

**Gender Politics in Neoliberal  
Governance:  
The Case of the European Bank for  
Reconstruction and Development**

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The results, discussions and conclusions presented in this eThesis are identical to those in the examined and printed version.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>Tables and charts</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction to the EBRD</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Origins of the EBRD.....	5
The EBRD’s mandate and functions .....	8
EBRD’s membership, funding and lending.....	10
Organisational structure and culture .....	11
The EBRD as a case for feminist research .....	13
<b>Original contributions of the thesis</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Empirical contributions.....	15
Contributions to feminist research on neoliberal governance .....	17
<b>Methodology and research design</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Document analysis.....	21
Interviews at the EBRD’s Headquarters in London .....	23
Field research.....	26
<b>Thesis outline</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Analysing gender politics in neoliberal governance</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Gendered analyses of governance</b> .....	<b>35</b>
Gender inequality in feminist political economy.....	37
Feminist Economics.....	40
Defining and operationalising the concept of neoliberal governance.....	42
<b>Policy and practice on gender equality in neoliberal governance</b> .....	<b>45</b>
Feminist agency and strategy in the policy-making process .....	47
Women and gender mainstreaming in economic development.....	50
Promoting gender equality through the market .....	52
<b>Three processes of gender politics</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>60</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Gender advocacy and policy-making at the EBRD</b> .....	<b>62</b>

Analysing gender mainstreaming .....	63
<b>Women in Business and gender mainstreaming in EBRD lending .....</b>	<b>65</b>
The EBRD and the Post-Washington Consensus for development.....	66
The EBRD’s Women in Business Programmes .....	70
Gender mainstreaming as managing risk in EBRD lending .....	73
<b>Feminist strategy and gender expertise in the policy-making process.....</b>	<b>76</b>
Institutional resistance and constraints .....	77
The EBRD’s Gender Team.....	82
<b>Gender and equality through the market in the EBRD’s policy framework .</b>	<b>87</b>
Gender analysis and ‘academic feminism’ at the EBRD.....	88
Arguments and evidence in the EBRD’s policies.....	91
Articulating equality and inequality .....	93
The co-optation of gender mainstreaming.....	95
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Gender in economic theory and policy at the EBRD .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender in the EBRD’s economic analysis.....</b>	<b>101</b>
Gender-blindness in economic theory and policy.....	102
Gender as a variable in the EBRD’s economic research .....	108
<b>Crisis, continuity and expansion of the EBRD’s neoliberal economic strategies.....</b>	<b>112</b>
The EBRD’s response to the 2007/8 global financial crisis .....	112
From a temporary to a permanent institution.....	115
‘Seeing women’ in the EBRD’s new region.....	118
<b>Economic inclusion and competitiveness promotion at the EBRD .....</b>	<b>123</b>
Inequality and economic growth in the EBRD’s agenda for competitiveness	125
Economic inclusion and market expansion in EBRD lending.....	129
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Gender in the EBRD’s operations in Turkey .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Contextualising women’s employment and labour force participation .....</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>Mainstreaming gender in the EBRD’s economic strategies for Turkey .....</b>	<b>138</b>
Gender analysis in the EBRD’s country strategies.....	139
Gender mainstreaming in project finance.....	142
<b>Gender equality in the EBRD’s project lending.....</b>	<b>148</b>
Equal opportunities in the privatisation of IDO Ferries .....	149
Garanti Bank and loans to women entrepreneurs .....	158
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>166</b>

<b>Chapter 6: The EBRD and business-partnerships for gender equality.</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Business strategies for women’s employment</b> .....	<b>168</b>
Women’s employment as competitiveness promotion .....	171
<b>The EBRD’s Women in Business Programme in Turkey</b> .....	<b>175</b>
The role and influence of donor agencies.....	177
How the EBRD targets women entrepreneurs.....	181
Women’s and feminist organisations.....	186
<b>Business partnerships for equal opportunities</b> .....	<b>189</b>
Equal opportunities schemes for business .....	191
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>194</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusions</b> .....	<b>196</b>
Analysing gender politics .....	197
<b>Feminist agency and strategy in the policymaking process</b> .....	<b>199</b>
<b>Gender and economic theory and policy at the EBRD</b> .....	<b>203</b>
<b>Policy implementation and the EBRD’s strategies for the governing of gender relations</b> .....	<b>205</b>
<b>Feminist political economy and gender equality politics in neoliberal governance</b> .....	<b>209</b>
<b>Avenues for future research</b> .....	<b>210</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>213</b>
<b>Appendix 1: List of interviews</b> .....	<b>239</b>

## **Abstract**

This thesis is about the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and its role and strategies in the governance of gender relations. The EBRD was founded between 1989 and 1990 to channel financial assistance that would promote transition to market economies and liberal democracy in East and Central Europe and Central Asia. Since 2009, the EBRD has expanded its membership and started to invest in Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. Having for most of its history been silent on how gender issues were implicated in such processes, policy and rhetoric on gender equality has since the mid-2000s become an increasingly important part of the EBRD's policies and rhetoric on economic development

This thesis constructs a theoretical framework that explores this shift in terms of how ideas and arguments about gender equality are implicated within and used to transform the EBRD's economic strategies and operations. The analysis proceeds from an exploration of policymaking on gender equality at the EBRD to consider how this agenda has been implemented in its country-level activities.

The central argument made throughout the thesis is that the objective of gender equality has been co-opted to support the EBRD's policies and strategies for market expansion. The implications of this are explored through an extended case study of how policies on gender equality are being mobilised to support further neoliberal restructuring within the EBRD's operations in Turkey. The thesis concludes by discussing the business-oriented models through which gender equality is being governed, highlighting a potential gap in this terms of how socially reproductive labour is being accommodated for.

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## **Dedication**

To my mum Ewa and dad Kenneth – for raising me to stubbornly go my own way and for supporting me on every step of it. Tack.

To Paul - for teaching me the writing mantras, rationing the pick n' mix, coping with the lunacy and for making me happy every day.

## **Tables and charts**

Chart 1: EBRD cumulative investments 1991- 2013 by region	68
Chart 2: MDB Financial Assistance 2000-2013	113
Table 1: Employees on IDO payroll before and after privatisation	153
Table 2: IDO outsourced staff before and after privatisation	154



## **List of Abbreviations**

- AKP –Justice and Democracy Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
- CIDA - Canadian International Development Agency
- EC – European Community
- EBRD, the Bank –European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- EES –European Employment Strategy
- EIB –European Investment Bank
- EU – European Union
- G8 - Group of Eight
- GAP – Gender Action Plan (EBRD)
- IBRD - International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- IPA - Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (EU)
- IFC – International Finance Corporation
- ILO - International Labour Organisation
- IMF – International Monetary Fund
- İŞKUR - Turkish Employment Agency
- KAGİDER - Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey
- KEIG - Women’s Labour and Employment Initiative Platform
- MDB - Multilateral Development Bank
- NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
- OCE – Office of Chief Economist (EBRD).
- OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
- SMEs - Small and medium-sized enterprises
- RDB - Regional Development Bank
- UK – the United Kingdom
- US – the United States
- SEMED - Southern and Eastern Mediterranean
- SGI – Strategic Gender Initiative (EBRD)
- Sida - Swedish Development Agency
- TISK - Confederation of Employers’ Associations of Turkey
- TÜSİAD - Industry and Business Association (Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği)

UNIFEM - the United Nations Development Fund for Women

WEF – World Economic Forum

WiB – Women in Business (EBRD)

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This thesis is about the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the EBRD, the Bank) and its role and strategies in the governance of gender relations. The EBRD was established between 1989 and 1990 as a new regional development bank (RDB) that would channel financial assistance to Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The Bank's mandate nonetheless goes beyond economic reform and gives it an explicitly political orientation:

“The purpose of the Bank shall be to foster the transition towards open market economies and to promote private and entrepreneurial initiative in the Central and Eastern European countries committed to and applying the principles of multiparty democracy, pluralism and market economies” (EBRD 1990, Art. 1).

In this thesis it is consistently argued that the EBRD is committed to a broader framework of neoliberal economic development, through which it works to embed free markets within the states and societies across its region. The EBRD's economists have articulated 'transition' as a form of modernisation; defining the concept as “progress from command economy to open, market-oriented economy” (EBRD 1994, 4) and working toward the (re-)integration of the planned socialist economies into the world economy through the establishment of free and open markets (Smith 2002, 652-653). In its first decade of operations, the EBRD centred on structural reforms - especially the privatisation of former public enterprises and services and the construction of new markets through financial and legal reforms (Shields and Wallin 2015, 388). During this time, the EBRD paid little attention to the social impacts of

structural reforms and was silent about how its policies and strategies might impact upon gender inequalities. Indeed, early publications by the EBRD position issues such as poverty and inequality as separate from economic transition and effectively outside of the Bank's remit (EBRD 1994, 3-4).

Since the early 2000s, the EBRD has however followed in the footsteps of many other multilateral financial institutions and assigned gender equality a more important role in its agenda for economic reform. In 2003 the EBRD's then President Jean Lemierre committed the Bank to the third UN Millennium Development Goal, asserting that the Bank would work to "promote gender equality and women's empowerment" (IMF 2003). Subsequently the EBRD's staff have developed a policy framework through which gender concerns could be addressed within the EBRD's operations (EBRD 2009b; 2013a). This thesis traces and analyses the journey through which the EBRD has come to develop and implement policies in relation to gender equality, reflecting upon such processes from a feminist political economy perspective.

This thesis has four main aims. The first is to comprehensively trace how gender equality has emerged and evolved as a policy area in the EBRD. This includes locating the sources of impetus for the new policy agenda, tracing the steps of policy development and considering the ways in which the EBRD has put its commitment to promoting gender equality into practice. The second aim is to analyse what 'working on gender' means for the EBRD in terms of how the new policy agenda contributes to, and potentially transforms, the Bank's role and strategies in constructing market economies. The third aim is to develop a theoretical and analytical framework inspired by feminist political economy and apply this to the analysis of the EBRD. Finally, by providing an in-depth case study of the EBRD the thesis hopes to contribute empirically and theoretically to the understanding of how gender equality is being governed within the global political economy today.

The main research question that this study sets out to explore is: what can the case of the EBRD tell us about how gender equality is understood and

mobilised within neoliberal forms of governance? In order to answer this question, a series of series of smaller research questions are developed:

*Research question 1:* Why and how has the EBRD developed policies in relation to gender equality?

*Research question 2:* How does the incorporation of gender equality as policy area link to changes in in the ways that the EBRD understands and promotes economic reform?

*Research question 3:* How does the EBRD implement its policies on gender equality?

*Research question 4:* How can insights from feminist political economy applied to the analysis of the gender equality agendas promoted by the institutions of neoliberal governance?

The theoretical and analytical approach constructed in this thesis begins from an understanding of neoliberal governance as institutions and actors that are committed to embedding market values and reforms into economic, political and social life (Griffin 2010, 88). Informed and inspired by research in feminist political economy, the thesis employs gender as the central analytical concept to examine how the EBRD constructs meanings and understandings about gender and how these relate to its market-making agenda and lending. The title of this thesis ‘gender politics’ refers to the how the concepts of gender and gender equality are struggled over and delineated during institutional processes at the EBRD, as well as the broader political and economic projects to which the EBRD mobilises ideas and arguments about gender. More specifically, the empirical chapters of this thesis concentrate on exploring three key areas of gender politics and institutional change: 1) how staff at the EBRD have developed policies on gender issues; 2) how gendered ideas and norms are reproduced through the EBRD’s economic analysis and how these areas are affected by the introduction of gender analysis in the

Bank; 3) how the EBRD brings its policies into practice during processes of policy implementation.

The main argument this thesis makes is that staff at the EBRD have integrated gender analysis in ways that aim to support the Bank's its overarching market-making agenda. The empirical research findings are used to explore how gender equality has been co-opted by the EBRD and how policy and rhetoric on gender are being mobilised through the Bank's operations. This starts with an analysis of the processes through which policies on gender were developed within the EBRD between 2003 and 2013. Next it is seen how the EBRD's activities in relation to gender equality have become more important to the Bank as it has extended and expanded its neoliberal economic strategies since the 2007/8 financial crisis. The concern with women's economic participation has become of critical importance to the Bank as it has expanded its operations into Turkey and North Africa. The last two empirical chapters explores how the EBRD's commitment to gender equality is being implemented within the Bank's operations in Turkey and reflect upon the wider structures of governance to which the Bank is contributing.

The remainder of this introductory chapter is organised in four parts. The first part offers a more detailed introduction to the EBRD and explains why the institution was selected as a case for a feminist research project. The second part positions the research within the field of feminist International Political Economy (IPE), and outlines the original contributions made by this thesis. The third part comprises of a methodological discussion that outlines the choices made in designing this research project and reflects on the methods used to carry out this research project. The chapter concludes with an outline of the chapters of the thesis.

## **Introduction to the EBRD**

“It is development, but with one condition, I want my money back.”<sup>1</sup>

This section outlines the key characteristics of the EBRD, seeking especially to establish the specific nature and origins of the Bank’s ‘brand of neoliberalism’ (Griffin 2009, 89) by discussing the specific ideas that inform the Bank and by highlighting how its institutional identity and role were defined in the early 1990s. Although the EBRD is not immune to change, these formative years have had long-lasting implications for how the Bank operates today. The section also justifies why the EBRD has been selected as the case study for this research, arguing that the Bank is an important case for feminist research that is concerned with promoting more gender-equitable forms of governance (Parpart 2004, 1).

### *Origins of the EBRD*

The EBRD was established by the European Community (EC) as a part of its efforts to co-ordinate Western assistance to Central and Eastern Europe. In practice the French Administration were a key driving force behind the creation of a new development bank, with Mitterrand setting out the agenda to the European Parliament in a speech entitled ‘A Bank for Europe’ on October 26th 1989 (Bronstone 1999, 21-22; Ivanova 2007, 358). In more detailed proposals Mitterrand’s Special Adviser and later figurehead of the EBRD, Jacques Attali, suggested an ambitious and distinctively European institution which would usurp and co-ordinate all aid and investments directed at Central and Eastern Europe and which would permit only limited influence for non-European states (Weber 1994, 13-16; Bronstone 1999, 21-22). On May 29<sup>th</sup> 1990, forty member states, the EC and the European Investment Bank (EIB) signed the articles of agreement that would establish the EBRD. The Bank officially commenced its operations in 1991, and signed off its first loan to the

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*.

Polish Bank of Poznan on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June (EBRD 1992, 18; Weber 1994, 10-11).

