

Development and Gendered Mobilities:
Narratives from the Women of Mardin, Turkey

Paper accepted to be published in *Mobilities*

Final version: November 2012

Publication date: February 2013

Abstract

This paper addresses gendered mobilities in Mardin in the context of the implications of transport investments for the female labour market. I seek to illustrate that the relationship between infrastructure provision and gendered mobilities is entangled in a wider context which encompasses politics and cultural geographies. Drawing on theories of mobilities, I argue that a lack of understanding of the complementary and contradictory impacts of local context and physical infrastructure investments may undermine social and cultural conditions within communities, resulting in misguided development policies.

Keywords: gender and mobilities; Turkey; Mardin; regional development policy; transport

Theoretical Rationale

A number of scholars have suggested that there is a positive relationship between improved accessibility following transport development, and mobility and social inclusion (Carrasco and Cid-Aguayo 2012; Lucas and Currie 2012). Improving physical access to education, community centres and workplaces may benefit the labour market; more indirectly, transport investments may induce positive spillovers, for example increased job opportunities. If these direct and indirect accessibility benefits are to be achieved, the increased mobility should follow from improved access to transport infrastructure and should result in economic and social inclusion benefits. However, social divisions, including gender bias, and the socio-economic disadvantages faced by some mean that this is not always the case in practice (see for example Uteng [2009] on gender and Lucas [2011] on socio-economic disadvantage). Here, I analyse and critique the development implications of transport infrastructure investments by illustrating the ‘non-physical’ factors that act as facilitators of, and impediments to, regional development. The term ‘non-physical’ here refers to the political, social and cultural attributes of the region, including class, beliefs, social networks and traditions, as well as politics. Using the case study approach, the paper considers the implications of transport investments for the female labour market (FLM) in Mardin in terms of the ‘non-physical’ attributes that connect infrastructure, mobilities and economic benefits.

The crucial factor behind the gendering of transport studies has been the social roles of women, and how these affect travel patterns and lead to differences in infrastructural needs (Riviera 2007). The employment of traditional gender roles in transport research has, however, long been criticized, with scholars calling for the study of issues surrounding women and transport to be located within wider social and cultural geographies (Law 1999). This has encouraged theorists to frame women and transport issues in the context of social exclusion and to focus on the interaction between gender and mobility and on how mobility and access to opportunity are related (Uteng and Cresswell 2008; Hanson 2010). Earlier research may have employed broad categories such as ‘rural women in Africa’, but more recently, it has become evident that within diverse societies such as Indonesia, communities differ in their responsiveness to physical infrastructural goods (Pal 2010). This implies that other factors, including religion, class and ethnicity, also require exploration.

Furthermore, the characteristics of societies may change over time, so that the traditional categories used to interpret the relationship between transport infrastructure and women may no longer be accurate. This may result in ineffective policies over the longer term. Research and policies based on rigid, unchanging categorization inevitably lead to demarcation; demarcation leads to exclusion and exclusion to inequality (McCall 2005, 1777). Completely rejecting social categories, on the other hand, constrains us from exploring the exclusion of certain groups from public goods. It is, thus, important to recognize that ‘it is not possible to separate the categories of gender, race, and class nor to explain inequalities through a single framework’ (Valentine 2007, 55).

When pointing out the interrelationships between mobilities and patterns of inequality, Ohnmacht, Maksim, and Bergman (2009) partly address this multiplicity of identities. They claim that inequality has two aspects, namely the ‘socio-economic’ and ‘political and cultural’, and that they both result in social exclusion. Kaufmann’s (2002) ‘motility capital’ emphasizes how personal capacities and opportunities – in this case, of women – can be significantly affected by the surrounding social, cultural and political structures. According to Kaufmann’s framework, access, competence and appropriation are the key elements determining mobility and inequality. They are clearly linked to the

‘social, cultural, economic and political processes and structures within which mobility is embedded and enacted’ (Kaufmann, Bergman, and Joye 2004, 750).

Urry (2007) brings a relational aspect to the understanding of mobilities and social trajectories with his network capital framework. According to this framework, the social consequences of mobilities are influenced by: physical accessibility, time, appropriate legal requirements, having someone to communicate with at a distance, location-free information, communication devices, movement, and availability of space to communicate. While Kaufmann, Bergman, and Joye (2004) see motility capital as interchangeable with other forms of capital, including the social and cultural, Urry’s (2007) network capital focuses directly on the social consequences of mobilities (Manderscheid 2009, 35). Cultural capital, which broadly refers to intellectual and educational capacity (Bourdieu 1986), can be interchangeable with ‘capacity to move’ (e.g. access to schools and movie theatres), while its relationship with network capital is causal: the social consequences of mobilities may enhance cultural capital.

