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Bound to Benefit

Exploring How Gender Roles and Relations Shape Women's Access to Economic
Growth from Connectivity: One Case of the Road Corridor in Armenia

Author: Emelie Staffas

Supervisor: Axel Fredholm

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Abstract

The study takes off from gender studies, aiming to identify and explore the relations and roles that people share in society that shape their daily lives. Road corridor investments and how they affect women are argued to be in the middle of a development dilemma where three global agendas that appear incompatible are yet promoted simultaneously. The study aims to explore how gender roles and relations shape women's access to economic growth from connectivity can be framed using a gender-centred conceptual framework employed in the research question: *How have the productive and reproductive roles of women been recognised in a road corridor investment programme?*

The analysis will suggest that initial social conditions will matter to what and how wider economic benefits from road corridors can reach women by concluding that inclusive growth arguably makes women bound to benefit from road corridors. However, women may have limited agency to choose how to benefit. The study suggests a possible way forward to remain aware of how a macro-scaled project affects the public and private domains is to track governmental spending on public services.

Key words: inclusive growth, gender inequalities, transport infrastructure, road corridors, Armenia, Asian Development Bank

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
NSRC	North-South Road Corridor Investment Programme

Glossary

Development	The act of changing; when doing development intention represents enhancing a situation (adopted from Potter <i>et al.</i> , 2018: 8)
Gender roles	A division of labour between based on whether a person is male or female
Gender relations	The social norms and values that shape how men and women interact
Living standard	“The amount of money and comfort people have in a particular society” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021)
Man and Woman	“The binary division of gender [...] characterised as opposites, with the male as the norm and the female in the othered position [...] organis[ing] them as masculinity and femininity and match[ing] them with male or female bodies” (Levin and Faith-Ell, 2019: 95-96).

1. Introduction

Developing resilient infrastructure that generates economic growth and promoting gender equality is included in the global effort towards sustainable development in Agenda 2030 reflected in goals 9, 8, and 5, respectively (UN General Assembly, A/RES/70/1). The outcome of connectivity through investing in transport infrastructure intends to reach all spheres and segments of society with physical, economic, and social impacts. However, integrating the different ways segments of a population uses transport in planning is still proved challenging, not least to integrate the needs of women (Greed, 2019; Levy, 2019). Women's physical mobility patterns are a product of their routine, which allows the bridge to study the gender roles and relations that shape the routine and thus genders differing transport use (Greed, 2019).

A *road corridor* can be defined as a stretch of road or rail that either connects at least two economic hubs or is at least one hundred linear kilometres long (ADB *et al.* 2018: 5). As the rationale behind investing in road corridors is to boost economic growth through more efficient trade (Akbar *et al.* 2020), the socio-economic impacts generated from them have become of interest to study, which is where the concept of wider economic benefits fit (Quium, 2019). Road corridor investments and how they affect women are therefore in the middle of a development dilemma where three agendas that appear incompatible are yet promoted simultaneously, which is where this study takes off.

The study aims to explore how gender roles and relations shape women's access to economic growth from connectivity can be framed, using a gender-centred conceptual framework employed in the research question:

How have the productive and reproductive roles of women been recognised in a road corridor investment programme?

To the best of the author's knowledge, the wider economic benefits of road corridors have not been studied by employing the chosen conceptual framework.

Next, the thesis sets out the research nexus from where the study will take off and to which it wishes to contribute. In chapter 2 the theoretical and conceptual grounding in the concept of inequality in outcome versus opportunity is presented to explain how people can be expected to benefit differently from development, and the way public and private domains of society

interact with each other and its relation to economic development. Chapter 3 explains the study's methodological considerations and the subsequent chapter sets the scene for the study. Here, contextual background on Armenia, the Asian Development Bank, and the North-South Road Corridor Investment Programme are provided to give the reader an in-depth understanding of the site and allows the analysis to be more condensed. The analysis in chapter 5 will suggest that initial social conditions will matter to what and how wider economic benefits can reach women. Finally, the study discusses how assessing wider economic benefits from road corridors holds possibilities to become more gender-aware to capture essential data that can be used as indicators to understand how wider economic benefits from road corridors interact with society's public and private domains simultaneously.

1.1 Research Nexus

Development has a complex relationship with women. Caroline Moser (1993: 55-79) summarises the different development approaches and their rationale for addressing women's issues, beginning with how early development policy approaches would often view women as passive receivers of welfare assistance, often in direct relation to their role as mothers. Eventually, it was understood that women were needed in development as active participants in the development process. The approach is often referred to as Women in Development. Women in Development is an umbrella for several development strategies but with the aim to include women into the labour force in the public domains of society (ibid). Labour force participation has been associated with more efficient economic growth, and economic growth has proven beneficial for raising living standards through poverty reduction (Hulme and King, 2017: 468-71).

Potter *et al.* (2018: 91-93, 96-98) introduce the early views on development founded in neoclassical economic theory and promoted fast economic growth through macro-scaled interventions of industrialisation. A critical thinker was A. O. Hirschman, who, in 1958 (cited in ibid), added to the debate that unequal growth was necessary for the early stages to let the market settle inequalities later. In other words, accumulated capital would eventually 'trickle down' to all layers of society. Thus, the rationale is to maximise resources and heighten efficiency to accelerate the economy using a productive labour force. Therefore, women have become viewed as vital members of the labour force to promote economic growth, which is reflected in the Women in Development approach strategies. Hirschman is under an umbrella

of development theories called modernisation that assumes development spreads from a large settlement down to smaller ones (ibid). Therefore, apart from mobilising labour forces, spatial connectivity is essential to boost economic growth (Potter *et al.*, 2018: 97, 152). Transport involves time and fuel, which are costly, supporting the rationale for achieving efficient travel by investing in transport infrastructure (ibid). The road corridors that contribute to efficient trade and economic growth are deemed especially essential for landlocked countries (Lane and Pretes, 2020). As a response to the modernist development interventions, not least the Structural Adjustment Programmes in post-colonial countries, normative theorists began calling for development interventions to refocus from growth to the people. The argument is to work from the bottom-up with participatory strategies to ensure that development benefits the local population without creating inequality, as summarised by Brohman (1996, cited in Potter *et al.* 2018: 129). A related response was later to make development inclusive, promote equity to people, and fight inequality. Inclusive growth is thus where the intention is to ensure that the opportunity to participate in a process is not hindered by discrimination of individual characteristics (de Haan, 2017: 504).

Gender studies, springing from postmodern theory, has sought to gain a holistic understanding of the social relations that shape society and the situation for women. The social relations at play in society matter to how different segments interact with development and each other differently (Greed, 2019). Evolving from the Women in Development umbrella was an approach referred to Gender and Development to assess if and how interventions and their outcomes affect men and women differently (Moser, 1993: 55-79). The field of transport, relevant for this study, provides insight into how men and women's physical mobility differ and, therefore, urge transport planning to integrate gender more in its process (Greed, 2019). The aim of the Gender and Development movement corresponds to the diverse economic theory, which argues for research to view all the work that keeps a society running, where wage labour in the capital market is only the "tip of the iceberg" (Gibson-Grahams, 2006, 2008, 2014, cited in Potter *et al.* 2018: 131-32). Gibson-Grahams' ideas connect to gender studies that wish to study the interrelation between the work taking place in both the public and the private domains of society and the spill-over effects from economic growth simultaneously (Wanderlay, 2018).

2. Theoretical Grounding

The following chapter sets out the theoretical and conceptual grounding for the thesis. The concept of inequality in outcome versus opportunity is presented to explain how people can be expected to benefit differently from development. The way public and private domains of society interact with each other, and its relation to economic development is presented and why it matters to the welfare and development of women. The section ends by presenting the conceptual framework of Moser (1989) that the analysis will utilise.

