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A Discourse Analysis of Gender in Mobility Related Urban Planning

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Summary

This thesis explores how gender is understood and conceptualised in mobility related urban planning. Mobility is central to urban planning in that it is a determining factor in overall quality of life and in that it shapes people's experience of an urban environment. Discussions about the social impact of urban planning decisions have meant that the concept of gender has become a more prominent element of these discussions. However, some issues become apparent when a gender perspective is applied in mobility related urban planning, notably regarding the conceptualisation of gender and the analysis of gender inequality. Discourse analysis is an opportunity to gain insight into the relationship between language and social reality. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to analyse the discourse on gender found within documents used to inform policy relating to the topic of gender and mobility in the case of Malmö in Sweden. The findings lead to the conclusion that the discourse on gender reflects an understanding based on presumed biological characteristics of men and women. Gender is presented as a binary categorisation and the differences between men and women are emphasised. With regards to policy and planning decisions, we argue that this understanding is analytically limited because it ignores other social dimensions that play a part in shaping individuals' identity and ultimately their experience of gender and mobility.

Key Words - gender, mobility, discourse, urban planning

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1. Introduction

This thesis explores how the concept of gender is defined and how issues relating to gender inequality are perceived in mobility related urban planning. Using the city of Malmö as a case, the concept of gender will be analysed within a sample of documents that represent a variety of public documents written on the topic of gender and mobility, most of which are plans and reports aimed at supporting policy and planning decisions. This thesis makes use of discourse analysis as both a theoretical and methodological background.

This introductory part will be divided into three parts. First, the background discusses the topic of mobility and gender within the field of urban planning, referring to previous research as well as the relation between mobility and gender. Secondly, the problem statement will describe the issue at hand, explaining the complexity associated with the conceptualisation of gender. Finally, the purpose of the thesis will be briefly stated. The thesis aims to answer the following research question: *What understanding of gender is put forward in mobility related urban planning?*

1.1 Background

Within the field of urban planning, the design of cities can shape people's movement, not only their ability to move but also their access to infrastructure that facilitates movement. This means that mobility is a contributing factor to the social, environmental and economic success of a city. Ultimately, planning for mobility must be regarded as a central component to the development of sustainable urban environments. Particularly regarding socially sustainable development, mobility is the foundation for providing "greater equity of access to all" (Hanson, 2010: 8).

Mobility embodies important notions of accessibility and movement. It is a determining factor in overall quality of life and shapes people's experience of an urban environment. As such, the topic of mobility is a central part of urban planning. This thesis follows the definition of mobility as "the movement of people from one place to another in the course of everyday life" (Hanson, 2010: 7). Walking, cycling, driving or taking the bus all contribute to the practice of mobility. Mobility as such refers to movement in itself, while transport can be understood as the physical infrastructure and systems in place to aid people's mobility. Such systems that facilitate mobility are crucial in "granting individuals and organisations access to spatial and temporally disjointed resources they need to thrive, and even just survive" (Bertolini, 2006: 319). In urban planning, decisions that affect mobility most generally are those that relate to public transport planning, traffic management and urban design. As such, this thesis will refer to mobility related urban planning as the general term for the field.

In the aim of promoting equality more generally, the concept of gender has been actively put forward in Sweden in policy decision-making processes, which relates to discussions about the social impact of urban planning. The inclusion of a gender perspective is made particularly visible through a process of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is the act of bringing in a gender perspective in all policy areas in order to insure an equal distribution of resources. This policy tool has been officially recognised by the European

Union with the CEMR's¹ 'Charter for the Equality of Women and Men in Local Life', which has been formally adopted by the city of Malmö in 2007. The Charter states;

"The gender perspective must be taken into account in the drafting of policies, methods and instruments which affect the daily life of the local population – for example, through the use of 'gender mainstreaming' and 'gender budgeting' techniques. To this end, women's experiences in local life, including their living and working conditions, must be analysed and taken into account" (CEMR, 2006: 9).

This focus on gender equality is visible at both a national and local level in Sweden. Gender mainstreaming is also implemented in urban planning. In particular, the city of Malmö has set itself the goal that by 2020 the city will have "gender equality in service delivery directed at all women and men, girls and boys irrespective of background" (Malmö Stad, 2011: 7). While gender mainstreaming is not the focus of this thesis, Malmö's application of gender mainstreaming has meant that as a case it is relevant to our topic and is a practical choice with regards to the collection of data. The location has also been taken into account regarding access to interview respondents.

1.2 Problem statement

Implementing gender in mobility related urban planning is a complicated task not least because the concept of mobility itself is embedded in a deeper understanding which requires some elaboration. Mobility can be defined as the capacity of entities, namely goods, information and people, to be mobile in social and geographic space, that encompasses interdependent elements, namely access, competence and appropriation (Kaufman et. al, 2004). This understanding assumes that mobility is the way in which "entities access and appropriate the capacity for socio-spatial mobility according to their circumstances" (Ibid., 2004: 750). This implies that mobility is a necessity and something that is experienced differently between entities; "mobility is a resource that is differentially accessed" (Cresswell, 2009: 21). The idea of access and appropriation of capacity brings forward a strong human element to mobility. Ultimately, it can be argued that mobility is a resource that allows access to city resources as well as shapes every day experiences of the city (Miciukiewicz and Vigar, 2012).

This understanding of mobility as access and appropriation, but also as embedded in meaning and representation, is strongly linked to the conceptualisation of gender. This thesis takes as point of departure the idea that when decisions regarding mobility are made to affect all members of society equally some issues become apparent regarding gender equality. Urban planning decisions tend to be based on a universal subject, free from any social or cultural attributes and expectations, which fails to address problems associated to mobility as well as gender (Hine and Mitchell, 2001; Scholten et al., 2012). In other words, efforts to make urban planning universal ignore the fact that policy and planning decisions affect individuals in society differently.

The most common understanding of gender is based on the presumed biological characteristics of men and women. Gender in this sense is understood as a binary categorisation and places emphasis on the differences between men and women. Research in the field of gender and mobility has tended to focus on the fact that urban planning has

¹ Council of European Municipalities and Regions

traditionally been “gender blind” (Rakodi, 1991). The development of the urban environment has systematically ignored women’s needs and prevented their participation in the decision-making process (Rakodi, 1991; Greed, 2005; Fainstein and Servon, 2005; Jaeckel and van Geldermalsen, 2006). This critique of gender-blindness has brought about a series of research on ‘women and transport’, which has drawn attention to gender in an urban context (Kronlid, 2008). However, such a gender perspective on urban planning is inclined to focus on ‘women’s needs’ specifically, rather than making use of a more complex understanding of gender. Indeed, research on gender has also argued that urban planning decisions when referring to gender fail to consider other dimensions that also constitute the experience of gender (Bondi, 1998; Hanson, 2010; Law, 1999; Priya Uteng and Cresswell, 2008; Scholten et al., 2012).

This thesis wants to move away from research within the field of mobility that highlights gender differences in travel patterns and habits. Studies that are conducted in this field are predominantly quantitative and rely on an understanding of gender which focuses on ‘women’ and ‘men’ as two different categories (Hanson, 2004). The thesis argues that “future research on the topic must be based on a more systematic treatment of gender as a theoretical concept [that] identifies aspects of gender as a social category and symbolic code, and links it to aspects of *daily mobility*” (Law, 1999, in Kronlid, 2008: 18, author’s emphasis). Gender must be understood in a broader sense and thus defined as an experienced identity that is linked to and affected by other social dimensions such as race, class, age and health (Hanson, 2004; Shields, 2008).

The problem regarding the implementation of gender in mobility related planning is that on the one hand aiming for neutrality ignores inequality among individuals and groups, on the other hand relying on the common conceptualisation of gender has meant perpetuating traditional gender roles; “the reification of gender *as* difference in this enormous body of research has inevitably led, again, to the reproduction of gender stereotypes” (Talbot, 2003: 475, author’s emphasis). Furthermore, it can lead to the marginalisation of individuals who cannot identify with either group. The approach to understanding individuals as members of groups can be criticised for focussing on differences rather than all other aspects that constitute individual identity (Shields, 2008).

Effectively, this thesis argues that the binary categorisation of gender is an oversimplified understanding of the concept that is contributing limited and restricted information to policy and planning decisions. Problems associated with such a definition not only shape decisions, but the process of decision-making as well. When research is conducted in urban planning, the definition of gender can structure and shape the way a problem is perceived and solved in policy-making. In other words, the understanding of gender can result in “‘knowledge’ transfer where implicit and embedded ‘knowledges’ are not questioned within policy making, but are instead repeated and reiterated by the policies they produce” (Payne, 2014: 958). This means that the experience of gender is important for individuals’ identities and cannot be considered in isolation from other social dimensions. Understanding, the complexity of individual identity is crucial to being able to address the diversity of needs in mobility related urban planning.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how gender is understood and conceptualised in mobility related urban planning. More specifically, this aims at analysing the discourse on gender found within documents relating to the topic of gender and mobility. As such, the purpose of this thesis is to answer the following research question:

What understanding of gender is put forward in mobility related urban planning?

This research question will be divided into two sub-questions: *'how is gender defined?'* and *'how are the problems associated with gender inequality perceived?'*. These sub-questions will be used to help answer the main research question and structure the findings and discussion.

