the industry are dependent on this masculinity.

### **4.3 'Women in the real estate industry'**

The overall aim of this article was to explore how young female graduates who work as real estate managers and women who work as CEOs construct their femininities in positions that are dominated by men. Furthermore, the article explored how they go about creating a career in organizations that are dominated by men. I achieved this aim by studying how they discuss and negotiate their femininities by using different personal strategies, which enable them to work effectively and forge a career in the real estate industry.

Interviews were conducted with seven young female graduates and five women working as Chief Executive Officers.

The finding in this paper was that, to be a woman, and make a career in the real estate industry, women use different strategies to construct their femininities. Young female

graduates who were working as real estate managers and women working as CEOs used different gender-political *strategies* to remain in their male-dominated positions in the real estate industry. One important finding is that (i) the contexts and (ii) having children led to changes in negotiations of gender.

#### **4.4 'Representation of gender in annual reports in the real estate industry'**

The purpose of this paper was to examine how annual reports contribute to the gendering of the real estate industry in Sweden. To fulfill this purpose, representations of gender in photographs in 14 annual reports from public housing companies were analyzed and compared to 8 annual reports from commercial real estate companies in the year 2011.

The empirical data consisted of representations of gender in photographs in annual reports. The sample comprised of the annual reports of different business concepts, i.e., public housing companies and commercial real estate companies. The annual reports were seen as social constructs, that is to say, they were seen as human products that expressed the gendering of the industry. The number of women and men who were employed in the different companies was counted, and images in the annual reports with women and men were also identified and counted. Thereafter, photographs of employees and non-employees were analyzed.

It became clear that different organizations seem to show different levels of awareness regarding representations of gender in the photographs, and that gendering was constructed within and beyond the focal boundaries of the organization. Both public housing companies and commercial real estate companies preserved the gender structure by showing young women, employees, in token positions, and by showing middle-aged men in leadership positions and technical positions.

The photographic representation of women and men who were not employees of the companies differed. The public housing companies preferred to show women taking care of children and the elderly. Men, on the other hand, were portrayed as being active in outdoor activities with their (nuclear) family, playing football, flying kites, and fishing. The images of non-employees in the commercial real estate companies were not



particularly numerous; they showed women and men in a professional urban setting, e.g. as tenants. Young urban women were depicted as store managers, or customers shopping in fashion stores.

Thus we observe that there exist stereotypical images of women and men that serve to maintain the hierarchical gender order (within and beyond the focal boundaries of the organization) in both the public housing companies and commercial real estate companies. The token position, whereby images of one of the few women in the real estate industry were presented, was also made use of. Women were generally underrepresented, and heterosexuality as a norm was also preserved.

#### **4.5 'Gender and positions: students' preferences about careers in the real estate industry'**

The paper presented career preferences that were held by students who were attending the real estate management programme at Malmö University with respect to their future positions in the real estate industry. The research interest lay in establishing which kind of company or organization the students wished to work for in the future, and what kind of customers they wished to provide a service for, i.e. either to households or business-to-business services. Included in the investigation were enquiries about the positions that the students wanted to work in. This entailed asking the students whether they wanted a traditional career, or whether they wished to become a manager and have responsibility for employers. Other issues that were addressed in the interviews included their view of (prospective) parenthood and whether it would affect their future career.

The purpose of the survey was to investigate whether students have a particular view of their future positions when they enter into the programme and during the programme, and whether students at the end of the programme hold a different view. Another aim was to examine whether there were any differences in these views of the future depending upon gender and family background of the student.

Surveys were conducted with students at the real estate management programme at Malmö University. The students who took part in the survey came from across four different years in the programme.

It was observed that the particular year in which the student was at the university did actually matter with respect to the choices that the students made regarding the type of organization the students wanted to work for. The year that the students were at also correlated with their choice with respect to whether they wished to work with households or business-to-business in the industry: the more the student progressed through the programme, the greater was the preference to work for commercial real estate companies and to work business-to-business.

The students' choice with respect to their future position depended on the students' gender and whether their parents worked as managers, and was not related to what year the student was in at university or whether the students' parents worked in the real estate industry.

The real estate management programme at Malmö University has the responsibility of presenting different business concepts and different positions in the industry to the students. It is of great importance to discuss with students the positions that are vertically and horizontally gender-segregated within organizations and how they are affected by structures that also exist outside the real estate industry.

## **5. Discussions and conclusions**

The overall aim of this thesis is to analyse gender structures in the real estate industry in Sweden. The aim is fulfilled by answering four questions: (i) What is the prevailing gender structure of the real estate industry? (ii) How do women who work as CEOs and real estate managers in the industry construct their individual femininities and create a career for themselves in traditionally male-gendered positions? (iii) What images of women and men are presented by the industry through the publication of companies' annual reports? (iv) What preferences do students have with respect to the positions that they hope to fill in the industry in the future?

By answering the four questions above, I aim to create a further understanding of the relation between how gender is 'done' and the prevailing gender structures that exist in the industry. Thereby the "big picture" of the gender structures in the industry is created. As stated in Chapter 3 above, structures are seen as influencing how gender is done. Kvande (2003) and Nentwich and Kelan (2014) argue that there exist strong structural and symbolic contingencies on the practice of gender, and, by studying how gender is done, we can see how structures are produced.

The current chapter continues with a discussion of each of the research questions, followed by a discussion about the overall aim. Even if it is the case that each question was answered in the individual articles, in this section, I elaborate on these questions more generally.

### **5.1 'What is the gender structure of the real estate industry?'**

The question *What is the gender structure of the real estate industry?* is directly related to the overall aim of the dissertation. However, as was clarified earlier in the thesis overview, when I started off on this journey, I took a more essentialist approach towards gender categories. With increased knowledge, my perspective on how to understand gender changed. In this context, I first of all discuss and answer the first research

question by reporting on the figures. A more holistic and developed answer follows when I, at the end of my discussion, answer the overall aim of the thesis.

Initially, the number of women and men on the board of directors, employed as chief executive officer (CEO), and employed as general employees was counted in 22 different companies, in 2001 and 2008. The management teams were counted in 2010. The board of directors of the public housing companies consists of politicians. Interestingly, the CEOs in the public housing companies are appointed by the board, that is to say, by politicians.

It was concluded in Article 1 that there were no differences between the proportion of men and women who were working in the companies that were gender mapped between 2001 and 2008. In the commercial real estate companies, there were no female CEOs in 2001 or 2008. The number of female CEOs in the public housing companies declined from 3, in 2001, to 2 in 2008. In the cases where the CEO was a woman or the position was previously held by a woman, the majority of the management team consisted of women. On all the other management teams (commercial and public), men were in the majority.

Even though there has been an increase in the number of women on the boards of directors in commercial companies, men remain the majority in the management teams in the commercial industry, and all of the CEOs were men.

In light of above, I interpret Acker's (1990, 1992, and 1994) sets of gendering processes such that the *structures* form the *gender division*. This is made manifest via the action of *symbols and images*, in the *interaction* that forms the *identity* of the people in the organization, that in turn form the *structures* and *gender division*. If not questioned on this matter, the organization will continue to reproduce the gendered processes that form the structures and gender division.

## **5.2 'How do the women who work as CEOs and real estate managers in the industry construct their individual femininities and create a career for themselves in traditionally male-gendered positions?'**

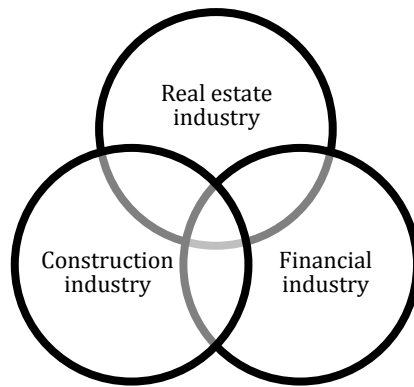
From article 2, "Women in the real estate industry", it can be concluded that women who hold male dominant positions in the industry, challenge the structures of being different. When how 'femininities are done' is analyzed, it can be concluded that it is problematic to assign just one of Kvande's (1999) strategies to this process. From my analysis, it is noted that the strategies that are employed by women are floating, and the boundaries between them are not clear-cut. The article shows that the majority of the women who were interviewed use a combination of two of the four strategies (the compensator strategy and the challenger strategy) as a 'compensator-challenger' strategy. This is especially true for the women who were working in public housing companies or municipality departments. Only one of the real estate managers and only one of the CEOs worked in commercial real estate companies, whereas the other eight worked in public-housing companies or municipality departments.

Being a woman and having a position as CEO or real estate manager remains a somewhat rare position in public housing companies or municipality departments. It can, however, be concluded that femininity is constructed differently in the commercial- and in the public housing companies or in the municipality departments. The women in the public housing companies or municipality departments emphasized the fact that they appreciated that the public companies or municipality department made it possible for them to adapt a long-term perspective on the real estate industry, since these organizations own their real estate properties over a long period of time, have commitments that go beyond the real estate properties, and take good care of the real estate properties and the their tenants, according to the respondents. This expression of satisfaction says something positive about the public real estate management companies and the municipality departments. The fact that public housing companies or organizations have a long term perspective, have commitments beyond the real estate properties themselves, care about the real estate properties and their tenants, can be understood as a symbol by which the public housing companies and municipality construct gender (Acker, 1990, 1992, 1994). In this context, gender is constructed in a specific way in the public-owned companies and in the municipalities. It is a

construction of gender which most of the respondents who represented this type of company or found attractive. The female CEO working in the commercial real estate company (in this case a privately-owned family business) also had 'housing' as business concept, and also preferred a 'long time' perspective. This indicates that women also except long time perspective prefer working towards households. What they express supports feminine values, therefore these values are gendered.

A first lesson that was learned from conducting this sub-study was that there different organizational contexts should be considered in the industry; the commercial and the public context. The retail- and commercial real estate companies, on the one hand, have a more competitive business-to-business culture, where fast decisions are made and many changes are implemented within their respective organizations. The public housing companies and real estate departments in the municipalities, on the other hand, have public responsibilities and more long-term obligations. The respondents in these different contexts expressed different values. These values can be defined as feminine or masculine. The feminine values were found in the public context, and masculine values were associated with the commercial, business-to-business context.

A second lesson that was learned from this sub-study was that the industry is fragmented. A consequence of this fragmentation is that the position of a real estate manager can include very different work tasks and content, depending on which company or organization the person works for. A real estate manager, for example, in a public housing company, takes care of private persons (householders) as tenants and most often than not have no responsibility with respect to finding new tenants. In contrast, a real estate manager in a commercial real estate company has, in some cases, the responsibility for marketing the office space and finding new tenants (in the business-to-business model). Real estate managers in commercial real estate companies often have the responsibility to renovate certain properties, and, therefore, interact closely with the construction industry. This implies that different real estate manager positions as are differently gendered (Acker, 1997, Wahl et al., 2011). Given these different scenarios, I refer back to Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The relation between the real estate-, construction-, and financial industries.

The most interesting thing about this figure is the sections where the circles overlap. The work tasks of a real estate manager can include close interaction with the construction industry; an industry that remains male gendered, since more than 60% of the people employed in this position are men. A different real estate manager position might entail a high level of interaction with the financial industry. In Article 2, several of the respondents said they negotiate a different strategy when they interact with external stakeholders, when compared to the strategy that they use within their own organization. For example, when they left the office to visit a construction site, they thought about how they were dressed, since they did not wish to challenge the fact that they were women. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that, depending upon the type of stakeholder that the real estate manager interacts with, the position as real estate manager is differently gendered.

In Article 2, it is concluded that there are several factors that influence particular strategy that the respondent opts for. For example, factors such as the type of organization one works for, the type of organization one interacts with, one's job position, and one's age. It is also argued in the article that young graduate women who work as real estate managers and the (more experienced) CEOs adapt to different strategies. It was made clear that a shift in strategy was adopted when the respondents became mothers, (see also Kvande 1999). In summary, I observe that context, age, and motherhood are of particular relevance to the interactional strategy that is ultimately adopted by a female employee.

### **5.3 ‘What images of women and men are presented by the industry through the publication of companies’ annual reports?’**

In article 2 entitled “Representation of Gender in Annual Reports in the Real Estate Industry”, it was concluded that women and men (both as employees, and non-employees) are portrayed in stereotypical positions. Such positions were portrayed in both the public housing- and commercial real estate companies’ financial annual reports. As an employee, middle-aged men were often portrayed as the CEO, or in other leading positions, or as maintenance workers. Women were portrayed as the CEO in two of the companies. Young women were portrayed at the front desk (reception), but also in token positions as real estate managers, doing maintenance work, or in doing outdoor summer jobs.

An interesting finding in a report from a commercial real estate company, one woman was depicted in two different photographs, as if it was very important to portray a woman. In the same report, a young woman who was working as a real estate manager was depicted. This particular photograph showed the whole body of the female subject, walking and smiling towards the camera.

In both the public housing companies and in the commercial real estate companies, employees were depicted similarly. However, when non-employees were depicted, I notice a number of differences. For example, commercial real estate companies depicted more women as non-employees than the public housing companies. These women were also depicted in different settings. Women in the public housing companies were more often presented in a private setting, in the role of a mother, shopping for groceries, or taking care of children. In the commercial real estate companies, women were more often depicted in an aspirational urban shopping setting, riding a bike, or reading a magazine.

There seem to be different levels of awareness in the companies with respect to how they present how gender is done. I claim this because the photographs reveal the symbols and images about gender that the companies wish to show, both inside the company, as employees, and outside the company, in terms of non-employees. Women are more often depicted in a passive way, for example, as listening or watching, whilst



men are shown as active, for example drilling, doing maintenance work, or playing football, and, in one case, even windsurfing.

The portrayal of women and men as employees in the companies is congruent with the proportion of women and men who were employed in the real estate companies, as discussed earlier. The difference lies in the companies' attempts to show women, often in token positions, as if there were a need to show that women were employed by the companies.

Showing women and men outside the companies (as non-employees, for example, customers) we note that, in both in the public housing companies and in the commercial real estate companies' annual reports, women were portrayed more often.. Women were more often depicted taking care of children, or having a child on their lap. The commercial real estate companies also showed preference for the depiction of women as shoppers, or working in a clothing store, riding a bike, or reading a magazine. Again, we note a stereotypical way of how gender is done, in terms of the symbols and images associated with women and men. In the photographs, women take care of children, going shopping, ride a bike, and read magazines, whilst men work.

The article shows that, in the public housing companies and in the commercial real estate companies, gender structures are done in almost the same way Men are depicted in the top position and women are more often seen in a supporting position. This was true for both public housing companies and commercial real estate companies, even if as presented young women in token positions.

#### **5.4 'Gender and positions: students' preferences about careers in the real estate industry'**

Occupations and jobs should, according to Acker (2006), be distinguished differently; an occupation is a type of work, whereas a job is a particular cluster of tasks in a specific work organization. Previous research indicates, as discussed in the article 'Gender and positions: students' preferences about careers in the real estate industry', that sex segregation at the job level is more extensive than sex segregation at the level of

occupation (Wharton, 2005). Even when women and men have the same occupation, they tend to work at different jobs and firms. This raised the question of whether the occupation as 'real estate manager' entailed different tasks in different work organization was gendered? Do women prefer to work in public housing companies and service private households, whilst men prefer to work in commercial real estate companies and direct their professional efforts business-to-business?

After writing the first three articles, I concluded that there existed gender segregation, both vertically and horizontally, in the industry. The position of real estate manager was a male gendered position, and, undeniably, an important position to fill in a traditional career path in the industry. It could also be concluded that the industry is fragmented, with the consequence that the real estate manager position can include very different work tasks and content depending on which company or organization a person works in. It was also noted that there were more women working as CEOs in the public housing companies, and that there were more women in the management teams in the public housing companies. The symbols and images presented in the annual reports confirmed the gender structure in the industry, but these annual reports also revealed symbols and images about women and men outside of the industry.

How does the university present the industry to its students? In the first year of the real estate management programme, alumni of the programme present their careers to the new students. These women and men represent different organizations and have different functions within these organizations. In the basic courses in economics and law that follow the first year studies in the programme, no representatives from the industry address the students. In the 'Installation' course, in the second year, there is a study visit to a real estate company. However, the main interest of the study visit lies in the installation technology that is used by the company, and not in the company itself. In the third year, the 'Real Estate Development' course is delivered to the students. In this course, students are tasked to develop an existing building in a commercial real estate company. In this case, different commercial real estate companies are represented each year and the study work that is done by the students is 'hands on', both in respect to redesigning a building and doing a cash-flow analysis. Representatives from the real

estate industry are, in general, very interested in this particular course. This course show-cases the students the positive aspects of working business-to-business.

In the questionnaire survey, students were asked about their preferences about their future positions in the industry. The survey showed that most of the students, both women and men, preferred to work in commercial real estate companies. The higher the year the student was enrolled in, there was a tendency for students to choose to work with commercial real estate companies and also business-to-business.

In the questionnaire survey, questions that could be regarded as gendered were included, for example whether the student preferred to work in a supporting position, to work as a manager, or whether the student wish to be engaged in part-time work. The gender index showed, for example, that women who had parents who worked as managers were more likely to choose career alternatives in more masculine positions.

In summary, this article shows that both male and female students preferred to work in commercial real estate companies and business-to-business. This preference is stronger in later years of the programme. This pattern of preferences indicates that the university may be an influencing factor. The gender index showed that women that have managers as parents had masculine-gendered preferences. This indicates that the influence on student preferences about future positions comes from various sources; from the university, the industry itself, society, and the student's family.

## **5.5 Conclusions of the study**

The aim of this thesis is to analyse gender structures in the real estate industry in Sweden. In the investigation of the prevailing gender structures in the real estate industry, a strategy whereby I asked various questions about how gender is 'done' was implemented, in order to obtain an overview of the gender structures that exist in the industry.