2.1 Inclusive Growth and Equality to Opportunity

Inclusive growth is when a trade-off between the equity and efficiency of economic development does not occur (Anand *et al.*, 2013: 3). Efficiency means that the economy is growing at a good pace, and equity refers to equality to opportunity and equality in income distribution (*ibid*). Debates on how inequality is measured often speak about the outcome of policy or the social world (de Haan, 2017: 504). De Haan explains how specific economic theory suggests that inequality is needed for a healthy economy, and what matters when discussing inequality is inequality to opportunity. The argument is that it is more important that everyone has as equal opportunity to utilise policy and economic benefits as possible than the outcome of policy. The latter would relate to the effort an individual puts into an opportunity. De Hann exemplifies that a student's poor educational performance is an outcome and could be argued as "not necessarily unfair" (*ibid*), while certain people not being allowed the opportunity to get an education would be unfair. Inequality to opportunity would imply that certain groups of people receive different social treatment or are subject to discrimination based on individual characteristics like ethnicity or gender (*ibid*).

2.2 Women in the Public and Private Domains of Society

The debate on the opportunity to benefit from economic growth is interesting in relation to research on prevailing gender inequalities that argue that the mainstream economy only focuses on the public domain of society and market productivity (Wanderlay, 2018). The home remains private and not significant to economic development. During the time of structural adjustment programmes, policymaking leaned on cutting back on social security funding to concentrate budgets on accelerating trade and economies (Perrons, 2018). The policies were and continue

to be possible because states continue to rely on unpaid labour often are culturally assigned to women. Due to culture and norms, the domains are often segregated by gender (Wanderlay, 2018). As households have diversified and more women are engaging in the market through paid work, the gendered segregation of caring for the domestic sphere remains to cause women's workload to increase (ibid).

Because domestic labour requires much time, women tend to work in occupations with flexible, shorter workdays, where the trade-off is that wages are less likely to increase with time (Wanderlay, 2018). Being confined to certain types of labour has been referred to as horizontal occupation segregation. In contrast, the phenomenon of those occupations not being designed for careers or wage increase has been called vertical occupation segregation (ibid). Vertical inequality is becoming worse globally and increases the polarisation between rich and poor groups (Kabeer and Sweetman, 2018). At the same time, horizontal inequalities prevail, which fuels the deadlock that some social groups face in not being able to lift themselves out of poverty because they are culturally defined to specific means of income. It is the intersection of vertical and horizontal inequalities that can explain the persistence of poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion and general inequalities where often are more likely to be (Kabeer, 2018a). The pressure to participate both in public and private domains can be called to experience time poverty. It is suggested that the family unit and the household need to be opened for analysis because the social relations at play in the private domain involve conflict and cooperation between members (MacPhail, 2018). At the same time, designated gender roles and relations are arguably being taken advantage of for the sake of economic growth (Bessell, 2018). Therefore, development programmes that do not recognise a society's gender differences are likely to enlarge gender inequalities (Kabeer, 2018b).

Thus, an argument is that as living standards have risen globally through reduced poverty, the people women care for through their unpaid domestic work have had their wellbeing improved. However, women remain under pressure (MacPhail, 2018). Because the woman's time tends to be a crucial variable for adjustment to increase economic efficiency, her total labour intensifies while remaining subordinate and more impoverished than her male counterparts, which have proven to have long-lasting adverse effects on women's development (ibid). Such institutional reliance on women's unpaid labour reinforces the structural subordination of women and girls. Therefore, gender equality strategies must move beyond targeted development interventions for

women and girls towards intersectional policies that address gender inequality and economic growth simultaneously to reach the embedded social structures and relations that make inequalities last (Tiessen *et al.*, 2017; Ukhova, 2018).

Scholars who argue for women's economic empowerment stress that due to enduring stereotypes on what a suitable occupation for someone's gender is, women typically exercise less individual choice in their lives than men, along with the argument of occupation segregation (Wanderlay, 2018; MacPhail, 2018). One such enduring stereotype is how feminine characteristics are less valued than masculine in a market-based economy. Although women are participating in the labour force at a higher rate, so are men, and the male-dominated sectors tend to access higher-wage opportunities faster than women (MacPhail, 2018). Debates about gender equality argue that equality is when people experience equal entitlements and have the same opportunities to exercise agency and choice in their lives. Therefore, women's economic empowerment would be when women are active participants in the development and benefit from growth processes that include the capacity to balance work and family life (*ibid*).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Caroline Moser (1989), promoting gender planning, designed a conceptual framework and methodological tool to understand how development projects are likely to impact women's lives. As per other gender studies, the framework wants disaggregation of households by gender to enable insight into how the needs and lives of men, women, boys, and girls may differ.

The framework accepts the customary patriarchal division of labour by gender as fact and women's subordination to men. The framework builds on Maxine Molyneux (1985), who discussed women's various interests and needs and utilised the distinction between strategic and practical gender needs (cited in Moser, 1989). The former is concerned with challenging the customary division of labour to eliminate women's subordination. Practical gender needs revolve around perceived immediate necessities in a context that must be met (*ibid*). The conceptual framework encompasses an analysis that considers the triple role women work in, in society: the productive, reproductive, and community managing work. The productive role involves women's income-generating activities. The reproductive and community managing work concern the unpaid labour women carry out, which supports society, including caregiving in the family and assisting in communal chores like volunteering. Different policy approaches

recognise different roles with varying rationales for fulfilling strategic or practical needs, which the table below summarises:

Table 1: The rationale and intended outcomes of development policy approaches

<i>PGN – Practical Gender Needs, SGN – Strategic Gender Needs</i>		
Policy Approach	Rationale	Intended outcome
Welfare <i>Aid for food, healthcare, family planning, and similar</i>	Assist the reproductive role in meeting PGN	Improve life standards for women but not challenge customary gender division of labour
Anti-poverty <i>Increase productivity to escape poverty</i>	Offer the productive role opportunities to earn income in meeting PGN	
Efficiency <i>Economic participation generates efficient and effective development</i>	Rely on women’s time elasticity of the triple role in meeting PGN	
Equity <i>Participation in development process</i>	Top-down state intervention to provide autonomy for the triple role in meeting SGN	Reduce inequality with men thus challenging customary gender division of labour
Empowerment <i>Increase self-reliance</i>	Bottom-up mobilise around PGN to in-directly assist the triple role in meeting SGN	Confront oppression of women thus challenging customary gender division of labour

Adopted from Moser (1989: 1808)

The study will use the conceptual framework’s distinctions of women’s roles and practical and strategic gender needs to analyse how and what aspects of opportunities in economic growth are likely to reach women and hypothesise what the outcomes may be. Critiques to Moser’s conceptual framework argue that there is no clear distinction between practical and strategic, either theoretically or empirically, because changes in one domain affect other spheres of life (Wieringa, 1994). The criticism can be identified in the section above that the public and private

domains of society cannot be isolated from each other to ensure that analysis includes how gender roles and relations affect individuals and the economic growth process. Despite the criticism, the framework will allow this study to categorise data clearly and allow the results to be discussed in the broader light of the study's set out theoretical grounding. The framework will be especially helpful in analysing data that is not disaggregated by gender. The distinct roles and needs provide indicators for how and what aspects of opportunities in economic growth are likely to reach women and hypothesise what the outcomes may be.

3. Methodology

This study takes off from normative theory, more specifically in gender studies where the purpose is to identify and explore the relations and roles that people share in society which shape their daily lives to contribute to the emancipation for women to have complete autonomy and independence over their lives (Bryman, 2012: 150). Philosophically, the study takes on a pragmatic interpretive framework allowing the study to keep the problem to be studied in the foreground and intends to generate actionable outcomes (Creswell, 2013: 23, 37). The pragmatic stance to the study is that an external world is recognised as well as the complex individual ways the world is experienced (2013: 28, 37). Due to spatial limitations and language limitations that the author had in collecting her data and how close she could come to the case unit applied mixed methods of completeness to allow quantitative and qualitative data to enrich each other (Bryman, 2012: 637). The type of data collected (Table 2) makes the mixed methods of completeness approach the most suitable to allow the study to conduct its analysis. It is an abstract case study aimed at studying a concept (Lund, 2014: 228) the concept being accessing economic growth, contextualised by road corridors.