The thesis will be divided into four parts. Firstly, the theoretical background introduces discourse theory, presents how gender and mobility are discursively constructed and the neutrality and equality dilemma. Secondly, the methodological part discusses discourse analysis in greater detail, namely qualitative analysis of discourse in text and the use of semi-structured interviews as a supporting method, and considers some of the methodological limitations associated to discourse analysis. Thirdly, the analysis discusses the findings. Finally, the conclusion is divided between a discussion about the findings and suggestions for an alternative approach to the conceptualisation of gender, and a reflection on discourse analysis more generally.

2. Theory

The following section will present the theoretical background for this thesis. Divided into three parts, the first part will discuss the theory behind discourse analysis arguing that discourses play a part in shaping social reality. The second part will look more specifically at how the discourse on gender is constructed, looking at common conceptualisations and narratives about gender in relation to mobility. The third part will analyse the practical implications of including gender perspectives in mobility related urban planning.

2.1 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is particularly useful for the study of topics that are “qualitative, interpretive, and constructionist” such as gender (Hardy et al., 2004: 19). When looking at the concept of gender within the field of mobility related urban planning, discourse analysis is an opportunity for in depth exploration of the relationship between language and social reality. Discourse analysis can be understood as both a research theory and a methodological practice (Bryman, 2012; Hardy et al., 2004; Payne, 2014; Phillips and Hardy, 2002); it “not only embodies a set of techniques for conducting structured, qualitative investigations of texts, but also a set of assumptions concerning the constructive effects of language” (Hardy et al., 2004: 19). This sub-section will focus on some of these assumptions around the constructive effects of language, focussing more specifically on the theoretical foundations of discourse analysis.

Rooted in the epistemological and ontological position of anti-realism and social constructivism, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge is ultimately embedded in this reality while also shaped by it (Bryman, 2012: 528-529), discourse analysis further assumes that social reality is shaped by language. In assuming that “social reality is not something we uncover, but something that we actively create” (Hardy et al., 2004: 20), discourse analysis seeks to uncover how reality is constructed; “without discourse, there is no social reality, and without understanding discourse, we cannot understand our reality, our experiences, or ourselves” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 2). Hardy et al. state that discourse analysis “is an exercise in creative interpretation that seeks to show how reality is constructed through texts that embody discourses” (2004: 22). Creative interpretation is the practice of discourse analysis, which will be discussed in greater detail in the methodological section. However, it is this understanding that discourse analysis seeks to uncover how reality is constructed by text that is central to discourse theory.

The term discourse varies considerably in meaning (Bryman, 2012). This thesis understands discourse as the embedded meaning that surrounds a concept which is present in written and spoken language. There can be more than one discourse, however, when referring to the discourse on gender, this implies that that is a more general and common discourse on the topic. In analysing the concept of gender, this thesis focuses on uncovering the discourse on gender within text. For clarity purposes, the term ‘concept’ refers simply to a ‘word’ or a term used, ‘language’ is a practice of communication that can be spoken or written, and ‘text’ is a written form of communication. The terms text and document will be used interchangeably.

Phillips and Hardy (2002: 3) argue that when discourse is understood as “an interrelated body of text” that it becomes influential. They state that it is “the practices of [the] production, dissemination, and reception [of interrelated bodies of text], that bring an object into being”. In other words, texts and documents become instruments in the production of knowledge. Discourse, as such, has the capacity to shape social reality. Furthermore, Mills (2004: 55) describes discourse as “sets of sanctioned statements which have some institutionalised force”. Institutionalised force means that discourses and understanding become legitimate and “influence the way individuals act and think” (Ibid.). Such understandings of discourse are rooted within critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis as a discipline concerned with wider social structures and goes beyond analysing discourses in their immediate context (Mills, 2004). In this sense, discourse is the translation of social power structures in language and text.

Furthermore, Fairclough (2003: 8) sees texts as elements of social events that have causal effects stating that “texts can bring about change in our knowledge, our attitudes, [and] values”. He believes that they also have long-term causal effects in that they contribute to shaping people’s identities (Ibid.). The author looks at the example of publicity and how people through extended exposure to advertisements have had their identity shaped as consumers (Ibid.). However, the causality is not mechanical. Changes are not automatically brought about by texts and there may not be any regular cause-effect pattern (Ibid.). In relation to gender, the social effect of texts has contributed to reproducing concepts of gender, for example what it is to be a man or a woman. Ultimately, “texts are not meaningful individually; it is only through their interconnection with other texts, the different discourses on which they draw, and the nature of their production, dissemination, and consumption that they are made meaningful” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 4), which links to the understanding of discourse as “interrelated bodies of text” (Ibid.). Thus, analysing discourses must be about analysing the structures and rules of discourse (Mills, 2004).

Ultimately, the aim of discourse analysis is not to display the truth, but rather to reveal the mechanisms that sustain a specific statement. Again, it is important to see these statements within a context of other discourses, within discursive frameworks, and not as isolated. In this sense, reality as such does not exist but rather consists of constructs that are shaped through discourse (Mills, 2004). Discourse analysis means moving away from assumptions made about gender and an opportunity to ask “questions that could take us beyond the surface of our culturally shared common-sense understandings of the world” (Gavey, 2011: 184).

This means paying attention to the structures and power relations in place in society. Within the discipline of critical discourse analysis, discourses are seen as instruments of power (Bryman, 2012). Foucault claims that everything is political, meaning that it is important “to recognise the omnipresence of relations of force and their immanence to a political field” (Foucault, 1979 in Mills, 2004: 71). These relations of force are not obvious or direct, but they are acted out and negotiated at various places. If the conceptualisation of gender is recognised as political, this means realising that it is embedded in complex political context. Relations of force contribute to the creation of social relations, structures and hierarchies, and are played out in social practices.

In arguing that discourses are embedded in text, this implies that texts themselves contribute to knowledge dissemination and ultimately perpetuate existing power structures in place in society. This means that discourses are both shaped by power relations and also help to maintain them (Payne, 2014). In effect, Mills (2004) argues that it is precisely this theorisation of power that makes discourse theory especially useful and productive. The hegemonic interpretation of gender, as incorporated in social structures and power relations, is generated through a “combined force of institutional and cultural pressure, together with the intrinsic structure of discourse” (Mills, 2004: 49). In other words, common discourses on gender contribute to the creation of hegemonic understandings of gender.

2.2 The discursive construct of gender and mobility

This following part explores how the discourse on gender is constructed in relation to the topic of mobility. The part reflects on questions that Creswell (2009) puts forward in his work on mobility. The author argues that the notion of mobility is embedded within social relations. He argues that social relations, referred to as ‘politics’, are involved in the production and distribution of power. He states that “th[e] politics of mobility is enriched if we think about mobility in terms of material movement, representation, and practice”. His understanding of the politics of representation is particularly interesting with regards to discourse analysis. He asks “how is mobility discursively constituted? What narratives have been constructed about mobility? How are mobilities represented? [...] [M]obility, and particularly the represented meanings associated with particular practices, is highly political” (2009: 21). In relation to gender, this idea of politics of representation is also relevant and the same questions can be asked about gender; how is gender discursively constructed, what narratives have been constructed about gender and how is gender represented?

Analysing discourse is an opportunity to discover the underlying ideas that shape social reality. When looking at mobility and gender it is crucial to consider how the discourse is constructed around these concepts. Hine and Mitchell (2001) in their study of transport

disadvantage discuss the importance of considering the social impact of planning practices and procedures. They state that this has been a problem that is partly due to the “elusiveness of definable concepts” (Ibid.,: 320) used to measure such impact. This can also be said about the concept of gender.

Within the field of urban planning, research on gender and mobility often has a notion of women and men as contrary, assuming a bipolar concept of gender. Hanson (2010: 12) states that “gender enters analyses in this strand of the literature usually, though not always, as a binary male/female variable in a data matrix”. Nevertheless, this is true for the understanding of gender in a wider sense. Talbot (2003: 469) researches how gender stereotypes are reproduced in language. She claims that “gender is often thought of in terms of bipolar categories, and sometimes as mutually exclusive opposites”. She claims that “the idea that women and men have distinct styles has proved popular, but it is problematic. While there is extensive research to support such a view, [...] it needs extensive contextual grounding” (Ibid.: 475). Indeed, this is because “‘women’ and ‘men’ are not homogeneous groups” (Ibid.: 475). This idea has also been pointed out by Hanson who finds it problematic that research on travel patterns has very few variables for gender, whereas mobility is “carefully measured along multiple dimensions” (Hanson, 2010: 12). She gives the examples of distance and time travelled, mode of transport or reasons for trips as variables used for researching mobility patterns (Ibid.). Such a categorical understanding of gender is based on the problem that it is defined in basic terms following the conceptions of biological sex categorisation. Common definitions imply an understanding of gender as “the process through which differences based on presumed biological sex are defined, imagined, and become significant in specific contexts” (Nightingale, in Hanson, 2010: 8).