In the dissertation overview, additional empirical material was used, i.e. in addition to the annual reports from 2001 and 2008 (which were used in the first article) an analysis

of annual reports from 2011 was also included in the study. Further to this, reference material from the 33 largest real estate companies in 2013 (based on their size in terms of their market value) was included to the study. Exploratory interviews were also made, as presented in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. The main reason for including this additional information was to provide the reader the most up-to-date figures available from the industry.

The real estate industry is fragmented and consists of different arenas. It is 'fragmented' in that an *occupation* as 'real estate manager' can include very different work tasks and content, depending on the company or organization the person works in. The occupation of real estate manager is thus potentially a different *job* within different organizations.

There exist different arenas in the real estate industry, public housing companies, commercial real estate companies, real estate departments in municipalities, state-owned real estate companies, as well as consultancy firms. Gender is done in interaction; different positions within the organization interact with positions inside and outside the organization, for example, the construction industry. When interacting with the construction industry and with different types of tenants (for example, households or business-to-business) gender is done in different ways.

My roadmap has been informed by Acker's (1990, 1992, 1994) four sets of gendering processes and the interpretation that *structures* form the *gender division*. This is shown and performed via the action of *symbols and images*, and in the *interaction* that forms the *identity* of the persons in the organization. If not questioned and discussed, an organization will reproduce the gendered processes that form the structures and gender division.

First and foremost, the the research questions that were asked in this thesis show that *gender structures were pervasive in the real estate industry* during the period that was studied. The gender mapping of the industry did not show any greater differences in the gender structure between 2001 and 2011. The number of women CEOs in public housing companies were one fewer in 2011, when compared to 2001. The number of

women on the board of directors of the commercial real estate companies increased between 2001 and 2011, but this increase was not to the same extent as in the public housing companies.

There exist different arenas in the industry and there is a *hierarchical order* within these arenas, where commercial real estate companies are regarded to be in a higher position and regarded as more 'masculine' when compared to public housing companies. This is also shown by the students' preferences about their future positions in the industry. It was noted that they preferred to work in commercial real estate companies and business-to-business are preferred. Even though there is a generational shift and a shift of focus on the delivery of services to one's clients, the gender structure in the companies remained almost the same during the period that was studied, both vertical- and horizontal gender division. The same was the case for vertical and horizontal segregation within organizations; men are more often found in higher positions and technical positions, whilst women were predominantly found in supporting positions, and not as often in the real estate manager position as men. When we include the gender mapping of the reference material (the 33 largest real estate companies in 2013), it was found that there was a *balanced gender mix of employees in the largest public real estate companies and also a balanced gender mix in the management teams in the larger public housing companies*. The horizontal and vertical segregation between women and men seems to be sustained and the reason why it has been sustained may lie in gender structures that exist both inside and outside the industry, since these gender structures seem to be pervasive and extend beyond the realm of real estate industry. Notwithstanding this, there change seems to be taking place in the largest public housing companies.

Second, Kanter's (1977) concept of 'token' can be fruitfully used when describing women CEOs and women who work as real estate managers in the real estate industry. In these cases, women are often treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals. The women that were interviewed for this study are of various ages and are in different stages of their careers. Being a woman CEO or real estate manager requires that one uses not only the challenge strategy but also the compensator strategy, or something in between, like a 'challenge-compensator' strategy.

Being a woman in a male-gendered industry and occupying male-gendered positions, implies that one is different, and, to create a successful career, one has to use both strategies. A challenge–compensator could be a woman working at a strategic level for a municipality or housing company who is aware that she does not want to challenge the more masculine business-to-business culture. Instead, she would want to have a strategy with a healthy work-life balance. Working in a public housing company is one way to achieve this strategy. I agree with Kvande (1999) in that there is a shift in strategy when one has children. Women working as CEOs have used different strategies during their careers. One important factor for their development was having children. Consequently, age and motherhood matter. However, it should also be emphasized that the degree to which the individual is embedded in an organizational context matters with respect to the type of strategy or negotiation process she uses. Gender is done in interaction, not only inside the organization itself, but also in interaction with external organizations, for example, the construction industry.

Third, the *symbols and images* of women and men in the industry are obtained in many ways. In annual reports, the portrayal of women and men reveals both a consciousness and unconsciousness about how gender is done and symbolized, and these portrayals thereby contribute in doing gender and doing structures. Middle-aged men are more often portrayed inside the organization as employees, both in the public housing companies and in the commercial real estate companies. Both men and women are portrayed in a stereotypical way; men are portrayed as CEOs or in maintenance work, whilst young women are portrayed at the front desk in the reception or as tokens, as, for example, real estate managers or maintenance workers. Men are also more often depicted engaged in energetic activities by the public housing companies and commercial real estate companies, whilst women are more often depicted in a passive way. Gender is done, and symbolized within and beyond the focal boundaries of the organization.

Fourth, gender is also constructed outside the organization, that is to say when the respondents interact with different types of stakeholders. When *depicting women and men* who are outside the organization, the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies show differences; families and couples are portrayed

in the public housing companies in a hetero-normative way. The commercial real estate companies depict women and men who are outside the organization in urban settings. It is also noted that commercial real estate companies portray women more often than men, and these women are often young urban women in professional settings, or they are sometimes depicted shopping, riding a bike, or reading a magazine. In most previous research on gender structures in organizational studies, there has been a tendency to conduct studies within organizations (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Robyn, 2008). This research is based on the assumption that it is possible to draw sharp boundaries around an organization. This implies the assumption that the physical building constructs the boundaries. Organizational scholars, on the other hand, (for example, Smircich and Stubbart, 1985) have agreed that organizations are preferably understood as open systems, and that boundaries are fluid and in flux.

Fifth, the reaction from the respondents also showed an *essentialist way of looking at women and men*. Such a stance might make it harder for both sexes to enter new terrain because of preconceived notions about being a woman and being a man.

Sixth, the present study also emphasises the importance of the university in presenting the heterogeneity that is present in the industry, and the type of symbols and images that are distributed by the industry. Further to this, the university should provide opportunities for the students to discuss the gender structures that are found within the industry.

To summarize:

- Gender structures are pervasive throughout the period that was studied, both hierarchical and horizontal gender structures.
- Men dominate the industry, but there is a balanced gender mix in terms of the proportion of employees in the larger public housing companies.
- There is a balanced gender mix in the management teams in the larger public housing companies.
- The real estate industry is fragmented, and different real estate manager positions contain different tasks depending on organization.

- The industry interacts with different arenas; for example, with the construction industry and financial industry.
- Symbols and images of how gender is done are present in the industry; for example, how women and men are depicted. The public housing companies and commercial real estate companies use almost the same symbols and images when symbolizing women and men as employees.
- Symbols and images are also used to portray women and men who are outside of the organization, as non-employees. The public housing companies show women in a private setting, taking care of children, or in a family setting more often than the commercial real estate companies. The commercial real estate companies depict women and men in urban settings, for example, shopping, and do not depict women and men family settings.
- Student preferences about their future positions show that working business-to-business and in commercial real estate companies are preferred choices by both female and male students. This preference becomes stronger for women as they enter into the later years of their university studies.



## **6. Contribution**

With respect to its research implications, this study is of value because it places focus on gender issues in the real estate industry; issues that have previously not attracted any research attention. The ultimate aim of the industry must be to offer equal career opportunities for women and men, which, in the long run, will contribute to the development of the industry and society.

### **6.1 Theoretical contribution**

Academic research has, so far, largely overlooked gender issues in the real estate industry. In the field of real estate science, the gender perspective has not been emphasized, not even in terms of an essentialism account. A multidisciplinary contribution to the field, as made in this study, is of value in understanding and developing the field of real estate science.

Gender structures in the real estate industry are analysed in this study, using 'doing gender' as 'doing structures' in the real estate industry. I have developed a certain level of specificity with respect to which aspects of doing gender are focused on. This specificity can, in turn, help to develop theoretical sophistication, according to Nentwich and Kelan (2014). Due to the various methods that were used in this study, I argue that this study contributes to a broader view of gender structures and how gender is done in the real estate industry.

To understand gender issues in organizations also demands an understanding of the organizations that interact with real estate companies and their context. Gender and organizational theory has primarily focused on understanding the internal organization, but may have overlooked the influence and role of external actors in how gender is constructed.

### **6.2 Empirical contribution**

At present, there is a lack of empirical studies of gender issues in the real estate industry. This study contributes to filling this gap. I used annual reports as empirical material, both in the gender mapping and in my analysis of the photographs contained in these

annual reports. To use images as a way of showing how gender is done contributes to an understanding of how gender is done that goes beyond the use of language. Both verbal and visual language can be used to realize the same fundamental systems of meaning in our cultures, but also mode of communication does so by means of its own specific forms.

The gender mapping demonstrated how the gender structure was numerically constituted, and it lay a foundation for an understanding of the real estate industry that was used by my respondents. The heterogeneity and fragmentation of the industry was identified as it was noted that public housing companies and commercial real estate companies have different business strategies and concepts, and that the same occupation may entail different jobs which are gendered differently (Acker 2006) within different companies or organizations.

### **6.3 Practical contribution**

The practical contribution of this study can be divided across *companies, doing annual reports, and the university*. The study can be understood as a practical contribution to the real estate industry in general, and to public housing companies and commercial real estate companies. The practical contribution with respect to doing annual reports concerns public housing companies and commercial real estate companies, and the companies that are hired to help in the production of the annual reports, for example, advertising agents. The thesis also makes a practical contribution to universities as they design educational programmes in the field of real estate management and present the real estate industry to students. This to the design of educational programmes in real estate may be received outside the university system; for example in higher vocational education, in high school, or a commission education context.

#### **6.3.1 Contribution to the real estate industry in general**

- Investigate gender in different positions and do a gender mapping of the company or organization.
- Be aware that gender is made differently depending upon position and unit, as, for example, by leasing agents, maintenance workers, and real estate managers.

- Be aware of the symbols and images that are shown about employees, and who are shown to depict the companies or organization in annual reports or in other information material about the organization.
- Be aware of the symbols and images that are shown in annual reports or in other informational material outside the companies, for example, about tenants or other stakeholders.
- Improve knowledge of those people who are involved in developing information about the company or organization, for example, CEOs, the finance director, the director of information. This includes knowledge of the symbols and images that are presented in annual reports and other materials that presenting the organization.
- Offer more activities and inspiration to the educational programmes at universities and other educational units.
- When employing people to work in the industry, think gender.
- Discuss gender issues in the industry and in the organizations.
- Develop certification for gender awareness.

### **6.3.2 Contribution to public housing companies**

- Improve how images and preferences about working in public housing companies are communicated.
- Be aware of what is emphasised about working in a public housing company, as it seems easier to be a woman in traditional male-gendered position.
- Inspire politicians to develop a mixed gender balance in the board of directors in all public housing companies.
- Investigate why only a few public housing companies have a mixed gender balance in their management teams.
- There are only a few women CEOs in public housing companies, encourage, women to do career.
- Improve how public housing companies are presented in educational programmes at universities and other educational units.
- Improve how public housing companies are presented in more specific in courses at educational units.
- Improve how public housing companies are presented in final project work.

- Offer more activities and inspiration in real estate educational programmes.
- Develop trainee programmes to attract employees so that they can get to know how public housing companies operate.
- Develop research about gender in public housing companies.

### **6.3.3 Contribution to commercial real estate companies**

- Inspire the company to employ more women in all positions in the company.
- Improve how images and preferences about working in commercial real estate companies are communicated.
- Inspire company owners to develop a mixed gender balance in the board of directors in commercial real estate companies.
- Investigate why the management teams in commercial real estate companies are dominated by men.
- There are only a few women working as CEOs in commercial real estate companies. Improve the situation by attracting women to this position.
- Improve how real estate companies are presented in real estate educational programmes at universities and other educational units.
- Improve how commercial real estate companies are presented in more specific in courses at educational units.
- Improve how commercial real estate companies are presented in final project work.
- Develop trainee programmes to attract employees so that they can get to know how commercial real estate companies operate.
- Develop research on gender in commercial real estate companies.

### **6.3.4 Contribution to actors who are involved in producing annual reports, for example, advertising agents**

- Improve knowledge about the real estate industry and gender.
- The advertising agencies that work for the industry should be aware of the symbols and images that are shown in annual reports with respect to the people who work in the industry as employees and with respect to the people who are outside the industry, for example, tenants.

### **6.3.5 Contribution to the university**

- Inspire teachers to be aware of the symbols and images, about the real estate industry, that are distributed in courses.
- Guest lecturer has to be both women and men
- Be aware that the industry is heterogeneous and interacts with other industries.
- Gender should be addressed in real estate courses!
- Develop cases from the industry with gender awareness.
- Educate colleagues at the university about gender.
- Offer commission education to the industry about gender in the industry.
- Gender should be addressed in the course descriptions in the real estate programmes.
- Develop a mentor programme which includes gender awareness.

### **6.4 Future research**

There exist a number of different research topics and avenues of enquiry that address gender issues in the real estate industry. In a future study it would be of interest to focus on why women tend to choose to work in public organizations. What decisions lie behind their choices? Is it a form of compensation strategy that women work in public organizations, that is to say they do not want to be part of the short-term, commercial culture that is dominant in commercial organizations? Instead, they well may choose to follow careers in more stable and long term focused organizations, giving space to their private life too.

In the future, it would be of interest to perform an ethnographic study of different real estate companies, and investigate how daily gendered processes are made.

It would also be of interest to study family real estate businesses and examine how they do gender. Are there any apparent differences regarding gender issues in this type of organization?

Another area worthy of investigation is networking in the real estate industry. One might enquire as to whether one gender is more active in networking than another, who is engaged in networking, how networking operates, and its influence on the industry.

How about mentorship, how does it work and what are the impacts? How about mentor and adept, how about gender?

Finally, one might consider the awareness that politicians have with respect to the representation of gender on boards of directors in state-owned real estate companies. One might ask why there is no balanced gender mix in these companies, despite the fact that we do find some women on the board of directors.

## Epilogue

When I started this research process, I was angry and tired of the gender imbalance in the real estate industry. I held essentialist view of women and men, even though I understood somewhere deep inside that it could not be as simple as that. After working in different positions for more than 20 years after graduating from university I was used to doing things, and doing things fast. One person who I worked with told me “Put down the foot. Make a decision. Don’t wait. Make it fast. That is the most important thing”. Most of us who work in different organizations are socialized into this culture of “running”, and thus time for reflection is lacking. I hope that this study about gender in the real estate industry will inspire others to reflect.

I have been privileged to be able to study gender issues, because when I began the research process in 2009, I thought that this was the most interesting topic at the time. Something had provoked me, in both large and small sublime gestures; as a woman who worked in the real estate industry, in the positions of head of department (both at the university and at a company) but also as a woman in general. Having two children, married, and not being a young woman any more also affected me. I remember when my first daughter was born, I read a book about equality in relationships by Carin Holmberg, entitled *Det kallas kärlek: en socialpsykologisk studie om kvinnors underordning och mäns överordning bland unga jämställda par*. I became furious and disappointed about being a woman after reading this book, and realized that it was not until I had had children that I understood the norms and values associated with being a woman and wanting to pursue a career.

As I started the research process in 2009, my big awakening call came when I was studying the first course, in gender theory at Jönköping Business School. This experience initiated my understanding of the idea that gender is constantly in flux, and it also gave me the inspiration to use Joan Acker’s gendering processes in my own studies.

Engaging in research has been a process of self-knowledge. This journey has provided me a great opportunity in self-reflexion and in getting to know myself, and has enabled me to make my own norms and values visible to others, to some extent. There is still a lot to be angry about around me, but now I have tools which I can use to analyse these problems, so as to better understand them. This means that I have to be reflexive in my own behaviour and in how I act, including how I act towards my family and friends, with colleagues, and with students. This has, by no means, become easier, but at least such interaction is much more interesting and challenging.

Finally, I am very grateful that I, as a woman, living in the 21st century, in the right time, place and context, have been able to have the opportunity to make this journey. Just one generation back, my own mother, who was born in another time, place, and in another context never had the opportunity to do this research journey.



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## Appendix A

### Public Housing Companies

	Company	Head office location
1	EBO AB	Eslöv
2	Helsingborgshem	Helsingborg
3	HFAB	Halmstad
4	Landskronahem	Landskrona
5	LKF	Lund
6	MKB Fastighets AB	Malmö
7	Poseidon	Göteborg
8	Sigtunhem	Sigtuna
9	Simrishamnsbostäder	Simrishamn
10	Skurupshem	Skurup
11	Svenska Bostäder	Stockholm
12	Trelleborgshem	Trelleborg
13	Uppsala hem	Uppsala
14	Vätterhem	Jönköping

## Appendix B

### Commercial real estate companies

	Company	Head office location
1	Wihlborgs	Malmö
2	Diligentia	Stockholm
3	Wallenstam	Göteborg
4	Dagon	Malmö
5	Castellum	Stockholm
6	Kungsleden	Stockholm
7	Hufvudstaden	Stockholm
8	AP-Fastigheter (Vasakronan)	Stockholm

## Appendix C

### Interview guide that was used with young graduate women and men

*First, a reaction to the mapping of the industry.*

What is the real estate industry for you?

What do you think symbolizes the industry?

from these pairs of words, which one word would you choose?

*House or people?*

*Building or money?*

*Housing or commercial?*

*City or real estate*

Can you describe how you would draw a picture of the real estate industry?