3.1 Data

The data takes the following form: two literature reviews, one that is peer-reviewed; four project documents selected because they either include the project's rationale or are completion reports, thus including results and conclusion that were used for analysis; and five extensive reports from grey literature containing information about the case and the unit of analysis. Several reports base their conclusions on quantitative methods from collecting large cases, which have provided the study with timely data according to pragmatic reasoning that allowed the study to understand the case and the unit of analysis while being confined to a desk in Sweden. It must

be mentioned that grey literature will have had their publisher's agenda during construction. Therefore, additional sources were collected to secure the study's credibility.

Table 2: Overview of analysed documents

<i>Types: LR – Literature Review, PD – Project Document, GL – Grey Literature</i>	
Name of analysed documents, (Type), Content	Relevance
<p>1 ADB <i>et al.</i> (2018) (GL)</p> <p>The report presents extensive information from several road corridor investment programmes in South Asia where the publishers are the investors themselves.</p> <p>Asian Development Bank, Department for International Development, Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the World Bank (2018). <i>The WEB of Transport Corridors in South Asia</i>. Washington, DC: World Bank</p>	<p>The overview and chapter two were particularly used to understand the rationale of wider economic benefits from road corridors and learn how road corridors of Viet Nam and Malaysia are perceived as success stories.</p>
<p>2 EDRC (2016) (PD)</p> <p>It is the final social monitoring report that evaluates tranche two's Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan (LARP) implementation and includes base- and endline data from Aragatsotn. The document was constructed by a consultant and belongs to the borrower (Government of Armenia).</p> <p>Economic Development and Research Center (EDRC) (2016) <i>Independent Monitoring of The LARP Implementation Post-Project Impact Assessment Report 2015</i>. 2016 September. Yerevan: "Organization for Implementation Of North.South Road Corridor Investment Program" State Non-Commercial Organization.</p>	<p>The report is the data closest to the physical site of the study's case and includes relevant information on consultation processes.</p>
<p>3 Egis International (2011) (PD)</p> <p>The due diligence report was prepared by a consultant in preparation for the designated outputs related to gender in tranches two and three.</p> <p>Egis International (2011). <i>Due Diligence Report HIV/AIDS, Trafficking – Contract No. 02 SC 002 Consultant's Services for Construction Supervision (Tranche 1) and Preparation of Tranches 2 and 3 Projects Asian Development</i></p>	<p>The report includes relevant information about attitudes on gender in Armenia.</p>

	<p><i>Bank Loan No. 2561-ARM North-South Road Corridor Investment Program. 2011 July. Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Armenia.</i></p>	
4	<p>ADB (2013) (PD)</p> <p>The Facility Administration Manual (FAM) in ADB describes the essential administrative and management requirements to implement.</p> <p>Asian Development Bank (2013). <i>Facility Administration Manual: Project Number: 42145 Republic of Armenia: Multitranchise Financing Facility for the North–South Road Corridor Investment Program.</i> January 2013. Manila: Asian Development Bank.</p>	<p>The FAM includes the specific outputs dedicated to gender in the NSRC Investment Programme.</p>
5	<p>ADB (2015) (GL)</p> <p>The Gender Assessment Report (GAR) provides an overview of the political, social, economic, and environmental climate in Armenia and how it affects women based on quantitative and qualitative data including peer reviewed material.</p> <p>Asian Development Bank (2015). <i>Armenia: Country Gender Assessment.</i> Manila: Asian Development Bank.</p>	<p>GAR is useful due to its comprehensive material and presentation of women’s situation in Armenia. In the data collection process ADB’s GARs included the most current sources that the author could identify.</p>
6	<p>ADB (2019) (GL)</p> <p>The report provides an overview of the political, social, economic, and environmental climate in Armenia and how it affects women based on quantitative and qualitative data including peer reviewed material.</p> <p>Asian Development Bank (2019). <i>Armenia: Country Gender Assessment.</i> Manila: Asian Development Bank.</p>	<p>GAR is useful due to its comprehensive material and presentation of women’s situation in Armenia. In the data collection process ADB’s GARs included the most current sources that the author could identify.</p>
7	<p>Honorati et al. (2019) (GL)</p> <p>Dynamics in the labour market of Armenia is presented by drawing conclusions from extensive quantitative statistical sources and surveys.</p> <p>Honorati, M., S. Johansson de Silva, N. Millan, F. Kerschbaumer (2019). <i>Work for A Better Future in Armenia: An Analysis Of Jobs Dynamics.</i> 2019 October. Washington DC.: World Bank.</p>	<p>The report provides insight in gendered labour market division and sector productivity.</p>

8	ADB (2009) (PD)	<p>The Report and Recommendation of the President (RRP) is the officially approved plan for the NSRC Investment Programme and includes the rationale and expected outcomes of the project and the Summary Poverty Reduction and Social Strategy and Summary of Social Safeguards.</p>	<p>The RRP offers a comprehensive understanding for the NSRC Investment Programme and how women are expected to be included.</p>
<p>Asian Development Bank (2009). <i>Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors. Project Number: 42145. Proposed Multitranchise Financing Facility and Administration of Cofinancing Republic of Armenia: North–South Road Corridor Investment Program</i>. 2009 September. Asian Development Bank.</p>			
9	Quium (2019) (LR)	<p>Peer reviewed review on the wider socio-economic benefits and costs of transport corridors with conclusions on what is most likely to benefit from corridors and what they will be detrimental to.</p>	<p>The scope of the review provides sound ground for the general knowledge on wider impacts from transport corridors and information on road corridors in Viet Nam and Malaysia.</p>
<p>Quium, A. A. S. M. (2019). "Transport Corridors for Wider Socio-Economic Development", in <i>Sustainability</i> 11(5248) pp. 1-23.</p>			
10	Roberts et al. (2018) (LR)	<p>Review of 78 studies where a meta-analysis of 234 estimated impacts from transport corridors was made with conclusions on what is most likely to benefit from corridors and what they will be detrimental for.</p>	<p>The scope of the review provides sound ground for the general knowledge on wider impacts from transport corridors.</p>
<p>Roberts, M., M. Melecky, T. Bougna, Y. S. Xu (2018). "The WEB of Transport Corridors in South Asia Background Paper. Transport Corridors and Their Wider Economic Benefits: A Critical Review of the Literature". <i>Policy Research Working Paper 8302</i>. Washington, DC.: World Bank.</p>			
11	UN Women (2019) (GL)	<p>The brief provides document review on the status on gender equality and women's empowerment in Armenia.</p>	<p>The brief gives insight in the national government's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment.</p>
<p>United Nations Women (2019). <i>Armenia Country Gender Equality Brief</i>. United Nations Women. Istanbul: UN Women Regional Office for Europe And Central Asia.</p>			

3.1.1 Case

The North-South Road Corridor (NSRC) Investment Programme in Armenia with a particular focus on Trance two was a suitable case for the study of how women are intended to benefit from large-scale infrastructure investments. Because of Armenia's landlocked position, road corridors become essential to their economic growth for connecting its people and commodities with the global arena (section 4.1). The outspoken culture for traditional perspectives on gender (section 4.1), together with women being the only targeted group in the investment programme (section 4.3), made the case suitable to study gender roles and relations concerning the programme. The complimentary cases of Viet Nam and Malaysia were chosen because they were included as successful road corridor investments with main wider economic benefits concentrated on the increased labour force participation that also included women. The two cases are somewhat different from Armenia, not least their geographical conditions; however, the similarity of customary divisions of labour by gender, rural population, and the need for connectivity to boost economic growth exists in all three cases (chapter 5). The findings from the studies on wider economic benefits, illustrated through the two success stories, provided this study with hypotheses for how the wider economic benefits from the road corridor in Armenia could impact women. The next chapter sets the scene for the case presenting contextual background information about Armenia, the ADB, and the NSRC Investment Programme.

3.2 Research Design and Data Collection

The study took off through inductive logic and sought to gain as much understanding from the case as possible to reach the unit of analysis of the study, exploring how women accessing the wider benefits from economic growth, are framed. Based on the literature review, economic growth was seen in direct correlation to road corridor investments. In the early stages of the inductive process, concentration lay at learning as much as possible about the case. The most authentic way was to look at original document projects constructed by the investment partners and those who have had direct access to the case. From the data, trends emerged. The latest gender assessment report by the ADB in 2019, together with the project design, led to the revelation of the complexity of gender roles and relations in Armenia. Complimentary data was

needed to make sense of the trends where the Honorati *et al.*'s report on job dynamics from 2019 was essential.