The problem with the concept of gender as a binary categorisation is that the assignment of a category to an individual comes with its own set of assumed characteristics (Talbot, 2003). If gender is simply understood as ‘difference’ this leads to the reproduction of gender stereotypes, in particular when “the agenda is set solely in terms of identifying male and female differences”. Furthermore, it is often the case that gender has “‘fixed’ difference” (Ibid.). West and Zimmerman (1987) see gender as a routine, taking place in everyday actions and interactions, and not as an undisputable social expression of an underlying sex grounded in biology. They state that “doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential or biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the “essentialness” of gender” (1987: 137). Biological essentialism means that behaviour and attributes, which are perceived as ‘typical female’ or ‘typical male’, are treated as if they were inborn and grounded in biological sex differences.

This raises the question about the symbolic construction of different genders, such as ideas of femininity and masculinity (Leavy, 2007). Symbolic construction in this sense means that they are not natural or essential. Answering such a question is made possible through a process of analysing the narratives and stories that are constructed around the concept of gender. Indeed, Mills states that “discourse also constructs certain events and sequences of events into narratives which are recognised by a particular culture as real or important events” (2004: 48). These narratives and stories, that appear within academia as well as in general culture, are fundamental to the construction of social reality. These narratives and stories constructed around the concept of gender are also visible in relation to the topic of mobility.

One example of a narrative that is apparent in research on gender and mobility is one that highlights differences in the distribution of productive and reproductive labour. These differences are visible spatially and point to the connection between patterns of employment and travel demand (Runnvik, 2014; Law, 1999). Traditional gender-specific division of labour has been argued to be the reasoning behind the current layout of the post-industrial city. Cities have been divided into two areas that roughly correspond to the public and the private spheres of social life. Cities that were planned for homebound women and working men, with neighbourhoods characterised by single-family homes, such as the traditional American suburb, are a spatial manifestation of the sexual division of labour (Hayden, 1980; Bondi, 1998). Post-war society was built on the discourse that women belonged at home, in a caring role, entrapped in suburban areas, while men worked and provided for the family by participating in public life (Bondi, 1998). Even following changes in labour division, as women have become equal participants in the labour market, the narrative has remained the same (Hayden, 1980).

The discursive narratives about traditional gender roles raise questions regarding mobility. Research on gender and mobility has tended to focus on women's task of managing work and home, which manifests itself in complicated travel patterns, greater time spent commuting and the experience of public transport (Hayden, 1980; Greed, 2005; West and Zimmerman, 1987). All of which differ to men's experience of mobility in the city. For example, Hayden (1980: 175) states that "employed mothers usually are expected to [...] spend more time in private housework and child care than employed men; often they are expected to, and usually do, spend more time [...] commuting [...] than men". Moreover, Greed (2005) argues that women use the city differently and have different expectations about how a city should be planned. She states that women and men do not have the same journeys to their workplaces. Female workers make lateral multipurpose journeys, often undertaken using public transport (Ibid.). She states "a woman's daily journeys might be [...] home → school → work → shops → school → home" (Ibid.: 721). Whereas men are seen as only travelling from home to work and back.

Such research has been a great contribution to the analysis of gendered power structures that are played out in reality. Nevertheless, this research requires leaning on assumptions about gender that are necessary for extracting underlying problems regarding gender inequality. However, it is important to be aware of narratives and stories constructed around conceptions of gender that fail to recognise the social power structures that affect the experience of gender in an urban environment in the first place. This contributes to building the underlying idea that women in general are afraid and powerless in an urban environment, for example, narratives constructed around the topic of women and security. Women are portrayed as not willing to take risks, which limits their mobility. In order to create accessible urban spaces that are gender equal, it is implied that there is a need for political strategies that aim "to reduce women's fear and vulnerability in outdoor urban spaces" (Bondi, 1998: 163). Many statistical analyses of female cyclists argue that without separated bike lanes, women will be less likely than men to get around by bike. Garrard et al. (2007: 55), in their study on how to promote cycling for women, state; "consistent with gender differences in risk aversion, female commuter cyclists preferred to use routes with maximum separation from motorized traffic. Improved cycling infrastructure in the form of bicycle paths and lanes that provide a high degree of separation from motor traffic is likely to be important for increasing transportation cycling amongst under-represented population groups such as women".

Narratives about women, such as their adversity to risk or their complicated travel patterns, mean that women are presented as a homogeneous group, and it is terminology such as “consistent with gender differences” (Ibid.) that are particularly problematic. References to traditional gender norms in research on gender and mobility, such as the use of variables such as ‘women’s travel experience’, contribute in some form to the hegemonic conceptualisations of gender. This hegemony ultimately leads to the normalisation and rigidification of gender norms (Leavy, 2007). In other words, research that relies on basic understanding of gender fails to question and challenge essentialist assumptions about natural, inborn characteristics of gender, such as ‘femininity’. While the culturally divided public and private spheres and the attribution of gender roles to these spheres are known characteristics of western society, the description of behavioural differences in gender has the effect of reinforcing and reproducing gender stereotypes and power relations that created these differences to begin with.

2.3 Neutrality and equality dilemma

This following part discusses the dilemma that occurs when gender equality is put on the agenda in mobility related urban planning. While arguing that gender categories are socially constructed it is important to recognise them as existing and enacted in society. This can be said about all perceived differences experienced by individuals within society. Acknowledging differences is particularly important when studying power structures and inequality, but can be problematic in implementation.

On the one hand, ignoring structural differences between gender categories carries the risk of neglecting existing inequalities. Cities and urban environments have commonly been designed and planned for a universal target group. The social impact of planning decisions, such as in public transport, are aimed for an entire population, which is seen as a homogeneous group. Rakodi believes that urban planning in a more general way refers to people as ‘users’ or ‘residents’. Such terminology reflects decisions that do not recognise individual needs and experiences. She further argues that urban planning has generally been “gender-blind” (Rakodi, 1991: 541). Ultimately, it can be argued that the impact of mobility related urban planning, while aiming to be neutral and universal, has only limited reach. The aim has been to make decisions that affect all individuals equally. Hine and Mitchell (2001), in their work on the social impact of public transport decisions, discuss mobility issues that affect people with disabilities. They argue that decisions made in public transport planning are based on assumptions about movement that fail to include a disability perspective (Ibid.). This can also be argued in relation to gender. They state that “these assumptions are: premised on a universal, disembodied, subject which is conceived of as neutered, that is, without sex, gender, or any other attributed social or biological characteristic” (Imrie, 2000, in Hine and Mitchell, 2001: 321). This means that decisions are insensitive to “the many subtleties and complexities” that influence travel and movement (Ibid.: 320). Cresswell (2009: 21) argues that understandings of mobility are based on “the ideology of walking”, which he sees as associated to meanings of being human and being masculine. Similarly, Bondi (1998: 164) claims that cities’ public spheres are “imbued with characteristics that, as part of binary formulations, are deemed inherently masculine.”

On the other hand, to counteract problems associated with unequal urban planning, the concept of gender has become a more prominent element of urban planning decisions. Indeed, applying the concept of gender reflects a realisation that the social impact of decisions has been to the disadvantage of certain groups or individuals. However, the gender

perspective used in the field of mobility related urban planning is based on the common conceptualisation of gender as discussed previously. Reliance on this common conceptualisation has led to continuous replication of gender constructs and stereotypes within research and urban planning, meaning that differences between men and women shape the decision making process without them being challenged. Talbot states, “the trouble is that traditional [...] stereotypes are so resilient and so well entrenched that they may be contested repeatedly without undermining their commonsensical status” (Talbot, 2003: 480). While it is important that gender relations are discussed, categorising gender based on common assumptions about women and men must be avoided. Bondi (1998) argues that this dichotomic conception of gender is defined in terms of heterosexual relations, relying upon a conventional notion of families as couples of men and women with children. This means that other familial realities are not addressed on policy agendas.

This dilemma regarding the integration of a gender perspective in urban planning demonstrates the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the concept. Both neutrality and equality do not challenge common understandings of gender in urban planning. The way the concept is used fails to recognise the complexities associated to the experience of gender. Indeed, relying “on categories such as ‘women’s experience’ seeks to reinforce hegemony and normalize dominant conceptions of gender without paying attention to the discursive fields in which gender become articulated” (Leavy, 2007: 101).

An alternative approach to applying a gender perspective is grounded within intersectionality. Intersectionality recognises intersections between structures and categories of inequality and oppression, such as gender, class, race, and disability. This involves acknowledging that using one analytical category, such as gender, is highly limited since an individual’s identity is shaped by more than one characteristic. These characteristics are related and mutually constitute one another (McCall, 2005; Shields, 2008). Indeed, a single category cannot sufficiently capture “the full structure of multiple, intersecting, and conflicting dimensions of inequality” (McCall, 2004: 1791). With regards to mobility related urban planning, it is important to recognise that experiences of gender and mobility are developed and shaped by everyday practices, and influenced by other dimensions of perceived difference, such as age, ethnicity or physical ability (Hanson, 2010).

3. Methodology

This thesis seeks to analyse what understanding of the concept of gender is presented in mobility related urban planning by conducting a discourse analysis of public documents relating to the topic of gender and mobility. The city of Malmö is used as a case, on the one hand due to the city’s efforts to implement gender equality goals at large, and on the other hand, because it was a practical choice that facilitated the access to data, such as closely located interview respondents.