Contrary to what the rapid establishment of the EBRD might suggest, the Bank has never been without controversy. As argued by Jakobeit, the EBRD “has had the hardest time defending its existence and defining its role in the transformation process in Eastern Europe” (Jakobeit 1992, 119). This critique was informed by a series of scandals over high levels of expenditure on Bank premises and travel for its staff, allegations of corruption and slow rates of loan disbursement during Attali’s Presidency of the Bank (1991-1994) (Bronstone 1999, 58). However, the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) staunchly resisted Attali’s proposals for a new institution on the basis of its role and membership. In one respect, these delegations could be seen to question the very need for a new development bank on the grounds that the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) was already operating in the region (Weber 1994, 14-16; Barria and Roper 2004, 623-624).

Perhaps more importantly, the US and the UK challenged the concept of an institution that in their view would be ‘giving subsidies to failing state socialism’ (Bronstone 1999, 33) in favour of setting out an agenda for economic recovery that was driven by foreign direct investment (Ivanova 2007, 362). As argued by Smith (2002, 652-653) the founding of the EBRD is in many ways representative of the growing convergence among international leaders and institutions in the early 1990s on a neoliberal framework for post-communist transition. In particular, the notion that in order to secure this inflow of international capital countries needed to undertake rapid and large scale processes of liberalisation of capital and financial markets and privatisation of public enterprises is integral to the EBRD’s approach (Ivanova 2007, 361).

Once the decision was made to found the EBRD, the debate shifted to focus on the Bank’s membership and lending profile. The outcome of the



membership negotiations, in which the role of the Soviet Union and the US were particularly contested, saw an institution with a distinctive European profile with the EC and EIB as members as well as embedding a majority ownership of European countries into the Bank (Weber 1994, 14-15). The talks further resulted in the US taking up the position as the EBRD's largest single shareholder, accounting for a ten per cent ownership share (Smith 2002, 652).

During its founding conferences, the EBRD's private sector orientation was agreed and sixty per cent of its financing was ring-fenced to the private sector. In addition, the forty per cent share available to the public sector was to be restricted to loans that would contribute to the privatisation of public enterprises or infrastructure investment needed for private sector development (Vuylsteke 1995, 129-130; Bronstone 1999, 53). Overall, these early decisions worked to establish a niche in which the EBRD would operate – by lending primarily to the private sector and by focussing on small and medium-sized enterprises (Weber 1994, 14-16; Bronstone 1999, 31; Barria and Roper 2004, 623-624).

During the first half of the 1990s, the EBRD's identity as a private sector-oriented 'transition bank' was solidified through a series of reforms. Under the leadership of its new President Jacques De Larosiere, the EBRD's banking departments and lending protocols were revised in major ways in 1994 (Bronstone 1999, 58). The reform aimed to instil an institutional culture in which the EBRD would operate more like a commercial bank than a traditional development bank. This saw the restructuring of the EBRD's banking departments in which developing banking was effectively discontinued and responsibility for all banking activities was transferred into the merchant banking department (Barria and Roper 2004, 627; EBRD 1995, 6). In more concrete terms, the restructure means that the EBRD works exclusively through a commercial banking model in which the Bank lends at market rates. That is, in contrast to the other multilateral development banks, the EBRD does not have a 'soft window' in which it provides credits or

concessional loans below the prevailing market rates (Barria and Roper 2004, 637; US Congress 2010, 25-26).

### *The EBRD's mandate and functions*

To many of its observers, the EBRD is a uniquely ambitious institution because its mandate goes beyond economic reforms to promote a particular form of political rule - multiparty democracy (Weber 1994, 5; Linarelli 1995, 374-375; Shihata 1990, 210; Culpeper 1997, 31). The EBRD's political role is operationalized through the attachment of conditionality onto its lending, where each borrowing member need to demonstrate progress in the areas of staging free elections, enhancing the freedom of civil society and media, and ensuring the rule of law and supporting civil and political rights (EBRD 2013h, III). The EBRD's political counsellors then have the power to suggest the suspension of lending to a specific country if it is deemed to not meet these criteria (Bronstone 1999, 30-31).

A complete cessation of EBRD financing is, however, relatively rare, as in cases where democracy is limited – such as Turkmenistan - the EBRD prefers to employ a ‘calibrated approach’ designed to circumvent any public investment in favour of targeting the private sector.<sup>2</sup> In practice, the EBRD's approach to promoting democratic rule often links this agenda to the construction of market economies. That is, from the EBRD's perspective, ensuring private property rights and economic growth are integral parts of democratic consolidation, not least because it is hypothesised to contribute to the construction of a middle class with a vested interest in stable political conditions (EBRD 1992, 4; EBRD 2013b, 22-23).

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Rousso, Managing Director, External Action and Political Affairs, *EBRD*, CSO Session on the EBRD's Political Mandate, EBRD's Annual Meeting, Istanbul, 11 May 2013.

From the perspective of this research, the EBRD's mandate manifests the neoliberal paradigm of transition that the Bank was founded upon. The EBRD conceptualises transition as the process "through which open market-oriented economies are established" (EBRD 1995, 2). In turn, the founding articles of the EBRD defines its role primarily in terms of contributing to economic restructuring among its borrowing members, by advancing policies supporting the de-monopolisation, liberalisation and privatisation of economies (EBRD 1991, Art. 2: 1). In this sense, the EBRD's mandate sets the Bank apart from the other multilateral development banks by excluding poverty reduction as a key development objective. As argued above the EBRD makes a core analytical distinction between transition and development; the former being about the construction of markets through structural reforms and the latter being about socio-economic gains in areas such as education and health and the reduction of poverty and inequality (EBRD 1994, 3-5). Importantly, as will be seen throughout this thesis, this does not mean that staff at the Bank do not see that it can play a role in contributing to economic and social progress but rather that they have been positioned to do so through market channels.

The EBRD works as a producer of expert economic knowledge about its region as well as a financial intermediary. Starting with the former, the EBRD produces a significant amount of research on the economic state of its region. As argued by Shields (2015), the EBRD is a powerful producer of 'common-sense knowledge' of what constitutes economic transition and what measures governments need to implement in order to attract foreign investment. The EBRD's annual Transition Reports are widely cited among social and economic researchers. Within these reports, the EBRD's economists assesses the investment climate in each of its borrowing member countries as well as a series of indicators measuring the extent of liberalisation and private sector participation in different sectors of the economy (Myant and Drahoukoupil 2012, 69). Chapter 4 returns to this point, highlighting the Bank's role in promoting competitiveness as a policy aim.

Nonetheless, in contrast to the World Bank's explicit orientation as 'knowledge bank' (World Bank 1998), the EBRD's publications – and many of its staff – describe the Bank more in terms of a 'project-based' institution (EBRD 1994, 3). In this sense, the EBRD's role is often described in relatively depoliticised terms: as 'leading by example' through its investments rather than as influencing policy through research and policy dialogue. This takes the form of the EBRD channelling international finance into its countries of operations in the shape of loans, guarantees and senior debts (Barria and Roper 2004, 632).

### *EBRD's membership, funding and lending*

The EBRD lends to 34 countries in the region stretching from Central and Eastern Europe to Central Asia, Turkey and North Africa (EBRD 2014a, 2-3). Working as the largest single investor in the private sector in its region the EBRD approved 3,994 projects between 1991 and 2013, contributing with a total of €84,757 million of its own resources and attracting €168,283 million in co-financing from other agencies (EBRD 2014b, 5). The EBRD's lending is split between four main sectors including the corporate sector, financial institutions, energy and infrastructure (EBRD 2014b, 5). Since the early 2000s, the EBRD's focus on SMEs has also become better actualised within its lending with a drastic increase from 14,000 such loans in 1999 to over 50 000 in 2000 (Barria and Roper 2004, 632). In actuality, the public sector has rarely received the potential forty per cent share of this lending but since 1998 the private sector has accounted for over 80 per cent of the Bank's total financing (US Congress 2010, 59).

The EBRD's members provide the Bank with its capital base. In 2015, the EBRD's membership included 64 individual countries together with the European Union (EU) and the EIB. One part of this capital is paid directly to the EBRD, and the other part can be called in by the Bank in case it risks defaulting on any of its commitments (Korfker 2013, 86). Since an increase in 2013, the EBRD has a total capital base of €10.0 billion Euros, with €9.0

billion of that being ‘callable’ (EBRD 2014b, 5). To date the EBRD has not drawn upon its callable capital, and very little of the financial resources which the Bank invests into projects actually comes from shareholder subscriptions (Nelson 2013, 8-9). Rather, this financial resource is generated through interest on its capital base and the dividends derived from its equity portfolio (EBRD 2014a, 8). The Bank has international an AAA credit rating and averaged approximately €2 billion in annual profits between 2005 and 2008. Having made its first loss since the 1998 Russian financial crisis in 2009, the EBRD has since returned annual profits of €1 billion or above per annum (EBRD 2014b, 8; US Congress 2010, 59).

In addition, the EBRD receives grant funding from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies. In 2013 the EBRD received a total of €349 million in such funding, with the EU as its largest contributor by providing €114.1 million (EBRD 2014a, 6). This funding stream goes particularly to the EBRD’s technical assistance programmes which include consultancy, assessments, and legal advice which commonly target the poorer regions of the EBRD’s geographical remit, including the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the southern and eastern Mediterranean (EBRD 2014a, 6). As will be seen in subsequent chapters, donor funded technical assistance programmes is a key element of the EBRD’s activities in relation to gender equality.

### *Organisational structure and culture*

Geographically, the EBRD operates through its headquarters in London and it has offices in 39 countries that oversee operations in its borrower countries (referred to by the Bank as resident offices). The headquarters on Exchange Square, right in the City of London, purposefully signal the EBRD’s identification with commercial banking. In spite of efforts to decentralise, the headquarters still accommodate around three-quarters of the Bank’s nearly 1, 800 professional staff, its member-state delegations and its President (EBRD 2014a, 47).

The formal decision-making hierarchies at the EBRD are biased in favour of its non-borrowing member countries (Menkveld 1991, 51). Usually composed of the Ministers of Finance from each member country, the Board of Governors is the highest forum in the EBRD. The Governors meet once a year at the EBRD's Annual Business Meeting to make decisions about the strategic direction, membership and constitution of the EBRD with the effect that they in practice delegate the power for the day-to-day running of the EBRD to the Board of Directors (Strand 2003, 118). The Board of Directors has 24 seats, assigned on the proportion of shares held by each member country or institution. It votes on the principle of selective representation which grants the largest country shareholders in the Bank, the EIB and the EU individual votes whilst grouping together smaller members and all borrowing countries (Strand 2003, 116).

The EBRD's President is also from a non-borrowing country. Historically, this appointment has been done through backdoor negotiations among the Board of Governors over whether the post is to be allocated to a representative of France or Germany (Barria and Roper 2004, 627). However following the German decision to refrain from supporting the re-appointment of Thomas Mirow, the EBRD in 2012 held the first ever open shareholder vote resulting in the election of the British representative, Sir Suma Chakrabarti (Buckley 2012; Barder 2012). Each President serves up to two four-year terms as the EBRD's legal representative and its chief of staff (EBRD 1990, Ch. 6: Art. 30). The President also has symbolic importance, signalling the EBRD's identity and direction both internally and externally. As will be seen in this thesis, EBRD Presidents have been critical players in paving the way for the policy agenda on gender equality within the Bank.

A major concern of this thesis is to understand the ways in which the EBRD's staff and management enact the EBRD's mandate and role through in their work for the Bank. By considering the EBRD's staffing and internal organisation, the research oftentimes found the Bank to be an economic and

hierarchical institution. The EBRD employs highly-educated individuals, often with a background in economics-related disciplines and recruited from private banks, financial government departments, and other international institutions. The workforce is highly international and recruited from across the EBRD's member countries (EBRD 2015a, 47). The analysis suggested that the EBRD is at the same time a cohesive and internally divided and hierarchical institution. In particular, the EBRD's self-identification as a 'project-oriented institution' is argued to afford privileged roles to banking departments and teams that are perceived as working on 'the core' of the Bank's activities. Many of the interviewees for this project expressed their support of the EBRD's overarching agenda and approach, yet often provided some more critical reflections on what it meant for them to be working for the Bank. The empirical analysis identifies how the institutional protocols and procedures that have been put in place to ensure that the EBRD contributes toward market economies influence and constrain the activities of its staff, especially in terms of their activities in developing an approach to promoting gender equality.

### *The EBRD as a case for feminist research*

What makes the EBRD an interesting and important case for feminist research? Feminism is in this thesis conceived of in broad terms, as activism for the purpose of identifying and changing women's subordination to men (Ferree 2006, 6). As with most feminist research, the thesis uses gender as its central analytical concept and proceeds from the view that "international institutions play important roles in constructing meanings and understandings about gender and thus in legitimising gender relations." (Steans 2002, 92). In turn, feminist scholars and activists have long sought to transform governance institutions so that they will promote more gender equitable policies and strategies. In doing so they have identified and analysed how governance per se is gendered, in the sense that it builds upon and reproduces specific meanings about gender relations (Rai and Waylen 2008, 4; Parpart 2004). One important aspect of this is, of course, the explicit rhetoric, policy and

practice through which such institutions seek to promote more equitable gender relations. The empirical content of this thesis discusses the EBRD's policy framework in relation to gender issues in detail.

This thesis proceeds from the view that the EBRD's agenda to promote gender equality needs to be considered also through its linkages to the paradigm of post-communist transitions that the EBRD is founded upon and the policies and strategies through which the Bank reproduces this. Although the EBRD itself has largely conceived of transition as the gender-neutral process, a substantive body of feminist research has demonstrated how the making of market economies and democratic rule has been enmeshed in ideas and relations that are gendered (Kuehnast and Nechemias 2004; Funk and Mueller 1993; Corrin 1992; Einhorn 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000). From feminist research on structural reforms emerges the critical point that the EBRD promotes the kinds of economic policies that are widely associated with exacerbating women's structural inequalities – especially in terms of an increase in their unpaid labour in the household (Bakker 1994; Elson 1994; LaFont 2001). From this it is clear that examining how the EBRD has reformed and revised its policies and strategies constitutes an important task for a feminist research project.