*Questions inspired by Acker*

What are your opinions of the proportion of women and men on the boards and in the management groups? (referring to the mapping)

What are your opinions about the proportion of women and men as CEOs? (referring to the mapping)

What are your opinions about the proportion of women and men in the industry?

Have you reflected on this?

How does it affect you?

What is the dress code in the industry?

Who are your heroes and heroines?

Who are your role models?

What metaphor suits your organization?

What metaphor describes your CEO?

What is the general behaviour in your company?

Describe a good day at work!

Do you make the same demands on all your co-workers?

Do you easily cooperate with your co-workers?

What expectations do you have of being in your position?

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview guide used with CEOs**

What kind of education do you have?

Age?

Describe your career!

Reaction to the mapping!

Questions inspired by Acker:

#### **Symbols and Image/ Culture**

Is there a specific culture in the industry or in your company?

Are there different forms of culture in the industry and how does this affect it?

Why do you think that different positions are gender-marked?

Why are there so few women in higher positions in the companies?

Why are there no CEOs in the commercial real estate companies?

Are you aware of a dress code?

#### **Interaction**

How have you coped, working in an industry dominated by men?

What "help" have you received?

What resistance have you encountered?

What or who has been important for your career?

#### **Identity**

What has been the greatest challenge in your career?

Who have been your role-models?

How do you look upon your legitimacy, inside and outside the organization? Has it changed?

Has your identity changed during your career?

Are you aware of being a woman, and has this awareness changed?

How do you regard diversity?

**Concluding questions**

Why do you work in this type of company and not in a housing/commercial company?

Do you think that the industry has changed during the years that you have been working in the industry?

Do you think that the industry has changed during the last 10 years?

**Other reflections**

What is the most important thing that you have learned? How would you summarize your career?

What are the greatest challenges to the real estate industry?

## Appendix E

### Summary statistics of pictures

**Table 1.** Public housing companies (14 companies) - summary statistics of pictures of women and men as employee and non employee (in numbers).

	Mean	Std dev
Number of Employees	133.5	98.35
Women employee	1	1.61
Men employee	3.71	3.12
Women and Men employee	2.28	1.38
Women non employee	1.57	2.17
Men non employee	0.64	1.08
Women and Men non employee	1.07	1.32

**Table 2.** Commercial real estate companies (8 companies) - summary statistics of pictures of women and men as employee and non employee (in numbers).

	Mean	Std dev
Number of Employees	187.37	95.73
Women employee	1.37	2.38
Men employee	3.75	2.37
Women and Men employee	4.25	2.91
Women non employee	1.87	2.69
Men non employee	0.75	1.03
Women and Men non employee	0.5	0.75

## **Appendix F**

### **Questions to course coordinators**

What is the real estate industry to you?

In what way is the real estate industry presented in your course?

In what way is the industry presented in the literature that is used in the course?

Do you have guest lecturer on the course? If so who?

Do you make any study visits? If so where?

Do you refer to someone in the industry? Is there a certain position you refer to?



## Appendix G

### Proportion of women and men in the 33 largest real estate companies in Sweden 2013 (based on market value).

Owner	Number of people employed by the company	women	In %	men	In %	CEO	Number of members in the management team	women	men
1. state/pensionfund	345	121	35%	224	65%	Man	12	3	9
2. state/pensionfund	96	42	44%	54	56%	Man	11	5	6
3. state/pensionfund	141	49	35%	92	65%	Man	5	1	4
4. state/pensionfund	133	56	42%	77	58%	Man	6	3	3
5. state/pensionfund	97	29	30%	68	70%	Man	7	3	4
	812	297	37%	515	63%		41	15	26
		<b>37%</b>		<b>63%</b>				<b>37%</b>	<b>63%</b>
6. state/commercial	407	106	26%	301	74%	Woman	11	5	6
7. state/commercial	122	31	25%	91	75%	Woman	8	2	6
8. state/commercial	117	27	23%	90	77%	Man	14	7	7
	646	164	25%	482	75%		33	14	19
		<b>25%</b>		<b>75%</b>				<b>42%</b>	<b>58%</b>
9. municipality/public housing	300	132	44%	168	56%	Man	11	4	7
10. municipality/public housing	279	104	37%	175	63%	Woman	7	3	4
11. municipality/public housing	277	122	44%	155	56%	Woman	6	3	3
12. municipality/public housing	236	106	45%	130	55%	Man	10	5	5
13. municipality/public housing	259	124	48%	135	52%	Man	9	3	6
14. municipality/public housing	252	171	68%	81	32%	Man	10	4	6
15. municipality/public housing	161	58	36%	103	64%	Woman	8	3	5
16. municipality/public housing	145	90	62%	45	31%	Man	6	2	4
17. municipality/public housing	253	102	40%	151	60%	Man	9	5	4
18. municipality/public housing	88	43	49%	45	51%	Man	7	3	4
19. municipality/public housing	200	99	50%	101	51%	Man	6	2	4
20. municipality/public housing	236	106	45%	130	55%	Woman	9	6	3

public housing

	2686	1257	47%	1419	53%		98	43	55
		<b>47%</b>		<b>53%</b>				<b>44%</b>	<b>56%</b>
21. Listed companies	293	113	39%	180	61%	Man	8	2	6
22. Listed companies	125	45	36%	80	64%	Man	6	1	5
23. Listed companies	196	109	56%	87	44%	Man	7	2	5
24. Listed companies	243	75	31%	168	69%	Man	6	1	5
25. Listed companies	96	37	39%	59	61%	Man	7	1	6
26. Listed companies	192	79	41%	113	59%	Man	7	1	6
27. Listed companies	106	39	37%	67	63%	Man	5	2	3
28. Listed companies	285	60	21%	225	79%	Woman	8	4	4
29. Listed companies	253	58	23%	195	77%	Woman	10	6	4
30. Listed companies	32	17	53%	15	47%	Man	7	3	4
31. Listed companies	153	41	27%	112	73%	Man	7	2	5
32. Listed companies	159	56	35%	103	65%	Man	6	2	4
33. Listed companies	27	11.2	41%	15.8	59%	Man	6	1	5
	2160	740.2	34%	1419.8	66%		90	28	62
		<b>34%</b>		<b>66%</b>				<b>31%</b>	<b>69%</b>



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# “All of my bosses have been men” – on gender structures in the real-estate industry

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of the paper is to create an understanding of the gender structure in the real-estate industry in Sweden. Interviews were made with younger female and male graduates. The purpose is to distinguish how these younger graduates working in the industry react to the gender structure.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 graduate younger women and men working in the real-estate industry in Sweden. As an input to the interviews a mapping of the gender structure was conducted, using annual reports of commercial real-estate companies and public housing companies in Sweden.

**Findings** – The paper provides empirical insights that there were not any greater differences in the gender structure in Sweden, between 2001 and 2008 and none of the respondents were surprised. The symbols of men and the hegemonic masculinity – men more often holding leading and technical positions while women more often hold supporting positions in the industry – are important to understand the gender structure. In the industry the hegemonic engineering masculinity is also apparent.

**Research limitations/implications** – The limitation of the paper might be the time period of the mapping; a longer time period might have shown a change in the structure and the amount of young female and male graduates interviewed.

**Practical implications** – The paper includes implication for the development of the gender structure – awareness is the first step, in order to retain talented women and men.

**Originality/value** – The paper fulfils an identified need to study the gender structure of the real-estate industry.

**Keywords** Gender, Women, Property management

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the real-estate industry in Sweden has initiated and launched a new type of higher education programme that focuses on services. The underlying aim is to open up the industry to a new group of employees: those with a degree in social science and not in engineering (historically, the latter was common practice). Although the purpose was not to attract more women into the industry, this has been the result. This new approach is to contribute to the development of the industry, which has been dominated by men either without college degrees and/or with an engineering approach and background.

The real-estate industry is facing the following two challenges regarding its employees: a generational and an educational shift. This means that those working in the industry today, mostly older men without higher education or with an engineering background, will meet younger and more highly educated men and women, some with a non-Swedish background.

Phillips and Roper (2009) discuss talent management and how to attract and retain the best, brightest employees in order to achieve higher than average market share and elevated profiles. Further on, Gostick *et al.* (2007) report that employees stay when they



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have a quality relationship with their managers, opportunities for personal growth, and professional development, a work-life balance, a feeling of making a difference; meaningful work and adequate training. Philips and Roper (2009) suggest that additional attention should be given to increasing employee engagement to generation Y. In their article they do not include a discussion on gender. Talent is according to them defined as “a core group of leaders, technical experts and key contributors who can drive their business forward”.

In order to attract and retain talent in an increasingly competitive market it is of interest to create an understanding of the gender structure in the real-estate industry.

#### *The gender structure in the industry*

The overall aim of the paper is to create an understanding of the gender structure in the real-estate industry in Sweden. Therefore, interviews were conducted with younger female and male graduates. The purpose is to distinguish how these younger graduates working in the industry react to the gender structure using numerical facts from the financial annual reports about women and men in different higher positions in the industry, to get the answer why the structure is composed as it is.

It is of importance to search for structural explanations and not the characteristics of individuals in organizations. Kanter (1993) says that gender differences in organizational behaviour are due to structure rather than the characteristics of women and men as individuals.

The paper is based on the real-estate industry in Sweden. The mapping of the industry is focused on the corporate market and includes both commercial and public housing companies. To include both commercial and public housing companies in the study is not unproblematic, as they have different business concepts and owners; this will probably affect the organization and structure in different ways.

The paper is based on two different empirical studies. First, the gender structures in commercial and public housing companies were mapped; this is discussed later in the paper. Second, Study 2 contains interviews based on the mapping of the gender structure with younger female and male graduates who have graduated from the Real Estate Management programme at Malmö University, and who anticipate a future career in the industry.

#### *Different roles and functions in the industry*

Within the real-estate industry in Sweden, there are various types of positions. According to Ling and Archer (2008), ongoing property management decisions can be classified into two categories: those that have to do with the day-to-day operation of the property and those that affect the physical, financial, or ownership structure of the property. Property managers are those who are in charge of the day-to-day operations of the property; this is the core function of real-estate management. Asset managers are responsible for the decisions affecting the physical, financial, or ownership structure of the property. According to Palm (2007), a real-estate manager has the following tasks: marketing and letting, space management planning, maintenance, operation, media, and facility management. In Sweden, the real-estate manager has traditionally not been involved in the construction process. The terms real-estate manager and property manager are used synonymously in this work.

## **2. Theoretical background**

For the future, it is important that the industry manages to recruit young women and men. Inspiration comes from the theoretical approach of doing gender (West and

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Zimmerman, 1987), in which gender is conducted in interaction and is a fleeting concept. Using this approach means that the gender structure in the real-estate industry is embedded in everyday interactions and is made through gendered processes (Acker, 1990, 1992, 1994). Additionally, Acker (1992, p. 250) defines gender as a “patterned, socially produced distinction between female and male, feminine and masculine”. Gender is something that is done, and it varies in time and place. According to Lipman-Blumen (1976) men act homosocial, that is the preference for the company of the same sex, and both men and women recreate the gender system.

#### *Gender and organization*

Kanter’s pioneering work from 1977 (*Men and Women of the Corporation*), which argues that “the job makes the person”, is used as an analytical tool in this study. She shows that gender differences in organizational behaviour are due to structure rather than to the characteristics of women and men as individuals. She identifies three variables as central explanatory dimensions for structural determination: The structure of opportunity, the structure of power, and the proportional distribution of people of different kinds (the social composition of peer clusters). These different variables were searched for in the mapping of the industry.

Tokens are, according to Kanter, more easily stereotyped than people found in a greater proportion; and as Kanter (1993, p. 211) points out, “Tokens are ironically, both highly visible as people who are different and yet not permitted the individuality of their own unique, non-stereotypical characteristics”.

When mapping the annual reports, different distinctions were used, including the number of women and men and the segregation among women and men in positions (Wahl, 1992; Wahl *et al.*, 2001). Hierarchical division between the sexes was also examined in the mapping and discussed in the interviews.

Acker (1990) argues that organizational structure is not gender-neutral; abstract jobs and hierarchies assume a disembodied and universal worker. She says that a theory of gender and organizations is needed for a number of reasons. One reason is that organizations are one arena in which widely disseminated cultural images of gender are invented and reproduced. Another reason is that some aspects of individual gender identity, perhaps in particular masculinity, are also products of organizational processes and pressures. The theories of organizations have ignored sexuality, and a gender-neutral structure is also asexual. Gendered organization means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender-neutral; it is an integral part of those processes which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender.

Acker (1990) identifies four interacting processes as points of entry. These are ways into the ongoing flow of actions and interactions that constitute organizational life and are analytically distinct but are parts of the same reality. Gendering may produce gender-explicit or gender-neutral practices. It occurs through concrete organizational activities, and its processes also have class and racial implications.

The first process as point of entry is through the ordinary, often daily, procedures and decisions that, while doing the work of the organization, also segregate, manage, control, and construct hierarchies in which gender, class, and race are involved. The division of labour; the division of permitted behaviours; the division of locations in physical space; and the division of power, including the institutionalized means of

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maintaining the divisions in the structures of labour markets, the family and the state, all construct gender divisions. For example, men are almost always in the highest positions of organizational power, as in the real-estate industry. Managerial decisions often initiate gender divisions, and organizational practices maintain them.

The second process is the construction of symbols and images that explain, express, reinforce, or sometimes oppose, those divisions. These have many sources or forms in language, in ideology, in popular and high culture, in manner of dress, in the press, and in television. The image of the top manager or the business leader is an image of successful, forceful masculinity. The organization itself is often defined through certain sorts of masculine metaphors. They are lean, mean, aggressive, goal-oriented, efficient, and competitive, but are rarely, empathetic, supportive, kind, or caring. Organizational participants actively create these images in their efforts to construct organizational cultures that contribute to competitive success.

The third process is the interactions between women and men, between women and women, and between men and men, including all those patterns that enact dominance and submission. Men are the actors, women the emotional support. In the real-estate industry, men more often hold the technical positions while women hold supporting positions. Interactions may be between supervisors and subordinates, between co-workers, or between workers and customers, clients or other outsiders. Interactions are part of the concrete work of organization, and the production of gender is often “inside” the activities that constitute the organization itself.

The fourth process is the production of gendered components of individual identity, which may include consciousness of the existence of the other three aspects of gender, such as in organizations, choice of appropriate work, language use, clothing, and presentation of self as a gendered member of an organization. This includes creating the correct gendered persona and hiding unacceptable aspects of one’s life, such as homosexuality.

These practices are supported by the assumption that work is separate from the rest of life and that it has first claim on the worker. Gendered processes are concrete activities, what people do and say, and how they think about these activities. I find Acker’s model of gendered processes is useful as an analytical tool for understanding how and why the gender structure is constituted as it is in the real-estate industry.

### *Masculinity*

The industry is male dominated, and the norms are masculine; therefore, it is of great interest to also use masculinity and hegemonic masculinity as an analytical tool in this study. Kimmel (2006) argues that manhood is less about the drive for domination and more about the fear of other men’s domination; in other words, the fear of men having power or control over one another. Throughout history men have been afraid that others will see them as less than manly, as weak, timid, or frightened. In addition, men have been afraid of not measuring up to what it means to be a man, or afraid of failure. Kimmel indicates that it is other men who are important to men, and that men define their masculinity not as much in relation to women as in relation to each other. He says that masculinity is largely a homosocial enactment and that homophobia is the fear of other men. While Kimmel’s study was conducted in the USA, it is possible that the Swedish context might be different; however, several similarities probably exist.

Hegemonic masculinity was first introduced by Connell (1987, 2008) and refers to the dominant form of masculinity within the gender hierarchy. According to Acker (1990), this plays an important part in legitimating organizational power. The term hegemony refers to Antonio Gramsci’s (1967) analysis of class relations, and the

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dynamic that occurs so that a group can maintain a leading position. Therefore, hegemony can only exist with acceptance from the subordinated groups. Although hegemonic masculinity subordinates other masculinities and femininities, it can be challenged by them. In most western societies today, hegemonic masculinity is associated with whiteness, heterosexuality, marriage, authority, and physical toughness.

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*Literature review of the real-estate field*

Having conducted a literature review of the real-estate industry, the conclusion is that the gender issue so far has been more or less overlooked. However, there are studies carried out over recent years into other industries dominated by men, for example, the construction industry and the financial industry.

Cettner (2008) discusses the gender issue in the construction industry, and of interest is that women working in the real-estate industry are included in her study. The question is why many women engineers choose to leave the construction industry. The study shows that the historically traditional male construction industry is almost unchanged. The study also shows that the essence of the problem is about the out dated image of the engineer, as a symbol of manliness and hegemonic masculinity. The question of why many women leave the industry is complex, and the study provides no simple answer. It is up to the construction industry to revise and update itself in order to adapt to modern times, and thereby the odds for successfully increasing and retaining the women engineers will be improved. A possible opportunity for change in the construction industry could be the male culture evident in the consultancy sector, which, according to the study, is more flexible.

Powell *et al.* (2009) explores how women engineers do and undo gender, and their conclusion is that women are using coping strategies as: acting like one of the boys, accepting gender discrimination, achieving a reputation, seeing more advantages than disadvantages, and adopting an anti-woman approach. On the financial industry Renemark (2007) discusses, why so few women work with finance? The study examines people working as analysts, stockbrokers and traders on the sell-side, and fund managers, analysts and dealers on the buy-side of the financial sector. The study revealed distinct gender divisions: the occupations studied can be seen as gendered. No definite answer was found to the question of why so few women work in finance, but several partial answers were presented. It is of importance to circulate alternative images of work in finance, because the work is commonly perceived as appropriate for men. Some parts of the financial sector are still dominated by men, and characterized by a strong competition and sexist jargon.