Having reached an in-depth understanding of the case and having arrived at the emerging theme of gender roles and relations made the author venture to the academic literature on gender inequalities. A reoccurring theme in the literature was the division of society's public and private domains and how it has affected women, as described in the theoretical groundings section. With this theoretical knowledge and an in-depth understanding of the case, it was possible to see the case data in a more organised manner. It was then possible to scan for the awareness of gender studies in the case data represented in the rationale about women's situation in Armenia especially concerning what the assessment reports revealed. After establishing a good understanding of a segment of the population meant to benefit from the road corridor, the study ventured into how the road would impact people. The study looked beyond the immediate outcomes of physical mobility because the project's impact indicators were dedicated to assessments of national trade, with one indicator implying how many people would benefit from the road without specifying how. The economic indicators became a guide to collecting information that could explain how economic growth reaches people. The study arrived at the concept of wider economic benefits from road corridors. The two literature reviews and ADB *et al.*'s report (2018) set out how wider economic benefits could successfully be maximised. The indicator dedicated to the impact on women was women's labour force participation. A gender-centred conceptual framework was applied to wider economic benefits to get a gender-sensitive understanding of the wider economic benefits.

3.3 Data Analysis

Moser's (1989) framework offered a way to identify thematic roles carried by women in society's public and private domains. Moser's framework includes three roles carried by women: the productive, reproductive and community managing work (section 2.3). The sourced data could not comprehensively reveal the conditions of women's community managing work and were therefore not included in the analysis. The two remaining roles were prominent, and the analysis set out to find whether the roles and thus the domains of society in which they work were seen as isolated or in relation to each other. The analysis was guided by the development policy approaches categorised as per Moser (*ibid*). The findings were then discussed with the assorted literature on gender inequalities and economic growth and the rationales for both.

3.4 Scope of the Study and Limitations

Because the study is set within gender studies, it was problematic that the studied women have not been given an opportunity to speak for themselves. There is a risk that through power asymmetries, women outside of the north-western context are objectified for the sake of research (Mies, 1993, cited in Bryman, 2012: 412). The challenge was mitigated with the aim of the study, which has not been to identify how women perceive their roles, needs, and desires. Instead, the study intended on locating women in both the public and private domains of society by analysing the contents from the selected data and literature to gain an understanding of the emerging trends of gender and expectations on gender where large sets of quantitative data could indicate such trends (Bryman, 2012: 412). Therefore, the results of this study are intended to be a springboard for future research that will have the opportunity to voice women's own opinions using e.g., participatory research methods through either interviews or focus groups. Such research could produce findings that can be compared with the conclusions based on the literature in this study. Due to the limitations faced by the research process, the mixed methods of completeness research approach is how the study is justified.

The physical scope of this study is limited to tranche two out of five possible tranches (section 4.3). Tranche two will go through the province Aragatsotn and is in the early stages of construction, allowing any conclusions from this study to be constructive and timely for further implementation and the fourth and fifth tranche that are yet to be designed.

Another limitation was that the sourced data and the scope of this study do not include what impacts the Covid-19 pandemic could have on women's access to the road corridor's wider economic benefits. The study was not able to include any impacts of the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh between the 27th of September and the 9th of November 2020 (Kramer, 2021). As national crises that have required extensive capital and human resources, they will inevitably have social and economic impacts on Armenia's development. Future research could therefore illuminate an understanding of public health crises in relation to violent conflict.

A non-binary perspective on gender is unfortunately outside of this study's scope, like any environmental aspects that could impact social development.

3.5 Positionality of the Author

I identify as a Caucasian heterosexual woman, and I was brought up in Sweden. This study is my master's thesis. My rationale for exploring gender is my interest in how social interactions and relations on both macro and micro-levels shape lives. I am therefore aware of the power relations between a researcher and their data that the data represent individuals. Therefore, I intend to be sensitive to what the data acquired can convey.

Despite the pandemic and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, I spent the autumn semester of 2020 in Yerevan, Armenia, completing an internship in applied programme management methods at a local non-governmental organisation. It is the first and only time I have visited the country so far. However, the research topic of this study was not decided on until after I left Armenia, and therefore there was no opportunity to collect data on-site in Armenia.

4. Setting the Scene

The following chapter sets the scene for the study. Contextual background on Armenia, the ADB, and the NSRC Investment Programme is provided to give the reader an in-depth understanding of the site and allows the analysis to be more condensed.

4.1 Armenia and Gender in Armenia

Armenia declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and is today considered a lower middle-income country (Ochsenwald and Nettleton Fisher, 2010: 528-30; OECD, 2020). It is a landlocked country bordering Iran and Georgia, south and north respectively, and Turkey and Azerbaijan in the west and east. Due to political disputes with Turkey and Azerbaijan, both borders are closed. The republics under Soviet rule experienced similar effects when they were emancipated as the other countries' emancipation from the European colonial powers during the 1900s (Allina, 2017: 42 footnote 3). Like other post-colonial countries, the emancipation from Soviet rule brought institutional instability as governments needed to be rebuilt from scratch and then began transitioning from centrally planned economies to the market based, including Armenia (ibid).

The Government of Armenia is committed to working for gender equality through accepting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1993 and ratified its Optional Protocol in 2006 (United Nations in Armenia, 2014). During the 2010s, Armenia has continued to show dedication to the matter. It has ratified the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) which includes parties' commitment to equal opportunities and antidiscrimination (European Commission, 2021). The European Council's Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, albeit with several reservations, was also signed (PICUM, 2018). The dedication is enhanced through the government's commitment to sustainable development in the Agenda 2030, superseding its dedication to the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, n.d.). Men and women are by national law equal in Armenia (RA Law No. HO-57-N). Under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is the Department of Family, Women, and Children's Issues who are responsible for implementing the national action plans for gender equality and mainstreaming gender in national policy and operation (ADB, 2019: 12).

Enforcing the plans has proven difficult due to budget constraints and lack of capacity and motivation on national and local government levels (UNDP Armenia, n.d.).

Armenia, one of several conquered nations under communist Soviet antireligious rule and labour policies, changed women's roles temporarily. After independence from the fallen Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia was among the countries to connect and reinvigorate their traditions and culture (Ochsenwald and Nettleton Fisher, 2010: 528-30), which implied a return to a patriarchal society with distinct gender roles where women's reproductive role is highlighted (Matosian *et al.*, 2013). Rural communities are reportedly more traditional than urban. However, young women throughout Armenia report that their labour force participation is restricted due to family and domestic obligations. Both men and women attend tertiary education largely, albeit subjects are significantly segregated between socially accepted occupations for men and women. Technological subjects and occupations are predominantly male-dominated, leaving manual or administrative tasks female-dominated (*ibid*).

Along with the assigned gender roles are the power relations that disapprove of women being unchaperoned in public settings or exceeding male relatives, social restraints that men do not face in Armenia (Menjívar and Agadjanian, 2007). Men's control and violence towards women, especially in intimate relationships, are reportedly supported by both men and women to certain extents like how physical punishments are called for, e.g., failing to care for children or a wife's infidelity (Matosian *et al.*, 2013). Sexual abuse and rape are criminalised offences (RA Criminal Code, Articles 138-139). However, they are primarily viewed as a private matter, a response that women receive even from the police (Matosian *et al.*, 2013). Because men do not face the same risk of punishments or shame for failing to conform to social norms suggests a power imbalance between men and women in Armenia that is coherent with a patriarchal social structure (*ibid*).

4.2 The Asian Development Bank

The ADB provides funding to both public and private sectors and technical assistance to its developing member countries of Asia and the Pacific to promote social and economic development (ADB, n.d.b.). To achieve social development, ADB finds inclusive strategies central to ensure equitable growth for all, paying extra attention to those most affected by marginalisation and poverty. To do this, ADB wants to enable institutions to foster

inclusiveness, empower people, and assist people with coping with risks (ibid). The work towards social development is incorporated in ADB's project cycle and strategic work and anchored in its Handbook on Social and Poverty and Gender Policy.