In addition to cultural capital, the concept of social capital is also frequently discussed with respect to network and motility capital frameworks (Ohnmacht, Maksim, and Bergman 2009). Social capital is a term popularized by Putnam (1995) to indicate the features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit. To Kaufmann (2002), motility is significantly influenced by opportunities that are obtained through people’s economic and non-economic attributes and relationships, while network capital shares the theme of ‘connections’ with social capital (Larsen and Jacobsen 2009). It is also important to distinguish negative and social nuances of social capital. The earliest theoretical framing of social capital, by Bourdieu (1986), identified social capital as the ‘deliberate construction of sociability for the purpose of creating this resource’ (Portes 1998, 3). According to this definition, social capital can have a particularly negative impact on social relations as it underlies the inequalities within power-oriented relationships. Later, Putnam (2000) pointed out the possible negative impacts of ‘bonding social capital’ (which reinforces only homogeneous groups) in contrast with ‘bridging social capital’, where social bonds are formed across diverse social groups and networks.

Overall, while motility capital focuses directly on inequalities, network capital emphasizes the social consequences of such interrelationships. Their interdependencies with other forms of capital, in particular social and cultural capitals, are crucial when exploring the complementary and contradictory relationships between the physical, economic and non-physical aspects of a regional economy. In light of this theoretical background, the remainder of the paper empirically explores gendered mobilities, taking into account inequalities in transport infrastructure provision and the labour market implications in Mardin. Recognizing gender as a category and its interactions with other forms of identity in the context of capital frameworks requires detailed consideration of individual abilities, personal aspirations and physical and cognitive constraints. Mobility should be considered a result of a much broader set of complex relationships affecting infrastructure use. Starting with the direct accessibility benefits of transport infrastructure development in Mardin, a critical discussion follows on the implications of transport infrastructure development for the FLM in the wider context of the socio-economic trajectory of the city. I conclude that a lack of understanding of the complementary and contradictory impacts of other regional economic factors may lead to ineffective and inequitable investment.

Empirical Setting

The south-eastern and eastern regions of Turkey are considerably underdeveloped in economic, political and social terms. Around €10 billion was invested in the regions between 2002 and 2010, with the most prominent development being the construction and improvement of the road transport infrastructure (Güneydoğu Ulaşımında 2011). With a population of around 765,000 people, Mardin is one of nine provinces in the south-eastern Anatolia and is home to a number of religions and ethnicities, including Muslims, Syrian Christians, Yazidis, Turks, Kurds and Arabs. The majority are Kurds and Arabs, who are mainly Muslim. Mardin has the lowest labour force participation rate in the region with 36.5% and an unemployment rate of 9.1% (TÜİK 2011). However, owing to its historical richness and architecture, Mardin has become an attractive tourist destination and hosted several cultural activities.

Bordering Syria and near the Tigris River, Mardin's settlements lie around the base of a hill. The central Multi-Purpose Community Centre (MPCC), where I conducted most of the interviews, is located towards the top of this hill, around which there are low-income settlements, luxury hotels, historical mansions, museums, a hospital and a school – the area is called Yukarı Mardin. Further down the mountain is a relatively new city called Yenışehir, where there is a university which opened in 2008, and some relatively high-income neighbourhoods.

Although Mardin lags far behind the majority of the provinces in Turkey in terms of economic development and human capital, in terms of highways (i.e. land development), where current investments are focused, it is increasingly advanced: 92% of the roads are now asphalt – recognized as an indicator of positive development in road transport infrastructure (SPO 2003). Indeed, the main highway improvement in Mardin between 2003 and 2010 involved turning 607 km of roads into asphalt (KGM 2011). At the end of 2002, there were only 28 km of divided highways. By May 2011, however, Mardin had 362 km of state roads and 388 km of provincial roads, making 750 km in total. The main highway that cuts through Mardin (the E-90) connects it to Adana through Şanlıurfa and Gaziantep, and is the main highway for moving road freight between Europe and the Middle East (DİKA 2010) (Figure 1). Finally, the province has an airport and 142 km of railways. The railways originate in Şanlıurfa and connect to Syria and Iraq.

Figure 1. Highways in Mardin

Source: KGM, 2012

The data in this study were obtained mainly from open-ended interviews as well as newspaper articles and discussions amongst the participants. I conducted the interviews in my native language (Turkish) as part of my fieldwork research in September 2010¹. The fieldwork research was conducted in the centre of Mardin City, mainly at the Meydanbaşı MPCC (central MPCC), with short visits to Ömerli MPCC and the Association of Business Women in Mardin (MİKAD). MPCCs are part of the Social Action Plan of the South-Eastern Anatolian Project, which is a multi-sector regional

development project started in the 1970s. They are centres where training is provided for women in literacy, health care, maternal care, childcare, home economics and income-generating handicrafts (Tomanbay 2000). There are 35 MPCCs in south-eastern Anatolia, nine of which are located in Mardin. Because the MPCCs not only provide training but also help women sell their products, attendees are considered as ‘working’ in the analysis, although they are not registered as such in the social security system.

In addition to the 26 MPCC interviews, interviews were also conducted with four scriptwriters and graphic designers. The latter were useful in identifying the social impacts of the art scene in the city. Finally, a discussion was conducted among the women regarding how the Government of Turkey handles the issue of minorities living in the country. This was especially useful for observing how the participants interpret the political, social and cultural conditions in the region, which is home to the majority of Turkey’s Kurdish population. The average age of the MPCC participants was 44. All but four of the MPCC participants are married with children and the majority have primary school education. The fieldwork findings were analysed through narrative structuring to explore the dynamics between women and transport and development.