The EBRD is an interesting case for exploring the forms and strategies through which feminists are seeking to transform economic governance. International financial institutions provide an important site for feminist critique and engagement, and have over the last twenty years incorporated at least selected parts of feminist agendas and provided new spaces for feminists to work from within these institutions in units dedicated to gender mainstreaming (Çağlar *et al.* 2013; Razavi 2013; Rai and Waylen 2008, 4; Meyer and Prügl 1999). However, as will be seen below and in Chapter 2, there remain significant debates and questions around what is being gained and what is lost in terms of feminist agendas as they enter mainstream governance institutions (Baden and Goetz 1997). Therefore, a main theme



developed throughout this thesis addresses the strategies pursued by gender advocates working from within the EBRD.

### **Original contributions of the thesis**

This thesis makes several original contributions to political economy research on governance generally, and to feminist political economy analyses specifically. With no other research programme having comprehensively studied the EBRD's role and strategies in promoting gender equality, the thesis is first of all original in its subject matter. Beyond the EBRD's own material, very little has been published on gender issues in the EBRD at the time of authorship. The main publications are by Gender Action, and include an assessment of the gender impacts of two of the EBRD's co-funded projects (Sakahlin and BTC Pipeline) (Bacheva *et al.* 2006) and a comparison of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) to the gender equality policies of other international financial institutions (Bibler 2013). Although valuable resources, these studies are different in focus from this research and less comprehensive in scope.

### *Empirical contributions*

With no other study covering the same topic, or taking the same perspective, this thesis contributes toward filling a significant gap in the literature on the EBRD itself. A survey of this literature shows how there is an overall shortage of up to date analyses, especially ones that trace the evolution of the EBRD since the early 2000s and its responses to shifts in development thinking. Existing research on the EBRD primarily comprises of historical and comparative accounts (Menkveld 1991; Weber 1994; Bronstone 1999; Culpeper 1997; Barria and Roper 2004), many of which are authored by individuals associated with the Bank (Linarelli, 1992; Vuylsteke 1995; Lemierre 2003). There are a number of further technical discussions that focus on specific aspects of the Bank, such as voting (Strand 2003) and project evaluation (Korfker 2013). Although these offer valuable empirical insights,

the theoretical perspective adopted in this thesis nevertheless owes more to how critical political economists have engaged with the paradigm of economic transition that the EBRD advances.

Critical political economists such as Gill (1992), Smith (2002), Shields (2012; 2015) and Ivanova (2007) have provided valuable contributions to research on the EBRD. As suggested above, they have done so by considering the Bank's role in shaping post-communist transitions into a neoliberal mould. Myant and Drakhoupil (2012) and Shields (2015) have offered the more up-to-date and comprehensive analyses of the EBRD's concept and approach to transition, with both highlighting the consistency in the Bank's strategy to pressure its borrowing members to undertake further economic restructuring to attract foreign investment. However, in contrast to this thesis, these studies have rarely looked at the internal processes through which such strategies are being produced and mobilised by the Bank's staff. In addition, with the exception of a co-authored article on the EBRD's Gender Action Plan that was published during this research project (Shields and Wallin 2015), the political economy literature on the EBRD has neither employed gender as a central analytical category nor has it addressed the Bank's interest in promoting gender equality.

By offering a rich empirical analysis of the EBRD, this study offers an original contribution to feminist literatures on global governance. This growing body of research has addressed a rich variety of topics and issues related to the globalisation of governance (see edited collections by Meyer and Prügl 1999; Rai and Waylen 2008). A major strand of research has examined the strategies and policies on gender equality advanced by international institutions, especially the United Nations (see for example Charlesworth 2005; Hannan 2013), the World Bank (see for example Griffin 2009; Bedford 2009a) and the EU (see for example Lewis 2006; Stratigaki 2004). Beyond these major institutions, this literature has covered a growing range of global and regional governance actors such as the World Economic Forum (WEF) (Elias 2013); the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

(True 2008) as well as networks of international organisations, feminist activists and parts of the state (True and Mintrom 2001; Young and Scherrer 2010) and the rise of public-private partnerships and corporate-led agendas for gender equality since the late 2000s (Prügl and True 2014; True 2014; Roberts 2014).

With the exception of the EU, relatively little work has nonetheless been done on institutionalised forms of regional governance (Waylen 2004, 568). This thesis addresses the lacuna of feminist analyses on the regional development banks (RDBs). In similarity to the EBRD, the African, Asian and Inter-American Development Banks are important but underexplored parts of the global governance architecture. Although the role and function of the RDBs have been examined, and debated, within comparative and political economy analyses (see for example Culpeper 1997; Bull and Boas 2003), only a very small part of this literature has examined how feminist policy agendas have been incorporated into the RDBs (see for example Smyth and Turquet 2012).

#### *Contributions to feminist research on neoliberal governance*

The central area of research to which this thesis is intended to contribute is feminist studies of gender issues in neoliberal governance. This area of research cuts across multiple academic disciplines, including development studies, political economy, Europeanisation studies and Economics, and encompasses a rich variety of theoretical perspectives and methodologies. There are however a number of important and shared themes and debates to which this thesis speaks to, and hopes to contribute to.

The first major issue addressed in this research concerns the extent to which the paradigm of economic development advanced by international financial institutions has changed in response to feminist demands and critiques. As seen above, feminist scholars have offered serious critiques of how the models of economic restructuring advanced by development institutions in the 1980s and 1990s impacted on gender inequalities. In particular, feminist economists

and development scholars argued that the free-market agendas pursued by these institutions had failed to account for how women through their gendered responsibilities for unpaid labour in the household are often positioned differently from men in economic life (Elson 1994; Beneria 2003; Sparr 1994).

In response to feminist critique and campaigning, international financial institutions have since the mid-1990s incorporated gender equality as a concern within their development agendas and adopted approaches such as gender mainstreaming to support this objective. In addition, by the late 1990s the 'old' neoliberal models of development were widely discredited for having failed to achieve stable economic growth and raising living standards across in developing countries. Thus, since the early 2000s, there has been a distinctive shift in development theory and practice to pay increased attention to institutions, poverty and gender inequality are implicated within economic processes (Bedford 2009a, ix; Razavi 2013). However, the responses by feminist scholars have been decidedly cautious, with many still questioning the extent to which the incorporation of feminist ideas have actually managed to transform the economic frameworks that contributed to gender inequalities in the first place (Bergeron 2003; Elson 2009; Roberts 2014). As argued at length above, examining continuity and change in the theories and policies through which the EBRD promotes economic reform is a central analytical concern of this thesis.

The second core theme addressed by this thesis is about the role and nature of gender advocacy within mainstream governance institutions. Questions about who has the power to speak for women, and define what kinds of inequalities will be addressed and in what ways have long been central in feminist analyses of development and global governance (Mohanty 1988; Cornwall 2003; Rai and Waylen 2008). In this respect, a major transformation of feminist movements over the last few decades has been its institutionalisation within mainstream governance organisations, with feminists working from within national and international bureaucracies (Rai 2003).

In turn the roles played by these individuals have proven highly contentious within feminist research. More development-oriented or insitutionalists strands of the literature have often highlighted the often difficult institutional environments these actors need to navigate (Razavi 1997). In contrast, other feminist scholars in have examined the implications of the strategies pursued by the internal gender advocate. Within this strand, it has been widely argued that the expert-led and technocratic approaches to gender analysis seen within governance institutions have stripped feminist agendas of their political content and submerged the objective of gender equality to other agendas such as competitiveness and economic growth (Kantola and Squires 2012). The analysis in this thesis is informed and inspired by both strands, but the case is made that any feminist critique of strategy and policy on gender issues also need to sensitise to the conditions under which such policies were made.

The third theme this addresses is about shifts in the form and strategies through which gender relations are being governed. Feminist analyses of global governance have explored and analysed how designing policy and interventions that aim to transform gender relations are no longer the exclusive remit of the state, but done by more complex constellations of actors that operate across the international, national and local (Steans 2002, 87; Rai and Waylen 2008, 1-2; Stone 2010). A growing strand of research has examined the expanding role of private-sector business actors in gender equality governance. Since the late 2000s businesses have increasingly worked as partners to national and international institutions in initiatives related to gender equality (Bedford 2009b; Prügl and True 2014; Bexell 2012; Kilgour 2013). Given how the EBRD works primarily with private sector partners, this research project constitute an opportunity to examine in more detail how this market-oriented mode of governing gender equality is being constructed through specific institutional processes and practices.

Finally, by bringing together themes and concepts from a broad body of feminist research, the thesis offers a new analytical framework for the analysis

of gender equality politics in neoliberal governance. This framework facilitates an analysis of gender-related institutional change that accounts for the gendered nature of governance per se, and offers a device for more agent-oriented accounts of how ideas about gender are mobilised within governance projects (Rai and Waylen 2008, 5).

To summarise the core contributions and originality of the thesis:

- The study offers a new empirical case to literatures in political economy and feminist studies of global governance. Neither of these literatures have addressed the same processes, or taken the same perspective, as this thesis.
- The study contributes to theory development in the field of feminist political economy by engaging and extending key themes in the analysis of how gender equality is articulated and advanced within neoliberal forms of governance.
- The thesis contributes analytically to feminist research by constructing a framework for analysing gender issues in governance.

### **Methodology and research design**

This section outlines and discusses the research process I undertook for this thesis. In summary, this project is based upon a multi-site case study of the EBRD's headquarters in London and operations in Turkey through which I was able to explore the processes of policy development and implementation. The study relies upon qualitative research methods, including document analysis, elite interviews and focus groups. The research process was to a significant extent iterative, combining document analysis with interviewing, and a majority of primary research was conducted during 2013.

Before considering these elements in more detail, it is necessary to explain the broader methodological concerns that informed the research project. That is, this project was shaped through my interest in conducting feminist research.

As suggested above, I understand the term feminism broadly, as theory and praxis that seek to promote gender equality and in order to do so, seek to identify the structures that contribute to gender inequalities and women's subordination (Ackerly *et al.* 2006, 6). My concern with pursuing a feminist research project is perhaps most straightforwardly seen in terms of the choice of the research topic and the development of research questions. Within feminist methodological debates it has nonetheless been established that there is no such thing as a pre-designed feminist methodology or a specific set of methods that are more suited to conducting such research (Krook and Squires 2006, 45; Hesse-Biber 2012, 4). Rather, feminist methodology is better characterised by the normative, or ethical commitments that inform the research process. As argued by Tickner (2006, 19-20), feminist scholars have often rejected quantitative approaches or claims to conducting value-neutral and scientific research in favour of seeing theory as constitutive of the world.

In similarity with much feminist research in IR and IPE, I adopt a broadly post-positivist methodological perspective within this thesis (Tickner 2006, 19). In one respect, this means that I examine the kinds of knowledge produced by the EBRD in its research and policy with an interest in how meanings and categories around gender and the economy are constructed. Feminist scholarship has also highlighted the importance of interrogating how knowledge is being produced during the research process *per se*. In particular, feminist scholars situate themselves within their research and seek to reflexively consider the power relations that shape the research process (Ackerly *et al.* 2006, 4; see also Harding 1987, 9; Hesse-Biber 2012, 18). This section outlines each stage of the research process conducted for this thesis, seeking to reflexively discuss my experiences.

#### *Document analysis*

The analysis of EBRD official publications serves three major functions in this thesis: first, to chart how the institution has developed over time; second, to explore shifts in the theoretical framework through which the Bank theorises market economies; third, to examine the ideas about gender and

gender equality that are reproduced by the Bank. A further important use of document analysis was to inform the interviews with EBRD staff in London and in Turkey, including the identification of interviewees and the questions asked.

Given the shortage of up-to-date accounts of the EBRD (identified above), the first step of the empirical research entailed mapping how the EBRD has developed over time. To this end, I used the qualitative software NVIVO to identify significant moments of institutional reform such as geographical expansion, institutional reorganisation, and the introduction of new policy agendas including gender equality. The main sources for this analysis were the EBRD's Annual Reports (1991 to 2014) and Transition Reports (1995 to 2014). Both sets of reports are available on the EBRD's website, [www.ebrd.com](http://www.ebrd.com), along with other flagship publications, official institutional documents, summaries of Bank lending projects and speeches.

Thereafter, I turned the focus to the EBRD's economic research, including the Transition Reports, the EBRD's working paper series, medium-term lending strategies, and additional reports including especially those that focus on the 2008 financial crisis and the EBRD's expansion southwards (Besley *et al.* 2010; EBRD 2009a). The aim of this analysis was to explore whether and how the Bank's interest in gender issues was linked to shifts in how it conceptualises market economies and works to promote economic reforms. I took my inspiration from the ways in which feminist scholars have interrogated forms of knowledge that are commonly presented as 'common-sense' and value-neutral in order to see how they reproduce androcentric biases (Hesse-Biber 2012, 17; Tickner 2006, 25; Harding 1995). More specifically, I developed a number of questions based on the feminist critiques of economics I discuss in Chapter 2 to explore the EBRD's economic analysis:



- What assumptions do economists at the EBRD make about individuals, states and markets in its economic research? Have these changed over time?
- Does the EBRD speak about the reproductive economy, and if so, how?
- In which areas of its economic analysis has the EBRD included gender analysis? What does this analysis entail? Are there still areas from which it is excluded?

The findings from this analysis are presented in Chapter 4, which sees how the EBRD's attention to gender issues linked to a wider set of innovations in how the EBRD conceptualises market economies and its own role in ensuring economic and political restructuring.

The final set of documents I analysed were the texts that the EBRD has produced specifically on gender issues. The main aims of this analysis was to identify the kind of expertise that the Bank produces on gender issues, the evidence and sources that are used to back this up, and what this means in terms of the gender inequalities that the EBRD sets out to address – and which ones it excludes. At the time of research, the EBRD's published material on gender equality was relatively small and included of two main policies, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the Strategic Gender Initiative (SGI), the 2008 and 2010 Environmental and Social Policies, as well as a number of best practice guidelines, matrices for gender impact assessments and 'toolkits'. To supplement this material, the analysis also included speeches, press statements and conference presentations by Bank staff that are available online.

#### *Interviews at the EBRD's Headquarters in London*

From March to August 2013, I interviewed a total of 27 current and former members of EBRD staff over 24 separate occasions. These interviewees were

recruited to gain an understanding of how gender equality had been included as a policy area in the EBRD and to get a sense of the broader institutional debates that related the agenda. The first group of interviewees comprised of the key individuals involved in developing policy and projects on gender issues from within the EBRD's Gender Team, the Environment and Sustainability Department and the Small Business Team. The second group were those involved with shaping the economic agenda of the Bank, including members of the Board of Directors, research economists in the Office of the Chief Economists and banking staff.