The ADB assumes the approach of Gender and Development that recognises that unequal relations between men and women and development interventions need to actively understand how they play out in different contexts (ADB, 2003). An aim is to proactively identify the practical needs of women like healthcare and education and the strategic needs for independent decision-making and participation that would allow women to escape systemic oppression. ADB's strategy is founded on ideas of gender equity and social justice along with the evidence that women are "vital to achieving economic efficiency and growth" (ibid: 38). The policy includes five key elements:

1. *Gender sensitivity*: to observe how ADB operations affect women and men, and to take into account women's needs and perspectives in planning its operations.
2. *Gender analysis*: to assess systematically the impact of a project on men and women, and on the economic and social relationship between them.
3. *Gender planning*: to formulate specific strategies that aim to bring about equal opportunities for men and women.
4. *Mainstreaming*: to consider gender issues in all aspects of ADB operations, accompanied by efforts to encourage women's participation in the decision-making process in development activities.
5. *Agenda setting*: to assist [Developing Member Countries] governments in formulating strategies to reduce gender disparities and in developing plans and targets for women's and girls' education, health, legal rights, employment, and income-earning opportunities.

(ADB, 2003: 39, original italics)

In the project design phase, a project receives its categorisation of what impacts on gender it is likely to have. There are four possible categories. The first two will require a specific gender action plan to maximise the gender benefits because the project has "the potential to correct gender disparities" or "to significantly mainstream gender equity concerns" (ADB, 2012b: 30). The third category would be a case where a project is "likely to have an adverse impact on

gender equality or women’s or girls’ empowerment” (ibid), and the project design should then include mitigating measures. However, no gender action plan is then necessary. A category III project could also include performance indicators that show the project directly or indirectly improving girls or women accessing the project’s benefits “and/or timesaving infrastructure” (ADB, OM C2/BP). Finally, a project can be assessed not to have any gender elements, calling for no gender action plan (ibid).

Table 3: ADB’s gender impact classification categories

Category I	Category II	Category III	Category IV
Gender equity as a theme	Effective gender mainstreaming	Some gender elements	No gender elements
(GEN)	(EGM)	(SGE)	(NGE)

(ADB, OM C2/BP)

Gender is also considered in the design phase regarding three social safeguards a project needs to answer to the environment, involuntary resettlement, and indigenous peoples (ADB, 2012b: 42). Relevant to this study is how the impact on involuntary resettlement is categorised. Four possible categories range from highest to lowest or if funding goes to a financial intermediary: A, B, and C or F1, respectively. A significant impact of involuntary resettlement character means that at least two hundred persons are forced to resettle due to the intervention or lose ten per cent or more of their livelihoods (ADB, n.d.d.). Funding for medium- to long-term investment programmes can be approved in multiple tranches under a multi-tranche financial facility (ADB, n.d.a.). Each tranche will need their separate updated poverty and social analysis and is conducted as the tranches are completed (ADB, 2012b: 97).

The ADB has, between 2010-2018, built or upgraded 16 156 kilometres of national highway or expressway in Asia and the Pacific. It has a transport strategy that includes planning transport that is sensitive to women’s use, supports their employment, and reduces travel costs for rural populations in general (ADB, n.d.c.). The strategy also includes fostering trade (ibid). ADB has furthermore developed toolkits for incorporating gender in different sectors throughout the project cycle, including one for transport (ADB, 2013b).

The final essential classification projects receive at the conceptual stage is whether it is a general intervention or targeted intervention (ADB, 2012b: 23-25). Targeted interventions aim to

directly impact either household, a geographic area, or non-income dimensions of poverty. General interventions, on the contrary, are intended to support a country’s poverty reduction work indirectly through, e.g., improving infrastructure and enabling environments for growth (ibid).

4.3 The North-South Road Corridor Investment Programme

In September 2009, the ADB approved the *Multitranches Financing Facility and Administration of Co-financing Republic of Armenia: North-South Road Corridor Investment Program, project number 42145* (ADB, 2009). In five separate tranches, the ADB agreed to contribute a maximum of 500 million USD to renovate Armenia’s most crucial road corridor that connects the country with Iran and Georgia via the cities Agarak–Kapan–Yerevan–Bavra. The entire project is estimated at 962 million USD, where the other funders are European Investment Bank and Eurasian Development Bank (“Road Department” SNCO, 2021). It includes physical components through the renovation of the road and a non-physical component targeting technical assistance to institutions that promote efficiency (ADB, 2009).

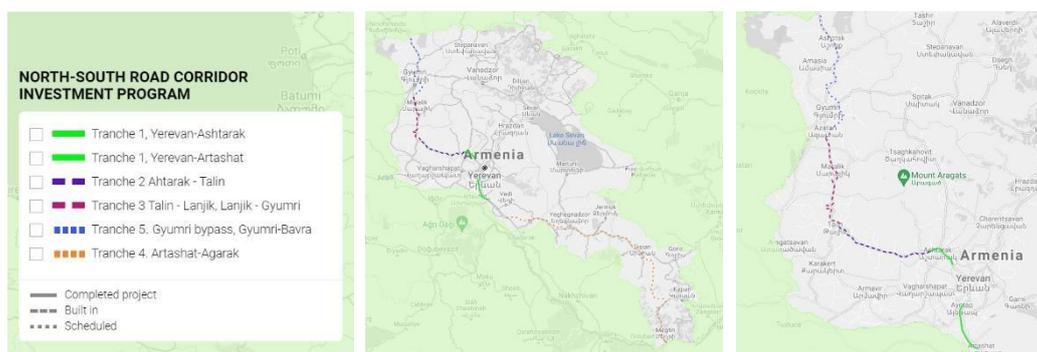


Figure 1: Map of The North-South Investment Programme

(“Road Department” SNCO, 2021)

The project has a *general intervention* targeting classification and aims to work for economic development and regional cooperation, and trade by investing in the transport sector (ADB, 2009). In preparation for the project, women and girls were, along with those living in poverty, identified as a potentially vulnerable group of people in need of some mitigating measures to support them, including granting female-headed households ownership during resettlement, building marketplaces at road junctions for their livelihoods of food and craft sales to be safer and more efficient, and a complementary project from the World Bank aimed at training women in business development and food processing. The project estimates that the improved road will

directly benefit women because travel time is shortened, letting them reach destinations faster and more efficient than before. Because the project aim is to accelerate national economic development and trade, concentrated in the road renovation and maintenance, economic and social development for individuals is less direct, making the project fall under the third gender category *SGE* (ibid).

As of April 2021, the investment programme is significantly behind schedule (ADB, 2011; ADB, 2019; Hayrapetyan, 2019). Only the first tranche is since 2016 completed and in use, representing nine per cent of the total distance of the road corridor and the second tranche was meant to be completed by 2014. Delays were explained to be due to problematic relationships with contracting firms, significant archaeological findings, and budgeting constraints. The newest estimated closing date for tranches two and three is in November 2021 (ibid).

The province of Aragatsotn borders to Turkey and is considered the most rural province in Armenia and has the least portion of its population, 17 per cent, living in poverty (based on the national poverty line) compared to the national average 29 per cent (Honorati *et al.*, 2019: 29, 94; Ruta *et al.*, 2019: 82). The population is 127 100 (Ruta *et al.*, 2019: 82) where most of them are either formally or self-employed in agriculture (Honorati *et al.*, 2019: 60).

Table 4: Length of each tranche in whole kilometres

Tranche	Km	% of total Km
1	31	9
2	42	12
3	46	13
4	175	49
5	62	17
<i>Total:</i>	<i>356</i>	<i>100</i>

(“Road Department” SNCO, 2021)

5. Analysis and Findings

Roberts *et al.* (2018) and Quium (2019) have conducted systemic reviews about wider economic benefits generated from road corridor projects. Studies show that what determines how successful the wider socio-economic impacts of road corridors depend on the initial contextual conditions relating to the labour market, capital market, and land and what complementary policies are being implemented by a state simultaneously with the road corridor investment (Quium, 2019: 14; Roberts *et al.*, 2018: 5-6). The initial conditions and policymakers' capacity to mitigate any trade-offs between them matters to the outcome.