Transport Investments within Political Discourse

The increased investment in highways which took place between 2003 and 2010 has been the subject of intense political debate. While the ruling political party has repeatedly drawn attention to the investment, one Turkish writer reminded at a European Parliament conference that similar highway improvements in the 1930s were the preface to the Turkish Army’s expedition against the Kurds (who had revolted in Dersim in 1937-1938). Although the conference was in a completely different context, this was enough for the Turkish Prime Minister to conclude that the government was being accused of preparing for another military action by increasing transport investments in the region. While I do not aim to provide a discourse analysis of this political debate in this paper, it is important to note the variety of interpretations and political implications that have attached to road investment programmes in Turkey.

This intricate nexus of political interpretations is largely confined to those at the top of the political hierarchy; such analyses pay little regard to how individuals in the region perceive the investments, or how they benefit from them. After all, public opinion on investment can be significantly different from the actual benefits gained from the investments. Directly interrogating different opinions on transport improvements in the context of large investments yields thought-provoking insights. In this study, despite their highly positive view of overall regional investment over the last eight years, no participant mentioned the investment in transport. When asked specifically about this, they all said that they appreciate the improved roads and think them highly beneficial for the local economy.

However, when asked how the improved roads changed their *own lifestyles*, there was usually either silence for a few seconds or they explicitly said they *did not* directly benefit from the improved highways. There were a few exceptions: one woman claimed that because there is now less likelihood of road accidents thanks to the improvements, she can travel more comfortably to neighbouring provinces, and particularly the nearby city of Diyarbakır (although this observation has no direct implication for the FLM since her trips are taken to visit relatives). Nevertheless, the participants believed the highway development will increase economic activity and create more job opportunities in the region:

I am originally from Adana, but have lived in Mardin for 13 years now. There is a huge difference compared to ten years ago. There are now more job opportunities, and more cultural activities. In the past, people were frightened to come here because of terrorism, but there are now more tourists visiting the city ... tourism has developed significantly.

So, the women's perspectives on transport investment do not necessarily follow their mobility needs. Some participants claimed that previous governments used terrorism as an excuse not to make adequate investment in the region. This is tantamount to claiming that it was political inequality that

led to the social exclusion of individuals living in the region. The improvement in the region's water supply was the development mentioned most often and the one they said directly benefited them the most. They now have water in their homes, which means they do not have to go to public fountains or neighbours who have access to water.

Thus, there is a significant gap between the actual development impacts of the investment in transport infrastructure and the perceptions of the participants, particularly in terms of FLM improvements. The role of the 'non-physical' becomes more evident when the actual benefits of the transport investments in Mardin are explored; this confirms the findings of other empirical studies conducted in both developed (e.g. Mackett, Achuthan, and Titheridge 2008) and underdeveloped countries (e.g. Salon and Gulyani 2010). Figure 2 illustrates the connections between regional, household and individual factors affecting the impact of infrastructure investment on the FLM in Mardin. It illustrates the key themes emerging from the data and how they are interlinked.

Figure 2. Summary of the Findings

Development impacts on the FLM can either be direct, facilitated by improved human mobility, or indirect, facilitated by the improved mobility of goods or by other economic spillover effects. These may include increased tourism, more accessible markets and the attraction of further investment, all of which may create more job opportunities. Some of the social and cultural conditions support these links, while some do not, and some even impede the expected impacts. The following section discusses the role of transport investment in responding to the accessibility needs of the women through mobility and the role of the 'non-physical' in this provision of accessibility. It then considers the gendered economic externalities of the investments and how they are affected by the broad cultural attributes and dynamics of the city, including identity politics and changes in perceptions over time.

Accessibility of Social Infrastructure

More than half of the women in the sample never left the centre of Mardin, not even to work or to take advantage of education and health facilities. More importantly, they were reluctant to travel further. The MİKAD coordinator told how, when informed about job opportunities at a textile factory in Midyat which is a 45-minute minibus drive away, she could not find anyone on the MİKAD course who would take the positions, although they genuinely wanted a paid job. She said that most women are reluctant to work outside central Mardin, something that backs up Staber's point that spatial proximity alone does not lead to direct economic spillovers 'if a supportive relational and cognitive framework is lacking' (Staber 2007, 505). This is also consistent with the 'appropriation' element of motility capital: clearly, the participants' plans and aspirations were not appropriate for benefiting from a mobility-related opportunity. 'Competence' (being able to use the transport services and being capable of doing the job) and having 'access' (to improved roads and to the factory) were not enough to get them into the labour force and achieve social inclusion. What then limits their desire to move? This requires us to take a holistic look at the implications of mobility and the social construction of gender.