### 3. Method

The empirical material consists of two studies. The first study consists of a mapping of the industry looking for the numerical facts of women and men in different positions in the organizations, using annual reports and the second study consists of interviews. The purpose was to understand how the gender structure was constituted and the reaction of the interviewees as to why the structure is composed as it is. Since the industry has had mostly older men with an engineering background or men with little formal education, it was of interest to interview those people who have recently entered the industry with higher education qualifications, but with enough experience to have an input to the questions. Therefore, interviews were conducted with graduates from the Real Estate Management programme at Malmö University (graduation in 2001).

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*The study of the industry based on mapping*

The argument for using annual reports as input in order to map the industry is that data are required about the number of women and men in the industry. These reports do not say anything about how or why the structure is constituted as it is, or even what kind of processes that have formed it. However, counting the number of women and men will give numerical facts for the respondents to react upon and a good starting point for the interviews (Wahl *et al.*, 2001). Comparing and counting the number of women and men in 2001 and in 2008 indicates whether there has been a change in the structure. It takes time for structures to change; and since gender is constructed here and now in day-to-day interaction, it is impossible to carry out a retrospective study.

The annual reports from 14 public housing companies and eight commercial real-estate companies were used for mapping. Using the data from 2001 and 2008, the number of women and men employed in the companies, the composition of women and men on the board of directors, and the gender of the CEO were tallied. Additionally, the composition of management boards from 2010 was used because it was hard to find information about management boards in all the annual reports. Therefore, supplementary information was found in the companies' homepages for the present year (2010).

*Interviews with younger graduate women and men*

Twelve students, seven women, and five men, who had attended the very first class of the Real Estate Management programme at Malmö University and graduated in 2001, were chosen for the interviews because they represent something new – a non-engineering academic education tailored to the industry. The interviewees were chosen from the same geographical market – southern Sweden, preferably in Malmö and Lund (Table I).

#### **4. Mapping**

*The industry in figures*

The structure of the board of directors, chief executive officer (CEO), management board, and employees is analysed. The board of directors of the public housing companies consists of politicians. Interestingly, the CEOs in the public housing companies are appointed by the board, that is, by politicians.

*Employees*

In the public housing companies studied, there was no difference between the number of women and men employed between 2001 and 2008. In 2001, the employees were 63 per cent men and 37 per cent women, and in 2008 the employees were 63 per cent men and 37 per cent women. In addition, the total number of employees decreased in the public housing companies between 2001 and 2008. In the commercial real-estate companies there is no difference either between the ratio of men and women employed; in 2001 there were 61 per cent men and 39 per cent women and in 2008 there were 61 per cent men and 39 per cent women.

*Board of directors*

The board of directors in the housing companies consisted of 71 per cent men and 29 per cent women in 2001 and 66 per cent men and 34 per cent women in 2008. The board of directors in the commercial real-estate companies consisted of 92 per cent men and 8 per cent women in 2001 and 79 per cent men and 21 per cent women in 2008. There have been an increasing number of women on the boards of directors of both public housing and commercial real-estate companies from 2001 to 2008; but despite the



**Table I.**  
Younger graduate  
women and men

	Gender	Company	Position	Place of interview
1	Woman	Housing	Real-estate manager	Respondent's office
2	Woman	Housing	Real-estate manager	Respondent's office
3	Man	Commercial	Real-estate manager	Respondent's office
4	Man	Commercial	Real-estate manager	Respondent's office
5	Man	Commercial	Real-estate manager	Respondent's office
6	Woman	Commercial	Real-estate manager	Respondent's office
7	Woman	Municipality	Real-estate manager	Respondent's office
8	Woman	Municipality	Real-estate manager	Respondent's office
9	Man	Municipality	Leasing agent	Respondent's office
10	Woman	Commercial	Leasing agent	My office
11	Woman	Commercial	Establishing/leasing	Respondent's office
12	Man	Commercial	Financial	Respondent's office

increase of women in the commercial real-estate companies, there are still more women on the boards of directors of the public housing companies.

### *CEO*

In the study of the CEOs, the majority of CEOs in real-estate companies in Sweden were men. In the eight commercial companies, there were no women working as CEOs in either 2001 or 2008: Further, there has been a decrease in the number of women working as CEOs in the housing companies: from three to two.

### *Management boards*

There were a larger proportion of women on the management boards of the public housing companies (39 per cent) than on those of the commercial real-estate companies (13 per cent) in 2010. The management boards of the commercial real-estate companies were composed of 87 per cent men and 13 per cent women (four boards of the commercial companies had no women).

### *Findings in the mapping*

It is interesting to note that there are no differences in the proportion of men and women working in the mapped companies between 2001 and 2008. There were no women working as CEOs in the commercial real-estate companies in 2001 or 2008. In the two housing companies with a woman as CEO, the management board consisted of a majority of women; on all the others management boards, there are a majority of men. The number of women working as CEOs in the public housing companies declined from three in 2001 to two in 2008. In March 2010, one of the two women working as a CEO was replaced by a man.

Even though there has been an increase in the number of women on the boards of directors in the commercial companies, there are mostly men on the management boards in the commercial industry and only men working as CEOs.

## **5. Interviews**

The reactions to the mapping of the industry were diverse. None of the respondents was surprised that the men were in the leading positions and that this is the norm in the industry. The respondents also confirmed that women work in supporting positions, such as in human resources, finance, and letting.

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Acker's (1990, 1992, 1994) four different interacting processes were used when structuring the interviews. Gender divisions, symbol and images, interactions, and individual identity: these are different points of entry, a way into the ongoing flow of actions and interactions that constitute organizational life. The presentation of the empirical material presented below is structured according to Acker's four gendering processes. The different processes are overlapping and interrelating, however, as a base for the final discussion there is a value in trying to analyse each one.

### *Gender divisions*

When the respondents reflected upon the mapping it can be concluded that they did not express any major differences. All twelve respondents expressed that the mapping represented their idea about the gender structure in the industry. However, it became obvious in the analysis of the empirical material that the respondents were much influenced by their positions. That is to say, if they worked as a real-estate manager they were provoked by the gender differences. This is a position that is male gendered and has been so historically. This is also a position where the individual interact with the male gendered construction industry, an industry with a typical engineering culture. Leasing agent positions are, on the other hand not typically male gendered. Those positions are quite new in the industry and are hosted by men and women, those respondents had not at all reflected on the gender structure in the industry.

Men are almost always in the highest positions of organizational power, as in the real-estate industry. The image of the top manager or the business leader is an image of successful, forceful masculinity where men are the actors and women are the emotional support. In the real-estate industry, the men are more often in the technical positions and women in the supporting positions. This is shown also in the mapping e.g. in what position they are represented in the management board and confirmed in the interviews.

"Men employ men", said a woman working as a real-estate manager. Another female real-estate manager claimed, "All of my bosses have been men". A third female real-estate manager reported, "One doesn't think of a boss as a woman".

A woman working as a real-estate manager declared, "This mapping seems correct to me; I think it is very male-gendered". Another female real-estate manager added, "It is male gendered, above all in the higher positions". A male real-estate manager concluded, "I am not surprised; this is the proportion of women and men that I thought the industry consists of. Nothing has changed in the higher positions; it is mostly men".

Being a real-estate manager is regarded as a masculine position. One woman stated, "I work as a real-estate manager, and we are two out of eleven".

### *Symbols and images*

Positions are gendered, the position of real-estate manager is masculine gendered and the positions in finance, leasing agent, and human resource are typical supporting positions, and are feminine gendered.

The few of another type can appropriately be called "tokens" (Kanter, 1993) and are often treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals, tokens get attention and have higher visibility than dominants alone.

The women working as real-estate managers seem to have a higher degree of awareness about them being regarded as tokens in comparison to the two women working as leasing agents. A woman working as a leasing agent revealed, "I can understand why it is male gendered; there are a lot of technical skills". A man working

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as a trader affirmed, “The technical part of the industry makes it dominated by men”. A male leasing agent claimed, “Just men are building contractors”.

One female real-estate manager stated, “Women work mostly with finance and administration”, while a male real-estate manager confirmed that “Women work with human resources, finance, administration and leasing”.

Some reactions presented an essentialist view of women and men. “My feeling is that men are more risk-takers than women”, according to a male trader in a commercial real-estate company. The same man added, “There are no differences as regards knowledge between men and women; it is the culture in the industry that matters”.

### *Interactions*

According to Acker (1992) gender is constructed in interaction and defines gender as a “patterned, socially produced distinction between female and male, feminine and masculine” (Acker 1992, p. 250). Gender is something that is done, and it varies in time and place. This interaction takes place in different contexts; not only within an organization but also when employees in the organization interact with different stakeholders, e.g. customers and suppliers.

A female leasing agent revealed, “I meet more females customers today than before within retail and service”. “I am a bit surprised; I thought that the proportion of women would be higher”, declared a man working as a trader. Another man working as a real-estate manager in a commercial real-estate company stated, “It is easier with letting for women”. Another women working as a real-estate managers did not want to challenge the norm and said, “When I go out and look at the construction work, I think of what I wear, I don’t want to challenge the assertion that I am a woman”.

### *Individual identity*

Homosocial reproduction, that men prefer other men (Lipman-Blumen, 1976) might cause the fact that it will take time to get more women into the leading positions in the industry. According to a female leasing agent, “In the real estate industry there are mostly men working; there are more men to choose from”. A female real-estate manager in the municipality claims, “I think a lot has happened since we left Malmö University, but to get more women into the industry will take time”.

One woman working as a real-estate manager in a commercial real-estate company pointed out that it is up to the women themselves to act: “Women have to learn to help themselves, for example, to dare to work as a real estate manager”.

Some women described their experiences of the gender structure and their own experience of being a female token (Kanter, 1993): “It can impede us women, when there are a lot of men; sometimes it is hard to speak out”, said a public housing real-estate manager. Another woman working as a real-estate manager declared, “I feel like an upstart” and also that “I think of what I wear”. According to another female real-estate manager, “You have to handle jokes with sexual content”.

## **6. Analysis and discussion**

The mapping of the industry did not show any greater differences in the gender structure between 2001 and 2008. The reactions to the mapping results from the female and male graduates were diverse, and, generally speaking, none of the respondents were surprised that not much had happened between 2001 and 2008 according the

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gender structure. The reaction also showed an essentialist way of looking at women and men, which in turn might make it harder for both sexes to enter new terrain because of preconceived notions about being women and men.

It seems that it will take time to change the structure, and this will likely depend on different factors. The different gendering processes referred to in Acker (1990, 1992) are useful in understanding why nothing has happened, or why it will take time for change to occur.

The symbols of men and the hegemonic masculinity – men more often holding leading and technical positions while women more often hold supporting positions in the industry – are important to understand the gender structure. In the industry the hegemonic engineering masculinity is also apparent.

The process of interaction between men and women, between women and women, and between men and men show that their positions are important. There seems to be a tendency that both women and men working as real-estate managers, regardless of the organization, are more aware of the domination of men in the industry than those working with letting and transactions.

Furthermore, from the interviews it becomes obvious that gender is constructed also outside the organization, that is to say when the respondents interact with different types of stakeholders. So far, when researching gender structures in organizational studies a tendency has been to conduct studies within organizations (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008); as if it is possible to draw boundaries around an organization. This implies that it has been unconsciously assumed that the physical building constructs the boundaries. The great majority of organizational scholars (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985) have for a long time agreed upon the fact that organizations are understood preferably as open systems, and that boundaries are fluid and in flux.

The gender structure in the real-estate industry will probably change because more women will enter into the industry. These women will also get into higher positions, such as real-estate manager, thus clearing the way to positions at the top of the organizations.

The limitation of this study might be the time period of the mapping; a longer time period might have shown a change in the structure and the number of young female and male graduates interviewed. There are also different business concepts in commercial real-estate companies and public housing companies. Further, the culture of the real-estate industry is probably different in commercial real-estate companies compared to public-owned housing companies and would be an interesting area of further research.

## 7. Implications of the study

Regarding research implication this study is of great value as it puts focus on the gender issue in the real-estate industry, an issue that previously has been overlooked. For practice and society the study clearly shows that the gender issue and gender structure in the industry has to be taken into account. Real Estate Management programmes at universities need to bring in gender as a topic, to create awareness among the future employees in the industry. Furthermore commission education for the industry could create awareness and knowledge among the practitioners in the industry. The ultimate aim must be to offer equal career opportunities for women and men, which in the long run will contribute to the development of the industry and society.

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(Appendix follows overleaf.)

Appendix. Reaction to the mapping of the annual reports

Table AI.

Gender	Company	Position	
1 Woman	Housing	Real-estate manager	<p>"This mapping seems correct to me, I think it is very male-gendered"                      "I feel like an upstart." "Aren't there more women wanting to work in the industry?"                      "It is problematic being a woman and a parent of small children, wanting to pursue a career, and maybe having to work part-time"                      "It is male-gendered, above all in the higher positions"                      "I work as a real estate manager and we are two out of eleven"                      "I think there are more and more women that enter the industry and go into the property management"                      "When I go out and look at the construction work, I think of what I wear, I don't want to challenge that I am a woman"                      "There are almost no women applying when we are looking for caretaker and there are most women applying when we are looking for customer service personnel"                      It is mostly people with a higher education that apply for customer service posts; those applying for janitor posts have lower educational qualifications and more often with an ethnic background other than Swedish"                      "I think the climate is tougher for a woman in the commercial companies, it is a feeling, I haven't been working there"                      "It can impede us women, when there are a lot of men; sometimes it is hard to speak out"                      "I sometimes feel that the expectations of me as a woman are greater than of the men"                      "I am not surprised; this is the proportion of women and men that I thought the industry consists of"                      "Nothing has changed in the higher positions, it is mostly men"                      "There are mostly men in the technical positions"                      "Women work with human resources, finance, administration and letting"                      "I thought it would have had happened a lot"                      "It is mostly men working in property management"                      "It is easier with letting for women"                      "Property-caretaker many women applied for this position when we were looking for one, it sounds "softer"                      "There are more women today"                      "It is still male-gendered above all in the leading positions"</p>
2 Woman	Housing	Real-estate manager	
3 Man	Commercial	Real-estate manager	
4 Man	Commercial	Real-estate manager	
5 Man	Commercial	Real-estate manager	

(continued)

Gender	Company	Position	
6	Woman	Commercial	Real-estate manager
			<p>"All of my bosses have been men"</p> <p>"Women work mostly with finance and administration"</p> <p>"I think it is all about culture"</p> <p>"Women have to learn to help themselves, for example, to dare to work as a real estate manager"</p> <p>"I think it will be loosened up if more men take paternal leave and accept the softer self"</p> <p>"To review the role of being a boss, not having to work 60-70 hours a week"</p> <p>"It will take time, maybe at least 10-15 years"</p> <p>"Older men 50 + have another way of treating me than men my own age"</p> <p>"I am the only real estate manager in my organization, one out of seven"</p> <p>"Women are at a lower level in the organization"</p> <p>"Men employ men"</p> <p>"One does not think of a boss as a woman"</p> <p>"In the real estate industry there are mostly men working; there are more men to choose from"</p> <p>"I think paternal leave does have an influence; men are home some weeks and the women work part-time"</p>
8	Woman	Municipality	Real-estate manager
			<p>"I think a lot has happened since we left Malmö University, but to get more women into the industry will take time"</p> <p>"The real estate managers are both women and men in my organization, an equal proportion, and there is an age mix"</p> <p>"I think there are younger men working preferable often, civil engineers in the commercial real estate companies"</p> <p>"It is different kinds of people who want to work in commercial companies compared with municipalities"</p>
9	Man	Municipality	Leasing agent
			<p>"It is very dominated by men"</p> <p>"Maybe it is the tradition"</p>
10	Woman	Commercial	Leasing agent
			<p>"Building contractors are just men"</p> <p>"I am not surprised that it is this way, we do only have male bosses"</p> <p>"I can understand why it is male-gendered, there are a lot of technical skills"</p>

(continued)

Table AI.



Table AI.

Gender	Company	Position	
11	Woman	Commercial	Establishing/leasing agent
			<p>"I do not think that women apply to the industry"</p> <p>"Women work with marketing, service, information and finance"</p> <p>"I thought there would be more women in the industry"</p> <p>"In the higher positions it is mostly men"</p> <p>"I meet more women today than before as my customer within retail and service"</p> <p>"I am a bit surprised; I thought that the proportion of women would be higher"</p> <p>"The technical part of the industry makes it dominated by men"</p> <p>"I think in some years there will be more and more women in leading positions in the industry"</p> <p>"There are no differences as regards knowledge between men and women; it is the culture in the industry that matters"</p> <p>"A general opinion is that the publically owned organizations are to a greater extent responsible for creating diversity"</p> <p>"There are mostly men working as caretakers"</p> <p>"My feeling is that men are more risk-takers than women"</p>
12	Male	Commercial	Finance

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# Women in the Real Estate Industry

## 1. Introduction

Gender is an emerging topic in the real estate industry; scholarly works are however missing. A number of gender studies have been conducted in the construction industry cf. Cettner (2008), Kyriakidou (2012). This article focuses, however, on the real estate industry, i.e. managing housing and commercial properties, and is a contribution to the field of real estate industry. A group of scholars has focused on the importance of talent management (Phillips and Roper, 2009), i.e. attracting and retaining the best, brightest employees in order to achieve higher than average market share and elevated profiles. According to Phillips and Roper (2009, p.7), talent is “a core group of leaders, technical experts, and key contributors who can drive their business forward.” Gostick and Elton (2007) report that employees stay with their employers when they have quality relationships with their managers, opportunities for personal growth and professional development, a healthy work-life balance, a feeling of making a difference, meaningful work, and adequate training. Phillips and Roper (2009) suggest that additional attention should be given to increasing employee engagement with generation Y.