The interviewees were identified through the preliminary document analysis discussed above, or by recommendation from another interviewee. The main method for approaching and recruiting interviewees was via email or by means of introduction by other interviewees. A majority of these interviewees were currently employed at the EBRD's headquarters in London and they were interviewed on the premises. A smaller number of interviews were conducted over Skype or phone, especially those with former employees of the Bank or those currently positioned abroad. A full list of interviewees is provided as Appendix 1.

The aim of these interviews was to gain an understanding of how the EBRD works to produce its strategies and practices around economic restructuring, how gender equality policies have been developed through institutional processes, and how these two areas come together. The interviews focussed on identifying the professional characteristics of the EBRD's staff, their daily work and careers at the Bank, their views on the Bank's mandate and strategies, and their perspectives and experiences of working on gender equality through the parameters of the EBRD. The interviews were semi-structured, they were primarily conducted at the EBRD's premises, and a majority were recorded and transcribed and in other instances detailed notes were taken.

There were a number of challenges in relation to these interviews. The feminist methodological literature has often discussed interviews as a potential way to give voice to subaltern groups, and provide a space for marginalised voices and experiences (DeVault and Gross 2007). However, in contrast, my interviewees were elites and I was interested in them terms of how they through their professional roles reproduce relations of power. Most of my interviewees were highly educated, had significant experience of working for international institutions and were often older than I was at the time. I only met with each interviewee once hence it was at times difficult to establish rapport and move beyond the ‘official account’ of what the interviewee was doing for the EBRD. In addition, interviewees at the EBRD regularly inquired about and challenged the rationale behind my research. As I discuss in Chapter 3, staff at the EBRD are often cautious or critical of academic research – especially as it is perceived to fail to adequately understand what the EBRD is about and how it operates. However, given the aims of my interviews, these two issues contributed with interesting data.

Nonetheless, for the most part, I found my interviewees at the EBRD to be welcoming, relatively open, and able to discuss their views and experiences in a relatively frank manner. Interviewees regularly expressed quite critical views on the Bank’s efforts in relation to gender equality. In this respect, a major ethical concern for me was engendered by the position of gender advocates within the EBRD’s organisational hierarchy. As I show in Chapter 3, only a very small number of staff work on gender equality in the EBRD and the work done by these individuals have often faced resistance from colleagues and management. To not further compromise their position, these individuals (and all other interviewees) have approved all quotes that I use in this thesis. Furthermore, the critique of the EBRD’s strategies on gender equality I make in this thesis is based upon how institutional politics and processes constrain the opportunities available for these internal gender advocates. As such, I endeavour to show how the divergences between their personal knowledge, opinions and commitments and the kinds of gender knowledge they produce in their work for the EBRD.

Some of the challenges were also practical and resulting from how staff at the EBRD are bound to a high degree of client confidentiality. This means that they were rarely able to comment or provide Bank documentation of projects in which the Bank had invested. Wherever possible, this kind of information was instead attained from relevant clients and partners to the EBRD. In addition, a significant proportion of this group of interviewees requested not to have quotes attributed to them and that potentially sensitive information would be anonymous. In response to these requests, interview material is in the main body of the thesis at times cited anonymously or woven into the general structure of the text. Quotes in this thesis are only made with attribution when the interviewee has agreed to this.

### *Field research*

The third stage of the research process took place in the cities of Istanbul and Ankara between April and July 2013. The aim of the field research was to explore how the EBRD brings its commitment to gender equality into practice in the context of its operations in Turkey.

Turkey was purposefully selected as a country case study that would facilitate the analysis of policy implementation and gender-related institutional change at the EBRD. Initial research suggested that policy and rhetoric on gender issues had become more important to the EBRD as it started to operate outside of its historical region, with Turkey and North Africa highlighted as targets for the EBRD's gender related efforts (EBRD 2013a). At the time of this research Turkey in particular had begun to emerge as a hub for the EBRD's activities in relation to gender issues, with the Bank not only piloting new innovations and programmes in the country but also hosting a number of high profile events about women's economic empowerment. In practical terms, this meant that the research could cover multiple aspects of the EBRD's agenda around gender issues.

Concomitant to this, being the first country that the EBRD expanded into (in 2008) Turkey has been portrayed by the Bank as a ‘test case’ for its operational model and as opportune territory for experimentation and innovation in the new region (EBRD 2013b, 23). As will be discussed at length in Chapter 4, the EBRD’s geographical expansion took place against a context of internal debates that concerned the EBRD’s mandate and role. In particular, through its southward expansion the EBRD’s role was arguably redefined to address a broader set of governance issues, especially unemployment and labour force participation, which go beyond its long-standing commitment to structural reforms. For this reason, the EBRD’s operations in Turkey provide a valuable lens through which the thesis can address policy and practice on gender issues in relation to broader shifts in how the Bank theorises, and works to promote market economies. Beyond such symbolic importance, Turkey attracts a significant proportion of EBRD investment having emerged rapidly as a major single country recipient. In 2012 Turkey attracted 12 per cent of the EBRD’s total annual business volume, exceeded only by the 30 per cent attracted by Russia (EBRD 2013c, 2). In 2014 Turkey supplanted Russia as the main recipient country of the EBRD, with new investments totalling €1.4 billion. The size of EBRD investment in the country is reflected also in an unusually large presence of EBRD staff in three resident offices in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep.

I conducted a total of 33 semi-structured with staff at the EBRD’s resident offices, the partners which the Bank works with during implementation of gender projects (such as consultants, bilateral and multilateral donors, government departments and non-governmental organisations), and with staff and management from companies in which the EBRD sought to attach gender equality programmes to their loans. I also held two focus groups with employees at IDO Ferries – one of the companies in which the EBRD’s gender team have sought to promote equal opportunities.

The interviewees were recruited through a similar strategy of emailing and snowballing as in London. A majority of the interviews were conducted at the

workplace of the interviewee, and held in English, which was most commonly spoken fluently by the interviewee. Translators were used only during the focus groups. In addition to these organised interviews, I also attended the EBRD's Annual Business Meeting in Istanbul in order to generate some wider observations. In most instances, the interviewees agreed to be recorded and the interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically.

The first set of interviews were conducted with staff at the EBRD's resident offices, including senior management and employees who were currently, or had previously, worked directly on the EBRD's gender-related projects were interviewed. These interviews explored how these individuals had made sense of the EBRD's agenda on gender equality, how they had practically gone about working on it, and what this meant in terms of their day to day work.

The second group of interviewees were recruited from the EBRD project partners and clients. These interviews examined their views and roles in the processes of designing and implementing the EBRD's gender equality projects. This group of interviewees included two consultants working on the EBRD's projects with financial institutions, one co-ordinator for an EBRD-sponsored educational programme for women entrepreneurs and one solicitor who provided legal advice for the Garanti Bank project. No consultants working on the IDO Ferries project responded to interview requests. Finally, representatives from the borrowing parties were interviewed. The highest level of access was granted by IDO Ferries, at which the General Director and Human Resources Manager were interviewed.

In addition two focus groups were held with employees at IDO. In relation to Garanti Bank and the Eurasia tunnel loans, one representative of each borrowing company was interviewed. In addition, two focus groups were held with staff and management at IDO Ferries were held to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of the EBRD's equal opportunities agenda. In spite of repeated attempts, a similar level of access could not be gained within

the Garanti Bank project hence no interviews were conducted with the women entrepreneurs who had been the recipients of credit lines.

The final set of interviews aimed to explore the EBRD's relationship with other actors working on women's economic participation in Turkey. The potential interviewees for this component of the research were identified through extensive background research. Although several such major actors were identified and interviewed, no claim can be made that this discussion is complete or exhaustive as staff within the EBRD continue to make new linkages to an already complex governance landscape. To examine the EBRD's relationship with the EU interviews were conducted with key counterparts at the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey in Ankara and within the EU Co-ordination Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. These interviews also inform the discussion of the EBRD's Women in Business Programme in Turkey in Chapter 6. In addition, I interviewed representatives from feminist NGOs, government departments working on gender issues, and feminist academics and activists to get a wider sense of the EBRD's role in Turkey.

Carrying out the field research meant a new series of challenges and issues, related particularly to the different positions and backgrounds of the interviewer and the interviewee. Being an outsider, I often felt that EBRD staff and representatives from the Bank's borrowing companies sought to convey a particular agenda to me, especially that they were making progress in the specific area that I am interested in. To try to move beyond such official accounts and to facilitate a more honest and open discussion with clients I had to particularly stress that I am independent from the EBRD and that the focus of my research lied on the process rather than results of the interaction between the EBRD and the company. It is difficult to assess how such the power dynamics influenced the interview situations during the field research. Within many of the interviews, there are clear elements of the interviewee telling the official story in combination with other reflections and narratives. However, even such 'official' data is useful to this thesis, especially in

discussing how gender issues are understood and articulated by the EBRD and its partners. Wherever possible, I have also sought to use multiple interviews and additional material to back up my arguments.

Arguably the most difficult dimension of this research project has been the analysis of the EBRD's approach to promoting gender equality. Throughout this thesis, this is done through a combination of theoretical and empirical work. However, it should be clearly noted that the research project does not cover the impacts on the EBRD's projects on gendered power relations at the micro-level of the individual, household or community. The main access I was able to gain at this level was to employees at IDO Ferries where I held two focus groups with employees to hear about their experiences of working for the company. The use of translators during these groups proved to be a major challenge because I was not able to immediately follow the often-lively discussion among the participants or probe the central themes further with follow-up questions. Although it is not possible to draw major theoretical conclusions about the effects of the EBRD's programmes on gender relations on the basis of these groups, the material is used in Chapter 5 to highlight some of the issues that surrounds the EBRD's efforts to increase the number of women working in particular sectors of the economy.

### **Thesis outline**

Beyond this introductory chapter, the thesis is organised into six chapters each of which covers a key aspect of the research and contributes toward answering the main research questions.

**Chapter 2** constructs the theoretical and analytical approach that will be employed throughout the thesis. The chapter begins by setting out the foundation for such an approach by considering how the concepts of gender and gender inequality have been treated within feminist political economy, and uses this to argue for an analysis that considers the dynamic between the implicit and explicit ways in which the institutions of neoliberal governance



contribute to the construction of gender norms, ideas and relations. The chapter then offers a critical review of how gender equality governance has been addressed in recent research in feminist IPE, using this as a basis for constructing an analytical framework that interrogates three key processes: economic theory and innovation, policy development, and policy implementation.

**Chapter 3** explores the processes through which gender equality was incorporated as an issue area at the EBRD, with a focus on how gender advocates negotiated their institutional environment in the process of designing policies on gender. The chapter argues that discursively aligning gender equality with the EBRD's transition mandate has been a key part of feminist strategy within the Bank, and highlights how the staff tasked with addressing gender issues have become increasingly successful in doing so. The chapter moves on to suggest that a major implication of this strategy has been that gender mainstreaming has not meant the transformation of the norms that inform EBRD policy-making but instead has led to this agenda being subsumed by the EBRD's market-making objectives and processes.

**Chapter 4** continues the analysis of gender-related institutional change at the EBRD, focussing on the dynamic between gender analysis and wider shifts in how the EBRD works to promote market economies. The chapter identifies the 2008 financial crisis and the EBRD's subsequent expansion to Turkey and North Africa as engendering a process of substantial institutional reform and revision. As a part of this process, gender equality issues garnered a more central role in the EBRD's economic analysis. However, throughout the chapter it is consistently argued that the EBRD remains committed to a similar framework of competitiveness promotion and marketisation as before the crisis. In turn, it is seen how gender analysis and economic inclusion have been added into the kinds of expertise and strategies which the EBRD offers to extend market relations within its new region.

**Chapter 5** begins the exploration of how the EBRD implements its policies in relation to gender based upon the field research. The first part situates the Bank's efforts in relation to gender equality in the context of the EBRD's strategies to promote economic restructuring in Turkey, identifying how gender is incorporated within its agenda to advance the private sector share of key parts of the economy. The main body of the chapter examines in detail how gender concerns are being mainstreamed within the EBRD's operations, highlighting the absence of institutional incentives for incorporating gender equality as an objective in Bank lending and discussing the meaning that such agendas take on in the context of two of the EBRD's flagship projects, Garanti Bank and IDO Ferries. Overall the chapter highlights how the objective of gender equality is diluted by the EBRD and its partners, and instrumentalised to support profit-oriented activities.

**Chapter 6** extends the analysis of how gender features in the EBRD's operations and activities in Turkey with a focus on the Bank's role within wider governance structures that work to promote women's economic participation. The chapter begins by highlighting the rise of networks composed of international organisations, parts of the state and business actors that champion women's employment and entrepreneurship as a means to promoting economic competitiveness. It is suggested that these networks assign the private sector a key roles in shaping this agenda; hence often advocating solutions that are compatible with neoliberal economic models. By providing a rich empirical picture of how the EBRD works within partnerships to advance entrepreneurship and flexible working patterns, the chapter both offers a critique of these strategies and highlights the mechanisms through which they are formed (and transformed).

**Chapter 7** brings together the findings and arguments made in the thesis in order to answer the research questions and to formulate important insights about how gender in neoliberal governance. In particular, the chapter argues that feminist insights that are critical to the promotion of gender equality

remain marginalised within the governance structures to which the EBRD contributes.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Analysing gender politics in neoliberal governance**

The previous chapter established the focus and aims of this thesis in terms of conducting a feminist analysis of the EBRD and its role and strategies in the governance of gender equality. A central concern of this analysis is to explore gender-related institutional change at the EBRD with a focus on how its agenda around gender equality implies wider shifts in the ways in which the Bank understands and works to promote free market economies. By undertaking original analytical and empirical work, the thesis is intended to speak to a series of broader issues and debates around how gender relations are being governed in the global political economy, especially within the context of neoliberal political and economic transformations.

The aim of this chapter is to construct the theoretical and analytical framework that will inform this analysis. The first part sets out the conceptual and theoretical foundation for the approach by defining the core concepts of gender and neoliberal governance and discussing how they will be operationalized within the research. By drawing upon insights from research in feminist political economy, especially gendered analyses of development and globalisation and Feminist Economics, the section proposes that engaging gender as a central analytical concept allows for an analysis that begins by identifying the gendered underpinnings of governance per se. In turn, recognising how gender biases and norms are reproduced by the economic theories and policies advanced by governance actors offer a valuable lens through which the gender equality policy and projects advanced by these actors can be addressed. The second part of the chapter examines the literature on how feminist ideas and actors have been incorporated into mainstream governance institutions with a focus on how feminist agendas are being reformed and deployed in the context of economic restructuring. By critically

reviewing this substantive literature, several empirical and theoretical insights that are important to answering the research questions are identified.