Discourse analysis is both a theory and a research practice. Discourse analysis ultimately can be seen as an overarching methodology. However, Bryman states that “there is no one version of discourse analysis” and the approach to analysis varies considerably (2012: 528-539), which means that the methods used for the collection data is a matter of choice. In this case, discourse analysis through qualitative text analysis will be performed on public documents used to inform policy and planning decisions. The analysis of these texts will be the source of primary data collection. Additionally, semi-structured interviews will be used

as a supporting methodology. These interviews will provide supporting data and additional knowledge to the topic.

The following parts constitute the methodological section of the thesis. In a first instance, it will discuss the different public documents chosen for analysis, detailing how and why they were chosen. The analytical process undertaken for the gathering of data will also be discussed. In a second instance, the process of conducting semi-structured interviews will be explained, as well the reasoning behind the selection of respondents and the choice of questions asked. Finally, some of the methodological limitations will also be presented.

3.1 Discourse analysis of text

Discourse analysis in the case of this thesis makes use of a qualitative form of text analysis, which includes “a sensitivity to the usage of words and that context in which they are used” (Hardy et al., 2004: 21). Indeed, Guise and Gill state that discourse analysis “involves an exploration of patterns in the data for an understanding of the actions that are achieved in talk” (2007: 896). Overall, there is general agreement that discourse analysis is “a methodology for analyzing social phenomena that is qualitative, interpretive, and constructionist” (Hardy et al., 2004: 19). This sub-section will be structured as follows; firstly, the nature of documents chosen will be discussed, followed by the explanation of the analytical process behind the collection of data.

3.1.1 The selection and nature of documents

The sample of documents selected for analysis represent a variety of public documents, most of which are plans and reports aimed at supporting policy and planning decisions. The documents are extracted from two different authoritative levels, reflecting policy discussions at both a national and local city level. A total of six documents were selected. These documents are both in English and Swedish. The documents were purposively selected to ensure a representative sample. The documents were found following a search of public documents that inform about gender, urban planning, mobility and transport. However, for documents available in English the choice was somewhat limited. As such, the final sample offers a small but varied account of the types of document available on the topic of gender in mobility related urban planning. The documents will be presented in turn according to source and topic.

The following two documents relate to the topic of gender equality and urban planning at national level. Both documents are from the Swedish Board for Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket). Documents from national authorities were important to take into consideration, since policy and planning at a local level is generally informed by decisions made at a higher level.

- *Gender equality on the agenda - Planning for a secure and gender equal society, Boverket ('Swedish National Board for Housing, Building and Planning'), 2011:* This publication aims to guide community planners at integrating a gender equality perspective in their operations. It is part of the Government mandate “strengthening security in urban environments from a gender equality perspective”.

- *Places to feel secure in - Inspiration for urban development, Boverket ('Swedish National Board for Housing, Building and Planning'), 2011*: This publication is the result of a task cooperation between the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning and the County Administrative Boards (Länsstyrelserna). It aims to support the development work for “improving security in urban and city environments from a gender-equality perspective” (Meurman, in Boverket, 2011b). The focus was on the chapter “Security when moving about”.

The following documents relate to planning and development of the city of Malmö more specifically. These documents are from a variety of sources, three of which are in Swedish and one is in English. The first is Malmö’s comprehensive city development plan. The second document is a strategic traffic and mobility plan for the city. The third is a report that looks at traffic and transport planning, with a focus on gender equality. The final document is an informational leaflet to communicate the city’s aims for gender mainstreaming.

- *Översiktsplan För Malmö. Planstrategi (Malmö comprehensive city development plan), Malmö Stad, 2014* (in Swedish): The comprehensive plan presents the City of Malmö’s “long-term vision for development”. The document “shows how planning can contribute to its implementation” (Malmö Stad, 2014b). It is a plan that “is intended as a guide and support for municipal decisions on all levels. It aims to aid and inspire decisions and practices within the city’s various departments to create a more sustainable Malmö. The comprehensive plan will also aim to spur other actors – private, public and voluntary – in their work to improve the city”.
- *Trafik- och mobilitetsplan 2015 (Traffic and mobility plan, in Swedish), Malmö Stad, 2014* (in Swedish): A plan aiming to establish strategies for sustainable urban development within Malmö municipality. It highlights traffic related goals from the Översiktsplan för Malmö 2012 (Comprehensive City Development Plan), Trafikmiljöprogrammet (Traffic Environment Programme) and other strategic documents from Malmö municipality. The document seeks to demonstrate how traffic and mobility planning can contribute to the city’s attractiveness, while creating a more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable urban environment.
- *På Väg - En resa i jämställdhet (On the road - a journey to gender equality, in Swedish), Malmö Stad, 2009-2010*: This document is a report that is part of the project Hållbar Jämställdhet (Sustainable Gender Equality) focussing on public transport and gender equality. It briefly presents the results from a study on travel habits from which it develops four goals for gender equality.
- *Development plan for gender mainstreaming - Malmö city, 2011*: This is an informational leaflet that communicates Malmö’s development for the incorporation of a gender perspective into all decisions and planning. It was published following the city council’s signing of the CEMR’s European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.

This following sub-section will look more specifically at the methodological procedure behind the document analysis.

3.1.2 The analytical process

The process for analysing text in discourse analysis is open and can be tailored to the nature of the research. In fact, there is little agreement among scholars on the practical applications of discourse analysis as a method. Laffey and Weldes understand discourse analysis as the “retroduction of a discourse through the empirical analysis of its realization in practice”, and method as “the conceptual apparatus and empirical procedures to make this retroduction possible” (2004: 28). In other words, empirical analysis refers to the procedures used to analyse discourse in practice, in this case in public documents. The methodological process used for this thesis follows a specific structure and routine. This chosen procedure for analysis will allow us to look, in light of the theoretical discussion, at the themes that become apparent as a result of the collection of data and discourse analysis.

First, the documents were read for key terms on the concept of gender, such as gender, men, women, boys, girls, as well as for terms related to mobility, such as mobility, transport, movement, walking and cycling. In many cases, the documents were structured in a way that these concepts had dedicated chapters. In a first instance, the documents were read in order to identify the terms. In a second reading, passages where these terms appeared were selected and copied unedited into an analysis table (see Appendix I). This table was then used to structure the analysis of these passages. The first column indicates the document name. The second column holds the unedited passages selected from the documents. The third column was used to extract more specific ideas from the text, but still without interpretation. In the final column, these extracted ideas are interpreted in order to further develop an idea of the discursive trends apparent in the documents on the concept of gender. For the documents written in Swedish the same methodological process was followed, however in the first column, the unedited passages from the text were kept for the most part in Swedish, while the following columns were translated into English.

This process follows the theoretical perspective that discourse analysis is an exercise in creative interpretation that seeks to show how reality is constructed through text that embody discourses” (Hardy et al., 2004: 22). This exercise requires a process of meaning-making. Mills states that “meaning-making depends not only what is explicit in a text but also what is implicit - what is assumed” (Mills, 2004: 11). Indeed, analysing discourse requires perceiving the context and meaning of the documents from different angles. The data presented in the final version of table (See Appendix I) helped reveal findings that were used to structure the analysis section of this thesis.

3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

This part discusses the use of semi-structured qualitative interviewing as a supporting method to the analysis of text. The interviews were conducted to provide additional knowledge to the topic. Semi-structured interviewing is a methodological choice that allows for more informal discussions to take place with experts. Open-end questions help guide the respondents in the direction of the research topic without interrupting the natural flow of the conversation. Indeed, open-end questions provide detail and depth, allowing the respondent to be the expert and to inform the researcher (Leech, 2002). These interviews were an opportunity to gain insight in the practical understanding of the concept of gender.

Four interviews were conducted with experts in the field of urban planning, policy and academia. The respondents were selected following purposive sampling. Snowball sampling was also used to some extent for the selection of interviewees, who themselves were willing to share their contacts in the field by giving recommendations for people to contact. The interviews were consensually recorded and lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. The final recordings were manually transcribed.

More specifically, the interviews were conducted with two traffic planners, one project officer for gender mainstreaming and one academic in the field of mobility and transport. The latter interviewee is based at the Department of Technology and Society at Lund University, while the three others all work for the city of Malmö in various departments, namely the Gatukontoret (Street Office), the Stadsbyggnadskontoret (City Planning Office) and Miljöförvaltningen (Environment Department). The anonymity of the respondents will be kept throughout the thesis. As such, interview quotes will be referenced as followed:

Interviewee 1 - Academic at the Department of Technology and Society, Lund University

Interviewee 2 - Traffic planner at Gatukontoret, Malmö Stad

Interviewee 3 - Project officer for gender mainstreaming at Miljöförvaltningen, Malmö Stad

Interviewee 4 - Traffic planner at Stadsbyggnadskontoret, Malmö Stad

The questions asked were developed to gather knowledge about how the concept of gender is understood by practitioners in the field of urban planning. While similar questions were asked for each of the respondents, each interview was somewhat tailor-made to compliment their specific field of work. The interviewees were chosen because of their position as both practitioners and experts in fields that relate to issues of mobility and/or gender, as such questions were asked bearing in mind their knowledge and expertise (See Appendix II for interview questions).