The urbanization process in Turkey has changed the dynamics of female labour force participation in cities. The social and cultural conditions and the inadequate economic capacity of the cities are key factors. Dominant social norms such as the patriarchal mindset and the reluctance of men to accept that women can also have economic freedom and education render physical accessibility insignificant. This became apparent when the women explained why they had not worked before they started attending the MPCC courses and selling their products. One of the instructors told me that, when they tried to attract the women to attend the courses, they also had to persuade their husbands, fathers or brothers to let them do the training and earn an income. Most of the attendees also had to convince their husbands. Some of them had to use their earnings to pay off their husbands' debts in order to convince them to let them join the courses. In these circumstances, increasing women's earning power is unlikely to lead to social inclusion through economic participation, but instead puts a further burden on them. The reported response from one husband typifies the general attitude:

There are the kids and cows ... they should keep you busy ... How are you going to deal with another job?

Several other participants cited similar reactions. Their statements also indicated the strength of societal values in this extremely close community. For instance, Aliye, a single mother with three children, divorced her husband four years ago; she complained that her parents, who live 300 km away, still do not understand why she did this and continue to hope they will be reconciled. This is due to their belief that family is fundamental, to the point that one must have a family:

They forced me to get married, and I forced them to get myself divorced. I found myself a lawyer, and no one supported me. It has been extremely difficult, and it still is.

Aliye, despite her relatively high educational attainment compared to other women and her ability and willingness to be physically mobile, is in desperate need of financial and emotional support. In terms of the network capital framework, she lacks one of the conditions to attain network capital, which is to have someone supporting her at a distance.

Süheyla, the eldest of the attendees, pointed out the striking difference between the previous generation and the current one:

This is totally another world. In the past, if someone said 'no, you cannot do this!' it was the end of the story. Now, things have changed ... It is such a difficult life without being able to read and write ... I wanted to go to school, but my mother-in-law beat me up.

Marriage is still considered vital in the region, and all of the interviewees had arranged marriages. Most of them did not want to marry, but they were forced to. Furthermore, because close-relative marriage is quite common in the region, even if her immediate family is sympathetic to the woman, other relatives often insist on a marriage and, in the end, there is too much pressure for the woman to resist. This illustrates the negative effects of bonding social capital: the women had to marry in accordance with the traditions that bind the community they live in. Halime said:

My mother was worried that when she died, I would be alone in this life and so I should get married in order to avoid such loneliness ... That's how I was forced to get married.

Evidently, women are expected to fulfil certain social obligations. However, the configuration of gender practice to incorporate such social roles and traditions may be misleading since gender, in this case, is not given but constructed (Uteng and Cresswell 2008). In Mardin, this construction is clearly marked by the patriarchal relations evident in the participants' statements. Later, I give examples of how this hegemonic power evolved over time. The extent to which existing social constraints prevent women from thinking freely about mobility and affect their desire and ability to move depends on the power relations within the household and how women identify themselves. Those participants who expressed a desire to travel to other cities (and, in some cases, to live in other regions) gave reasons that mainly revolved around their duties as mothers. Two mentioned that they would travel frequently only if their children got into universities in other cities. In this sense, mobility is mainly instrumental for the participants.

The impacts of social and cultural attributes are not necessarily negative. Socially transmitted knowledge is usually prevalent where family bonds are stronger. All the participants learned about the MPCCs through their neighbours and relatives, which can be regarded as a form of bridging social network. Tülay, one of the sewing instructors at the Meydanbaşı MPCC, pointed out that her having a paid job had set a precedent within her family who live 300 km away. Her sisters and cousins also

want to work and have convinced the male members of their families by citing her as an example. In this way, bridging social networks and reciprocity may help women overcome some of obstacles to their working, regardless of physical accessibility.

In addition to cultural impediments, travel time, transport costs and cognitive accessibility are also expected to play a role (Godard 2011). The latter two relate to the available economic resources and the individual's capacity to move within network and mobility capital frameworks. In my exploration of these factors, travel time turned out to be insignificant for the participants. There are currently two minibuses services: one within Yukarı Mardin and one that connects Yenışehir and Yukarı Mardin. The services are frequent and cost 1 TL (EUR 0.36), no matter what the distance. However, the women rarely use these minibuses services. Most women walk to the MPCC, and those who do take the minibus simply said they would just leave the house a bit earlier and walk if the service did not exist. In other words, they did not see the lack of services as an excuse for not going to the MPCC. On the other hand, some also mentioned that if they were not given a transport subsidy, they would reconsider coming to the centre by minibus, proving that there are economic barriers that may prevent people from benefiting from the transport services. In fact, one of the women said, 'If you have the money, you do not have the word "distance" in your vocabulary'. This was in the context of a discussion on whether she would send her children away to study at university.

In terms of cognitive accessibility, illiteracy plays an important role. The improved transport infrastructure and services, which are supposed to enhance community involvement and the accessibility of social services (including hospitals), are obviously affected by literacy level, as one of the discussions revealed. The reason why elderly women, who did not have to go to school by law before 1961, are currently learning how to read and write is to be able to go to hospital by themselves on the minibus.