The third and final part brings together the findings and arguments of the chapter to construct a multi-dimensional approach that facilitates the analysis of gender politics in neoliberal governance. The approach targets the dynamic between the gender norms and biases that are found within the economic logic that informs governance institutions and processes, and the frameworks and approaches to promoting gender equality. More specifically, it centres upon how ideas and arguments about gender are contested and articulated by actors within three main processes including economic innovation, policy development and policy implementation. Throughout this section, it is further explained and exemplified how the framework will be applied to the analysis of the EBRD in the main empirical chapters of the thesis.

### **Gendered analyses of governance**

Gender analyses of governance are an important starting point for constructing the feminist approach called for in this thesis. The concept of governance refers to the ideas, norms, practices and sanctions through which economic and political life is regulated. In turn, research on global governance has examined how authority is being reconfigured into complex constellations of public and private actors that work across the local, national and international levels, within which the state continues to play important but often redefined roles (Waylen 2004, 559). Research in feminist and critical political economy both tend to foreground and interrogate neoliberalism as the dominant ideology of global governance (Gill 1995; Rai 2004; Bedford and Rai 2010; Griffin 2010). In this sense, both strands of political economy have in common the interest in revealing how the often depoliticised and ostensibly value-neutral analyses and recommendations advanced by governance institutions rely upon specific normative claims and assumptions (Gamble 2014). International financial institutions such as the EBRD are seen to perform the integral function of institutionalising markets on a global scale

and seeking to embed private capital, market values, and policies of deregulation and flexibilisation into countries and societies (Rai 2004, 581; Griffin 2010, 88). Indeed, as pointed out by Rai (2004, 580-581) the very concept of global governance is intrinsically linked to the rise of neoliberalism as the dominant framework for economic policy in Anglo-America in the 1980s and 1990s.

More specifically, economic governance on the global scale has often been underpinned by ideas that originate from Anglo-American academic and policy-making circles and which assert the value of individual freedom as the central guiding principle for the efficient organisation of the economy (Harvey 2005, 5-9). In other words, at the centre of neoliberal governance is the idea that “individualised, market-based competition is superior to other modes of organisation” (Mudge 2008, 706-708). In this respect, neoliberal theory and practice centre upon principles such as freedom of choice, property rights and security to engage in market exchange, minimal government and free trade (Larner 2000, 6; Harvey 2005, 2).

Feminist analyses are distinct from most other strands of theorising because they use gender as a central concept for the analysis of global governance (Parpart 2004, 1-2). Feminist scholarship pays attention “to the way in which both the processes and institutions of governance are gendered and result in an institutional, discursive and structural bias in favour of men that leads global governance to take particular forms, which affect different sections of society unequally” (Rai and Waylen 2008, 2-3). This section unpacks these broad statements and discusses how the concepts of gender and neoliberal governance can be made analytically useful in terms of this research. It does so in three steps, using conceptual and empirical insights from feminist and critical political economy to establish the theoretical foundation for the perspective and approach taken in this thesis.

### *Gender inequality in feminist political economy*

This study is interested in the social construction of gender, referring to the processes through which ideas and norms related to masculinity (and men) and femininity (and women) are constituted discursively and materially (Rai and Waylen 2008, 3; Scott 1986, 1054). More specifically, the analytical approach is informed by Griffin's (2009, 113) argument that the World Bank is implicated in the construction of gender norms and identities in at least two ways: through the economic logic that informs and is reproduced in the World Bank's operations and; through the policies and rhetoric through which the World Bank works to reform gender relations and identities. This section concentrates primarily on the former, more implicit, gendered dimension of neoliberal governance. The next substantive part of the chapter discusses agendas with an explicit focus on gender at length.

Research in feminist political economy provides several theoretical and empirical insights that are useful in conducting the kind of combined analysis of gender in neoliberal governance called for above. Feminist political economy refers to approaches that:

“Critiques mainstream economic theory and policy, suggests alternative modes of analysis that put centre stage both productive and reproductive economies, and develops methodologies to take forward this critique and analysis.” (Rai 2013, 264)

This large and diverse body of research has largely evolved out of Marxist and socialist feminist theorising (materialist feminism) across the disciplines of development and Economics (Rai and Waylen 2014, 2-6). As such, contemporary analyses owe significant intellectual debt to how materialist feminist scholars have reconceptualised economic relationships to highlight the central role of women's unpaid labour in the household within capitalist

development (Laslett and Brenner 1989). As argued by Steans, materialist feminist insights remain valuable for a feminist analysis of governance:

“In constructing a feminist perspective of governance – one must first address the embedded nature of gender relations. Gender relations are thus ‘embedded’ through the gender division of labour that underpins the distinction between the public world of work in the national and global economy and the private realm of the home, family and social reproduction.” (Steans 2002, 88)

These more structuralist analyses theorise gender inequality in terms of how labour is organised between people and parts of the economy. In particular, they stress how the devaluation of the labour involved in care and nurturing that is often undertaken by women in the household and community is a major source of women’s inequality (Pearson 2000; Wood 1995; Frederici 2004). Rather than seeing such inequalities as extrinsic to economic development, as originating in culture or attitudes, materialist feminist scholars have argued that the exploitation of women’s labour in the private realm is an integral part of such processes as it allows for example the sustaining of the labour force at a low cost (Roberts and Soederberg 2012, 955). Although this thesis adopts a more eclectic approach to gender analysis, it takes from these analyses the core insight that a feminist perspective on governance needs to address how such institutions are implicated in the reproduction of gender relations in terms of how they affect the gender division of labour.

Theoretical and empirical work on social reproduction is particularly valuable for a feminist analysis of neoliberal governance. Originating in research on the gender division of labour, the concept of social reproduction is commonly defined to encompass the sexual and emotional labour that is involved in biological reproduction, the unpaid labour that provides care and social provisioning for the household and community and, the institutions and arrangements through which societies are reproduced over time (Laslett and



Brenner 1989, 382-383; Bakker 2007, 541; Rai 2013, 266-267). Since the late 2000s, social reproduction has been advantageously revitalised within feminist political economy to illuminate the impacts of neoliberal restructuring across the public and private spheres (Bakker 2007; Bakker and Silvey 2008; Ferguson 2010; Steans and Tepe 2010).

An important theme in feminist analysis concerns how neoliberal restructuring has afforded shifts in the organisation and provision for social reproduction between different actors and spheres of the economy. Cut backs in public expenditure combined with the marketisation of goods and services has been argued to afford a 'reprivatisation' of socially reproductive labour into the household, with a lesser degree of provision and responsibility by the state (Bakker and Silvey 2008, 3; Bakker and Gill 2003, 33-35). As seen in Chapter 1, scholars have highlighted the increased burden on women to undertake unpaid care work to compensate for the retrenchment of publicly provided and affordable services (Hoskyns and Rai 2007; Razavi 2007). In turn, socially reproductive work itself has become increasingly marketised; with private sector providers or poor and/or migrant women selling care services to those who can afford it (Luxton and Bezanson 2006; Bakker 2003). Although it is not within the scope of this research to examine the immediate impacts of the EBRD's economic policies, it employs the lens of social reproduction to examine the interrelation between the EBRD's economic policies and its agenda to promote gender equality.

Feminist perspectives on global governance have benefited from wider developments within feminist theorising. Critiques of Western feminism by black and postcolonial feminist scholars saw that perspectives such as materialist feminism failed to adequately conceptualise difference among women (hooks 1982; Crenshaw 1989), often leading to overly structuralist portrayals of women as victims in developing and post-communist countries (Mohanty 1988). The impact of such criticisms on gendered analyses of governance and globalisation has been significant, prompting a shift toward intersectional analyses which address how inequalities are being reconstructed

along the lines of gender, race and class (Bedford and Rai 2010; Elias 2004). For example, studies of women's incorporation in the labour force have highlighted how middle-class women in Western Europe and North America have entered formal employment, with the gap in terms of socially reproductive labour in the household being compensated for by the work of migrant women from developing and middle-income countries (Perrons 2004).

The concepts of sex and gender have been further developed within poststructuralist feminist analyses. By problematising the linkages between physical sex and gender, feminist scholars have foregrounded how governance institutions engage in gendered discourses that contribute to construct bodies, identities and behaviours according to dominant norms (Griffin 2009). For example, Bedford (2009a) shows how the World Bank's gender policies aim to reorganise partnerships between women and men. Framing men through racialised and post-colonial stereotypes, the World Bank seeks to 're-socialise' men to undertake more household work as their wives and partners go to work (Bedford 2009a, 99-126). Although this chapter consistently argues for an approach that builds upon the more materialist feminist strand of political economy, it engages a more pluralistic approach to gender analysis. In particular, as will be seen below, it takes up the concern with examining how categories of sex and gender feature within the EBRD's development interventions.

### *Feminist Economics*

Emerging in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Feminist Economics is an important field of research that engages gender analysis to transform the discipline and practice of mainstream economics (Waylen 1997, 206). In doing so, feminist economists seek to construct alternative models for economic theory and policy, which are built upon the recognition that the economy is embedded within social life and should place the provisioning of human life and advancement of values such as equality above economic gains

(Ferber and Nelson 2003). The neoclassical economic theories that inform the models for economic development and reform advanced by international financial institutions have been a major target of critique from feminist economists. Building upon feminist critiques of science, feminist economists have challenged the ways in which economic research advances claims to be scientific and value-neutral and highlighted how the discipline is permeated by masculine biases (Harding 1995; Beneria 1999; Ferber and Nelson 2003).

Economic knowledge elevates activities, identities and behaviour associated with men and masculinity such as paid work, rationality, competitiveness to become the norm whilst subjugating, and rendering invisible, those associated with women and femininity such as unpaid work, emotion, reciprocity and care (Waylen 1997, 207). For example, seminal feminist critiques have targeted the notion of rational individuals that underpins neoclassical economics. Rebuking the notion of individuals operating freely upon exogenously given preferences to maximise their utility in the market, feminist economists have argued that social relationships and norms influence what is understood as rational behaviours, highlighting for example how norms of reciprocity and care shape unpaid labour in the household (England 2003; Grapard 1995).

Feminist economists have provided extensive critiques of markets within neoliberal governance. As suggested above, neoliberal theory and practice position competition within free markets with minimal interruptions from the state has prevailed as the optimal route to achieve both economic prosperity and individual freedom (Rai 2004, 581). However feminist critiques of free market economics, especially as seen in the structural adjustment packages advanced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s and 1990s, highlighted how market restructuring was based upon inadequate conceptualisations of the household and social reproduction (Sparr 1994; Bakker 1994; Elson 1994; Beneria 2003). By being largely blind to how gendered power relations structure women's work across the public and private spheres, cut backs in social policies and employment purported to an

intensification of women's domestic work (Beneria 2003, 50-52). The ways in which the household and socially reproductive labour is included, and excluded, in development policy continues to be a major topic in feminist research (Waring 1988; Hoskyns and Rai 2007; Elson 2010; Razavi 2013; Bergeron 2011). It is also a central concern of the analysis in this thesis

Feminist research on labour markets offer insights that are valuable to how this thesis can address the EBRD's approach to promoting gender equality, especially its agenda around women's economic participation. As argued by Elson (1999), labour markets are not disembedded from society and culture but need to be understood as socially embedded institutions. This means that women's opportunities in labour markets are shaped through their responsibilities in other parts of the economy, such as unpaid work in the household. In consequence, the kinds of employment and rewards available to women in the formal labour market are shaped by existing norms and ideas about what constitutes appropriate work for women (Elson 1999, 611-612). The ways in which staff at the EBRD engage with, or seek to transform, the gendered construction of labour markets is a key concern in the empirical analysis of the EBRD's activities in Turkey.

### *Defining and operationalising the concept of neoliberal governance*

The concept of neoliberal governance is notoriously difficult to define and to make analytically useful (Mudge 2008). Chapter 1 took the first step in defining and explaining the EBRD's brand of neoliberalism, by focussing on the history and origins of the Bank itself. However, with neoliberalism being so widely used in political economy research, an important concern is how to avoid the reification of neoliberalism as something that explains all kinds of processes and outcomes (Prügl 2015, 616). As argued by Gamble

“What has to be avoided, however, is a tendency to reify neo-liberalism and to treat it as a phenomenon which manifests itself everywhere and in everything. This kind of reductionism

is not very useful, and it is also politically paralysing.”  
(Gamble 2001, 124)

Feminist analyses of neoliberal globalisation and governance have highlighted the importance of accounting for feminist agency. In contrast to most research in critical political economy, feminist scholars have identified how neoliberalism has opened up new opportunities for feminist agendas to be incorporated into mainstream governance institutions and analysed how such opportunities have both furthered and transformed feminist causes (Squires 2007, 8; Waylen 2006, 151). Not least because such a focus contributes to an account that can recognise the potential of progressive change in neoliberal governance, addressing feminist agency is a central concern within the approach adopted in this thesis.

In order to make the concept of neoliberalism analytically useful, it is helpful to organise it into its different facets (Prügl 2015, 616-617). Larner's (2000, 7-14) survey of research in political economy established three main ways in which neoliberalism has been conceptualised: as the economic policy framework that supplanted Keynesian welfarism in favour of free market economics, as an ideological transformation that shifted power from labour to capital, and as a new form of governmentality that is based upon individuals governing themselves and allowing for government from afar. Rather than privileging one of these aspects, Mudge (2008) proposes that neoliberalism can be understood through three facets: as economic theory and research; as policies or reforms aimed at promoting competition and reorganising the state to become a facilitator of market exchange; and as a set of politics through which market forces are inserted into political life and taking on increased roles in providing for public goods. Although the approach constructed below does not strictly follow Mudge's typology, it is inspired by this in the sense that it structures the analysis of the empirical material in this thesis into the areas of economic theory, policy and political practices and processes. In turn, the remainder of the chapter uses this as a device to guide its discussion of feminist analyses of neoliberal governance.

The perspective in this thesis builds upon the insight that neoliberal theory and practice are context-specific and evolving. As argued by Prügl (2015, 616), “neoliberalism as a doctrine comes in multiple forms and as a project has shown a tremendous capacity to transform and adapt.” This suggestion is important in relation both to the EBRD and the countries in which it operates. Regarding the EBRD itself, Chapter 1 discussed how the Bank was founded upon and organised around a specific notion of post-communist transition that derived from the liberal optimism of the immediate aftermath of the Cold War combined with how the US and UK championed a free market approach to economic recovery in East and Central Europe (Weber 1994). However, a substantive strand of research has examined how neoliberalism has been reformulated by international financial institutions since the early 2000s into more interventionist strategies that focus on national and sub-national institutions and social dynamics (Craig and Porter 2006; Ruckert 2010). From this perspective, this thesis aims to trace how the EBRD’s brand of neoliberalism has been developed by actors working for the Bank over time and how this relates to the Bank’s interest and strategies for promoting gender equality.