Quium's (2019) and Roberts *et al.*'s (2018) findings on how wider economic benefits have been studied and impacts from road corridors relating to social development set the base for this study's analysis. The selected areas are regarding improved living standards in terms of welfare that lead to improved accessibility and poverty reduction, and social inclusion by employment opportunities in the non-farm sector and women entering the labour force (Quium, 2019: 15; Roberts *et al.*, 2018: 3). Both reviews identified that despite improvements in living standards, adverse effects on inequality could be expected (Quium, 2019: 14; Roberts *et al.*, 2018: 21). The analysis will suggest that initial *social* conditions will matter to what and how wider economic benefits can reach women.

The following chapter is structured according to the findings beginning with how improved general living standards could impact women's productive and reproductive roles to analyse social how inclusion into the labour market can be understood in relation to the study's conceptual framework.

5.1 Part I

Poverty reduction and the social impacts generated from road corridors could be interpreted as development approaches that target welfare and anti-poverty once the conceptual framework is applied. Those impacts are through the framework not recognising the triple role of women and instead recognise the reproductive and the productive role in isolation from each other.

The road corridors in Malaysia and Viet Nam contributed to substantial structural changes in their economies through shifting labour forces from agriculture to industry, and poverty

incidence in both countries has decreased (ADB *et al.*, 2018: 50-69). Between 1995 and 2000, Viet Nam reported that poverty along the corridor dropped by 35 per cent (Quium, 2019: 15). However, because the statistics are not disaggregated by gender in either country, it is not clear whether road corridors have affected men and women differently. However, the corridors have improved physical access to services and markets, which in the case of women could suggest that they can meet practical gender needs that improve the living standard (ADB *et al.*, 2018: 50-69). Such improvement in living standards would indicate that rearing for the home in the reproductive role has become easier. Connected to the improved living standards is the poverty reduction that both projects report. This impact is partly dedicated to the structural changes in the labour market and suggests that both men and women from rural areas have shifted to the non-farm sector. Thus, the woman's productive role is recognised in a way that supports her participating in the economy in sectors that are meant to be more secure and income-generating than farming. Such shift in employment could indicate that practical gender needs are met with less effort and contributes to improving the living standards. Because the reproductive and the productive role are viewed in isolation from each other, the impacts of the road corridors in Malaysia and Viet Nam would be relevant to exploring the relationship.

Women in both Viet Nam and Malaysia report how family obligations restrict their movement in the labour market (UNDP Viet Nam, 2016; PE Research, 2012). Women are more likely to have contracted wage jobs in Viet Nam, while 70 per cent of men earn their wages in noncontractual jobs (UNDP Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei Darussalam, 2021). Nevertheless, the gender pay gap in Viet Nam is in men's favour by 11 per cent, even when men and women share similar age and education characteristics (UNDP Viet Nam, 2016; PE Research, 2012). While the level of education has been suggested to be significant for women's chances to take advantage of non-farm jobs (Melecky *et al.*, 2019: 32), it appears as if it cannot guarantee women acquiring jobs of the same quality as men. In Malaysia, women still only represent 40 per cent of the total labour force, and the rest are self-employed with unpaid work relating to the household and caregiving (Cunningham *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the horizontal concentration of occupation for women takes place in both contexts as women take on jobs that are more flexible for the sake of family-work balance (UNDP Viet Nam, 2016; PE Research, 2012).

Complementing the findings on poverty reduction and social impacts from the road corridors in Viet Nam and Malaysia with contextual information about women's situation provides the following possible conclusion. It could be suggested that although living standards in the form of increased and more secure income to households have taken place, it is not clear how women's situation has changed. Due to the occupational segregation in both contexts and a customary division of caregiving responsibilities by gender, the woman is viewed as an active participant in both the public and private domains of society simultaneously; however, how women balance their participation is not addressed. Therefore, the above indicators for wider economic impacts are arguably unable to track how road corridors may impact the gender roles and relations in a context and thus any contextual gender inequalities.

The reproductive and productive role of women framed as either improving welfare or contributing to poverty reduction can both be identified in the NSRC design. The expected impacts from the project include increased physical access to markets and services and employment opportunities for women (ADB, 2009: vi). The project design suggests an understanding of the relationship between the two gender roles. Considering that women's livelihoods are often in direct vicinity to what their households or farms can produce for selling and that women would benefit from more efficient access to larger markets to increase their economic activity while reaching other destinations. Such considerations could arguably fall under the productive role's responsibilities. The road corridor is arguably presented as a means for women to meet their practical gender needs more accessible and more efficient in both roles. The rationale could also be interpreted as the road corridor is mobilising efforts around meeting the practical gender needs, which in the future can contribute to the women's empowerment movement. Assisting women with welfare and anti-poverty development policies could, therefore, arguably later lead to empowerment. However, the NSRC does not include outputs dedicated to assisting women in challenging the customary division of labour by gender beyond making all employment opportunities open for women. The rationale is in line with the mainstreaming strategy that appraised the project with the assumption that it can improve the living standard but that there is no room to impact the gender situation in Armenia simultaneously.

Like the two empirical examples above, women in Armenia also face occupational segregation (ADB, 2015: 27). When women work, they are horizontally concentrated in few occupations

with low productivity (ibid; Honorati *et al.*, 2019: 35). ADB's Gender Assessment Report from 2015(27) reveals that 44 per cent of the female labour force are employed in agriculture, along with 35 per cent of the male labour force making up the dominant sector in Armenia. At the same time, it is the minor labour productive sector in the country except for the education sector (Honorati *et al.*, 2019: 35). Apart from agriculture, women tend to work in either education, healthcare, or trade, defined as retail (ADB, 2015: 35), whom all show low labour productivity (Honorati *et al.*, 2019: 35). However, the income generated from combined household work like handicrafts or food processing is low with little chance to expand in either size or profits (ADB, 2015: 59), which supports the notion that offering employment outside of the home increases women's income. A third of the women reported that they are not seeking employment in Aragatsotn (EDRC, 2016: 11). Concerning the understanding that income-generating activities need to be in close vicinity of the home, there arguably needs to be an incentive for women to transition into the labour force beyond the argument that the job would be in the market economy. It would be helpful to know how the productivity in the new employments relate to what women earn initially and time intensity. The new employments that the project is directly mentioning are in the construction and service industry who both show low productivity rates (Honorati *et al.*, 2019: 35). It was concluded that during project planning, it was unlikely that women will take up any construction work (Egis International, 2011: 44). The project design recognises the practical need for women to carry on their livelihoods and the importance of improving them (ADB, 2013: 26).

The outspoken livelihoods are fruit and vegetable vendors, many of whom are women, with the solution to co-decide where new marketplaces along the road corridor. Although this output arguably is not explicit in its understanding of the tension between reproductive and productive work, there is an aim to enhance the productivity of women's income-generating activities. Unfortunately, the building of the marketplaces was cancelled due to budgetary constraints (ADB, 2019: 62). The expected future employment opportunities in service, like rest stops along the corridor, are also impacted by the marketplaces not being built. It works against the known wider economic benefit of creating clusters of people and markets to allow economic activity to grow (ADB *et al.*, 2018: 6). Furthermore, considering the concentration of women in the private market holding service jobs, they are arguably going to be disproportionately negatively affected by not building the marketplaces. Because men's occupations are not

concentrated to few selected occupations in the private market (ADB, 2019: 22), they are arguably more agile to take up other jobs.

Women being underrepresented in senior and managerial positions regardless of the sector is further evidence of the job stratification in Armenia (ADB, 2015: 30). The reason is partly that women often must divide their time between building a career and family obligations, which makes it difficult for women to advance in the workplace with the same freedom as men. Another reason concerns the social norms that perceive women as poor managers, and surveys have reported that most men in the sample would not work for a female employee (*ibid*). The negative attitude to women in excelling in a career is an essential aspect of the initial social conditions that can indicate what kind of jobs women are likely to take up along a road corridor and what position she is likely to hold there. It would add nuance to the wider economic benefits in a way that illuminates the limitations on the quality and productivity of women's probable occupations in transport infrastructure impact assessment.