Among the participants who talked about physical constraints affecting their attendance at the MPCC courses, the distance between their children's schools and the MPCC was the main physical factor that influenced their decision. Yurdanur said this explicitly, while others implied that they usually come to the MPCC when their children are at school. Participants also mentioned not having

their clothes and shoes soiled as another direct benefit of transport improvements; this point was also made in discussions about the improved road connecting Yukarı Mardin and Yenişehir (though these trips were infrequent). The interviews, therefore, revealed that the existing evidence on work-related travel, family obligations and gender segregation (e.g. Hubers, Schwanen, and Dijst [2011] in the Netherlands) do not apply in areas where there are other socio-economic disadvantages and a lack of job opportunities.

Gendered Externalities

In addition to the potential direct (dis)benefits of transport and mobility identified above, transport infrastructure development in Mardin is expected to induce positive labour market externalities by increasing: (i) the accessibility of markets; (ii) the attractiveness of the city for further investment; and (iii) tourist and cultural activities. Furthermore, impeding political and cultural factors, such as identity politics, are noticeable in the city and have an influence on these three indirect benefits. This illustrates the political element of inequality, as identified by Ohnmacht, Maksim, and Bergman (2009) in their consideration of the interdependencies between mobilities and the patterns of inequality.

Accessibility of markets

Theoretically, markets become more accessible when transport distances and costs are reduced. Although all the women in the study believed that increased investment will create more job opportunities, most listed poor market accessibility as one of the main obstacles to starting their own businesses, such as the production of bittım soap, which is locally grown, and opening embroidery gift shops. Although not mentioned in isolation, this was the main problem interviewees cited when answering the question: *'Would you consider starting your own business?'* The implications of improved infrastructure for market accessibility for female workers are even more difficult to read; as Porter (2011) identified in his study of Sub-Saharan Africa, women's market mobility is restricted not merely by their limited economic and physical resources, but also by male family members who are suspicious if their wives travel long distances from home.

Even if markets are accessible, legal obstacles prevent women from obtaining the support to start their own businesses. For instance, Aliye, who is divorced, is not eligible to apply for loans and support because her ex-husband has a good job and is paying alimony, even though this is inadequate for a single mother with three children to live on. This, coupled with the lack of a good-quality labour force, limits the attractiveness of the city as a site for further investment – the second of the expected indirect benefits. Problems also arise where the parents are uneducated. Almost all of the interviewees' parents were illiterate. Even if their parents were educated to primary school level, those younger women who had tried and failed the university entrance exam associated their failure with a lack of parental guidance during their high school education. On the other hand, this lack of education on the part of their parents' generation does not necessarily imply that the women were unable to accumulate human capital. In some cases, economic capital plays a part, as in the case of Yeliz, whose family wanted her to go to school but who was unable to because there were no schools close to their village.

Attractiveness of the city for further investment

According to the MPCC coordinator, the city's increased accessibility has led to rising interest from non-local firms. However, the nature of the activities carried out by the MPCCs in Mardin for these firms suggests that this accessibility has only indirectly been the cause of further investment; it is the increase in cultural activities in the city that has made the region more popular and caught the multinationals' attention. Moreover, being seen to invest in the city or participate in activities encouraging female economic empowerment in the region has generated good publicity for these firms; this is evident in some of the statements made by the firms' management teams in the newspapers. For instance, Mudo, a national textile firm that provides Ömerli MPCC with branded women's clothing, has repeatedly publicized its involvement in the national newspapers as noted on the press section on their website.

However, recent activities by non-local firms in Mardin to target the FLM have not been sustained. This is evident in the case of one multinational firm which employed women from the MPCC to produce bittim soap to sell to hotels in Western Turkey. According to one female worker, it

initially provided significant income for the women, but the company only required a certain amount of soap and so, after a few months, it stopped production. This interviewee particularly emphasized the importance of local skills and expertise in the training process. The bittim soap is made from wild pistachio oil and terebinth wood, which is locally grown, and tablets are made by hand by expert soap makers. The company provided some training in production methods, but according to the interviewee this was not useful at all. Instead, the employees learned how to do the job properly from a local craftsman they contacted through their MPCC coordinator. According to the interviewee, 'The trainer provided by the firm provided only technical help, but nothing in practice'. This evidence bears out the findings of other studies that have observed the local outcomes of national economic structures; in North America, for instance, workers were unable to operate German machinery because they had not been given the vocational training to equip them with the necessary skills (Gertler 1996).

Tourism and cultural activities

Cultural activities account for much of the economic return generated by non-industrial activity in Mardin. Mardin is culturally rich due to its location at the intersection of Mesopotamia and Anatolia; recent years have seen it become an increasingly popular tourist destination and its cultural life expand. These have both been attributed to improved accessibility and the overall growth in regional investment. The graphic designers who were interviewed strongly emphasized the role played by a number of famous figures in raising the profile of the city through art. For example, Cemil İpekçi, a top fashion designer from Istanbul, has organized several fashion shows in the city, using MPCC attendees to sew the clothes and other accessories. For his fashion show in September 2010, the central MPCC produced 250 bags, the revenues from which were paid directly to MPCC attendees.