Turning to the EBRD’s wider role in advocating policies such as liberalisation and privatisation within its region, these reforms unfold in variegated forms and are shaped also by national and local political structures. Studies of economic restructuring in the US and UK (Peck and Tickell 2002) as well as in Central and Eastern Europe (Bohle and Greskovits 2007) have demonstrated how the trajectory and outcomes of neoliberal reforms have been divergent. This insight is highly relevant to feminist analyses of economic restructuring, and valuable to how insights from the feminist literature on globalisation are used to contextualise and discuss the EBRD’s strategies to promote gender equality in this thesis. Empirical research on social reproduction has foregrounded the importance of paying attention to the historical and institutional contexts in which neoliberal reforms are unfolding. Crucially, while the re-privatisation into the household hypothesis has

garnered support in research on countries with a large welfare state the impacts of restructuring on social reproduction take on different modalities in countries with less state provision (Luxton and Bezanson 2006; Kunz 2010; Ferguson 2010).

The chapter has now identified several of the theoretical and conceptual insights that are key to a feminist analysis of governance. Most importantly, it has been demonstrated that the study of the EBRD needs to begin by examining the gender biases that are embedded within the economic theories and policies (economic logic) that inform and are reproduced by the Bank. Informed by feminist political economy, social reproduction provides the core concept through which the analysis of gender-related institutional change and the EBRD's role in gender equality governance can proceed. The section further highlighted methodological insights that are important to the perspective taken in this thesis especially in terms of an analysis that is open to the potential of progressive gender politics in neoliberal governance. More specifically, doing so entails a focus on feminist agency within governance and careful attention to the institutional and national contexts in which neoliberal policy agendas are implemented.

### **Policy and practice on gender equality in neoliberal governance**

The chapter now turns to an analysis of how agendas and concerns that originate in feminist movements have been incorporated into neoliberal governance. With the previous section having discussed neoliberalism as economic theory at length, the focus here is principally on neoliberalism as a policy framework and a set of political processes that shift power toward private capital. In order to provide the rich analysis of neoliberal governance that will facilitate answering the questions about policy development and implementation asked in this research project, the section discusses research from a variety of feminist theoretical traditions, especially informed by materialist, poststructuralist, postcolonial and institutionalist perspectives, and that has been conducted across the disciplines of development studies and

global political economy. Although there are important internal differences, it is the contention here that feminist analyses of global governance benefits from this internal diversity because engaging theoretical and empirical insights from multiple traditions allow for richer analyses of specific problematiques (see Rai and Waylen 2008, 5). Taken together, the critical feminist approach developed in this thesis takes up Parpart's (2004, 1-2) argument that a feminist analysis needs to be pluralistic and draw upon both discursive and materialist insights about how gender operates in governance.

A number of shared concerns and ideas nonetheless characterise the kind of critical feminist perspective called for in this thesis. As argued above, feminist research proceeds from the view that gender relations are socially and historically constructed (True 2014, 329). In conducting gendered analyses of governance, feminist scholars are interested in identifying power relations and examine how they shape the practices of governing (Parpart 2004, 2). At the first instance, this means paying attention to the patterns of power and hierarchy within institutions themselves (Acker 1990). By doing so, feminist scholars have highlighted the masculine nature of development bureaucracies which are not only predominantly occupied by men but also work in ways that privilege ideas and norms that are associated with masculinity (Goetz 1997). As will be discussed below, most immediately important in this research is the interrogation of internal hierarchies and divides between different categories of staff, and how this is organised by the overarching economic logic that informs an institution, affect the opportunities for making progressive changes (Griffin 2009, 126ff).

Next, and in relation to this, the critical feminist approach developed in this thesis is interested in examining how meanings around gender equality and inequality are negotiated or struggled over, by whom, under what circumstances and to what purposes. The analyses discussed in this section often incorporate and engage with conceptual and empirical work from feminist political economy on gender inequalities in the global political economy (True 2014; Rai and Waylen 2008). In doing so, they provide



important sources of critique and counterpoints to the liberal feminist approaches to gender issues that have tended to dominate gender policymaking in mainstream governance institutions since the 1970s and the Women in Development paradigm (Jaquette and Staudt 2006, 20; Razavi and Miller 1995a, 3). Although liberal feminism is a rich and diverse theoretical tradition, it has left a particularly important legacy on contemporary forms of governance for gender equality in terms of the idea that gender equality is essentially compatible with further market development (Elson 2009, 39; 2012, 179). This is not to suggest that there is unified view among the more critical perspectives discussed below of what gender equality means or how it can be best achieved. Rather, the broader argument that is being advanced here is that the processes through policies on gender issues are being made are political because they privilege particular actors and ideas whilst excluding others (Verloo and Lombardo 2007, 22-23).

#### *Feminist agency and strategy in the policy-making process*

Questions about agency are central to feminist analyses of governance. In one respect, a focus on agency can help identify the routes that are more effective in transforming governance institutions to promote feminist goals whilst also recognising how such goals and objectives are often negotiated and revised within encounters between feminist actors and mainstream governance bureaucracies (Çağlar *et al.* 2013). Concomitant to this, and as argued in Chapter 1, globalisation has also afforded shifts in feminist organising *per se*; with actors that appear far removed from feminist grassroots organising taking on new powers in defining the agenda around gender equality (Squires 2007; Prügl 2013; True 2003b). Taken together, these issues are integral to exploring and analysing the first research question about how and why the EBRD has developed an approach to addressing gender issues.

In conducting this analysis, it is helpful to conceive of the processes through which policies on gender issues are being designed as ones in which concepts and claims about gender equality are being defined. As argued by Ferguson

(2015, 385-386), the process of policy development often includes repeated discussions between the staff members who are assigned the task of promoting gender equality (gender advocates) and institutional representatives over what kinds of language and claims are deemed acceptable and appropriate within specific institutional contexts.

The degree to which institutions are open to incorporating more radical feminist agendas within their policy frameworks has been found to vary significantly depending on their mandate and role (Razavi and Miller 1995b, ii; Razavi 1997). Institutions with economic mandates have been identified as particularly resistant to more radical feminist ideas and arguments, not the least because of intellectual and methodological differences between the economic frameworks through which the norms, priorities and protocols of the institution have been defined and the development of gender analysis from feminist activism and interdisciplinary work (Bedford 2009a; True and Parisi 2013; Elgström 2000; Moser and Moser 2005).

The position occupied by staff units or individuals tasked with developing policies on gender issues within the structure of an organisation can also affect the efficacy of their agenda. Research has shown that organisations in which gender policy units are incorporated at an early point in their history (Chappell 2008) and where internal gender advocates have strong networks with feminist activists outside of the organisation (Razavi and Miller 1995b) are more likely to be responsive to feminist demands. In contrast institutional resistance to gender advocacy, manifest for example in providing insufficient resources and isolating such policy units from the central activities of the organisation, has been widely identified as a reason for why policies such as gender mainstreaming become derailed or rendered meaningless (True and Parisi 2013; Elgström 2000; Moser and Moser 2005).

How gender policy units are positioned within the institutional hierarchy may also influence the ability of gender advocates to negotiate institutional constraints and imperatives. For example, Bedford (2009a, 44ff) shows how

gender advocates by being employed as consultants on specific projects have little leverage in negotiating the demand to frame gender equality in the World Bank's preferred language of 'Smart Economics'.

The gender advocates working within governance institutions are nonetheless themselves a source of contention among feminist scholars. As argued in Chapter 1 although feminist scholars have welcomed the increased attention to gender issues in global governance, they have raised important concerns about how the agenda has become the domain of a small elite of well-educated individuals who work across multiple institutions (Prügl 2013, 57; Squires 2007, 2-3). This 'cadre of international gender experts' has been staunchly criticised for the depoliticisation of feminist ideas, in which radical agendas are transformed to align with neoliberal governmental purposes (Kantola and Squires 2012). As will be returned to below, gender experts have been widely criticised for turning gender analysis into a technocratic set of tools and processes through which power can be exercised to support broader political and economic agendas (Prügl 2013, 57-58; Desai 2005; Mannell 2012).

The discursive strategies pursued by gender advocates warrant attention in terms of what is being gained, and what is perhaps being lost, as they promote gender equality as a cause. It has been widely established that gender advocates are more likely to make their voices heard if they frame their claims so that they match both the language and wider priorities of the institution (True 2008; Çağlar 2013; Razavi 1997). In responding to shifts in the wider political climate in the 1980s, and the prevalent understanding of development as economic growth, a principal strategy for gender advocates working within development institutions has over the last three decades been the use of economic arguments to motivate why gender equality is an important and relevant objective (Razavi 1997, 1113). By the late 2000s, efficiency arguments at the World Bank coalesced into the widely spread 'Smart Economics' approach; in which investing in women and girls is argued to have a series of positive developmental impacts on families, communities and

the economy at large (World Bank 2006; Roberts 2014). Next, it will be seen how although economic arguments have helped feminist agendas to gain traction across governance circles, they have garnered sustained criticism from feminist scholars on the basis of their often reductionist and essentialist depictions of women (Roberts 2014; Chant 2012, 200-202).

### *Women and gender mainstreaming in economic development*

Categories and concepts around women and empowerment as they appear in development policy have been widely problematized in feminist research. Research in feminist political economy has particularly critiqued and contested the ways in which including women into labour and financial markets has been established as the dominant framing for how gender equality can be achieved within global governance (Parpart *et al.* 2003, 3; Elson 2009, 37; Bergeron 2003, 408). Exemplified through the promotion women as entrepreneurs and managers, widespread governance strategies seek to combine the objective of women's economic and financial empowerment with broader developmental objectives, especially corporate performance and national economic growth (Goetz 1997, 2; Razavi and Miller 1995a, 8; True 2014; Prügl and True 2014; Bexell 2012). As will be seen throughout this thesis, the EBRD's policy framework in relation to gender issues conforms to this kind of rationale.

The responses among critical feminist scholars have highlighted the reductionist analyses of gender inequality that inform market-based strategies for gender equality. As argued by Rankin (2001, 19) development policy tends to portray women in essentialist ways, as ideal entrepreneurial subjects who are able to contribute to neoliberal economic models whilst lifting both themselves and their families out of poverty. In contrast, a large body of empirical research on women's incorporation into markets have highlighted the ways in which economic restructuring intersects with ideas and norms in ways that may both alleviate and exacerbate intersectional inequalities. For example, studies of trade liberalisation has demonstrated how although

women might have benefited in terms of accessing employment, the nature and conditions of employment have become increasingly precarious and informalised (Ferguson 2013, 339; Perrons 2004; Elias 2004; Elson and Pearson 1981). Although it is out of the scope of this thesis to comprehensively explore the immediate impacts of the EBRD's policies on gender relations, this thesis takes from this literature the key concern with examining potential tensions between how neoliberal restructuring has been found to exacerbate certain kinds of gender inequalities and the ways in which governance actors identify and propose to address gender inequalities (Roberts and Soederberg 2012).

A major criticism of gender equality policy in global governance is that feminist agendas have been co-opted as a means to achieve other objectives of economic growth and competitiveness. Feminist scholars have highlighted how initiatives and agendas to promote gender equality, defined primarily as increasing the number of women who are active in the formal economy, are often designed to contribute to neoliberal policy agendas such as labour market flexibility (Lewis and Plomien 2009; Young 2000), export-promotion and trade liberalisation (Bedford 2009a, 102-103) and competitiveness promotion (Elias 2013). Stratigaki's (2004, 32) notion of conceptual co-optation is particularly valuable to the analysis of how ideas and agendas intended to promote gender equality are transformed to support other policy agendas. Focussing on how the concept of reconciliation of work and family life has been engaged in EU gender policy, Stratigaki (2004, 40-44) demonstrates how the concept originally designed to reorganise caring work between men and women was redefined to strategies that seek to enable women to combine paid work and household labour. The redefined concept of reconciliation has been co-opted to the EU's employment agenda and mobilised to increase the number of women in employment by allowing for flexible working patterns (Stratigaki 2004, 44-50). These insights are particularly important to discussing how gender equality features within the EBRD's agenda for structural reforms in Turkey.

Studies of gender mainstreaming are further important to understanding how feminist objectives can be transformed within neoliberal governance. As argued by True and Parisi (2013, 46-47), gender mainstreaming is relatively commonly turned into a technical process that aligns with existing institutional protocols and processes. Integrationist forms of gender mainstreaming, that use gender analysis as an add-on to existing frameworks rather than as a means to transform these, risk diminishing objectives of equality and justice (True and Parisi 2013, 39). The consequences of technocratic approaches to gender mainstreaming that rely on the collection of sex disaggregated statistics and the completion of a set of pre-prepared tools and checklists, have been particularly discussed in terms of failing to address gendered power relations, especially through an inability to account for the complex and dynamic nature of such relations within specific localities (Baden and Goetz 1997, 19-22; Desai 2005; Mannell 2012; Mukhopadhyay 2004; Charlesworth, 2005). The ways in which staff at the EBRD define gender mainstreaming and how they bring the agenda into action is an important theme developed across the empirical chapters of this thesis.

### *Promoting gender equality through the market*

The third area examined within this thesis is about how the EBRD moves from policy to practice in its agenda to promote gender equality. At the first instance, this analysis is interested in examining how staff at the EBRD work to implement the Bank's policies on gender within its country-level operations. Research in gender and development offer a number of important tools and insights for the analysis of policy implementation.

This thesis takes up a key methodological insight from how research on gender and development has demonstrated that the objectives set out in policy documents rarely translate into practice in a straightforward or linear manner. Studies of gender mainstreaming in development have shown how translating policy commitments into practice is often a difficult process involving a multiplicity of different actors who might resist or welcome the agenda

(Moser and Moser 2005; Moser 2005; Rao and Kelleher 2010; True and Parisi 2013). Indeed, as highlighted by Staudt (2003, 101), there can be significant discrepancies between the rhetoric and practice of an institution even when gender mainstreaming is done through an integrationist model. This strand of the literature has further discussed how the meaning of gender mainstreaming can be contested or subverted during policy implementation, not least because this process involves a multiplicity of actors who may work within different cognitive contexts and incentive structures (Kardam 1997, 45-48). Consequently, as argued by Bedford (2009a: xxvii-xxviii), a purely discursive analysis of policy documents may actually say relatively little about how policy implementation unfolds in practice. Rather, the thesis calls for a careful analysis of how the ideas about gender that are expressed in the EBRD's policy and rhetoric are brought into practice, how they might be transformed during these processes, and to what effects.