In order to attract and retain talent in an increasingly competitive market it is important to apply a gender perspective, as the real estate industry is a male-dominated industry (Lind and Lundström, 2009). A gender perspective implies that it is possible to understand how talented women can be attracted to work in the industry.

The overall aim of this article is to explore *how* graduate younger women working as real estate managers and women working as Chief Executive Officer's (CEO's) construct femininities and create a career in organizations dominated by men. I fulfil this aim by studying how they are discussing and negotiating their femininities using different personal strategies which enable them to work and forge a career in the real estate industry.

The article is structured as follows: first, the method of the study is presented. Thereafter follows a theoretical discussion about doing gender, relying on authors who have emphasized the role of the organization as such (Acker, 1990, 1992; Kanter, 1977, 1993; Wahl, 1992). Also theory about the role of motherhood is emphasized (Kvande, 1999). Thereafter follows a presentation of the context of the industry. The theoretical framework is used when presenting and analyzing the empirical findings. The article ends with a concluding discussion, emphasizing theoretical and practical implications.

## 2. Method

To fulfill the aim of the study to explore *how* graduate younger women working as real estate managers and women working as Chief Executive Officer's (CEO's) construct femininities and how they create a career in organizations dominated by men, I conducted interviews with ten women, five who works as real estate managers and five who work as Chief Executive Officers. By analysing how they are discussing and

negotiating their femininities using different personal strategies which enable them to work and forge a career in the real estate industry, I learn how they construct their femininities in organizations dominated by men. The empirical material consists of semi-structured interviews.

To discuss the strategies used by women in the industry, the industry's gender structure was captured by mapping a total of fourteen housing companies and eight commercial companies. In each case, facts regarding the company's current situation were mapped (how many women and men are employed in the company, how many women and men are represented on the board of directors, how many women and men are represented on the management board, and how many women and men are working as CEOs). Annual reports from 2001 were compared to annual reports from 2008 to determine if there had been a change in the number of female and male employees between the two different years. Having this time perspective implies that a longitudinal perspective was taken, which is important as the ambition at this stage was to investigate if there had been any major changes in the industry's gender structure over the past decade.

The main argument for using annual reports when mapping the industry is that it is one way to acquire figures about the number of women and men employed in the industry. The figures neither say anything about why the industry is constituted as it is, nor about what kind of processes that have formed the structure. Although counting the numbers of women and men will only give numerical facts, it is an important way to create awareness of how the industry is comprised. It was also an important part of the interviews as the mapping opened up the interview.

In this study, the biological categories of women and men are used as a point of departure when counting the number of women and men in the industry. Even though it could be argued that gender structures cannot fully be understood by studying the biological sex (Alvesson and Due Billing, 2009), in this study it does however fulfil my purpose: to create an image of the industry to use during the interviews.

Apart from getting reactions during the interviews to the mapping of the gender structure, other questions were included to gain an understanding both about the interviewees career processes in the industry and about how they construct femininities in organizations dominated by men. Based on this data, it was possible to analyze which strategies they used. The first group of respondents the five women working as real estate managers represents a group of younger women; conversely, the second group of respondents the five women working as CEOs represents a more senior group of women who have made careers in the industry.

A purposeful sampling were conducted of five female real estate managers and five women who were employed in similar organizations as CEOs. Real estate managers gain important knowledge from their experiences whilst working; accordingly, it is a valuable position if one wishes to become a CEO in the future.

The respondents are presented in the the two tables below, the first table presentes the young women, and the second the CEOs. The tables report type of company the respondesnts work in,previous positions, age and if they have children or not.

**Table 1.** Real estate managers (women)

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Company/Org.</b>	<b>Previous positions</b>	<b>Educational background; age</b>	<b>Children</b>
A:1	Public housing	Real estate manager in a commercial real estate company	BSc; 33	1
A:2	Public housing	Different positions in the same public housing company	BSc; 31	Expecting first
A:3	Commercial	Real estate manager in a commercial real estate company and in a municipality	BSc; 34	2
A:4	Municipality	Real estate manager in a public housing company	BSc; 34	0
A:5	Municipality	Real estate manager in a commercial real estate company	BSc; 38	2

**Table 2.** Chief Executive Officers (women)

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Company/Org.</b>	<b>Previous positions</b>	<b>Educational background; age</b>	<b>Children</b>
B:1	Housing	Head of real estate management departments in public companies	MSc; 53 years	2
B:2	Housing	Head of real estate department in a commercial real estate company	LLM; 51 years	2
B:3	Housing	CEO of a small family company	D.Tech; 55 years	2
B:4	Commercial	CEO in the construction industry	MSc; 58 years	2
B:5	Housing	Head of a public real estate department	BSc; 44 years	0

Respondents A:1-A:5, the younger real estate managers, are all employed in the south of Sweden; data was used from a local university when sampling this group of respondents. The university offers a program in real estate management; they all graduated in 2001. Respondents B:1-B:5, the CEOs, are not geographically located in the south of Sweden and they have different educational backgrounds. There are only a few women in Sweden in these positions; I received help to identify them. I conducted interviews with four women working in the largest housing companies and with the only woman working as a CEO in a large commercial real estate management company.

This background data presented in the tables above is of interest and relevance when analysing the interview data later in the paper.

### 3. Theoretical background

#### 3.1 Male-dominated Organizations

The real estate industry in Sweden is dominated by men. Moreover, it is an industry that historically can be related to an engineering context. Women in male-dominated organizations use different strategies to construct femininity (Kvande, 1999). Gender can be seen as a basic cultural code and can be understood as an ongoing negotiation in the interaction between women and men, and between women and between men (Haavind, 1992; Kvande, 1999). There are several possible ways for women to negotiate the meaning of femininity in a male-dominated organization (Kvande, 1999). Women and men can be seen as agents whose actions either challenge or confirm the existing gender order and *hegemonic masculinity* (ibid, p308).

Hegemonic masculinity was first introduced by Connell (1987, 2008); it refers to the dominant form of masculinity within the gender hierarchy, which, according to Acker (1990, 1992), plays an important part in legitimizing organizational power. The term hegemony refers to Gramsci's (1967) analysis of class relations; specifically, the dynamic that occurs for a group to maintain a dominant position. Hegemony can only exist through acceptance from subordinated groups. Although hegemonic masculinity subordinates femininities and other masculinities, it can also be challenged by them. According to Connell (1987, 2008), hegemonic masculinity in most contemporary Western societies is associated with whiteness, heterosexuality, marriage, authority, and physical toughness. Connell (ibid) also argues that the gender order in the world still gives men privileges over women.

Wahl (1992) has constructed the idea of gender structure, which includes three different gender distinctions within organizations. Gender structure includes three different traits which show the gender division within an organization: the number of women and men within the organization; the segregation between the sexes in occupations, professions, and positions; and the hierarchical division between the sexes' influence and power possibilities.

#### 3.2 Four strategies

According to Kvande (1999), graduate woman engineers negotiate four ideal construction processes (called "strategies"). The four strategies are: *homeless*, *one-of-the-boys women*, *compensators*, and *challengers*. The four strategies are variations along the *sameness/difference* dimension. Women negotiate whether the meaning of gender should be sameness or difference from men. *Homeless* and *one-of-the-boys women* are in the *sameness* dimension, whereas *compensators* and *challengers* are in the *difference* dimension. The same person can change strategy over time and can even apply different strategies in different situations within the same organization.

*Homeless* is a *sameness* strategy; it is often used by young women who are at an early stage in their careers. Women apply this strategy because they want to fit in as much as possible. *Homeless* implies that they distance themselves from the norms, manners, and

objectives in the organization, but participate according to the rules as a strategy to remain in the industry. According to Kvande (1999), these women are kind and clever, and tend not to participate in the competition with male colleagues; moreover, they are uncertain and undecided about both what it means to be a woman and to what degree they have common interests and shared values with other women.

*One-of-the-boys* is also a *sameness* strategy; it is based on participation and competition with the same means as men. Women who employ this strategy want to be like and to be treated like their male colleagues.

*Compensators* is a *difference* strategy; women who adopt this strategy distance themselves from the profession's values and culture, and either do not want to or cannot participate on men's premises (for example, due to family obligations).

*Challenger* is also based on the idea of *difference*. By using this strategy, challengers reject and criticize certain aspects of the organizational culture and norms. Challengers participate in competing for the opportunities and rewards in the organization, but gradually on their own terms. An important characteristic of challengers is that they do not deny that they or other women are victims of discrimination. They have experienced it, seen it, and admit that it exists; subsequently, they challenge it.

Kvande (1999) found that motherhood influences the gendering process. The strategies categorised as *sameness* are primarily adopted by graduated women who do not have children, while the strategies categorised as *difference* are primarily adopted by graduated women who have family or/and children. She argues that pregnancy implies that the woman erases the idea of gender neutrality at the workplace. Thereafter, childcare puts an end to the image of the women as *one-of-the-boys*. As a result, being a mother confirms the identity as being *different* from the men in the organizations.

On the other hand, *sameness* strategies are based on a woman's understanding of herself as different from other women. A strong feeling of being different from other women is common to those who adopt the strategies of *homeless* and *one-of-the-boys*; it is a consequence of their untraditional socialization (Kvande, 1999).

#### 4. Context of the study – the real estate industry in Sweden

This part of the article reports the result of the mapping of the industry, reported in the method part above. The information found is considered to be important to analyze in relation to Wahl's notion of gender structure.

Some interesting facts in the mapping were found. First, there were no differences in the proportion of men and women working in the mapped companies between 2001 and 2008. Second, there were no women working as a CEO in the commercial real estate companies either in 2001 or 2008. Third, in the two housing companies with a woman as CEO, the management board consisted of a majority of women; on all the other management boards there were mostly men. And fourth, the number of women working as a CEO in the housing companies declined from three in 2001 to two in 2008.

Even though there was an increase in the number of women on the boards of directors in the commercial companies, there were mostly men on the management boards in the commercial industry; moreover, there were only men working as CEOs. In the two housing companies with women as CEOs, there were a larger number of women than men in the management group.

The mapping shows an industry that is male-dominant with few changes throughout the mapped time-period; moreover, the women who enter and seek to forge careers have to cope with being different and must construct strategies to negotiate gender.

## 5. Empirical findings

The empirical findings are presented and analysed under three themes: the first theme is the images of the industry; this theme primarily relates to the respondents' reactions on the mapping of the industry, which was shown for them in the beginning of the interview. The second theme is positions and strategy, and the third is becoming a mother. Thereafter follows a section in which the empirical findings are related to the four strategies by Kvande (1999). The three themes identified are of importance for identifying which strategy the respondents are using.

### 5.1 Images of the industry

When seeing the mapping of the industry CEO (B:2), working for a housing company, responded: "There is a hierarchical order in the industry: first retail centres and then commercial and then housing." CEO (B:3), working for a housing company, said concerning the hierarchical order that: "[working in] housing is less manly than working with commercial real estate."

Because there exists a hierarchical order in the industry and there being more men in leading positions in the commercial real estate companies, the type of organization is of importance, i.e. if it is a commercial or public organization. The public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies have different business concepts and different tasks. The housing companies are public-owned, have politicians on the board of directors, and have responsibilities beyond economic results. Similarly, the real estate department in the municipality is mainly responsible for facilities relating to day-care, schools, and institutions for the elderly.

One real estate manager (A:5) (who works in a municipality but who used to work in a commercial real estate company) said that the culture is more competitive in commercial real estate companies than it is in municipalities. She has had a male boss— younger than herself and with no children—who had no understanding of her being a mother; "I used to work in a commercial real estate company, and it is different kinds of people who want to work in commercial companies compared with municipalities," she said. One CEO (B:1) from a housing company said that "I think the culture in some public organizations has created more equal opportunities."

The image from a real estate manager (A:2) of a housing company regarding commercial real estate companies is clear; "I think the climate is tougher for a woman in the commercial companies; it is a feeling—I haven't been working there," she said.



The business-to-business concept in commercial real estate companies is affecting the dress-code; as one CEO (B:2), working for a housing company, said, “There are different dress codes in commercial and in housing companies; it is more formal in commercial due to business to business.” Another CEO (B:3), from a housing company, said, “It is more relaxed clothing in housing than in commercial companies.” Similarly, the CEO (B:4) working for a commercial company stated, “When I was younger, I wore a suit, but now I am older and I wear what I want—no suits anymore.”

There seems to be a tendency that the women working as CEOs think that a lot has happened to the gender structure of the industry during their careers; as one CEO (B:2), working for a housing company, said, “If you hadn’t told me about the mapping, I would have said that there are more women today. Maybe they haven’t reached the top positions yet? To get a top position you have to have a position in the hierarchical level, in the line.” Another CEO (B:1), who works for a housing company, said, “I think that maybe not much has happened over the past decade; it is about thirty percent women, but in the 1980s and 1990s I think more happened. I was alone in the beginning as a woman, but then something happened.” The same woman (B:1) explained that “it needs courage to employ a woman in male-gendered organizations; you don’t want to be criticized and then it is safer to employ a man.”

Being one of few in the industry has made the women visible, tokens (Kanter, 1977, 1993); one CEO (B:1), working for a housing company, said, “It was easier in the beginning to create a “brand”—when I was alone as a woman.”

The women working as real estate managers are more likely to be aware of the industry as male gendered regardless of organization; one real estate manager (A:1), working for a housing company, said, “This mapping seems correct to me; I think it is very male-gendered.” Another real estate manager (A:4), working in a municipality, said, “In the real estate industry, there are mostly men working—there are more men to choose from.”

The real estate managers are more aware of the gender structure in the industry; one woman (A:3), working for a commercial real estate company, said, “Women work mostly with finance and administration.” Furthermore, the same woman also said that “all of my bosses have been men.” A real estate manager (A:2), working for a housing company, said, “It is male-gendered, above all in the higher positions and we are two women out of eleven working as real estate managers.” Another woman (A:4), working for the municipality, said that “I am the only real estate manager in my organization—one out of seven.”

According to one woman (A:4), working for the municipality, the cause of the structure in the industry is both that “men employ men” and that “one does not think of a boss as a woman.”

How the women respond to the mapping seems to vary according to their position and to the number of years they have been working in the industry. The CEOs were more surprised that not much has changed, whereas the real estate managers found the mapping in line with their expectations.

## 5.2 Position and strategy

From the interviews it becomes obvious that it is a challenge to become a CEO. And, it is probably a greater challenge being a CEO for a commercial real estate company than it is for a housing company; as the CEO (B:4) for the commercial company said, "I am goal-oriented and willing to take risks and challenge myself."

The real estate managers are all younger than the CEOs; accordingly, they are in another part of the process of making strategies to negotiate being women in the industry. One real estate manager (A:1), working for a housing company, said that "I feel like an upstart." Another real estate manager (A:2), from a housing company, said, "When I go out and look at the construction work, I think of what I wear, I don't want to challenge that I am a woman."

Being a token (Kanter, 1977, 1993) is being visible as a woman; one real estate manager (A:2), for a housing company, said, "It can impede us women when there are a lot of men; sometimes it is hard to speak out and I sometimes feel that the expectations of me as a woman are greater than of the men." A CEO (B:2), from a housing company, had the experience that "it can be an advantage being a woman in a male-gendered industry; maybe I had to prove that I could do it. It is maybe harder when you are younger than when you are older. I choose the path that everything is possible."

## 5.3 Becoming a Mother

According to Kvande, there is a shift in strategy when becoming a mother. One real estate manager (A:1), working for a housing company, with one child said, "It is problematic being a woman and a parent of small children, wanting to pursue a career, and maybe having to work part-time." A real estate manager (A:4), working for a municipality, with no children said, "I think paternal leave does have an influence; men are home some weeks and the women work part-time." These two real estate managers had just recently realized there was something problematic being a mother and pursuing a career in the industry; the question is if they will challenge it or not.

The CEO (B:4), working for the commercial company, with grown-up children said, "I think bringing up children is a good experience when working as a CEO;" hence, she is challenging the male-norm. The industry should employ and use women over fifty said one CEO (B:3) working for a housing company, those women have grown up children, men over fifty can still have children.

## 5.4 Analysing the material from Kvande's strategies

First of all it should be said that Kvande's (1999) strategies and characteristics are ideal types; however, they can help us to understand the processes of entering into, of managing to remain in, and of forging a career in the industry. It is common that a woman might adopt to different strategies in different situations, contexts, and positions.

Based on the analysis done above that there is no respondent who adopts the homeless strategy as all have gone further in their careers in the industry. On the other hand, the strategy one-of-the-boys is a strategy that four of the real estate managers have adopted. One

of the real estate managers working for a municipality (B:2) said: “I think of what I wear; I don’t like to wear a skirt. I am the only woman out of seven working as a real estate manager.”

I would argue that some of the real estate managers are beginning to use the compensators strategy and/or the challengers strategies. One-of-the-boys strategy is probably a strategy that all the CEOs adopted in their early careers. One of the CEOs is still using this strategy. She is the youngest CEO and only recently became a CEO. Yet, she has no children.

The strategy of the compensator is somewhat difficult since if one adopts this strategy to a high degree, one would probably leave the industry. However one of the real estate managers uses this strategy in a manner. She has small children to take care of and her husband travels frequently; consequently, she chose to leave the commercial real estate company she worked for in favour of a municipality, where she found it possible to combine being a mother and working as a real estate manager. She (A:5) stated: “It is different kinds of people who want to work in commercial companies compared with municipalities.”

The challengers strategy has been adopted by one of the CEOs (B:4). She has a background in the construction industry, and she is a CEO for a commercial real estate company. This might be due to her previous employment as a CEO in the construction industry, due to her being the oldest respondent, or due to a combination of these factors.