3.3 Methodological limitations

The qualitative and subjective nature of discourse analysis means that it can be subject to criticism. It can be argued that the findings resulting from discourse analysis are not generalisable and replicable (Bryman, 2012). Focussing on the assumption that discourse constructs social reality means relying on creative interpretation of language. In the case of this thesis, discourse analysis will be conducted using qualitative text analysis. According to Fairclough (2003: 14), text analysis is “inevitable selective”. Objective selection of documents is not possible due to the researcher’s “particular motivations” which ultimately guide the research and determine what questions are asked (Ibid.: 14).

Additional to the qualitative nature of this thesis, the small number of interviews can limit the scope of the research since the interviewees are not representative for the people working in the same field (Bryman, 2012). However, interviews can complement the limitations of document analysis since they allow the research to get a broader picture of the problem at hand. As such, the aim of this thesis is not to generalise the results but rather to suggest further discussion and research.

In order to counteract the subjective and interpretative nature of discourse analysis, this thesis aims to make the selection of documents and analytical process as transparent as possible (See Appendix I and II). Doing so allows the reader to be more informed about how the conclusions were made and the extent to which they can be generalised.

Methodological limitations also occurred regarding the choice of the city of Malmö as a case. Choosing the case of Malmö means that the analysis is situated in a very specific context. Sweden must be recognised as a country that has been rather proactive regarding gender issues and gender equality in policy and urban planning. With regards to the how gender is understood is mobility related planning, the results cannot be applied to the context of other countries. Furthermore, this choice brought about some linguistic issues that meant that there was less choice in the selection of documents and also meant there was need for translation. Additionally, as some of the documents were covering fairly broad topics in the area of urban planning, only chapters or passages deemed relevant were used for analysis. This also means that not all aspects and topics found in the documents are addressed in the analysis.

4. Analysis

This analytical part will explore the findings that surfaced from the data analysis and present the results that contribute to answering the research question: *what understanding of the concept of gender is put forward in mobility related urban planning?* Following the collection of data derived from text analysis and interviews, the findings are structured into two sections. The first part looks at how gender is defined and the second discusses how the use and experience of the city differs with regards to gender.

4.1 Defining gender

One of the most striking findings that became apparent in the data was that the documents do not talk about the concept of gender per se, but refer to gender in relation to equality. In fact they speak specifically of a gender equality perspective. For example, in the document ‘Places to Feel Secure In’ it is stated that: *“A gender-equality perspective [...] needs to be included in the day-to-day work of all operations, including community planning”* (Boverket, 2011b). Additionally, the ‘Development plan for gender mainstreaming’ (Malmö Stad, 2011) does not distinguish between a gender perspective and a gender equality perspective, and seems to refer to the two terms interchangeably. Moreover, in the ‘Comprehensive city development plan’ (Malmö Stad, 2014a) gender equality is only a subtopic. Here the definition of gender equality is briefly brushed upon and does not go into any great detail as to what is meant by the term gender itself: *“A socially balanced city should also be a gender equal city. This involves justice, democracy and participation – women and men should have the same power and possibilities to shape the society and their own lives”* (Malmö Stad, 2014a: 15, translated).

An additional finding was the presentation of the concept of gender as a binary classification. Men and women as the two categories that make up gender has already been touched upon in the theoretical section, namely with the works of Hanson (2010) and Talbot (2003), and indeed the analysis conducted on public document reaffirms that this is the main and current understanding of gender. Statements such as *“men and women utilize city spaces in different ways”* (Malmö Stad, 2014b: 7) are numerous and present within each of the chosen documents. Ultimately, on a general level women and men are presented as two categories of gender.

With regards to the word 'gender' itself, all but one document analysed fail to define what is meant by the term gender. In a general sense, the concept gender is often linked to the understanding of gender equality as a whole. However, the term 'gender' is defined in the document 'Gender Equality on the Agenda' (Boverket, 2011a). Here, gender is explained following a complex definition that touches upon the idea of social construct and the assignment of characteristics based on biological sex. The definition is presented as follows: "*Gender is an analytical concept used to mark social and cultural dimensions of the concept of sex. It is about assigning different characteristics to women and men based on the conceptions we have about what being a woman or man entails, in a certain society and at a certain point in time. The problem is that these concepts create power relationships that tend to make women as a group subordinate, while men historically have constituted the norm for humanity*" (Boverket, 2011a: 7). The document discusses gender in a more developed way that recognises gender as a process of ascribing characteristics based on biological conceptions rather than actual facts.

However, in the other documents and in the interviews as well it becomes apparent that even when gender is recognised as a social construct, the biological conception of sex is not questioned. As West and Zimmerman (1987: 128) state, analyses of sex and gender "often retain a conception of sex-linked behaviors and traits as essential properties of individuals", which can result in biological essentialism, that is the perception of what is 'typical female' or 'typical male', as if they were grounded in biological differences. The definition in 'Gender Equality on the Agenda' (Boverket, 2011a) considers the importance of recognising different power structures based on gender, which ultimately have been unfavourable to women. It could be argued that since this document has gender as a main topic, it is more likely to have such a developed definition of the word gender than the other documents which focus more on mobility and traffic planning in a general way. However, of the three documents that have gender as a main topic, 'Gender Equality on the Agenda' (Boverket, 2011a) was the only document to define the term.

A more complex understanding of gender was also put forward during some of the interviews. Three out of the four respondents were rather reluctant to define gender along the binary classification of women and men. One respondent's defined gender as: "*the social construction of our sex. It's the norms and properties you associate with being a man or being a woman. Also, the science of understanding the difference in power and possibilities between men and women. It's a social construction of our biological difference*" (Interviewee 3). It could also be said that their reluctance to define gender as two categories was due to the fact that they found it problematic to generalise women and men. One of the respondents stated "*I don't have a definition of gender, I don't want to say this is typical for a man or for a woman*" (Interviewee 2), while another expressed that "*I don't think you can say generally, women would like this and men would like that*" (Interviewee 1). This reluctance to divide gender into two categories also reflects the issue that it ignores other important aspects, which should be taken into account in urban planning. This is linked to Hanson's (2010) claim that in studies on gender and mobility are limited to these two categories, while mobility is studied using many more variables. Indeed, one respondent stated that while "*there are differences between genders [...], I think in the end it depends also very much on the individual. I think there are huge differences within the category women and the category men*" (Interviewee 1).

In effect, the sample of documents was rather limited when it came to recognising the differences found within gender categories. In some cases, references to "men and women"

are immediately followed by references to “girls and boys” (Boverket, 2011a; Malmö Stad, 2011, 2014a). For example the phrase *“it is important to recognise that the everyday lives of women, men, girls and boys vary to a certain extent”* (Boverket, 2011a: 23). This is a rather weak attempt at acknowledging differences between ages within the large groups of men and women. The document ‘Places to Feel Secure In’ (Boverket, 2011b: 58) makes a brief reference to elderly people as well; *“Older men and women also feel greater insecurity in connection with public transport than others”*. People with disabilities is a final category that demonstrates an acknowledgement that gender is not divided between two homogenous groups, but the group ‘women with disabilities’ was only discussed in one of the documents (Boverket, 2011b). While some references to different groups within the two larger gender specific groups are made, the references are few and limited.

The way gender is referred to in the majority of the documents is too simplistic and too categorical as they deny other realities and identities that do not fit in the description ‘male’ or ‘female’. As Talbot (2003) claims, gender in discourse is problematic particularly because men and women not only are described as two different categories, but as mutually exclusive opposites. The problem here, as mentioned in the theoretical part, is that gender becomes the generalisation of assigned sets of characteristics.

However, data collected from the interviews, revealed more information about the importance of understanding social relations in a more complex way. One of the respondents addressed the problematic nature of binary conceptualisation of gender which affects the lens through which the concept is introduced into the work of policy making: *“This is where we start but it also strengthens the view that women are one group and men are another group. They have different abilities and possibilities and it makes us also miss a lot of important information and a lot of activities that we maybe should do to make Malmö a better city”* (Interviewee 3). One respondent argued that *“it is much more interesting to go beyond gender and ask why people bike, what problems they perceive? [...] I think it is more interesting to look at different social groups”* (Interviewee 1). Another respondent explained that the simplistic gender division in statistics is based on the fact that according to the law there are only two genders in Sweden, but that there recently has been a change in how surveys are conducted: *“We did problematise that there might be other more relevant divisions between different groups, sometimes maybe age is more important or your economic status or education, could be different things. The argument was that everyone has to be either a man or a woman, juridically (...). It’s been discussed and debated, and the last positive news is in surveys we can have ‘man’, ‘woman’ and ‘don’t want to say’ or ‘other’. So it opens up at least for people to choose, which is better”* (Interviewee 3).

Furthermore, one of the respondents talked about the active attempt to reach citizens that are usually underrepresented in decisions, in this case referring to two migrant women’s organisations in Malmö; *“There are immigrant women who have founded organisations, they have a common background, a common language (...). So you can talk to them more directly about the plans you have, what would be important in their life. Then you get more direct, concrete views on the environment and what could be improved”* (Interviewee 4, translated). This interviewee believes that the reason for approaching such organisations is because these voices are often not heard in planning processes. *“We are talking about groups that usually are not heard or seen. We were interested in what they think, we might have prejudices and stereotypes, but we seldom hear their voice”* (Interviewee 4, translated).