Research in feminist IPE has contributed with further insights that are important to how this thesis can understand and theorise how gender equality is being advanced through neoliberal governance processes. A growing number of studies have examined the rise of business actors in the governance of gender equality, seeing how since the late 2000s transnational public-private partnerships and multinational corporations have become increasingly influential in shaping policy and practice on gender issues (Roberts 2014; Prügl and True 2014; Bexell 2012; True 2014). As identified by True (2014, 333-335) and Prügl (2015, 619-620), the strategies advanced by neoliberal governance networks for how to promote more equitable gender relations rely upon governance mechanisms and approaches such as benchmarking, the sharing of best practice and 'nudge' approaches that rely upon actors to regulate themselves.

This strand of the literature has offered a number of themes that are important to analysing the strategies advanced by the EBRD and its partners. A major concern of the analysis is the examination of what actors are being positioned as responsible for addressing gender inequalities and ensuring women's

empowerment within these strategies. It has been increasingly widely argued that the shift from policy-making and provision by the state to market actors and strategies for gender equality has in practice afforded new responsibilities for individuals (Rankin 2001). For example, empowering women by giving them access to with mentoring services that will allow them to become entrepreneurs locate the responsibility for challenging inequalities at the level of the individual rather than seeking solutions that collectively tackle inequalities at the level of society and politics (Bexell 2012; Prügl 2015, 620).

Topical analyses in feminist IPE have however tended to focus on the forms through which feminist ideas have been incorporated into neoliberal policies and strategies. In methodological terms, this means that recent research has tended to concentrate on the official policy documents and statements produced by business-partnerships (Bexell 2012; Prügl and True 2014; Roberts 2014; Roberts 2015; Elias 2013). As such, these analyses lack the sensitivity to agency, opportunity and non-linearity that has been called for throughout this chapter. In contrast, a major aim of this research is to examine the *how* of gender politics in neoliberal governance by providing a rich empirical analysis of how actors use and renegotiate the EBRD's institutional protocols during the processes of policy implementation.

### **Three processes of gender politics**

The aim of this section is to synthesise the arguments and insights made in this chapter into an analytical framework. The thesis defines gender politics as the processes through which specific meanings about gender are being constructed among governance actors. This chapter was organised around two dimensions of this concept: the gender biases that are embedded within and reproduced through neoliberal theory and policy and the explicit policies and projects through which institutions seek to promote gender equality. Throughout the chapter, it has been consistently argued that a feminist analysis of gender-related institutional change needs to account for both these dimensions and address how they interrelate. More specifically, investigations



of how gender analysis has been integrated into an institution needs to consider the extent to which this has prompted changes in the area of economic theory and policy. In the second part, the concept of gender politics was expanded in two key ways: first, to entail the immediate struggles over ideas and meanings about gender equality among differently positioned actors within processes of policy development and implementation and second, to consider the broader politico-economic projects within specific understandings about gender are being mobilised.

The chapter further identified a series of methodological principles that are important for a feminist analysis of gender politics in neoliberal governance. In particular, the approach taken in this thesis needs to pay careful attention to questions of agency and power. As argued above, identifying the actors that are involved within the different stages of policy development and implementation is a crucial aspect of understanding where the power to decide what gender inequalities are to be addressed lies. Looking at the EBRD specifically, this means paying attention to how institutional dynamics influenced and were being transformed during the process of policy development in relation to gender issues.

The feminist methodological approach taken in this research also needs to account for difference, contingency and inconsistency. This chapter has returned to the point of how neoliberal governance do not necessarily follow the idealised trajectories described in policy and rhetoric. Most importantly, analysing the trajectory from policy to practice should also aim at the identification of inconsistencies and moments where gender is being contested or made contingent. Sensitising to such moments and grounding the analysis in specific empirical examples is important to counteract the reification of neoliberalism as something that causes particular outcomes. Instead, as argued above, the focus on process and complexity is pivotal for a feminist analysis that interested in progressive change.

This section proposes a framework that analyses the construction of gender within three processes: the first one centres on feminist strategy and agency within the process of developing policies on gender issues; the second considers gender-related institutional change with a focus on economic theory and policy and; the third concentrates on policy implementation and practice related to gender equality. This section outlines each of these processes in more detail, identifying how they relate to the research questions. The section further outlines and provides examples of how the framework will be engaged throughout the thesis to address the EBRD. As will be seen below, each aspect of the framework corresponds broadly with each of the research questions and is thus more central to the analysis in one specific chapter. However, rather than setting the thesis up into a strictly compartmentalised analysis, the framework is intended to logically allow for the development of the key themes of agency, ideas and power across the research.

The framework is purposefully designed to combine the objective of answering the research questions asked in this thesis with the construction of an analytical framework that could be applied in other studies of gender in neoliberal governance. Regarding the latter the framework is informed by the synthesis of pivotal theoretical and methodological insights from critical feminist research, especially taking up the challenge of providing an approach that allows for the integration of insights from feminist political economy research on globalisation into the study of governance (Rai and Waylen 2008, 4-5). In addition, the approach is designed to allow for a comprehensive exploration of how gender analysis is being incorporated and transformed within key facets of neoliberal governance as economic theory, policy and political processes.

#### 1. Policy development

Analysing the ways in which policy agendas related to gender equality have been adopted and adapted within institutions advancing neoliberal paradigms for economic development is an important task for this research. As argued

above, policy development in relation to gender issues can be advantageously conceptualised as processes in which particular meanings and understandings of women and gender emerge. This entails paying careful attention to the kinds of actors that are included within such processes, especially considering the individuals who work as gender advocates and the roles they play within their specific institutional hierarchy. In particular, paying attention to how gender advocates have responded to constraints and imperatives emanating from their institutional setting is an integral part of this analysis, with instrumentalised and market-oriented rationales a prevalent but highly contested form of feminist strategy in neoliberal governance.

In addition, a dynamic analysis of policy development accounts for the interplay between feminist strategy and wider institutional processes. In part, this means accounting for how the mandate, role and structuring of an organisation influence the opportunities for gender advocates to pursue more radical feminist agendas. As seen above, institutional issues can engender forms of resistance that can derail the efficacy of feminist policymaking through for example providing insufficient resources or by marginalising gender policy units (True and Parisi 2013). However, and importantly, feminist strategy in an organisation is unlikely to be static and entail an always coherent and compatible set of arguments. Rather, as argued by Razavi (1997), an analysis of feminist strategizing should also account for how gender advocates respond to shifts within broader institutional and political agendas.

In terms of the empirical content of this research, Chapters 3 and 4 trace the evolution of gender advocacy at the EBRD. Chapter 3 identifies and discusses how the EBRD's concept of transition, as the making of market economies, to a significant extent constrained the work of gender advocates within the Bank. Meanwhile, Chapter 4 highlights how changes in the EBRD's operational environment since the 2008 financial crisis have afforded new moments of opportunity for gender advocates to make their voices heard within the Bank.

## 2. Gender in economic theory and policy

The second question asked by this thesis is about whether and how the inclusion of gender equality as a policy area has changed the ways in which the EBRD understands and promotes economic reform. In order to address this question, the approach builds the core arguments by feminist economists discussed above about how gender biases in economic theory are reproduced through neoliberal economic restructuring (Beneria 1999). In doing so, the analysis conducted in this thesis focuses on the research and conceptual framework through which economists at the EBRD have defined the Bank's role in advancing transition to market economies. Following research in feminist political economy, the central indicator of progressive institutional change at the EBRD is the extent to which feminist conceptual and empirical insights on markets and social reproduction have been considered by the Bank and allowed to transform its approach to promoting market economies. This aspect of the research is elaborated upon in Chapter 4, which focuses on the linkages between the EBRD's agenda in relation to gender equality and wider processes of continuity and change in the EBRD's analysis and approach to economic restructuring.

A further key task for a feminist analysis of gender-related institutional change is to examine the conceptual framework and empirical evidence that informs strategies and policies on gender equality. As argued at length above, this entails paying careful attention to what kinds of inequalities are deemed important and are included as something that the EBRD can address and those which the Bank might exclude. Of particular interest are the kinds of structural gender inequalities, as the organisation of labour between different social groups and spheres of the economy, to which neoliberal restructuring has been seen to contribute. From feminist analyses of neoliberal governance, the approach takes up the interest in examining whether gender analysis has been incorporated in ways that transform or add to existing institutional processes. In particular, the thesis seeks to examine the processes through which gender mainstreaming as a feminist policy agenda is being defined and

operationalized by the EBRD and to what ends gender equality in this framework are being engaged.

### 3. Policy implementation and governance

Policy implementation is in this thesis rearticulated as a set of processes in which ideas and arguments about gender are brought into practice. One important aspect entails identifying the extent to which gender equality commitments have actually been operationalized by the EBRD, including a discussion of the institutional mechanisms and provisions that facilitate or hinder such processes. As argued above, the process of policy implementation can rarely be read out of official documents and rhetoric but can be better understood as negotiation, contestation or agreement among multiple actors over specific meanings of concepts such as gender inequality and equality. The approach taken in the thesis is however less concerned with whether the EBRD can be argued successful in achieving its own objectives in favour of examining the politics involved when the EBRD seeks to promote gender equality. A principal concern in the analysis of how the EBRD mobilises its policies on gender equality is how doing so supports or transforms the Bank's neoliberal economic policy, and in what ways. Chapter 5 offers an in-depth examination of how gender mainstreaming is operationalized across by the EBRD and its partners in the context of the EBRD's economic strategies and lending in Turkey.

The approach taken in this thesis further seeks to explore and analyse what it means to insert gender equality as a policy objective into neoliberal governance strategies - understood as policies and processes that seek to extend market relations into ever more areas of political, economic and social life (Larner 2000). As argued above, an integral part of this analysis is a careful consideration of the roles played by business actors in shaping policy and practice around gender equality. In turn, the policies and strategies advanced by the EBRD and its partners in this area are examined through the lens of how they propose to organise socially reproductive labour – between

people and different spheres and sectors of the economy. Chapter 6 engages this part of the framework, exploring the wider governance structures that the EBRD is a part of and the strategies through which they seek to promote women's employment in Turkey.

## **Conclusions**

As has been argued throughout this chapter, global governance institutions play important roles in normalising ideas, norms and relations that are gendered. They do so by targeting gender relations and inequalities directly through policies and projects and by reproducing economic ideas that contain gender biases. In particular, the failure of mainstream economic theories to account for the unpaid labour involved with the social reproduction of workers, individuals and families has tended to mean that neoliberal policy packages have often had disproportionate impacts on women. This provides the key vantage point from which this thesis examines the EBRD and its policies and strategies in relation to gender equality.

This chapter has provided the theoretical and analytical approach that will be operationalized in this thesis. In order to do so, it offered an overview of research in various fields of feminist political economy. The first part established the conceptual and theoretical foundation for the analysis of gender-related institutional change at the EBRD, arguing that institutions such as the EBRD reproduce gendered understandings of the economy and markets. The second part examined how feminist agendas have been incorporated and transformed within neoliberal governance projects. The third and final part synthesised the theoretical and methodological insights from the chapter into a framework that focuses on three processes in which gender politics occur within neoliberal governance: policy development, economic innovation, and policy implementation. One of the key aims of this framework is to bring together the implicit and explicit dimensions through which gender is being constructed by the EBRD and to use this to examine gender-related institutional change. In doing so, the approach centres upon the

roles played by feminist actors operating within and across different institutional and national contexts. The framework is applied throughout this thesis, with the next chapter offering a detailed examination of the processes through which staff at the EBRD developed its policy framework on gender equality.

## Chapter 3

### Gender advocacy and policy-making at the EBRD

“The Bank recognises that gender equality is a fundamental aspect of a modern, well-functioning market in as much as it contributes to the efficient use of all resources.” (Suma Chakrabarti, cited in EBRD 2013a, 5)

“We didn’t try to tell everybody like it is a human right or it is the right thing to do you, you know, why does it make good sense why is it important, what does it do for our client, then we are trying to integrate it into just general business processes.”<sup>3</sup>

This chapter addresses why the EBRD started paying attention to gender inequalities in its region and explores how Bank staff produced a policy framework through which it could address these issues. The focus lies on the years between 2005 and 2013, being the time period in which the EBRD produced two major policies on gender equality - the 2009 Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the 2013 Strategic Gender Initiative (SGI). The chapter takes up the arguments about policy making as a political process made in Chapter 2 and analyses how the meaning of concepts such as gender and gender equality were negotiated and delimited by actors during the process of designing the GAP and the SGI.

This analysis develops one of the central analytical themes of this thesis; how the objective of gender equality has been co-opted to the EBRD’s overarching agenda of market development. It is highlighted how the scope for gender advocates working for the EBRD to pursue more radical feminist agendas has been severely constrained by the Bank’s economic mandate and role, which have often proved major sources of resistance against the incorporation of

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<sup>3</sup> Anonymous interviewee, EBRD.



gender equality as a new policy objective. The implications of these processes are explored and critiqued throughout the chapter; with the central argument made that the EBRD's model of gender mainstreaming is narrow in scope and incorporated into the Bank's profit-oriented lending protocols.

The chapter traces the processes of policy development over three main sections, each focussing on how the objective of gender equality has been articulated within the EBRD. The first part discusses the two initial areas in which the Bank started to pay attention to the role of women in market economies, as entrepreneurs and as a 'vulnerable' social group within Bank lending. The second part examines feminist strategy and institutional issues in the making of the GAP and the SGI, highlighting how gender advocacy has progressed through increasingly expert-led and integrationist strategies. In the final part, the chapter examines the implications of these institutional processes in terms of the arguments and claims that are being made within the EBRD's policy framework on gender issues.

### *Analysing gender mainstreaming*

Gender mainstreaming was established as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (United Nations 1995). The agenda originated through pressures from feminist scholars and activists for the concern with women and gender equality to be shifted to the centre of development; opposing particularly the tendency of the Women in Development paradigm to mean the isolation of these concerns into specific and often small-scale projects (Razavi and Miller 1995b, 1-2). Gender mainstreaming can be defined as a process that entails

“Efforts to scrutinize and reinvent processes of policy formulation and implementation across all issue areas and at all levels from a gender-differentiated perspective, to address

and rectify persistent and emerging disparities between men and women.” (True 2003b, 369)

As suggested by Walby (2005) gender mainstreaming was conceived of by feminists as an approach that would promote gender equality by tackling gender biases within the process of policy design, hence contributing to the reformulation of development policy by “making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes” (Walby 2005, 321).