Something that may have affected the project design's attention to women's reproductive role is that no significant change in the population was expected during implementation (ADB, 2009: 57). The population growth was a contributing factor to the success of Viet Nam (ADB *et al.*, 2018: 54). However, Armenia's dependency ratio is rising because too few children are born, and the elderly stop being productive (Honorati *et al.*, 2019: 8). The population change could suggest that women's reproductive role and place in the home may be invigorated to increase the population quickly and efficiently. On average, women in Armenia will give birth for the first time at 22.8 years old and one year earlier for those living in rural areas like the province of Aragatsotn (National Statistical Service Armenia, Ministry of Health Armenia, and ICF, 2017: 16). The timing of the first birth and the consolidated gender roles and relations that assign women with the primary caregiving responsibility and limited public care services could indicate that the restrictions faced by women in taking part in the labour market are enforced. In turn, the labour force will shrink not only because not enough children are born (Honorati *et al.*, 2019: 8) but also because women will continue to need to balance the productive and reproductive roles. The knowledge about occupation segregation in Armenia and the labour market situation in Aragatsotn is interesting because it indicates that the women taking up the employment opportunities from the corridor are unlikely to be outside the norm for women's employment (*ibid*). Supporting this assumption is that the project is explicitly going to “observe

local protocols on acceptable social and professional behaviour towards the local population and employees” (ADB, 2009: 54). It arguably appears the measurements of not discriminating against any segment of the population in the recruitment processes where female-headed households are meant to be prioritised to certain opportunities as part of the Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan are unlikely to have an actual impact (ibid: 63).

The analysis could suggest that while ADB acknowledges its limitations for having any transformative changes on gender relations in Armenia, no mitigation strategy was offered to avoid the project enlarging the occupational segregation in Armenia. This could suggest that the NSRC sees women’s reproductive and productive role more in isolation from each other rather than two roles balancing time and effort in society’s public and private domains simultaneously.

5.2 Part II

Impacts of labour force participation could be interpreted as development approaches of equity or efficiency. The National Highway no. 5 (NH-5) in Viet Nam, connecting Hanoi with the international port of Hai Phong, is referred to as a successful road corridor intervention because the government simultaneously implemented programmes to improve the skills of the labour force (ADB *et al.*, 2018: 50-59). It was constructed in the mid-1990s, and along with the physical efficiency, the corridor provided the government invested in secondary education for the population, including vocational training. The combination made it profitable for industries to grow and possible for the local population to take on jobs in the industry, transitioning from the agricultural sector. Industrial clusters of manufactural sectors have emerged along the NH5, and by 2006, two technological parks in two provinces accounted for 14 per cent and 19 per cent of the total working populations there (ibid).

Similarly, a road network consisting of five road corridors that connect four states in Malaysia is regarded to generate substantial successful wider economic benefits in the country (ADB *et al.*, 2018: 59-69). As industries and export grew, several new jobs were created that allowed the population to shift from farm-based labour to non-farm jobs. Uneven income distribution has not taken place in the case of Malaysia (ADB *et al.*, 2018: 65), which is an otherwise expected negative wider economic impact from road corridors (Quium, 2019: 15). The median household income in Malaysia has doubled and along the five corridors at least 427 000 jobs

have been created (ADB *et al.*, 2018: 65). Both Viet Nam and Malaysia's strategies could be interpreted as taking an efficiency or equity approach to development since they were all state initiatives. Improved equity in education, increased labour force participation, and the income it generates could suggest that living standards have drastically improved in both countries. Moreover, like described previously, the corridors have contributed to quicker travelling for everyone, including women. However, the strategies could suggest that the population was mobilised to generate faster economic growth by transitioning them into non-farm jobs and relying on women's ability to balance their time between the public and private domains, so she partakes in both.

Although the indicator labour force participation for women could be part of a measurement of women's empowerment by being economically independent, thus partly working for their strategic needs, it simultaneously suggests that a holistic understanding of women's situation is not provided. The lack of disaggregating the indicators by gender in the studies on wider economic benefits (Roberts *et al.*, 2018: 3, 34, 36) could indicate that studies are blinded to social power asymmetries that favour specific segments of the population. The study of wider economic benefits by Roberts *et al.* and Quim, respectively, arguably collects data that could provide insight into women's time burden between the productive and reproductive role. However, their studies do not capture how social impacts on caregiving has been mitigated during economic growth to a very far extent because their raw data do not allow it. Patriarchal structures persist in both Viet Nam and Malaysia (UNDP Viet Nam, 2016; PE Research, 2012). The structures project what is deemed culturally appropriate for women to work with and how the family obligations should be prioritised over income-generating work when possible (*ibid.*).

However, because the quality of jobs is not measured beyond being farm or non-farm, the wider economic benefits could indicate that it is still unknown whether the benefits are enough to assist women in providing for their practical gender needs. Because family obligations require women's jobs to be flexible, industries emerging from road corridors may not be attractive or feasible for women to take on. If husbands take on the newly created jobs, his income may affect his household and thus indirectly improve the living standard of women. ADB *et al.* (2018: 51) discuss the impacts of the NH-5 in Viet Nam by expressing the following as successful: "the region was blessed with a good-quality but relatively low-wage workforce", continuing that the improved quality of the labour force "... allowed Viet Nam to take full

advantage of the corridor as a driver of growth” (ibid: 57). Suppose the newly created non-jobs do not generate significantly more income for the employers than previous farm jobs. In that case, women will not indirectly benefit from their husbands’ shift in work either. Instead, labour force participation arguably becomes a one-sided indicator for economic growth and not individual economic development.

This analysis could suggest that studies on the wider economic benefits from road corridors continue to illuminate how people are vital to countries’ economic growth without directly acknowledging the costs of economic growth on more vulnerable segments of the population. There is a need to acknowledge that without complimentary attention to the unpaid work of the private domain, it is not possible to know if women are fully taking part in the public domain and that they are doing it on their terms (Levin and Faith-Ell, 2019: 89-118).

Development approaches of equity and efficiency could also be interpreted in the case of the NSRC with its intention to offer more opportunities for women into the labour market. Along with the analysis above, it is therefore plausible that more women will transition from non-farm jobs and living standards are likely to improve. However, the project design and the initial social conditions for women could indicate that the project is at risk for enforcing some gender inequalities in Armenia.

The direct beneficiaries of transport cost reduction are defined as vehicle owners, and passengers are recognised as in-direct beneficiaries of the road corridor as efficient travelling will reduce transportation costs (ADB, 2019: vi). This rationale could indicate that the improved living standards of accessing markets and services more efficiently rely on public transport development, or people without their own vehicle can be driven by someone who does. Women are reported to own and have independent control over assets to a small extent (ADB, 2015: 24). Only three per cent of women in Armenia reported in 2011 that they own a car by themselves. Twenty per cent reported owning one with others, leaving the rest without independent or joint control over a vehicle (ibid). This could indicate that passengers are more likely to be women than men with limited chances to move independently. Municipal governments maintain public transportation where gender mainstreaming is not standard or compulsory practice on the municipal level (ADB, 2019: 13). Therefore, women’s mobility and use of transportation could be at risk of not being met by the local government.

Furthermore, women are highly underrepresented in higher offices of local politics, and the province of Aragatsotn is not an exception. In 2019 there were a total of three female deputy mayors in Aragatsotn and zero mayors out of the total 108 (Shahbazyan, 2020: 206). The consulted village authorities for the survey selected five villages along the road corridor in Aragatsotn. They were all male at the time of consultations in preparation for the second and third tranche (Egis International, 2011: 20). Because there were no identified non-governmental organisations in the sample of villages in Aragatsotn (ibid), there is no apparent civil force working for women's empowerment in the province. This could indicate that the spill-over effect of efficient travelling for female passengers is at risk of being limited if their situation is not central in public transportation development. Furthermore, it could be that the benefits from the road corridor reaches women later than the direct beneficiaries and cause enlarging of gender inequalities in the meantime.