Although returns from temporary cultural activities such as film festivals and seasonal tourism may not be sustainable, Urry (2007, p. 193) is surely correct in his assertion that new mobilities, in this case the movement of people and cultural capital between regions, can result in social consequences that benefit local individuals. The dominant social and cultural trajectories and the lack of facilities such as cinemas mean that many individuals living in Mardin do not participate in intellectual and cultural activities (only three of the 24 women said they read books); for these people, even

participating in one-off events may enhance cultural knowledge. Moreover, attending such activities may lead them to spend more time with family members and share daily life experiences with them, thereby enhancing their ability to express themselves. Most attendees claimed that they try to talk to their children and do things together as much as possible, as they felt that they had never had the chance to connect with their own parents in this way and therefore often felt lonely during their childhood. This feeling of connection between the parents and their children, an implied consequence of Bourdieu's 1986 concept of cultural capital, is significantly associated with the formation of human capital through parental guidance on education.

However, there was contradictory evidence regarding the extent to which cultural activity in the city benefits local people. One of the organizers of the city's main cultural festival described what happened at a dance show by Nezaket Ekici in Kasımiye Medresesi, in which women wore wet and therefore transparent clothing. This was deemed inappropriate in a *medrese*, which is a building used for teaching Islamic law. The situation was the same with a fashion show by Cemil İpekçi at the same place. This is not the place to discuss whether such cultural activities change perceptions, but it is important to ask to what extent these activities were aimed at increasing social inclusion within the local community. The main aim of such activities is arguably to attract visitors and investment to the city, but the fact that the gala concert of the Mardin Film Festival in 2010 was not open to the public indicates that the benefits accruing from these events are not always felt by locals. For instance, none of the MPCC attendees was aware of the film festival that has been held in the city for the last four years, despite the fact that the event takes place only a ten-minute walk from the central MPCC.

Identity politics and ideology

Identity politics, the Kurdish conflict, have marked the region for a long time. It is widely believed that previous governments brought insufficient investment to the region and that investors still do not find it stable enough to invest in. Öktem (2005) refers to the hegemonic power of the nationalist movement within Mardin's urban structure, and how this may suppress the different ethnic groups in the city. Although it is not the concern of this study to explore the reasons behind the historic lack of investment in the region, how the recent investments have been utilized in the city, the social

consequences of ethnic conflict in the region and how these are reflected in the cultural capital of individuals and ultimately human capital are highly relevant to this narrative. That most of the women aspire to their sons becoming police officers demonstrates that the conflict within the outer region of Mardin and the rest of south-eastern Anatolia generates defensive ideas that then materialize in human capital. This is transmitted through families to eventually be recognized as cultural capital. One of the women even said that she herself had always wanted to be a police officer. Moreover, a number of the women and their daughters wanted to study theology and become Quran teachers. Two of them chose this option because they had already attended Quran courses. Some participants mentioned that sending children to free Quran courses is an option usually chosen by mothers who want to work or undergo training and have nowhere to leave their children. This is not to say that there is no religious motivation at all, but the lack of alternative, free childcare facilities can then be considered as an obstacle for women to participate in the labour market.

Dynamics of the culture

The assumption that there is sustained causality between a region's sociocultural profile and its economic performance following the development of the transport infrastructure may lead to misguided policies. Observing how social networks change over time and how social groups respond to changing national conditions reveals the unstable nature of regional economies. Such instability is evidenced in the way in which Mardin's cultural norms impede women's access to education and the labour market. Educational attainment is significantly influenced by the cultural values of families; these values may alter in response to changing perceptions and societal values.

That perceptions change over time – resulting in modified societal values, which lead to changes in cultural capital, which in turn affect human capital – is evident in parents' attitudes towards the education of their daughters. In the past, if parents had the resources to provide their children with a formal education, they gave priority to boys. However, responses to my question, '*If you had only one option, would you send your daughter or son to school?*' show that the perception – at least among these women – had changed considerably. According to all participants, girls should be given

priority in terms of education. One of the MPCC instructors related the changes in perception to the negative impact of social networking between men. She claimed that once her father stopped going to *kahvehanes* (coffee shops), where men have long chats with other men, play card games, drink tea and smoke, his perceptions changed as he was no longer under the influence of other more conservative men. This is consistent with some other examples from the field search conducted by the MPCCs. One of the main observations was that men who spend too much time in *kahvehanes* show less tolerance towards their daughters improving their skills. The field search also showed that men are receptive to what others say and, therefore, their decisions can be manipulated by other people; in this case, by women talking to them about the benefits of educating their daughters.

Such developments are indicative of an unstable domination: the fact that perceptions change over time illustrates that the dominant power, which is in this case reinforced by the patriarchal relations, is never in complete control, and that resistance and domination are continuous processes. This shows that the cultural and social attributes that dominate the city are not necessarily fixed, but alter over time (Creswell 1993). The fact that some women have resisted the dominant power and mitigated some of the effects of the patriarchal mind-set does not necessarily imply a permanent change for the better. It is the continuous power exchange that characterizes gender relations, and women's willingness to increase their social inclusion, that require attention. Overall, it is clear that for mobility to mean anything to the women in this research, the constraints that limit their access to that mobility must be identified and addressed.