While the documents reflected a rather limited understanding of gender, looking at the differences between men and women, and in some cases acknowledging age differences and

disabilities, the interview respondents differed in the way they answered the question on how they define gender. There was general awareness of the problems associated to gender categorisation but this debate was not apparent in the documents. One document however does state that; *“Several power structures such as gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, socio- economic background and functional disability, play a role in the determination of an individual’s identity and its conditions”*. The existence of inequalities in society can hardly be denied but their identification and analysis are insufficient when it only focuses on inequities between men and women. There might be differences and discriminations between other genders that fall short and are not explored. Instead, statements like *“women and men should have the same power”* (Malmö Stad. 2014a: 15, translated) and *“equality between women and men”* (Malmö Stad, 2011: 2) only consider two genders.

4.2 The experience and use of the city

This following part explores the idea that the experience and use of the city differs with regards to gender. This idea was apparent in the documents and constitutes the second finding. Explanations for why the experience and use of the city differs were also visible in the documents and are presented in two sub-parts.

One of the main goals laid out in the comprehensive city development plan, ‘Översiktsplan För Malmö’ is to ensure that every citizen has a high quality of life (Malmö Stad 2014a). Other goals include that women and men should have the same power to shape their own lives as well as shape society, and that all citizens’ priorities and needs should be taken into consideration. Awareness and knowledge about people’s needs and understanding of how individuals use the city are seen as key to achieving an inclusive city environment (Malmö Stad, 2014a). This is also mentioned in the document ‘Places to Feel Secure In’, where it is discussed that the everyday life of *“women, men, girls and boys”* varies. Nevertheless, the document states: *“The experiences are also affected by factors such as age, ethnicity and functional impairment. You should therefore ensure you assign equal value to all experiences in community planning, and focus on those who are to benefit from the planning. In this way, you can influence people’s opportunities to live gender equal lives”* (Boverket 2011a: 23). This reflects an understanding that individuals’ identity and their experiences of the city are affected by different factors and other social dimensions.

Yet, when the documents discuss in greater detail how such experiences and needs differ, they refer back to the understanding of gender as divided between men and women. For example, this is evident in the section about gender equality in the Comprehensive City Development Plan for Malmö where strategies for reaching set equality goals are presented. The first strategy aims at making the different experiences and needs visible and to take these experiences into consideration in urban planning (Malmö Stad, 2014a). This assumes that men and women have divergent needs when it comes to mobility and transport. Another document also claims that women and men have different needs when it comes to urban planning stating that it is important to consider this in the planning process; *“the transport system shall be gender equal, i.e. equitably fulfil women’s and men’s transport needs* (Boverket, 2011a: 12).

It has become apparent through the data that travel patterns are a frequent topic discussed in the documents regarding the idea that women and men use the city differently and have

different travel behaviours. Statements such as *“women account for a larger proportion of the journeys than men do, and they travel more but shorter stretches than men”* (Boverket, 2011b: 56) are frequently found in the documents. Travel journeys are looked at in terms of how they differ for men and women. Again, following the common conceptualisation of gender as binary whereby men and women are presented as opposing groups with a given set of characteristics. The documents commonly refer to the idea that women use public transport more and cycle to a greater extent than men. Men, alternatively, use the car more than women and are more likely to own a car (Malmö Stad, 2010; 2011; 2014a; 2014c). This is also stated in the document ‘Places to Feel Secure In’ which claims that *“women use twice as much of their income as men on fees for public transport”* (Boverket, 2011b: 56).

The document ‘Gender equality on the agenda’ states: *“Everyday life and patterns of movement of women and men differ to a certain extent. Being able to move between different target points, such as from home to work, to the shops, to school and back home again are fundamental for making everyday life work. The transport policy goals look to the travelling of both women and men”* (Boverket, 2011a: 12). Statements such as this imply that the differing experience of the city and differing needs regarding public transport for women and men are known and proven facts rather than general assumptions. Indeed, the document ‘Places to Feel Secure In’ states that *“it is known that men and women often have different travel patterns”* (Boverket, 2011b: 55). This was also discussed in an interview where the respondent stated that different travel patterns between women and men are seen as factual: *“I guess it is more taken as a fact”* (Interviewee 3).

Furthermore, the same document argues that combined trips often take place at irregular times, whereas public transport systems are largely planned according to the start and the end of a work day (Boverket, 2011b). Thus arguing that public transport planning ultimately favours men’s daily routines, even though men use the car to a higher extent. Overall, the documents portrayed women’s travel patterns as complicated and difficult to pinpoint. The document further states that *“women more often combine trips so that a mixed-use development facilitates a woman’s way of travelling in many ways”* (Ibid.: 55). This idea that women have complicated travel patterns was reaffirmed in an interview; *“It is stated that women tend to pick up their kids more often and stop for shopping and do different stops and men tend to go from work to their home, for example”* (Interviewee 3).

Generally, there is little attention paid to the question why travel patterns differ. Nevertheless, the three documents that lay out the city’s development plans, traffic plans and for equality, do claim, however, that the reasons for differing travel habits are complex (Malmö Stad, 2010; 2014a; 2014c). It is argued that these reasons can be explained by considering existing power relations in society, family situation, economic conditions and situation of employment, but without going into details (Malmö Stad, 2010; 2014a; 2014c). This was reaffirmed in one of the interviews; *“We haven’t gone into it specifically and we haven’t really asked questions about travel habits, why one travels a certain way”* (Interviewee 4, translated). However, the respondent was willing to discuss the idea that environmental awareness could be a reason for women’s choice of transport mode, stating: *“Women seem more inclined to find road safety and the environment important”*. Yet, again explanations are either not considered or are not discussed in detail, in addition they are often stated as fact.

To summarise this part, it can be said that generally the documents present gender in the context of men and women as two groups that have different travel behaviours, needs and preferences. They are seen to a large extent as homogeneous groups and explanation or

discussion about why these differences occur is relatively limited. However, the data did reveal two themes that appear in the documents regarding how problems associated to gender inequality are perceived in an urban environment, which contribute to explaining why the experience and use of the city may differ for men and women. As such, the following parts will discuss these findings, namely that women as a group have greater domestic responsibility and that women have greater feelings of insecurity.

4.2.1 Domestic responsibility

The data collected from text analysis reveals that one reason for different gendered travel patterns is grounded in the responsibility for domestic and care work. In the document ‘Development plan for gender mainstreaming’, transport planning is seen as key to solving issues relating to the division of labour. The document states: *“a gender equal transport system shall serve as a link between work, leisure and the home and shall be easily accessible and attractive for all citizens”* (Malmö Stad, 2011: 18). This is largely seen as affecting women to a greater extent than men. According to the document ‘Places to feel secure in’ (Boverket, 2011b), journeys undertaken by women are generally more complicated and often less linear than men’s because of the need to combine various destinations: *“The functionally divided city creates transportation problems. It can, for example, take a lot of time and be complicated to combine several different errands. It is known that men and women often have different travel patterns, whereby women more often combine trips so that a mixed-use development facilitates a woman’s way of travelling in many ways”* (Boverket, 2011b: 56). The idea that women carry the responsibility for domestic work to a greater extent than men is consistent throughout the data. Although women account for domestic labour to a higher extent than men do, it is important to not reduce the issue of domestic responsibilities to an individual problem but see it as embedded in societal structures (Mills, 2004). In other words, domestic work has often been considered an individual concern, while the discourse about women as main carers is not the problem in itself, there is pressure within society that reinforces such statements.

Nevertheless, it is mentioned in the documents that domestic work is not a task that is only carried out by women but a responsibility that all people share and thus explained as more gender neutral; *“We work, take children to preschool, shop, move about between different places, etc.”* (Boverket, 2011a: 23). Furthermore, in the document ‘Gender Equality on the Agenda’ it is said that although domestic and productive work is unequally divided between men and women, this does not apply to all individuals: *“This does not mean that the situation is the same for all women and all men, but on a general level there are differences that are important. But just because things are like that today does not mean that they will always be the same in a future, more gender equal society”* (Boverket, 2011a: 25). The same is said by one interviewee who stated that *“if you look at groups without thinking about the fact that they consist of individuals, you will not see differences (...). In the same way, one can also say that there are many similarities between the sexes too, of course. But maybe it has changed a little with time. There are differences today that may not exist in a few years time”* (Interviewee 4, translated).

The data derived from the documents and the interviews demonstrate that power relations and societal structures are regarded as an important fact to consider when analysing gender inequality. Nevertheless, the statement that *“everyday life differs between women and men”*, which is explained by the fact that *“women carry our more housework than men, while men*

in turn invest more time in paid work” (Boverkets, 2011a: 23) is repeating the binary categorisation of gender. This understanding can be argued to be reproducing allocated roles. Indeed, as discussed in the theoretical part, households are sites where doing gender takes place, that is the active creation of differences between men and women, and this happens simultaneously as domestic and family work is performed (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Furthermore, the use of terminology such as “*carry out*” housework versus “*invest time*” in paid work also implies a certain hierarchy of importance regarding the way society perceives the division of labour (Boverkets, 2011a: 23). This is also made apparent in the interview data: “*The reason would be that women usually have the main responsibility for the household and the children. Maybe it is mentioned, but not so explicitly and not how we could change that division. It would be very interesting to learn more about that*” (Interviewee 3).