The analysis continues with addressing women's mobility in Armenia. Armenian women's mobility is reported to have less to do with the quality or efficiency of the roads rather than the social norms that control their mobility (ADB, 2015: 69). If public transportation is developed to enhance women's mobility specifically, it could be an opportunity for empowerment policy where improved physical accessibility generates momentum for women's empowerment. The knowledge of local government being responsible for facilitating the wider benefits of the road through efficient public transportation makes it possible to conclude that public transport is developed to assist women in meeting their practical gender needs within the socially accepted norms. It is arguably not as likely that the local government will use public transport to reduce gender inequalities in Armenia. Therefore, the analysis could indicate that the expected benefits from the project are continuously viewed within the customary divisions of labour by gender with regards to women's reproductive and productive roles.

The equity to be recruited to employment opportunities from the project without discrimination does make it plausible that women can transition from non-farm jobs. By not placing any barriers for women's employment regardless of sector, this could be interpreted as the ADB and the Armenian state providing top-down opportunities for women to join any occupation the woman chooses. At the same time, previous analysis shows that women's reproductive role controls the options for women's employment. The project design explicitly mentions transport, logistics and trade sectors that are likely to accelerate from the road corridor (ADB, 2009: vi).

The project's initial direct beneficiaries are thus very likely to be men and suggest that the wider economic benefits from the road corridor will boost sectors and domains dominated by men directly. The wider economic benefits are thus only expected to reach female-dominated ones eventually. This could be interpreted that ensuring no discrimination in recruitment is not enough to ensure actual equity for everyone to take advantage of the opportunity because of restrictive social conditions.

The social impacts from road corridors are, as described, often been a result of complementary policies initiated by the states. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate the Armenian state's commitment to fighting gender inequalities because it has been reported to be limited (UN Women, 2019). The state has formally committed to laws and policies; however, it struggles to implement and enforce them. An explanation to this could be the lack of allocated resources to gender issues on a national level (UN Women, 2019; ADB, 2019: 35). The Department of Family, Women and Children's Issues are responsible for promoting gender mainstreaming in all national policies. However, no staff dedicates its full time to the matter, and there are budgetary constraints (ADB, 2019: 35).

Furthermore, in Armenia's case, the policies dedicated to working for gender equality still centre around women assuming primary caregiving responsibility in the family (Egis International, 2011: 44). This knowledge increases the likelihood that future public service programmes are unlikely to actively seek to challenge the customary division of labour by gender in Armenia. Occupational segregation is unlikely to be challenged, which could mean that men will have more direct access to national economic growth than women. Women would arguably rely on their husbands or male relatives to take up employment that will generate higher income than previously, so the women's situation is in-directly tapping into the economic growth.

The analysis thus far could suggest that although particular practical gender needs connected to the woman's productive and reproductive roles are recognised in the project design, the design lacks a comprehensive tool to track if the project may impact men and women differently and, if so, how. The project has one indicator for tracking impact on social development, which is not disaggregated by gender. The indicator is about how many people are benefitting from the road (ADB, 2009: 18). The choice of the indicator is arguably too limited to provide insight

into the different ways people will use the road corridor and thus what benefits they get out from them. Arguably, by not tracking the impacts through gender-disaggregated indicators, the risk for enforcing gender inequalities in Armenia, discussed above, will not be identified during monitoring and evaluation. A possible reason why this flaw in the monitoring and evaluation framework exists could be traced back to the general intervention and containing some gender elements classifications which do not require as rigorous attention to gender as targeted interventions.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The following chapter discusses how assessing wider economic benefits from road corridors holds possibilities to become gender-aware to capture essential data that can be used as indicators to understand how wider economic benefits from road corridors interact with society's public and private domains simultaneously.

Women's productive and reproductive roles appear to be viewed in isolation from each other, where it becomes difficult to track how increased intensity in the productive role contributes to the time poverty many women face. A possible conclusion from this is that the designs of road corridors follow the habit of concentrating on the public domain, on accelerating the economy and productivity, without adequate consideration for the private, which was discussed in the chapter of the thesis theoretical groundings and literature review. The occupational segregation for women in the labour market and the rationale of road corridor projects to engage more women in the labour market is a possible reason why women cannot tap into the economic growth that the corridor is generating. The time is not enough to carry the responsibility in the private domain and build professional careers.

The concerns of Perrons (2018) and Wanderlay (2018) with regards to customary divisions of labour by gender that restricts women's agency in the labour market corresponds to this analysis' findings. This is also interesting for scenarios where women report not seeking employment, like in the case of Aragatsotn (see pp. 29). Unfortunately, this study cannot convey why so many women in the province are not looking for jobs. However, it would arguably be of essence to understand how the NSRC's rationale of increasing women's labour force participation corresponds to those women. Arguably, it is crucial to question why strategies for economic growth aims to engage more women in non-farm jobs to understand whether the welfare of the economy or women is prioritised. Ultimately, the question could allow economic growth strategies to include more comprehensive mitigation strategies that consider women's time burden and understand why poverty reduction from increased labour force participation does not automatically promote gender equality (Kabeer, 2018b). Such considerations would arguably recognise the woman in all her roles and recognise what structural obstacles exist for her to exercise full agency, thus addressing strategic gender needs.

Simultaneously, it is not feasible that every development project addresses all domains of society equally. In the case of transport infrastructure investments, a macro-perspective is therefore justifiable since the road will eventually benefit all through their travel efficiency. This corresponds to the idea that connectivity matters to the growth of economies and nations (section 1.2). Mechanisms to ensure that the implementation process is founded in non-discrimination to involve as many population segments as possible are positive. It works towards equity in being included in the process. Arguably, such mechanisms can be enough to ensure a project is inclusive because everyone is given the opportunity to join to the best of their efforts (de Haan 2017: 504). When one domain is prioritised in an intervention, it could be an option to have a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework that simultaneously captures changes in society's public and private domains. Furthermore, it would correspond to the idea of recognising the diversity of efforts that keep economies functioning, as Gibson-Grahams suggests (section 1.2).

The analysis above enforces previous literature on how women's time is made to adjust to societal change and economic growth. Once they are included in the growth process, they are likely to already be in a marginalised situation. An intervention that takes a macro-level perspective to development, concentrating on the public domain, are thus likely to accelerate sectors where men dominate and, by default, accelerate men's development while 'leaving women behind' as literature has expressed (MacPhail, 2018). Another worry is furthermore that the inclusive growth process does not guarantee that the male-dominated sectors pay high wages that in turn can indirectly benefit the household income like the analysis showed. In a setting where women are unlikely to get the higher-paid jobs that make their development dependent on a spouse's or male relative's income, women arguably do not reach full agency. This could strengthen why it is essential to track development on micro-levels of society, even in macro-scaled interventions.

Therefore, the conclusion from Roberts *et al.* (2018) corresponds to this analysis's findings that road corridors' impacts can be different to segments of the population. The study's analysis indicates that there is a risk that one segment which is likely to not benefit equally from poverty reduction and inclusion in the labour market are women.

In conclusion, the approach of inclusive growth arguably makes women bound to benefit from road corridors. However, women may have limited agency to choose how to benefit. This could be the possible conclusion to why that when poverty declines, gender inequalities prevail (Roberts *et al.*, 2018: 21). A possible way forward to remain aware of how a macro-scaled project affects the public and private domains could be to track governmental spending on public services. The rationale would be that it is of interest how the growth from a macro-intervention is being distributed. While it is up to policymakers of each country to decide on what taxes and tariffs are to be collected and how to spend them, international development actors who assist in investments would collect data relevant to social development in the countries they invest in. Such an indicator could arguably help track countries' progress towards reaching the sustainable development goal for gender equality where the recognition of women's unpaid work is specified (Goal 5.4).

The study has shown that the wider economic benefits tool, together with gender inequalities research, provides layers and nuances to the findings of wider economic benefits. The results are valuable because it shows a possible way forward to evolve the concept of inclusive growth to trace what impacts being included can have on segments of the population who are expected to be included and participate in several spheres of society simultaneously.

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