Theoretical and Policy Implications

Overall, my findings illustrate the conditions for obtaining motility capital and the 'relational' aspect of network capital by pointing out the social consequences of mobilities (or lack thereof): if the first set of conditions indicated by these frameworks does not hold, the benefits brought by infrastructural development, and the consequent improvement in mobility and social inclusion, do not materialize. Although the lack of transport infrastructure and service failures are significant barriers to accessibility in terms of labour markets, particularly in underdeveloped and inaccessible regions, more prevalent and crucial issues are the negative or counter-productive social norms and cultural values experienced

by women, and the unsustainable economic investment that leads to further socio-economic segregation.

Broadly, I have sought to illustrate that the relationship between infrastructure provision and gendered mobilities is entangled in a wider context that encompasses politics and cultural geographies. Any attempt to assume causality between any aspects of a regional economy (i.e. local culture and the economic and physical conditions) within this web is misleading. Moreover, the criteria for obtaining network and motility capitals do not operate only at an individual level; they are highly influenced by the broader environment. Although the scope of the study was insufficient to account for the full range of personal identities and the intersections between these identities, the discussion suggests that class, age and ethnicity all affect the distribution of transport benefits.

From a policy perspective, seeking opinions on transport improvements yields thought-provoking insights. Although they do not benefit directly from the investment, the participants in the study all had a positive perception of the investments. The danger is that this public popularity may lead to the benefits of development being overstated by politicians, and that the political rationalization of transport infrastructure investment will result in ineffective investment in the future. Benefits are less likely to be distributed fairly and development strategies will not be improved. One way of addressing this danger at regional level would be to conduct local travel surveys to monitor travel patterns over time. Regional development strategies that draw on this information will better reflect the needs of the local population.

Overall, the direct benefits arising from the expanded transport services are undermined by the reluctance of the women to be mobile due to their various social roles and responsibilities. Given the significance of social capital in the city, its negative and positive spillovers should be considered in full. Positive effects include the ease with which it is possible to disseminate information and the impact that the example of a woman in work can have on her friends and relatives, whereas negative examples include the traditions of restricting female access to education, close-relative marriage, and gender-based household roles. The fact that not all citizens are benefiting from local cultural activities means they are less likely to adopt new societal values, further reducing the potential for positive

spillovers. The findings also imply that the reluctance of male members of society to allow their daughters to attend the training courses and to work may be due to the overall conservatism of the community. Even if men are not conservative themselves, they are likely to be under the influence of others who are. These impediments arising from the patriarchal mindset could be avoided by integrating men into the empowerment process, something already acknowledged by the MPCC trainers, who regularly talk to the fathers, brothers and husbands of potential participants in order to convince them of the importance of overall social wellbeing.

Finally, in terms of creating job opportunities, the transport infrastructure plays a limited role in attracting further investment to the city. For the returns and benefits to stay in the region and to be sustainable, other supporting measures are required. These include active investment in human capital. If market accessibility is to be improved, the limiting effects of the prevailing social and cultural conditions must also be addressed. These cultural values should not be taken as dogmatic, common sense, natural or inevitable. Changes in perceptions should be exploited in such a way as to strengthen the formation of human capital and social development in underdeveloped regions, especially in cases where the attractiveness of the city is reduced by the lack of a high-quality labour force and political instability.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank

- Transport Studies Unit of the University of Oxford and Wolfson College, Oxford for the generous funding they provided for this study,
- the participants of the research, particularly the attendees of the Mardin Meydanbasi MPCC for their valuable contribution,
- and Prof. David Banister, Dr. Dariusz Wojcik and Dr. Karen Lucas for their valuable comments on the drafts of this paper.

¹ Please note that the research and analysis were conducted before the war in Syria and the recent deterioration in Turkish/Syrian relations; hence, the discussion does not consider the implications of the Syrian conflict.