After analyzing the CEOs, it becomes clear that they are in one way or another, using the strategy of being different – they challenge. They stress for example that they do not mind working in the male-dominated industry.

Moreover, they feel that being mothers and raising children is also an asset. They also have in common that they are all goal-oriented. This might be an adaption to the hegemonic masculinity, but it seems to be a common way of thinking among the CEOs.

Age, combined with the process of forging career, has influenced the women throughout their career.

There might be situations when a woman consciously decide not to act as a challenger. This was for example shown in one interview when the respondent said that she dress in a certain way when she for example is going to inspect construction work.

As gender can be seen as an ongoing negotiation in the interaction between women and men, and between women and between men (Haavind, 1999; Kvande, 1999) it is possible to be inbetween different strategies. The two women working for a public housing company are aware of being different. They are both in a shift concerning sameness or difference; one of them has a small child and the other one is expecting a baby. One of them (A:1) said, “I feel like an upstart. ... It is problematic being a woman and a parent of small children—wanting to pursue a career, and maybe having to work part-time.” The other woman (A:2) said that “it can impede us women when there are a lot of men; sometimes it is hard to speak out.” She also said, “I sometimes feel that the

expectations of me as a woman are greater than of the men.” Those quotes shows that they have started to reflect upon gender structures, and how they themselves relate to gender, and which strategies they use.

## 5. Final discussion and contribution of the study

The overall aim of this article is to explore how graduate younger women working as real estate managers and women working as Chief Executive Officer's (CEO's) construct femininities and how they create a career in organizations dominated by men. I fulfil this aim by studying how they are discussing and negotiating their femininities using different personal strategies which enable them to work and forge a career in the real estate industry.

Kvande's (1999) four main construction processes are negotiated by women in the real estate industry. The construction processes were discussed in relation to the women working as real estate managers and the women working as CEOs.

There are different organizational contexts to be considered in the industry. On the one hand, the retail and commercial real estate companies have a more competitive business to business culture, with fast decisions and many changes in the organizations. On the other hand, the public housing companies and real estate departments in municipalities have public responsibilities and more long-term obligations.

When working as a real estate manager, some respondents faced different organizations in different contexts, leading them to negotiate a different strategy than they used within their own organization. That is to say, when they left the office they thought about how to dress to not challenge that they were women.

The women in this study are of various ages and are in different stages of their careers. Being a CEO requires using not only the challenge strategy but also the compensator strategy, or something in-between like a challenge- compensator strategy. Being a woman in a male-gendered industry implies that one is different and to create a career one has to use both strategies. A challenge-compensator could be a woman working at a strategic level for a municipality or housing company who is aware that she does not want to challenge the more masculine business-to-business culture; instead, she would want to have a strategy with a healthy work-life balance. Working in a public housing company is one way to achieve this strategy.

It is interesting to notice that only one of the real estate managers and only one of the CEOs work in a commercial real estate company, whereas eight of the respondents work in publicly-owned companies or organizations. In a further study it would be interesting to focus on why women tend to choose to work in public organizations. What are the strategies behind their choices? Is it, as presented above, a form of compensation strategy that women work in public organizations, that is to say they do not want to be part of the short-term, commercial culture that is dominating in the commercial organizations? Instead they choose to do careers in more stable and long term focused organizations, giving space to private life too.

To summarize, the strategy adapted by the respondents is a result of several factors; for example, the type of organization one is working for, the type of organizations one is interacting with, one's position of employment, and one's age, are all important factors.

I have argued that the younger graduate women working as real estate managers and the CEOs have different strategies to cope with being a woman in a male-dominated industry. To become a CEO, I contend that it is very important to adopt the challengers strategy. I agree with Kvande (1999) that there is a shift in strategy when having children. The analysis above shows that the CEOs have used different strategies during their careers; one important factor for their development was having children. Consequently, age and motherhood matter. But, it should also be emphasized that the embeddedness of the individual in an organizational context matters for what type of strategy or negotiation process she uses.

I have also argued, by referring to Phillips and Roper's (2009) article "a framework for talent management", that in order to retain talents and give opportunities for personal growth, professional development and healthy work-life balance strategies in talent management should be tailored not only for each generation but also to ensure gender diversity.

My contribution to the industry is the knowledge regarding how women use different strategies to negotiate and construct their femininities in the workplace. Moreover, my research has shown that different contexts—both inside and outside organizations— influence how women negotiate femininities.

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# Representations of Gender in Annual Reports in the Real Estate Industry

## 1. Introduction

The front page of the 2011 annual report of Hufvudstaden, a commercial real estate company, showed a photograph of a man walking up a set of stairs; the image became the inspiration for this study of the visual representation of gender in the real estate industry's annual reports. The industry is male dominated in Sweden, though the bare percentages might not suggest a heavy imbalance (60% men versus 40% women). But more men fill its top positions and technical positions, whereas women tend to be found in supporting and service positions (Staffansson Pauli, 2011, 2013).

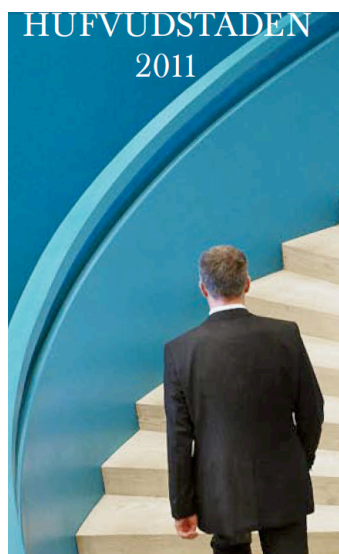


Fig 1. Front page of Hufvudstaden annual report, 2011.

According to Neimark (1992), annual reports are interesting study objects when it comes to gender relations; they provide insight into the network of interrelationships between organizations and their work force, investors, competitors, customers, suppliers, and government officials, as well as into relationships between men and women.

Images and visual artefacts have come to constitute an important mode in the construction, maintenance, and transformation of organizations and their management, and they represent an equally important resource as a language for the social construction of reality. Both verbal and visual language can be used to manifest the fundamental systems of meaning in culture (Meyer et al 2013). The analysis of photographs is a growing approach to social research, and photographs appear in annual reports quite often. Dougherty and Kunda (1990) used photographs found in annual reports to study customers and argued that the photographs reveal aspects of an organization's theories about its customers in a non-verbalized yet substantive way. It is important to note that companies do not have total freedom in writing their annual reports; in Sweden, for instance, such reports are regulated by the Swedish Accounting Act.

The overall purpose of this article is to examine how the annual reports issued by public housing and commercial real estate companies contribute to “doing gender” in the real estate industry in Sweden. Studying these two different types of organizations, which have different corporate and business strategies, is important because both play a significant role in constructing the industry itself.

The analysis of photographs has been conducted in three steps: first, all the photographs depicting a woman, a man, or both were counted; second, the employees portrayed were counted and analysed; third, women and men not employed in the industry but depicted in the annual reports were counted and analysed. This study also compares how public housing companies and commercial real estate companies deal with the issue of gender. Are there any differences in the ways the two types of firm perceive gender and what constitutes the gender of the industry? The assumption here is that gender awareness exists in these wholly municipality-owned organizations (i.e. public organizations) because politicians sit on their boards of directors.

The structure of the paper is as follows: first, the theoretical perspective used in the paper is presented; thereafter, previous studies on images in annual reports are described. We next address the methods used in the study, present the empirical work, and discuss the results; finally, we draw several conclusions about the representation of gender in annual reports.

## **2. Theoretical perspective**

This investigation applies two main perspectives derived from organizational studies. First, critical organization theory questions the neutrality of organizations (Alvesson and Wilmott, 1992), drawing attention to the social, historical, and political construction of knowledge, people, and social relations and questioning the neutrality, rationality, and objectivity of the existing world (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996). Second, theories about the gender structures of organizations show the ways gender is produced and reproduced in organizational processes and practices—in other words, how gender is carried out in organizations. Acker (1990, p 146) argues, “To say that an organization is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine.” There is a gendered division of labour, and the processes of gendering are embedded in everyday organizational work as symbols, practices, and routines (Acker, 1990, 1992). In the present study, this division and these processes are expressed in annual reports.

Acker (1990, 1992) identifies four different interacting processes as points of entry, ways into the on-going flow of actions and interactions that constitute organizational life; they are analytically distinct but parts of the same reality.

The first point of entry comprises the ordinary, often daily procedures and decisions that, while they facilitate the work of the organization, also segregate, manage, control, and construct hierarchies involving gender, class, and race. The division of labour, of permitted behaviours, of locations in physical space, of power—including the institutionalized means of maintaining the divisions in the structures of labour markets, the family, and the state—often reflects gender divisions.



The second entry point comprises the construction of symbols and images that explain, express, reinforce, and sometimes oppose those divisions. The image of the top manager or the business leader is one of successful, forceful masculinity. Organizational participants actively create these images in their efforts to construct organizational cultures that contribute to competitive success.

The third set of processes that produce gendered social structures (among them organizations) constitutes the interactions between women and men, women and women, and men and men, including all those patterns that enact dominance and submission. Men are the actors; women are the emotional support. Interactions may take place between supervisors and subordinates, between co-workers, or between workers and customers, clients, or other outsiders.

Fourth, these processes help to produce gendered components of individual identity, which may include one's consciousness of the existence of the other three aspects of gender—for instance, one's choice of appropriate work language, clothing, and self-presentation as a gendered member of an organization.

Viewing annual reports as social constructs entails seeing them as human products and, as Benschop and Meihuizen (2002 p 614) put it, “allows us to analyse how they express and constitute organisations’ corporate identities.” Tinker and Neimark (1987) do not consider annual reports to be neutral reflections of reality but see them as vital parts in the social production of the meaning of gender and class relations in organizations. Most people conform to the rules and codes of gender-appropriate appearance and personas prescribed in organizations (Acker, 1992).

Language has been the dominant sign system of human society, but it has been emphasized that it is by no means the only one, for visual artefacts are an equally important resource for the social construction of reality (Meyer, 2008). Meyer et al. (2013) argue that both verbal and visual language can be used to realize the same fundamental systems of meaning in our cultures but also that each type of language does so by means of its own specific forms. There are differences, however: verbal language is commonly regarded as linear and sequential. While traditional writing has materialized as successive linear sequences of meaningful units, visual artefacts are characterized by a certain immediacy. Meyer et al. (p 503, 2013) identify five ideal-typical approaches to the study of visuals: archaeological, practical, strategic, dialogical, and documentary approaches. In these approaches the relevance of visuals artefacts is that they “store” and “transmit” the social knowledge of a specific community or society and allow for a reconstruction that they materialize. Typical visual artefacts are photographs and composite visuals and methods of data collection, including archival material from a broad range of genres and media.

The archaeological approach, which is closest to the approach used in this paper, stresses “the status of visual artefacts as manifestations of culture whose meaning, relevance, and use are socially constructed by a particular community or society, i.e. organisations” (Meyer et al., 2013, p 502). This approach focuses on collected “pre-existing” visual artefacts and data, in order to reconstruct the structures of underlying meaning. The visual artefacts serve as “cultural memory.” Hence, what is central is the precise way in which visuals are related to social reality, knowledge, and practice. In

other words, visuals artefacts store and transmit the social knowledge of a specific community or society and allow for a reconstruction of the meaning that they materialize.

## 2.1 Previous studies

Although earlier studies have examined gender in annual reports, this approach has not been applied to the real estate industry. Tinker and Neimark (1987) were the first to recognise the importance of annual reports and gender relations. They conducted a longitudinal study of General Motors' annual reports for the period 1917–1976 so as to monitor the evolution of managerial ideology regarding women over some sixty years. Benschop and Meihuizen (2002) analyse representations of gender in the annual reports of 30 corporations in the Netherlands. Building on several critical theoretical perspectives, they examine how annual reports contribute to the gendering of organizations through an empirical study of representations of gender in the organizations' texts, statistics, and images. The results suggest that stereotypical images dominate, and the representational practices reinforce the traditional gendered division of labour. The study concludes that the masculine connotation of reports thwarts a more diverse representation of gender in organizations.

Bernardi et al. (2002) examine the differences in the presentation of boards of directors in annual reports. The proportion of female directors was 11% for firms that did not include pictures of their boards and 14.5% for firms that included pictures of their boards in their annual reports. According to these authors, this indicates that firms with a higher percentage of women on their boards signal this fact to stockholders, investors, and other interested parties by purposefully including photographs of their boards in their annual reports.

Kuasirikun (2011) analyses the portrayal of gender in corporate annual reports using the yearly documents of companies in Thailand. The study investigates the ways companies, by using pictures in accounting reporting, project an attitude towards gender that tends to reflect and consolidate existing norms rather than promoting change in the perceptions of gender relations within Thai society. The pictorial analysis shows that women, unlike men, are generally presented in subsidiary roles.

This paper's contribution to the literature is an analysis of a single industry in a specific country—the Swedish real estate industry—and the differences within that industry between public housing and commercial real estate companies. It also contributes by separating portrayals of women and men as employed and not employed in the industry.

## 2.2 How is gender presented in annual reports?

Representing people with clear gender identities in annual reports is one way to maintain the symbolic gender order in the organization. Other gendering processes pertain to the numerical representation of women and men. Benschop and Meihuizen (2002) conclude that firms favour pictures of men and are reluctant to show more than one woman unaccompanied by men. They also state that portraying top managers in reports (re)produces a gender subtext because it carries a symbolical message that associates masculinity both with the power at the top and with the organization's credibility. The dominance of men in representations of the work force is read as a cultural meaning that includes men as organizational beings and is much more selective in its inclusion of women.

Benschop and Meihuizen (2002) also state that women are more often presented as organizational outsiders, and most reports display a rather strong preference for male characters in the representation of employees. The imagery closely connects to the top of the organization, representing it as a whole by showing where the power resides. How men and women are portrayed also demonstrates gendering processes: the roles, locations, dress, and settings of men and women in the pictures. Images that feature both sexes, however, tend to depict men and women similarly, according to Benschop and Meihuizen (2002).

### 3. Methods

This article explores representations of gender in photographs in the 2011 annual reports of 22 real estate companies in Sweden: 14 public housing companies and 8 commercial real estate companies. The companies operate mainly in the south of Sweden, but some larger companies from Gothenburg and Stockholm have also been included.

All the photographs in the annual reports that portray at least one person have been analysed to reveal how gender is constructed both inside and beyond the boundaries of the focal organization—that is to say, in order to determine how customers and others are depicted and perceived by the organization. Analysing gender representation in the imagery involved three steps. First, *all* the annual-report photographs showing a person were counted. Second, *pictures of employed and non-employed* women and men in the annual reports were counted. The pictures were grouped according to whether they contained (a) only female figures, (b) only male figures, or (c) both female and male figures. Finally, the *pictures of chief executive officers (CEOs)* were also counted and analysed; they serve as important symbols for the companies, as carrier of a symbolic message that associates masculinity both with the power at the top and with the organization's credibility (Benschop and Meihuizen, 2002).

In the *third* step, each company was given an identity, and each photograph with a person in it was analysed, resulting in a chart with up to 24 columns depending on the number of pictures showing people. Each person in each picture is identified as an employee or a non-employee and in terms of what he or she is doing. Notes about the pictures are provided in a systematic way using specific codes—for example, young, middle-aged, woman/man, ethnicity, and a work environment versus a private setting. The tables speak to the purpose of this study. Analysing the images of non-employees allowed us also to see how organizational outsiders are depicted and whether any gender differences are apparent here, as well.

### 4. Gender annual report figures

#### 4.1 The numerical representation of women and men in annual reports

Photographs in the firms' annual reports that contain women and men who are either employees or non-employees have been examined to determine whether any difference exists between the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies. Tables 1A and 1B present the total number of images for the various companies, the number depicting women or men alone, and the number with women and men together. Table 1A accounts for the public housing companies; 1B for the commercial real estate companies. The companies' sizes have been calculated in terms of the number of employees.

**Table 1A.** Public housing companies: Size of company in terms of employees and total number of pictures showing women and men.

	Company size by number of employees	Women employed (%)	Total number of photographs	Women alone (number)	Women alone (%)	Men alone (number)	Men alone (%)	Both women and men (number)	Both women and men (%)	Photographs of employees (%)
1.	39	31%	10	1	10%	5	50%	4	40%	80
2.	145	48%	23	6	26%	8	35%	9	39%	32
3.	109	48%	8	2	25%	3	38%	3	38%	67
4.	67	36%	11	6	54%	3	27%	2	18%	17
5.	203	30%	11	0	0%	5	45%	6	55%	67
6.	248	43%	20	3	15%	12	60%	5	25%	81
7.	192	35%	4	0	0%	2	50%	2	50%	100
8.	121	27%	5	2	40%	2	40%	1	20%	67
9.	20	30%	6	1	17%	3	50%	2	33%	43
10.	12	25%	1	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	100
11.	304	43%	17	5	29%	7	41%	5	29%	52
12.	32	27%	5	1	20%	1	20%	3	60%	40
13.	276	36%	17	6	35%	8	47%	3	18%	60
14.	137	41%	9	1	11%	4	44%	4	44%	100
Total		36%	147	34	23%	63	43%	50	34%	65%

*Four* companies employ 1–50 people (1, 9, 10, 12); *five* employ 51–150 (2, 3, 4, 8, 14), *three* employ 151–250 (5, 6, 7), and *two* employ 251–350 (11, 13).

*Three* (7, 10, 14) of the companies used pictures only of employed women and men.

*Three* of the companies printed no pictures depicting a woman by herself (5, 7, 10).

**Table 1B.** Commercial real estate companies: Size of company in terms of employees and total number of pictures portraying women and men.