When gender inequality is presented as a problem that predominantly affects women, while this is true to a large extent, it neglects that gender as a relational category has consequences for all individuals. Additionally, referring to categories such as ‘women’s experiences’ and ‘men’s experiences’ and presenting them as different deepens the essentialist and normalised interpretation of gender. It acts as reinforcing the binary conceptualisation of gender, since questions of behaviour can be seen as inherent in gender and not as dependent on other more complex factors. In addition, references to traditional gender roles ignore people and individuals who live alternative lifestyles than the ones seen as present in the traditional heterosexual family.

4.2.2 Security

Another theme that became apparent following the analysis of data is women’s feeling of insecurity, which Law (1999: 570) refers to as the “‘women’s fear’ strand of research”. Feelings of insecurity are understood as limiting people’s mobility in an urban environment: “*the fact that insecurity limits people’s opportunities to move around freely is a problem that greatly limits access to the city and urban environment*” (Boverkets, 2011b). Regarding gender, women’s perception of insecurity, which is understood to be especially acute in the evening and at nighttime, is presented as one of the reasons for why women have different experiences and needs of the city, and ultimately translates into different travel behaviour (Boverkets, 2011b). The idea that women feel unsafe in public spaces to a higher extent than men is generally agreed upon in the documents and is also presented as a fact about gender differences (Malmö Stad, 2014a). In the document ‘På väg - en resa i jämställdhet’ (Malmö Stad, 2010) safety is one of the four goals put forward for gender equality, alongside equal distribution of power and influence, financial equality, equal distribution of unpaid domestic work. The goal aims at aiding women’s fear of being exposed to violence, in particular when it comes to using public transport. Feelings of insecurity are discussed as having negative effects on mobility (Ibid.).

Furthermore, Boverket (2011a) presents security as a topic that has become prominent in the field of urban planning in relation to gender equality. While they state that the feeling of security depends on an individual’s personal experience, they also claim that “*sex is the most crucial factor when it comes to the perception of insecurity, but many times sex works in tandem with other conditions in the lives of women and men*” (Boverkets, 2011a: 8). However, the idea that men also experience feelings of insecurity in public spaces or on public transport as well is not brought in any of the documents. The document ‘Places to Feel Secure In’ even discusses women’s feelings of insecurity when meeting unknown man

that is compared to the fact that men do not experience such feelings when meeting unknown women (Boverket, 2011b). The document states: *“travelling on foot means that you are faced with many other people to meet. Many women feel that meeting one or more unfamiliar men on the street can feel insecure. Men never or seldom experience such a feeling of insecurity when meeting a woman. This is basically due to general perceptions that women are weak, vulnerable and helpless. These perceptions also include the view that women risk being subjected to violence or threats of violence in public places and that all men are potentially dangerous to women”* (Ibid.: 62). What is interesting with this example is that it completely fails to recognise that feelings of insecurity when faced with unknown individuals has nothing to do with fear of the opposite sex. Women who are afraid of unknown men are not afraid just because they are men, but because of the relation of power and structural violence against women that is present in society. Discussing whether men feel afraid when meeting unknown women is an irrelevant and pointless comparison. It would have been of greater importance to discuss whether men also have feelings of insecurity when meeting unknown men, since herein lies the problem regarding gendered power structures. One interviewees, however, acknowledge this as a problem claiming *“as a woman you can be afraid to go out in the evening when it's dark, but if you are a man you might as well be as afraid but it's not really okay to say that you're afraid”* (Interviewee 2).

Two of the documents also discuss women's feelings of insecurity in public spaces as a concern regarding traffic safety (Boverket, 2011b; Malmö Stad 2014a). The link between gender and traffic safety is presented in the documents as problematic because women are believed to develop strategies to circumvent threatening situations: *“Strategies that women choose often go against what is viewed as safe in view of traffic, but they increase a woman's sense of security in the traffic environment. They may cycle with their lights turned off, ride or walk along busy roads instead of using a separate walkway or cycle path, or they may park on the street instead of in garage”* (Boverket, 2011b: 55). These strategies are seen as being obstacles to people's mobility. This problem regarding strategies is believed to be increased regarding women with disabilities and elderly people; *“studies also show that women with disabilities are more prone than other women to deliberately plan their movements and employ strategies in order to feel more secure in public areas”* (Ibid.: 57).

Indeed, safety in an urban environment is not only a concern for women, there are people who have feelings of insecurity and vulnerability on a different scale. The discussion about disabled women as being a particularly vulnerable group regarding gender and safety was visible in three of the documents (Boverket, 2011b; Malmö Stad, 2011; 2014a). The document 'Places to Feel Secure In' stated: *“for women with disabilities, surroundings that are generally seen as insecure can feel even more so because their ability to escape or choose alternative routes is severely limited”* (Boverket, 2011b: 57). In this sense, safety is strongly linked to mobility. However, issues of safety regarding other groups such as ethnic minority groups, disabled people or LGBTQA² people who may also feel extremely vulnerable in an urban environment are not discussed in any of the documents nor mentioned by any of the interview respondents.

The idea that only women feel afraid in public spaces and that they develop mobility strategies is mentioned by one of the interviewees as being a problem, stating: *“There are men who are more afraid of things and men who are less afraid. And the same goes for women. (...) You make strategies. That's actually a thing that in general people do, to have strategies when you perceive something is dangerous. For example, when you walk at night.*

² Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer, Asexual

You have strategies to adapt your mobility pattern, which is kind of bad, I think” (Interviewee 1).

Generally, safety in relation to gender and mobility is either discussed in the documents as an issue that especially concerns women as a whole, or in particular to women with disability and elderly people. Essentially, the problem with such discourse is that it ascribes characteristics to women that apply for the group as a whole. ‘Women’ when considered as a homogenous group, are presented having substantially different needs than ‘men’. This ultimately reveals a reality whereby men do not have feelings of insecurity and women are in need of greater protection and require more from urban planning decisions in line with the needs of other vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities or elderly people.

5. Conclusion

The following part concludes the study and constitutes the overall answer to the research question *‘what understanding of gender is put forward in mobility related urban planning?’*. More specifically, the supporting research questions *‘how is gender defined?’* and *‘how are the problems associated with gender inequality perceived?’*, presented in the introduction, will be answered along with a discussion about the findings. Furthermore, some suggestions will be recommended regarding how the concept of gender could be used in mobility related urban planning. Finally, this conclusion ends with a reflection on the nature of discourse analysis in relation to the thesis findings as a whole.

5.1 Conclusion and suggestions

The aim of the thesis was an opportunity to analyse how the concept of gender is understood in mobility related urban planning. Looking at the city of Malmö in particular, documents relating to the topic of gender and mobility were selected for analysis and supported by interviews conducted with experts in the field. As a general conclusion, analysing the discourse on gender has highlighted the dilemma of acknowledging gender inequalities, while at the same time challenging common assumptions about gender. Indeed, it has become apparent that when the concept of gender is included in policy discussions, the current understanding of gender is somewhat limited. In particular, the common binary conceptualisation of gender, that is the division of gender into two groups, men and women, is the most common interpretation thus far (Hanson, 2010; Talbot, 2003).

This thesis concludes that the common conceptualisation of gender is an oversimplified use of the concept that is contributing limited and restricted information to policy and planning decisions on mobility. Problems associated with such a definition not only shape decisions, but the process of decision-making as well. When research is conducted in urban planning, the definition of gender can structure the research process as well as the way the problem is perceived. For example, urban infrastructure designed around a generalised idea of what women need. If researching gender means focussing on differences between men and women, the ascribed characteristics are perpetuated and never challenged. A binary understanding of gender causes the repetition of stereotypical interpretations of what is ‘female’ and ‘male’. Furthermore, it can lead to the marginalisation of individuals who cannot identify with either group. This means that stereotypes and characteristics attributed to men and women are being reproduced. Stereotypes are problematic because they reduce

and simplify people's realities and neglect that the social construction of identities is more complex (Talbot, 2003). Furthermore, this can also lead to decisions that focus on gender when other factors could be more relevant.

In answering the research question *'how is gender defined?'*, the data analysis demonstrated that there was no given definition of the term 'gender' aside from in one document. However, the concept of gender is discussed in a broader sense. Firstly, gender is referred to in terms of 'men' and 'women' as categories, this categorisation reflects assumptions about biological differences consistent with the common conceptualisation of gender as discussed in the theoretical background. Secondly, gender is discussed in relation to the topic of gender inequality, which presents a picture of women as a disadvantaged group regarding mobility and urban planning decisions. The concept of gender as such is defined in terms of binary categorisation and in relation to gender inequality, which reflects only a limited understanding of the concept at large. The interview data, however, demonstrated that individuals working within these fields have more awareness regarding the complexity of conceptualising gender. Nevertheless, this thesis has focussed on discourse present in text and there is evidence that the common conceptualisation of gender is dominant. This is problematic in the field of mobility related urban planning when decisions are made based on repeated understandings of gender inequality. When all issues are seen through the same lens, gender stereotypes remain unchallenged and power relations that created these differences to begin with remain unacknowledged. As previously discussed, gender must be understood as an experienced identity that is linked to and affected by many other social dimensions (Hanson, 2004; Shields, 2008). As such, this thesis concludes that the conceptualisation of gender put forward in the documents is analytically limited. By this we mean that the complexity of the concept gender is not recognised and the use of the term ignores the intricate and important dimensions that constitute gender.