References

- “Güneydoğu Ulaşımında Altın Çağını Yaşıyor.” 2011. *Ulaştırma Haber*, September 7. Accessed July 20, 2012. http://www.ulastirmahaber.com/3092_Guneydogu-Ulasimda-Altin-Cagi-nda.html.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. “The Forms of Capital.” In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. Richardson, 241–258. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Carrasco, J.A. and Cid-Aguayo, B. 2012. “Network Capital, Social Networks, and Travel: An Empirical Illustration from Concepción, Chile.” *Environment and Planning A* 44 (5): 1066–1084.
- Cresswell, T. 1993. “Mobility as Resistance: A Geographical Reading of Kerouac’s ‘On the road’.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18 (2): 249–262.
- DİKA (Dicle Development Agency) 2010. *Mardin’de Yatırım Ortamı*. Accessed July 20, 2012. http://www.dika.org.tr/upload/archive/files/MARDiNDE_YATiRiM.pdf.
- Gertler, M.S. 1996. “Worlds Apart: The Changing Market Geography of the German Machinery Industry.” *Small Business Economics* 8 (2): 87–106.
- Godard, X. 2011. “Poverty and Urban Mobility: Diagnosis Toward a New Understanding.” In *Urban Transport in the Developing World: A Handbook of Policy and Practice*, edited by H.T. Dimitriou and R. Gakenheimer, 232–261. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Hanson, S. 2010. “Gender and Mobility: New Approaches for Informing Sustainability.” *Gender, Place & Culture* 17 (1): 5–23.
- Hubers, C., Schwanen, T. and Dijst, M. 2011. “Coordinating Everyday Life in the Netherlands: A Holistic Quantitative Approach to the Analysis of ICT-related and Other Work–life Balance Strategies.” *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 93 (1): 57–80.
- Kaufmann, V. 2002. *Re-thinking Mobility: Contemporary Sociology*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Kaufmann, V., Bergman, M.M. and Joye, D. 2004. “Motility: Mobility as Capital.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28 (4): 745–756.
- KGM (General Directorate of Highways of the Republic of Turkey) 2011. *Statistics*. Accessed June 10, 2011. <http://www.kgm.gov.tr/Sayfalar/KGM/SiteEng/Root/Statistics.aspx>.

- KGM (General Directorate of Highways of the Republic of Turkey) 2012. 9. Bölge Müdürlüğü Diyarbakır. Accessed July 20, 2012.
<http://www.kgm.gov.tr/Sayfalar/KGM/SiteTr/Bolgeler/9Bolge/Subeler/SbMardin.aspx>.
- Larsen, J. and Jaconsen, M.H. 2009. "Metaphors of Mobility: Inequality on the Move." In *Mobilities and Inequality*, edited by T. Ohnmacht, H. Maksim and M.M. Bergman, 75–99. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Law, R. 1999. "Beyond 'Women and Transport': Towards New Geographies of Gender and Daily Mobility." *Progress in Human Geography* 23 (4): 567–588.
- Lucas, K. 2011. "Making the Connections between Transport Disadvantage and the Social Exclusion of Low Income Populations in the Tshwane Region of South Africa." *Journal of Transport Geography* 19 (6): 1320–1334.
- Lucas, K. and Currie, G. 2012. "Developing Socially Inclusive Transportation Policy: Transferring the United Kingdom Policy Approach to the State of Victoria?" *Transportation* 39 (1): 151–173.
- Mackett, R., Achuthan, K. and Titheridge, H. 2008. "AMELIA: A Tool to Make Transport Policies More Socially Inclusive." *Transport Policy* 15 (6): 372–378.
- Manderscheid, K. 2009. "Unequal Mobilities." In *Mobilities and Inequality*, edited by T. Ohnmacht, H. Maksim and M.M. Bergman, 27–51. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- McCall, L. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture and Society* 30 (3): 1771–1802.
- Ohnmacht, T., Maksim, H. and Bergman, M. 2009. "Mobilities and Inequality: Making Connections." In *Mobilities and Inequality*, edited by T. Ohnmacht, H. Maksim and M.M. Bergman, 7–27. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Öktem, K. 2005. "Faces of the City: Poetic, Mediagenic and Traumatic Images of a Multicultural City in Southeast Turkey." *Cities* 22 (3): 241–253.
- Pal, S., 2010. *Norms, Culture and Local Infrastructure: Evidence from a Decentralised Economy*. Institute for the Study of Labor, Discussion Paper No. 5281.
- Porter, G. 2011. "'I think a woman who travels a lot is befriending other men and that's why she travels': Mobility Constraints and their Implications for Rural Women and Girls in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Gender, Place & Culture* 18 (1): 65–81.
- Portes, A. 1998. "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 1–24.
- Putnam, R.D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1): 65–78.

Putnam, R.D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Riviera, K.L. 2007. "Culture, Gender, Transport: Contentious Planning Issues." *Transport and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific* 76: 1–20.

Salon, D. and Gulyani, S. 2010. "Mobility, Poverty and Gender: Travel 'Choices' of Slum Residents in Nairobi, Kenya." *Transport Reviews* 30 (5): 641–657.

Staber, U. 2007. "Contextualizing Research on Social Capital in Regional Clusters." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31 (3): 505–521.

SPO (State Planning Organization) 2003. *Ön Ulusal Kalkınma Planı [Preliminary National Development Plan] 2004–2006*. Ankara: SPO.

Tomanbay, M. 2000. "Turkey's Water Potential and the Southeast Anatolia Project." In *Water Balances in the Eastern Mediterranean*, edited by D. B. Brooks and M. Ozay, 95–112. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute) 2011. *Labour force indicators by province*. Accessed July 20, 2012. <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=8536>.

Urry, J. 2007. *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Uteng, T.P. 2009. "Gender, Ethnicity, and Constrained Mobility: Insights into the Resultant Exclusion." *Environment and Planning A* 41 (5): 1055–1071.

Uteng, T.P. and Cresswell, T., eds. 2008. *Gendered Mobilities*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Valentine, G. 2007. "Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography." *The Professional Geographer* 59 (1): 10–21.