Company	Company size by number of employees	Women employed (%)	Total number of photographs	Woman alone (number)	Woman alone (%)	Man alone (number)	Man alone (%)	Both women and men (number)	Both women and men (%)	Photographs of employees (%)
1.	87	36%	17	2	12%	6	35%	9	53%	100
2.	132	43%	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
3.	184	56%	9	2	22%	4	44%	3	33%	70
4.	130	43%	13	3	23%	6	46%	4	31%	54
5.	239	38%	11	0	0%	7	64%	4	36%	100
6.	298	24%	25	10	40%	6	24%	9	36%	80
7.	93	42%	21	10	48%	5	24%	6	29%	33
8.	341	36%	6	2	33%	1	17%	3	50%	83
Total		40%	102	29	28%	35	34%	38	37%	65%

*Four* companies employ 1–150 people (1, 2, 4, 7), *one* of the companies employs 150–250 (3), and *three* of the companies employ 251–350 (5, 6, 8).

In the public housing companies' reports, 23% of the pictures depict only women (compare to 28% of those used by commercial real estate companies). Forty-three per

cent of the pictures of the public housing companies show only men (compare to 34% of those used by commercial real estate companies). Both women and men are depicted in 34% of the pictures in the public housing companies' documents (compare to 37% of those used by commercial real estate companies). Sixty-five per cent of all the pictures show employees in the annual reports of both the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies.

## 4.2 The portrayal of women and men

The portrayal of women and men in the annual reports reveals how the companies express and constitute their organizations' corporate identities and how gender is done—that is, they reflect the gendering of the organization, both inside and outside of it. Each photograph in the annual reports containing a person has been analysed. Descriptions of the photographs are divided into the categories *public housing companies* and *commercial real estate companies*.

### 4.2.1 Women portrayed as employees

In the reports of both commercial and public housing companies, young women are portrayed either in stereotyped positions or as tokens—in other words, they represent the few in a group of another type (Kanter, 1977). Tokens are often treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than as individuals. Kanter argues that the proportional rarity of tokens is associated with three perceptual tendencies: visibility, contrast, and assimilation. Tokens draw attention; they have higher visibility than dominants alone do. This is apparent in the real estate industry in, for example, women who are real estate managers and women who are CEOs.



Fig 2(left). Commercial real estate company: Young woman working as a real estate manager (token position) is depicted a nearly full-length photo, walking towards the camera (Wihlborgs, annual report 2011 p 23).

Fig 3. Commercial real estate company: Young woman working at the front desk (Vasakronan, annual report 2011 p 7).



Fig 4. Public housing company: Young woman working as project manager (token position) (Uppsalahem, annual report 2011 p 49).

#### 4.2.2 Men portrayed as employees

In both the commercial real estate companies' and the public housing companies' reports, male employees alone are portrayed most often in action, working with machines or in construction, or as CEOs.



Fig 5 (left). Commercial real estate company: Middle-aged man, probably a maintenance worker, is fixing a boiler (Castellum, annual report 2011 p 11).

Fig 6. Public housing company: Middle-aged man in working clothes is depicted probably repairing or replacing the roof (Helsingborgshem, annual report 2011, p 29).

#### 4.2.3 Women and men portrayed together as employees

The portrayal of women and men together as employees occurs almost as often in commercial real estate companies' reports as it does in those of public housing companies. Most often, a man is showing or explaining something; he is active, and women listen, being passive.



Fig 7. Commercial real estate company: Two men and a woman as employees (Castellum, annual report 2011 p 9).



Fig 8. Public housing company: Two men and a woman studying a blueprint (LKF, annual report 2011 p 15).

#### 4.2.4 Women portrayed as non-employees

In portrayals of women and men outside the organization, a difference emerges between the commercial real estate companies and the public housing companies.

Women in several cases are portrayed as shoppers in an urban setting by the commercial real estate companies; for the public housing companies, they appear more often taking care of someone.



Fig 9 (left). Commercial real estate company: A female non-employee looking at a shop window (Hufvudstaden, annual report 2011 p 38).

Fig 10. Public housing company: A woman and a boy (Svenska bostäder, annual report 2011 p 10).

#### 4.2.5 Men portrayed as non-employees

Non-employee men are also depicted in different ways by the two types of companies; not many men are portrayed outside the organization (tables 4A and 4B). Men frequently appear in professional settings in the commercial real estate companies' reports and in private settings in those of the public housing companies.



Fig 11 (left). Commercial real estate company: A man working in cheese shop (Hufvudstaden, annual report 2011 p 40).

Fig 12. Public housing company: A man and a boy playing football (LKF, annual report 2011 p 25).



#### 4.2.6 Women and men portrayed together as non-employees

More photographs in the public housing companies' reports depict women and men together as non-employees, often in stereotypical family settings (fig 13) where men are active and women passive.



Fig 13. Public housing company: Family (Helsingborgshem, annual report 2011 p 50–51).

#### 4.3 The numerical representation of women and men as employees and non-employees

Tables 2A and 2B compare the figures for both women and men shown as employees and non-employees. This comparison is useful to see whether and how the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies depict women and men in different ways.

**Table 2A.** Public housing companies: Summary statistics of pictures of women and men as employees and non-employees (in numbers).

	Mean	Std dev	Min	Max
Number of employees	133.5	98.35	12	304
Women employees	1	1.61	0	6
Men employees	3.71	3.12	0	12
Women and men employees	2.28	1.38	0	4
Women non-employees	1.57	2.17	0	7
Men non-employees	.64	1.08	0	3
Women and men non-employees	1.07	1.32	0	5

**Table 2B.** Commercial real estate companies: Summary statistics of pictures of women and men as employees and non-employees (in numbers).

	Mean	Std dev	Min	Max
Number of employees	187.37	95.73	87	341
Women employees	1.37	2.38	0	7
Men employees	3.75	2.37	0	7
Women and men employees	4.25	2.91	0	9
Women non-employees	1.87	2.69	0	8
Men non-employees	.75	. 1.03	0	2
Women and Men non-employees	.5	.75	0	2

Almost the same number of pictures of men as employees appears in the reports of both the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies, with a mean value of 3.71 in the public housing companies and 3.75 in the commercial real estate companies. The number of women depicted as employees is lower in the public housing companies' reports, with a mean value of 1 (compare 1.37 for the commercial real estate companies). The number of pictures that show both women and men as employees is higher among the commercial real estate companies, with a mean of 4.25; the mean is 2.28 for the public housing companies.

The number of pictures of men as non-employees is also almost the same for both the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies; the mean value is 0.64 in the public housing companies and 0.75 in the commercial real estate companies. The number of women depicted as non-employees is 1.57 among the public housing companies and 1.87 among the commercial real estate companies.

Pictures in which both women and men are depicted as non-employees have a mean value of 1.07 for the public housing companies' reports and of 0.5 for those of the commercial real estate companies.

The annual reports of both the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies depict more men than women in pictures by themselves, but the commercial real estate companies used more pictures that show both women and men.

The public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies both used more images in which women rather than men appear as non-employees, and the commercial real estate companies used a lower number of pictures in which women and men appear together.

#### 4.4 Portrayal of CEOs

Portrayals of CEOs differ across the annual reports; each of the public housing companies printed a picture of its CEO, and seven of eight commercial real estate

companies did so, but these leaders are depicted in different ways and in different settings.

The CEOs (twelve men and two women) of all the public housing companies appear in the annual reports: six are dressed formally, and eight are dressed relatively informally. Of the formally dressed individuals, four are wearing a tie. Nine appear in medium shots (from the waist up), four in small photos (passport style), and one in a group with the board of directors. Four CEOs are shown in an office, and one is on a construction site. Four were photographed in front of a building.

The two women are depicted in different ways: the first appears in a small photo; she is wearing a white blouse, and no location is apparent from the image. The other woman is more formally dressed, wearing a jacket. She is shown in a medium shot on a whole page and, again, the location is not clear.

Seven of eight CEOs in the commercial real estate companies appear in the annual reports. All of them are men, and all are portrayed wearing formal clothes; only one is not wearing a tie. One appears in a small photo, while the other six are in either medium or full-length shots. Two are standing outside in front of a building, one is outside, walking towards the camera, two are sitting down in an office, and two are standing, one in an office and one against a white background.

Thus, the CEOs of the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies are portrayed in similar ways. The size of the photos is somewhat larger in the reports of the commercial real estate companies, and those CEOs are more commonly depicted in medium or full-length shots. The difference lies in the clothing: more suits and ties are displayed in the commercial real estate companies' reports.

## 5. Results and discussion

All except one of the public housing companies publishes pictures of their board of directors. The management team is shown for eight of 14 companies. The board of directors and management teams appear in seven of the eight commercial real estate companies. All the companies—public housing and commercial real estate firms alike (with the exception of one commercial real estate company)—printed photos of their CEOs in their annual reports. Women and men are depicted in stereotypical positions by both the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies. *Middle-aged men* are more often depicted as CEOs or in leading positions and as *maintenance worker* while young women are shown working in reception, in token positions as real estate managers and caretakers, or in summer jobs.

Women are often portrayed as non-employees: customers, shoppers, and caretakers for children or older women. Men depicted as non-employees are shown playing football and flying kites with children. Women are depicted in relatively passive positions—listening and watching—while men are more often depicted in action: drilling, digging, talking, playing, windsurfing.

After the reports were analysed, it became clear that the different organizations seem to demonstrate different types of awareness regarding representations of gender in photographs, as well as varying levels of understanding that gendering is constructed within and beyond the focal boundaries of an organization.

An interesting finding is that the number of women portrayed in each annual report is lower than the actual number employed, one reason being that the CEO, management

group, and board of directors almost always appear in the annual report; these groups consist mostly of men.

Stereotypical images of women and men serve to maintain the hierarchical gender order in both public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies. The token position—being one of only a few women in the real estate industry—is also used. Women are underrepresented in the corporate identity, and heterosexuality is also preserved. Men are depicted more often as organizational insiders, and women as outsiders.

**Table 3.** Comparison of employees and non-employees depicted in the annual report images of public housing companies and commercial real estate companies.

	Employees	Non-employees
Public housing	Young women are shown in token positions; men appear in leading and technical positions. Men are depicted in active roles, building and drilling, and women in more passive roles, watching and listening.	Young and middle-aged women take care of children and older people. Couples are portrayed as a woman and a man. A family is portrayed as a woman and a man with a girl and a boy.
Commercial	Young women are shown in token positions; men appear in leading and technical positions. Men are depicted in active roles, building and drilling, and women in more passive roles, watching and listening.	Pictures are not used to the same extent as in the reports of public housing companies, but women are more often depicted than men are. Young women are depicted in an urban setting, shopping and reading magazines, or in a professional role, e.g., as store managers.

I argue that both the public housing companies and the commercial real estate companies are preserving the gender order when portraying employees and that the public housing companies are preserving the gender order by showing non-employees as women taking care of children and older people. They are maintaining the heterosexual norm in the annual reports by showing women and men as couples and depicting nuclear families as a woman, a man, a boy, and a girl.

The commercial real estate companies do not use pictures showing non-employees to the same extent. When they do, these images show young women in various settings: as store managers, as shoppers, as magazine readers—but not in the private sphere taking care of other people.

Overall, the industry is preserving the gender order in different ways inside and outside the focal boundaries of these organizations. Depictions of employees inside an organization are almost the same in the reports of the public housing companies as in those of the commercial real estate companies. The difference lies in the portrayals of non-employees. The public housing companies’ documents show women in the private sphere taking care of children and older people, whereas the commercial real estate companies’ reports show urban women working as fashion-store managers, shopping, or reading magazines.

## 6. Conclusion

There are stereotypical images of women and men that serve to maintain the hierarchical gender order in the real estate industry. Both public housing companies and commercial real estate companies are preserving the gender structure by using such images. Men tend to be depicted as organization insiders, and women appear more often as outsiders. Men are more often depicted in action, while women appear in relatively passive roles. Gendering is also constructed within and beyond the focal boundaries of each organization.

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### **Annual reports 2011**

Castellum

Helsingborgshe

Hufvudstaden

LKF

Uppsalahem

Vasakronan

Wihlborgs



# Gender and Positions: Students' Preferences about Careers in the Real Estate Industry

## 1. Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to clarify from a gender perspective the preferences that students attending a university real estate programme express about future positions in the industry and thereby to implicitly examine the industry's gender structure. The empirical material was collected from students enrolled in the real estate management programme at Malmö University.

Acker (1992: 250) defines *gender* as a "patterned, socially produced distinction between female and male, feminine and masculine." Gender is something that is *done*, it varies by time and place, and both men and women create the gender system: they are "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1987). According to Acker (2006), occupations should be distinguished from jobs: an *occupation* is a type of work, whereas a *job* is a particular cluster of tasks in a specific work organization. For example, *real estate manager* denotes an occupation; *real estate manager at Company X* denotes a job. More statistical data are available about occupations than about jobs, even though *job* is the relevant unit for examining segregation in organizations. Research indicates that "sex segregation at the job level is more extensive than sex segregation at the level of occupations" (Wharton 2005, p 97). In addition, even when women and men "are members of the same occupation, they are likely to work in different jobs and firms" (Wharton 2005, p 97).

Acker (2006) argues that what appears to be a reduction in segregation may merely reflect its reconfiguration. Reconfiguration and differentiation have occurred as women have entered previously male-dominated occupations. It seems, for example, that women working as real estate managers more often work with households than men do. Kanter (1977) argues that gender differences in organizational behaviour owe to structure rather than to the characteristics of women and men as individuals. She identifies three variables as central explanatory dimensions for structural determination: the structure of opportunity, the structure of power, and the proportional distribution of people of different kinds (the social composition of peer clusters).

The real estate industry in Sweden is heterogeneous, representing a variety of companies and organizations, public and private. There are differences between the business concepts, for example, of commercial real estate companies and public housing companies. There is also a hierarchical order: working in commercial real estate companies and a business-to-business setting is regarded as more popular. The industry is both horizontally and vertically gender segregated; specifically, men more often fill the higher and more technical positions, while women more frequently work in service and supporting positions (Staffansson Pauli, 2011). Outdoor maintenance is regarded as masculine, and indoor maintenance work is regarded as feminine (Johansson, 1998). This study analyses preferences about future positions (i.e., jobs) from a gender perspective in order to identify any differences between women and men who want to

work with housing or commercial real estate companies, and any differences between women and men who want to work with households versus business-to-business concerns. In addition, preferences about positions within the organizations are also analysed. The study aims to capture whether students have the same views about future positions at the beginning of the programme, during the programme, and at its completion, as well as to reveal any differences that depend on gender and family background (e.g., parents' work in real estate industry or in management). The study is necessarily limited in that it is not longitudinal (i.e., the same students are not followed during a complete four-year educational period).

The structure of the paper is as follows: first, a literature review is presented; thereafter follows a presentation of the study's empirical setting and methodology. The data and variables are presented, along with the hypothesis that students' gender, year at university, and family background influence their views about future positions. Finally, the survey results are presented, followed by the conclusion.

## **2. Literature review**

A review of the extant research identified articles about the real estate industry and education, along with articles about factors that influence students pursuing an education in real estate or property management. Generally, this is an undeveloped field of research—surprising given the industry's large size. Existing educational programmes tend to focus on asset management rather than on property management, keeping the transactions rather than the industry's people central.

No previous study has explored undergraduate students' preferences about their future in the real estate industry. Some studies have been conducted, however, examining education and real estate, but these do not consider the students' point of view about their future positions and careers.

Some studies have investigated real estate employability: the contribution of Hoxley et al. (2011), "Real Estate Education: An Investigation of Multiple Stakeholders," discusses real estate programmes in the UK, presenting a clear gap between what employers expect of graduates and what graduates feel they have attained through their education. Both employers and graduates would like to see more-practical skills and knowledge incorporated into university curricula. Human resource managers of surveying firms voiced concern about graduates' lack of commercial awareness. They think this is important for graduates as the real estate sector is part of the broader economy; therefore, real estate professionals need to understand the whole picture from a property perspective when providing property services for clients.

How real estate education is processed in Europe has been presented by D'Arcy and Taltavull (2009) in "Real Estate Education in Europe: Some Perspectives on a Decade of Rapid Change," which analyses recent trends in provision based on the European course-accreditation data provided by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). The structure of provision is examined in the context of the significant changes that have taken place in the structure of European real estate markets as a means of identifying its key drivers. The analysis considers two important initiatives, the Bologna Process and the European Real Estate Society Education Seminar. Considerable expansion has taken place in the real estate education provided in Europe in recent

years. The postgraduate level, both full-time and part-time, has been established as the dominant mode of provision, and a business school setting has become an increasingly important academic context. The two initiatives examined have the potential to contribute to the development of a truly pan-European approach to real estate education.

Worzala et al. (2011) explore graduate-level real estate education and the “product” of the educational system in the United States, focusing on the acceptance of specialized degrees in the real estate community as related to compensation and benefits.

The stakeholders’ perspective is explored by Tu et al. (2009); one finding indicates that graduate real estate programmes rely heavily on real estate professionals to teach their courses and that real estate speaker series, alumni associations, and informal networking events are the most sought-after extracurricular activities among students.

Callanan and McCarthy (2003) have explored property education in New Zealand, surveying final-year students in the field of valuation and property management at Massey University about their perceptions of the property professions and their preferred areas of employment. Recent graduates were also surveyed to determine how the degree (education) had prepared them for a career in the property industry. In addition, industry employers were questioned in order to assess the theoretical and practical knowledge of recent graduates. The study reveals that graduates feel that more-practical fieldwork should be included in educational programmes, whereas employers feel that graduates lack the practical experience needed to relate theory and practice. This research indicates that university teaching has recognized the importance of industry involvement.