In answering the question *'how are the problems associated with gender inequality and mobility perceived?'*, the data analysis points to two main problem areas. In a general sense, gender inequality is perceived in the documents as being linked to the fact that women have different needs and expectations of the urban environment, which are portrayed as not being considered enough in urban planning. The perceived problems are consistent with gender narratives discussed in the theoretical section, namely that the experience and use of the city differ for men and women as a result of the idea that women have greater domestic responsibility and that women have increased feelings of insecurity in urban environments. While these examples may be evident and perceptible in social reality, it is important to consider that feelings and experiences of inequality cannot be homogeneously ascribed to entire groups. As Payne (2014) claims, gender equality strategies contain assumptions about gender equality and gender differences that are visible in discourse. These assumptions have been taken for granted and remain unchallenged within policy making. In other words, assumptions about gender inequality are repeated and ultimately reproduced in reality. For example, narratives about women as main carers in society restrict discussions about what the role as carer truly entails and excludes carers that do not identify with that category from the debate. By not recognising structural exceptions and differences in society, discourse narratives prevent change and progress from happening.

As such this thesis would like put forward some suggestions regarding the use of the concept of gender in mobility related urban planning. As mentioned in the introduction, we believe that gender should be understood as an experienced identity that is linked to and affected by other social dimensions such as race, class, age and health (Hanson, 2004; Shields, 2008). With regards to the collection of statistics on gender, we argue that more categories within

gender groups should be included. This would permit the analysis of gender across dimensions. Such an analysis becomes especially important in relation to mobility. Indeed, as discussed in the theoretical part, mobility is a resource that is differentially accessed, the experience and practice of which is different for all. When making decisions regarding people's mobility, there must be an awareness of all factors that could contribute to social equality. The gender perspective presented in the documents becomes problematic when it ignores other possible factors. For example, a young female cyclist will no doubt experience mobility more similarly to her male counterpart of the same age than she will to an elderly woman. This example illustrates that in the aim of addressing urban planning inequalities, it is important to recognise differences within gender groups rather than talking about 'women's needs' in general. It cannot be assumed that individuals that share a gender have the same experiences of mobility in an urban environment. A more complex understanding of gender would allow for decisions to be tailor-made to individuals' specific needs, rather than planning groups of people who do not necessarily share the same needs. Nevertheless, while we have argued that the conceptualisation of gender presented in the documents is analytically limited, we still believe that the inclusion of a gender perspective is relevant and important to the field of mobility related urban planning.

5.2 Reflections on discourse analysis

This part will be a final reflection on the thesis as a whole, and in particular a discussion about discourse analysis. We argued in the theoretical part that discourse embedded in text plays a part in the production and dissemination of knowledge and ultimately has the capacity to shape social reality (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). As a result of this study, the discourse on gender found within the sample of documents analysed is consistent with common understandings of gender that are played out in social reality. Furthermore, we also argued that discourses are statements that have legitimate and institutionalised force which influence the way people think and act (Mills, 2004). Since the sample of documents analysed are tools to inform policy-making, it can be argued that the discourse on gender is in effect playing a role in shaping decisions made within the field of mobility related urban planning.

Yet, following the conduct of interviews with individuals working within the fields of urban planning, gender mainstreaming and academia, this understanding of the role of discourse as reflecting social reality was somewhat contradicted. Their knowledge reflected a greater awareness of the complexity regarding the conceptualisation of gender and the application of a gender perspective in mobility related urban planning. We found that their personal opinions on the topic diverged to some extent from the discourse presented in the documents. This leads us to the conclusion that while discourse in text offers some insight into how social reality is constructed, we believe that the analysis of documents did not reflect the larger discourse on gender happening within the field. Nevertheless, since these documents are used to inform policy and planning decisions, we argue that the role of these documents and the discourse that they present are still influential. Ultimately, we believe the findings that have resulted from this study are valid and offer an interesting contribution to the conceptualisation of gender in the field of mobility related urban planning.

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References II - Documents sampled for analysis

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Appendix I – Extract of document analysis

Name of document	Passages from Document	Extracted Ideas	Interpretation
<p>Places to Feel Secure In - Chapter 'Security When Moving About' (Boverket, 2011b)</p>	<p>Many people feel insecure about transport for various reasons. The fact that insecurity limits people's opportunities to move around freely is a problem that greatly limits access to the city and urban environment. Women often feel more insecure in relation to transport in town than men do, especially in the evenings and at night. It is therefore important to plan for increased security in transportation from a gender-equality perspective, regardless of whether the trip is made on foot, by bicycle or on public transport. If transportation is designed so that it is perceived as secure by the most vulnerable or insecure people, everyone is likely to benefit. (p.54)</p> <p>Men and women make use of local public transport in different ways. Women account for a larger proportion of the journeys than men do, and they travel more but shorter stretches than men. The differences are not as marked in regional public transport. Men travel further and can therefore access a larger proportion of the region's selection of workplaces. Women use twice as much of their income as men on fees for public transport (SOU 2003:67). (p59)</p>	<p>Feelings of insecurity can limit people's opportunities to move around freely, limits access to the city</p> <p>Need to increase security in transport from gender equality perspective, regardless of mode of transport</p> <p>Designed for most vulnerable and insecure means everyone will benefit</p> <p>Men and women make use of public transport in different ways</p> <p>Women account for larger proportion of journeys, travel more but do shorter stretches</p> <p>Differences not as marked in regional public transport</p> <p>Men travel further and can access more workplaces</p> <p>Women use twice as much of their income on public transport fees than</p>	<p>Gender equal perspective in transport planning is linked to designing for most vulnerable and insecure, which ultimately would benefit everyone.</p> <p>However, it is problematic when women are linked to concepts vulnerable and insecure. This assumes that women fall into a category of powerlessness.</p> <p>The "most vulnerable or insecure people" are not the same group of people in every context</p> <p>Men and women use public transport in different ways. Women travel more but make shorter journeys. It is assumed that because men travel further than women do, they have greater access to workplace options. Yet, it is also claimed that women spend twice as much on transport fees than men.</p> <p>There is no real explanation as to why women would travel shorter distances and more often than men.</p>
<p>Gender Equality on the Agenda (Boverket, 2011a)</p>	<p>In the planning process, it is important to recognise that the everyday lives of women, men, girls and boys vary to a certain extent. For example, women carry out more housework than men, while men in turn invest more time in paid work. This does not mean that the situation is the same for all women and all men, but on a general level there are differences that are important. But just because things are like that today does not mean that they will always be the same in a future, more gender equal society. (p23)</p> <p>The fact that everyday life differs between women and men can also mean that they have different experiences of how things work. For instance, how easy or difficult it is to move between two locations. The experiences are also affected by factors such as age, ethnicity and functional impairment. You should therefore ensure you assign equal value to all experiences in community planning, and focus on those who are to benefit from the planning. In this way, you can influence people's opportunities to live gender equal lives. (p23)</p>	<p>Important to recognise everyday lives of women, men, girls and boys varies to a certain extent</p> <p>Women carry out more housework - men invest in paid work</p> <p>Not necessarily same for all women and all men, but on general level, differences are important</p> <p>But things may change in a more gender equal society</p> <p>The fact that everyday life differs between women and men mean they have different experiences</p> <p>Ease of moving between locations</p> <p>Experience also affected by other factors such as age, ethnicity and impairment</p> <p>Importance of assigning equal value to all experiences</p>	<p>Assumptions that women have more domestic responsibility than men. This means they have different needs. Women spend more time taking care of housework while men actually work. But not necessarily the same for all women and all men.</p> <p>These assumptions are based on today's societal structures, but could be different in a gender equal society.</p> <p>Women and men experience the city differently, which has effect on their mobility. This also means they have different needs regarding urban planning.</p> <p>There is recognition of different social conditions that have effect too, document states importance of assigning equal value to all experiences, yet still refer to men and women as two groups.</p>

Appendix II – Interview Questions

Not all the interview questions have been added to the appendix, this is a sample of the questions asked. Similar questions were asked for each of the respondents but they were tailor-made to correspond to their particular field of work.

1. Please could you describe to us your role.
2. Would you say that the concept of mobility is relevant to urban planning? In what ways is it relevant?
3. Do you believe that mobility is experienced differently between individuals? Between different groups?
4. Is the concept of gender discussed in your line of work? Are there any other concepts (i.e. disability, refugee, children etc.) that are also discussed?
5. Do such concepts influence the decisions you make?
6. In your own words, how would you define gender?
7. Would you say that gender affects the way one experiences mobility in an urban environment? If yes, in what way?
8. Do you find it easy/challenging having to consider such concepts in your work?
9. Do you have an (ideal/imaginary) individual in mind when making planning decisions? If yes, what are their characteristics?