Studies have been conducted exploring factors that influence non-real estate students and their careers. Students at a university in Australia perceived family and teachers, as well as media and web-based information, to be significant influences on their career decisions, according to Bright et al. (2005). This study examined a heterogeneous group of students, not specifically students pursuing an education in real estate management. A US study of business students (Hoffman et al. 1992) also found that parents constituted an important influence on career decisions.

Lacking are studies about real estate students’ preferences regarding their future positions in their chosen industry and reflection about both the industry’s heterogeneity and its gender structures

### **3. Empirical context of the study**

The real estate management programme at Malmö University is a three-year programme, and graduates receive a bachelor’s degree in real estate science. The courses in the major programme cover economics, business administration, law, real estate management, real estate development, strategy in real estate (the course syllabus appears in Appendix 1). The programme starts each year in September, and the distribution of women and men is in general equal.

The programme director’s ambition is that representatives of the real estate industry will participate in the programme in different ways—both women and men from

various organizations take part to reach various objectives. At the beginning of the first course, alumni of the programme present their own careers to new students; these men and women represent different organizations and have different functions within those firms.

A common way to involve the industry in several courses is to invite women and men working in it to serve as guest lecturers, and it is relatively easy to access such individuals to take part in a course. Visits from industry professionals are often very popular among the students. It is seen as important, however, that different views from the industry are presented and that the venue does not become a marketplace for only a few organizations or companies.

In some courses the real estate industry is involved in several ways; in other courses it is not involved at all. When studying construction work or performing installation exercises, students may visit a construction site or another building. In the real estate development course, students work with an actual building that they must develop; this is a different building each year, and the organizations are different each year (though they represent only commercial real estate companies).

It seems probable that representation and presentation of the industry in the programme influence students' perceptions of it and their preferences about future positions and careers.

#### **4. Methodology and data collection**

This study employed a questionnaire distributed to students in all three years (and an additional third year group of students) of university study enrolled in Malmö University's real estate management programme, along with a survey developed to capture students' preferences about their future positions in the industry based on both theoretical and empirical findings. Several studies (Kanter 1977, Acker 1990, 1992, Wahl et al. 2001) have demonstrated that there exists a gender division in organizations between women and men in general; this means that certain positions are gendered. There is a gender division, further, both vertically and horizontally in the real estate industry (Wahl, et al. 2001, Staffansson Pauli 2011, 2013). Men are found more often in the highest positions, in technical positions, and working in positions along the career track (e.g., real estate managers). Women more frequently work in service and support positions and with finances, human resources, and information. Women take longer parental leaves and work part-time more often than men do.

In considering students' future positions, this study used the dependent variables *type of organization*, *typical customers*, and *particular positions*. The independent variables are each student's *year at university*, *gender*, *parents working in real estate*, and *parents working in management*. The questionnaire asked what kind of company or organization students would prefer to work in and what kind of customers they wished to work with (households or business-to-business concerns). Also examined are the types of positions students envisioned for themselves—a traditional career versus being a manager responsible for employees—along with their preferences about parenthood and whether they thought that would affect their careers.

The respondents were students in the real estate management programme at Malmö University in four different years of university study. The questionnaire was handed out, in paper form, during classroom sessions. In January 2013 it was administered to third-year students (40 completed and returned the survey); in September 2013, during several different lessons, the survey was administered to students in three different years of study (55 first-years, 29 second-years, and 17 third-years responded). In total, 141 students participated in the survey.

The available students enrolled in the real estate management programme during this period numbered 183. Fifty students were registered in the programme and in their third year of it in January 2013. In September 2013, there were 68 students registered in their first year, 34 in their second, and 31 in their third. The response rate of the questionnaire survey is 77%. The students in their third year in September 2013 had the lowest response rate.

**Table 1.** Questionnaire response rate.

<i>Students' year in the programme</i>	<b>Number of students registered at the programme</b>	<b>Number of students who completed the questionnaire</b>	<b>Response rate</b>
<i>3rd (Jan. 2013)</i>	50	40	80%
<i>3rd (Sept. 2013)</i>	31	17	54%
<i>2nd (Sept. 2013)</i>	34	29	85%
<i>1st (Sept. 2013)</i>	68	55	80%
<i>Total</i>	183	141	77%

The questionnaire asked students to indicate their gender, age, programme year, whether one or both of their parents worked in the real estate industry, and whether one or both parents worked as managers.

## 5. Data and models

### 5.1 Hypothesis and models

The literature review demonstrated that family, parents, and teachers influence an individual's choice of career. Thus, I hypothesize that student preference about a future position in the real estate industry (REI) is a function of (i.e., dependent upon) that student's year at university, gender, and family background in real estate or management. Student preferences about future careers in real estate therefore constitute a dependent variable, and year at university, gender, and parents working in real estate or management constitute independent variables.

*Future position = f (year at university, gender, parents real estate industry, parents management) or*

*Future position =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1$  year at university +  $\beta_2$  gender +  $\beta_3$  parents real estate industry +  $\beta_4$  parents management + u*

To estimate the model, a logistic regression method was used. Logit regression was used in testing the first two questions in the survey, allowing a regression-like analysis of the data, where the dependent variable is qualitative rather than a continuous interval-level variable (Walsh, 1987). The first two questions in the survey were the following:

1. In 10 years, I will prefer to work in a (a) *housing company* (b) *commercial real estate company*.
2. In 10 years, I will prefer working with (a) *households* (b) *business-to-business concerns*.

There are critical issues when using logit and probit models, according to Hoetker (2007); common among them are interpreting the coefficients, modelling interactions between variables, comparing coefficients between groups, and measuring model fit.

In the third question, presented in table 2, students had to estimate preferences about their positions and career in 10 years' time. An index was created with a gender consideration, as discussed above, reflected in the hypothesis that women often work in service and support positions and are more likely than men are to take parental leave. The hypothesis regarding the index is that "masculine" preferences align with a score of 5 (agree) and "feminine" align with 1 (disagree). The eight questions were summarized. Six of the questions exhibited a masculine preference (3a, 3b, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3g), and two exhibited a feminine preference (3c, 3h). The scores 5 (agree) and 1 (disagree) in the two questions with a feminine preference were reversed when summarizing; that is to say, for those questions a score of 5 was counted as a 1 and vice versa.

**Table 2.** Third question in the survey.

		5	4	3	2	1
3a.	I want to be a manager and aspire to become a CEO.					
3b.	I want to be responsible for personnel.					
3c.	I prefer to work in service and support.					
3d.	I prefer to work with technical issues.					
3e.	I prefer to work with finance.					
3f.	I want to do business in the future.					
3g.	My work will not be affected by having children.					
3h.	I imagine working part time in the future.					

*Gender index = f (year at university, gender, parents in real estate industry, parents in management).*

Ordinary least square (OLS), a method of estimating the parameters of a multiple linear regression model, was used in testing the third question. OLS estimates are obtained by minimizing the sum in squared residuals (Wooldridge, 2013).

## 5.2 Descriptive statistics

In all, 141 students (67 women and 73 men) in four different years of university study completed the survey (table 3 and 4). The students' average age was 23 years; women constituted 47% of the sample, 23% of the students had at least one parent in the real estate industry, and 53% of the students had at least one parent working in management (summary in table 3).

**Table 3.** Summary statistics of the data set.

<i>Variable</i>	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
<i>Gender w1/m0</i>	140	0.47	0.50	0	1
<i>Age</i>	119	23	3.86	18	41
<i>Parents in REI</i>	141	0.22	0.42	0	1
<i>Parents in mngmt</i>	141	0.53	0.50	0	1
<i>Working with housing (0) versus commercial (1)</i>	138	0.64	0.48	0	1
<i>Working with households (0) versus business to business (1)</i>	138	0.72	0.48	0	1
<b><i>Index</i></b>	<b>141</b>	<b>17.46</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>25</b>

A different number of students from each study year participated in the survey; table 4 presents a more detailed description of the students and their backgrounds.

**Table 4.** Students participating in the survey.

<i>Year/ (Graduating)</i>	<i>Women (number)</i>	<i>Men (number)</i>	<i>Age of women (avg.)</i>	<i>Age of men (avg.)</i>	<i>Parents in real estate industry (number)</i>	<i>Parents in management (number)</i>
<i>3rd (2013)</i>	19	21	25.2	25.6	10	26
<i>3rd (2014)</i>	8	9	22.5	25.6	1	6
<i>2nd (2015)</i>	15	13	22.9	24.6	5	13
<i>1st (2016)</i>	25	30	21.3	21.4	16	31

**Table 5.** Correlation between variables

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Parents in real estate industry</i>	<i>Parents in management</i>
<i>Genderw1m0</i>	1.0000			
<i>Age</i>	-0.0890	1.0000		
<i>Parents in real estate industry</i>	-0.0448	0.1242	1.0000	
<i>Parents in management</i>	-0.1829 *	0.0641	0.3312 *	1.0000

Note: \* statistical significant on a 5 % level.

There is a correlation between gender and parents in management in that men more often has parents in management, and also a positive correlation between having parents in the real estate industry and parents in management.

## 6. Empirical results

### 6.1 Organizations: Working for housing or commercial real estate companies

The data presented in table 5 test students' preferences about working for housing or commercial real estate companies: 64% of all those surveyed wanted to work in commercial real estate companies. In testing working for housing (0) or commercial real estate companies (1), women are presented as 1 and men as 0. Table 5 shows coefficients, standard error in parentheses, and z-values in models 1a–5a. Model 1a tests the independent variable *gender*, and no significance was found even though the variable had the expected sign, i.e. women to a higher degree preferred working in housing companies. In model 2a, *year at university* was tested, and significance was found. *Gender* was added in model 3a, and the variable *year at university* was strengthened. When testing in model 4a, adding *parents in real estate industry*, and in model 5a, adding *parents in management*, no further significance was found.

**Table 6.** Results of the logistic regression analysis with dependent variables *prefer to work in housing real estate* (0) or *prefer to work in commercial real estate* (1).

	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 3a	Model 4a	Model 5a
<i>Year at university</i>		<b>0.325*</b> (0.149) z = 2.18	<b>0.334*</b> (0.150) z = 2.22	<b>0.336*</b> (0.151) z = 2.23	<b>0.340*</b> (0.151) z = 2.25
<i>Gender</i>	-0.448 (0.35) z = -1.26		-0.481 (0.364) z = -1.32	-0.479 (0.364) z = -1.31	-0.510 (0.370) z = -1.38
<i>Parents in real estate industry</i>				0.088 (0.438) z = 0.20	0.170 (0.466) z = 0.37
<i>Parents in management</i>					-0.207 (0.392) z = -0.53
<i>N</i>	138	138	137	137	137
<i>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></i>	0.008	0.027	0.037	0.037	0.039

Note: statistical significant on a 5% level

*Year at university* has an impact upon the future view of choosing to work in housing or commercial real estate. The gender variable is negative; women to a lesser extent chose this option, but the difference is not statistically significant at the chosen level.

### 6.2 Customers: Working with households or business-to-business concerns

The data presented in table 6 indicate students' preferences regarding working with households or businesses. Of all the students surveyed, 72% wanted to work in a business-to-business environment.

In testing for variables dependent upon whether students want to work with households (0) or businesses (1), women are presented as 1 and men as 0. Table 6



presents coefficients, standard error in parentheses, and z-values. Model 1b tests the dependent variable *gender*; no significance was found. In model 2b, *year at university* was tested, and significance was found; *gender* was added in model 3b, and the variable *year at university* was strengthened. When testing model 4b to add *parents in real estate industry*, and in model 5b, *parents in management*, no further significance was found.

**Table 7.** Results of logistic regression analysis with the dependent variable *working with households* (0) or *working with businesses* (1).

	Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 3b	Model 4b	Model 5b
<i>Year at university</i>		<b>.530*</b> (.175) z = 3.03	<b>.549*</b> (.1794) z = 3.06	<b>0.581*</b> (0.184) z = 3.15	<b>0.580*</b> (0.184) z = 3.14
<i>Gender</i>	-0.541 (0.385) z = -1.40		-.6169827 (0.402) z = -1.53	-.609 (0.406) z = -1.50	-0.599 (0.410) z = -1.46
<i>Parents in real estate industry</i>				.792 (0.525) z = 1.51	0.761 (0.555) z = 1.37
<i>Parents in management</i>					0.075 (0.430) z = 0.17
<i>N</i>	138	138	137	138	137
<i>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></i>	0.012	0.063	0.079	0.094	0.094

Note: statistical significant on a 5% level

Year at university has an impact upon students' future view of choosing to work with households or business to business. The gender variable is negative; women chose this option to a lesser extent, but the difference is not statistically significant at the chosen level.

### 6.3 Preferences about future position with consideration of gender

The data presented in table 7 have been tested against a gender index presented earlier (question 3 in the survey). The average sum of the index was 17.46 (table 3).

The dataset presented in table 7 tests a gender index and was created as described in chapter 5.1, with a preference regarding gender. It has been found (Staffansson Pauli, 2011) that women in the real estate industry often work in service and support positions and with human resources and information, whereas men often work in leading and technical positions. This horizontal and vertical segregation is, however, no different from that apparent in other industries.

I tested for independent variables as presented in table 7, showing coefficients, standard error in parentheses, and t-values. Model 1c tests whether gender has any impact on preferences about future position, and the result indicates that a woman is less likely to choose a "masculine" position (index 1.84), meaning that women have 1.84 lower degree of units than men do. Testing in model 2c whether having parents who work in the real estate industry influences a student's view about future position found that the impact of the variable is not statistically significant at the chosen level, but that the sign

is negative (less students with this background chooses “masculine” positions. Testing model 3c, whether having parents who work as managers influences a student’s view about future position (1.27), the result indicated that this variable does seem to have an influence in a “positive” direction. In model 4c year at university is added, and it is shown to have no impact.

**Table 8.** Result for OLS regression analysis with dependent variable index.

	Model 1c	Model 2c	Model 3c	Model 4c
<i>Year at university</i>				-0.0738 (0.227) t = -0.32
<i>Gender</i>	<b>-1.835*</b> (0.577) t = -3.18	<b>-1.879*</b> (0.573) t = -3.28	<b>-1.665*</b> (0.575) t = -2.89	<b>-1.661*</b> (0.577) t = -2.88
<i>Parents in real estate industry</i>		-1.188 (0.682) t = -1.74	<b>-1.672*</b> (0.713) t = -2.35	<b>-1.692*</b> (0.717) t = -2.36
<i>Parents in management</i>			<b>1.272*</b> (0.610) t = 2.08	<b>1.287*</b> (0.614) t = 2.10
<i>N</i>	140	140	140	140
<i>adj R<sup>2</sup></i>	0.061	0.075	0.097	0.091
<i>R-squared</i>	0.068	0.088	0.116	0.117

Note: statistical significant on a 5% level

## 7. Results and conclusion

The survey shows that year at university matters regarding students’ views about the kind of organization they would like to work for in the future; the further along a student was in the programme (i.e., the higher his or her year), the more likely he or she was to indicate a preference for commercial real estate companies. The same is true regarding the kind of customer: the higher the student’s year at university, the more likely it was that he or she would prefer business-to-business compared to households.

Moreover, the survey demonstrates that gender also matters in terms of preferences about future positions in the gender index. A particularly interesting finding is that if her parents work as managers, a woman is more likely to choose relatively “masculine” positions. I argue, therefore, that this indicates a connection between parents’ position and career choice.

The survey also demonstrates that a student’s year at university influences the type of organizations he or she might choose to work for and the choice to work with households or business to business in the industry: again, the later a student’s year at university, the more likely he or she is to choose commercial real estate companies and business-to-business clients. The positions students chose, as shown in the survey by

gender index, depended upon each student's gender and family background; it did not relate to year at university.

The programme in real estate management at Malmö University has the responsibility of presenting both the industry as a whole and the various professions or positions within it through its course material. But altering the positions within organizations or companies in the industry lies outside the programme's or the university's influence; these positions are affected by structures beyond the university and even beyond the real estate industry.

**Table 9.** Summary: Students' preferences about future positions in the real estate industry.

<i>Future career</i>	Dependent on		Influenced by	What to do?
<i>Organization: Commercial real estate companies</i>	Year at university	Preference increasing with year at university	Industry captured in courses	Increase awareness of how the industry is presented and what kind of organizations are represented
<i>Customer: Business to business</i>	Year at university	Increasing by year at university	Industry captured in courses	Increase awareness of how the industry is presented and what kind of organizations are represented
<i>Gender index</i>	Gender and parents working as managers		Structures beyond the university	Increase awareness about gender structures in the industry and beyond

## Appendix 1.

Syllabus of the real estate management programme at Malmö University in 2013:

### Year 1

Real estate science: Property and urban development 7.5 ects

Real estate science: Service businesses in real estate industry 7.5 ects

Basic law course: 15 ects

Financial accounting and analysis: 7.5 ects

Financials in real estate businesses: 7.5 ects

Real estate management: 15 ects

### Year 2

Real estate science: Basic construction: 7.5 ects

Construction process: 7.5 ects

Real estate science: Organization and management in real estate business: 7.5 ects

Real estate science: Property market: 7.5 ects

Tenancy law: 5 ects

Real estate science: Property law: 10 ects

Real estate management and installation (basic course): 7.5 ects

Real estate science: Finance and valuation: 7.5 ects

### Year 3

Facility management: 7.5 ects

Real estate management and installation (advanced course): 7.5 ects

Real estate development: 15 ects

Real estate science: Strategies in real estate industry: 7.5 ects

Real estate science: Method and methodology: 7.5 ects

Real estate science: Project 15 ects

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