In practice, gender mainstreaming has remained a contentious and contested approach among feminist scholars and practitioners. Critiques have highlighted how gender mainstreaming is often difficult to define and operationalise in ways that can be shown to effectively tackle gender inequalities (Baden and Goetz 1997; Walby 2005; True and Parisi 2013, 42-47). However, as argued by Prügl and Lustgarten (2006, 54), given its intrinsic conceptual vagueness, the meaning of gender mainstreaming can best be established by examining how it is being defined and implemented within specific institutional settings. In an overview of empirical research on gender mainstreaming, True and Parisi (2013, 39-40) highlight distinctions between gender mainstreaming models. The difference between integrationist and transformative models are particularly significant in feminist research widely, and for the empirical analysis in this thesis. Integrationist models of gender mainstreaming integrate gender concerns into existing frameworks, without altering the core principles and assumptions upon which these are based. This model tends to rely upon a binary analysis of gender as difference between men and women, with accounting and accommodating for women’s differences from masculine norms used as the main strategy for promoting gender equality (True and Parisi 2013, 39-40; Walby 2005, 322-333).

The second, less commonly used, model seeks to engage gender analysis as a tool to radically transform both the policies advanced by institutions and the ways in which these are formulated in order to challenge gender inequalities. Within the transformationalist model, more emphasis is placed on the

participation of the social groups that are targeted by an organisation to define what is seen as gender inequality and how this problem can be addressed (True and Parisi 2013, 39-40). Although ideal types, the reasons why this distinction is significant to EBRD's agenda to promote gender equality is demonstrated throughout this chapter.

### **Women in Business and gender mainstreaming in EBRD lending**

The first signs that the EBRD had started paying attention to gender issues in its countries of operations can be found in Bank publications from the early 2000s. As established in Chapter 1, the EBRD's then President Jean Leimerre, together with the heads of the other major multilateral development banks, committed to the third UN Millennium Development Goal to "promote gender equality and women's empowerment" in 2003 (IMF 2003). In parallel to this, women started to appear more regularly within the EBRD's rhetoric and analysis of its region, principally as small-scale entrepreneurs in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. For example, the Bank's 2002 Annual Report featured a case study of Mrs Mamitova, owner of a cotton cloth dyeing and printing business in rural Uzbekistan who had used EBRD finance to expand her business (EBRD 2003a, 67). Although the references to women, or any other specified social group, remained relative scarce this is still a noteworthy change from how the terms 'women' and 'gender' were largely absent in EBRD publications from the 1990s. This section explores and analyses this shift within the EBRD, starting with an analysis of how it relates to wider processes of institutional reform at the Bank in the early 2000s. It then proceeds to examine how the EBRD's approach to gender mainstreaming was defined through initial efforts to integrate gender concerns into the Bank's activities, occurring within technical assistance programmes to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and environmental and social impact assessments of project lending.

## *The EBRD and the Post-Washington Consensus for development*

One of the central analytical themes of this thesis is about how the EBRD's interest in gender issues relates to wider shifts in how the Bank works to promote market economies. To recall, the EBRD was constructed primarily to undertake structural reforms aimed at the making and expansion of markets (EBRD 1990). As argued by a senior interviewee at the EBRD, the Bank was very much a product of the free market neoliberalism of the Washington Consensus for development and, as such, was wed to a belief in markets as the optimal route for achieving individual, economic and social goods.<sup>4</sup>

The EBRD has however not been immune to the transformation of the paradigm for economic development that took place in the early 2000s. As argued by Elson (2009, 35), structural adjustment was by the late 1990s discredited as an effective route to achieve sustainable economic growth and the Washington Consensus was unsettled. With the World Bank at the vanguard, development institutions turned to a more socially and institutionally-oriented set of strategies for economic development (Stiglitz 1998). A substantive feminist literature has documented and analysed how women emerged as a central category within the Post-Washington Consensus for development, with encouraging women entrepreneurship positioned as a strategy that would contribute to reducing poverty and addressing gender inequalities by empowering women economically (Roy 2002; Jackson 1998, 39-40).

The EBRD's response to this paradigm shift has not been unequivocal. In comparing the EBRD's approach to economic development to that of other multilateral development banks, interviewees highlighted that exclusion of poverty reduction from the Bank's mandate and its business orientation meant that it had been slow on incorporating new ideas.<sup>5</sup> Opinions were split as to

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<sup>4</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*.

<sup>5</sup> Interviews with Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, and Ralph de Haas, Deputy Director of Research, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013; Michaela

whether this was necessarily a negative thing, with several senior interviewees highlighting that the EBRD's market-oriented mandate and lending criteria gave it a unique advantage in doing a kind of lending that 'worked'. That is, in the sense that it supported viable businesses rather than providing subsidies to failing companies or sectors of the economy.<sup>6</sup> Chapters 4 and 5 return to this point, highlighting how the continued commitment to free markets within parts of the EBRD is a source of tensions within the Bank's gradually more interventionist approach.

The policy innovations through which the EBRD started to pay more attention to women can also be understood in terms of responses to problems and governance issues that the Bank was faced with at the time. As argued in Chapter 1, the EBRD is founded upon a concept of transition that subjugates concerns with inequality and poverty to the construction and expansion of markets. In addition, the below chart shows how EBRD finance has for the most part targeted Russia and the more developed countries in Central Europe with a relatively small proportion targeting Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EBRD 2014a, 5).

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Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Anonymous interviewees, Board of Directors, *EBRD*.

Chart 1: EBRD cumulative investments 1991- 2013 by region

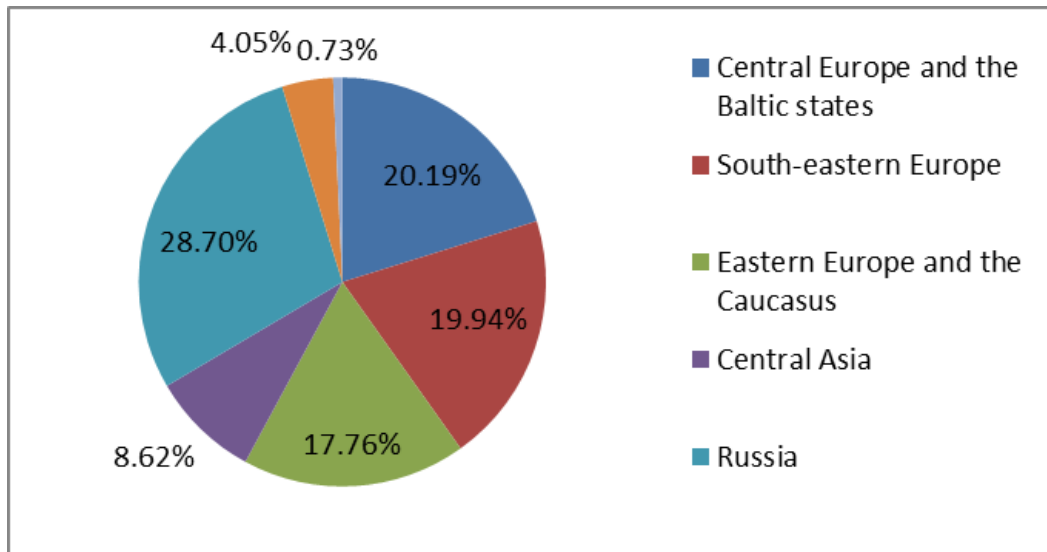


Chart constructed using data from (EBRD 2014b, 3).

By the late 1990s, the unstable economic and democratic developments in Eastern Europe and Central Asia were troubling the faith in market-led routes to transition. Indeed, by the late 1990s economists at the EBRD began to discuss high levels of poverty as a factor in the ‘stalled progress’ in the establishment of market economies in the eastern parts of its region (EBRD 1999b, 5; EBRD 2000, 6-7). Signalling the EBRD’s new interest in poverty, President Jean Lemierre argued in the foreword to the 2000 Annual Report:

“But no market is functional unless it ultimately alleviates poverty, improves health care and promotes education. Although these concerns are not part of the Bank’s direct responsibilities, we will work with other international institutions and countries to ensure that these most fundamental needs of people are addressed.” (Jean Lemierre, cited in EBRD 2001, 2)

The EBRD in 2004 launched its Early Transition Countries Initiative under which the Bank provided new resources in terms of investment and assistance that would contribute to developing the SME sector and work toward enhancing the investment climate in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia,

Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan through institutional reforms (EBRD 2005, 13-14; EBRD, 2015b).

Like the other multilateral development banks, the EBRD had also become the target of questions and critiques from NGOs and academics over its lending strategies (Culpeper 1997; Tzannatos 2006). In this respect, EBRD investments into large-scale projects in the infrastructure and energy sectors came under particular scrutiny due to evidence of human rights abuses, poor labour conditions, impacts on local populations and environmental degradation (Bacheva *et al.* 2006). Inspired by the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) Equator Principles, staff at the EBRD began to revise and update the protocols and procedures through which the Bank assessed the non-financial risks of its investments.<sup>7</sup>

Responsibility for impact assessment of EBRD lending lies with the Environment and Sustainability Department, whose staff assess each project against criteria set out in Bank policy. Up until 2003, these criteria concentrated on the identification and mitigation of potential negative environmental impacts of EBRD investments. However, since then requirements related to working conditions, including health and safety standards and the prevention of child labour and forced labour, discriminatory practices as well as community impacts have been included (EBRD 2003b, 3-4). As will be seen below, impact mitigation under the 2008 Environmental and Social Policy provided the initial framework for gender mainstreaming in the EBRD.

The concern with social impacts of lending amounted to organisational changes at the EBRD. In 2005, a full-time social development expert was appointed to assess the social impacts of projects on local communities, particularly in the oil and gas, mining, heavy industry and infrastructure sectors (EBRD 2006a, 20). In conjunction with this, consulting with

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Deborah Cousins, Senior Environmental and Social Adviser, *EBRD*, London 15 March 2013.

stakeholders and local communities emerged as a strategy through which the Bank could reduce the risks of its lending. In 2000, the EBRD's Annual Meeting for the first time ever included a section in which civil society organisations were invited to an open discussion with the Board of Directors. The following year a new Civil Society Engagement Unit was incorporated into the Bank with the purpose of facilitating improved stakeholder engagement.<sup>8</sup> As seen in the discussion below, the new members of staff in the Civil Society Engagement Unit and Environment and Sustainability Department played central roles in the development of the GAP and the SGI respectively.

### *The EBRD's Women in Business Programmes*

The EBRD's concern with women's roles in market economies originated as an interest in women entrepreneurs within the Bank's department for Small Business Support. To recall, the EBRD has sought to niche itself by supporting the development of SMEs within its region. The small business department is responsible for one element of this agenda, namely the management of the EBRD's donor-funded technical assistance programmes to SMEs. These programmes provide consultancy services to companies with less than 250 employees, with the client contributing a set share of the cost of the programme.<sup>9</sup> The team engages with women entrepreneurs in their general programmes as well as by specifically targeted Women in Business (WiB) programmes. Starting with the former, managers in the team explained during interviews that working with female entrepreneurs was often just business as usual for them:

“Well, basically if you look at all the projects we have done with entrepreneurs it's about 15 per cent we have done about

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay, Head of Civil Society Engagement Unit, Former Gender Action Plan Co-Ordinator (2009-2012), *EBRD*, London, 20 March 2013.

<sup>9</sup> EBRD, 'Small Business Support: overview', <http://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/advice-for-small-businesses/overview.html>, accessed 15/08/2015.



12, 500 projects with entrepreneurs and its about 15 per cent of these that are with woman-owned and managed enterprises and that's without doing anything specific.”<sup>10</sup>

Within the team’s general programmes, women’s enterprises are a part of the EBRD’s wider economic strategy of promoting market-led economies. EBRD policy clearly positions SMEs as central to the making of market economies, arguing that

“Active promotion of this sector is both a means and an end to the transition to the market economy and the creation of an entrepreneurial class will both mitigate the social costs associated with restructuring enterprises and enhance the likelihood of a durable commitment to democratic societies and the rule of law. The promotion of SMEs is therefore at the heart of EBRD's transition mandate.” (EBRD 2006, 4).

Within the EBRD’s reports a discussion on entrepreneurship as a means to empower women is relatively rare. A case study in the EBRD’s 2007 Annual Report, entitled ‘Empowering Tajik Farmers’, offers one such example. The case study makes clear that the Bank’s primary reason for investing in women’s businesses is a way in which the EBRD can contribute to the diversification of agricultural production in Tajikistan (EBRD 2008a, 15). In turn, women’s economic empowerment is discussed in secondary terms, as a potential by-product of the Bank’s market enhancing activities.

“With financial assistance and farm business management skills provided through a ground-breaking EBRD project, the women will be able to make informed decisions that affect their lives. Sanavbar, one of the 28 women applying for the

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Valeria Della Rosa, Senior Manager of Business Advisory Services and Caroline Bryant Bosa, Principal Manager of Small Business Support, *EBRD*, London, 6 March 2013.

land certificates, says that when she has her own farm, she will grow more than just cotton and apricots. She plans to expand and include potatoes and tomatoes. ‘I will be independent and choose what harvest I want and I can pass the land on to my children’.” (EBRD 2008a, 15)

In contrast, the WiB programmes specifically target women entrepreneurs and include a more substantive element around empowerment. The WiB programmes target women who own, part-own or manage companies with less than €50 million in annual turnover and offer a combination of consultancy services, business training and networking events that are intended to help women gain the skills, networks and confidence through which they can grow their businesses (Greenberg 2010, 3;). The programmes have, since starting in 2004, purposefully targeted the poorer parts of the EBRD’s region, including Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, the Western Balkans (Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ukraine and Moldova. At the time of this research, two new WiB programmes were being developed for the Bank’s more recent member countries Egypt and Turkey (EBRD 2013a, Annex 1). In conjunction with these programmes, the EBRD has since 2005 held an awards ceremony for female entrepreneurs during its annual business meeting. As will be seen throughout this thesis, the WiB programmes have come to constitute an important element of the EBRD’s agenda to promote gender equality (EBRD 2009b, 9; EBRD 2013a, 9-10). Chapter 6 explores the EBRD’s WiB programme in Turkey in detail.

An investigation into the origins of the WiB programmes provided several valuable insights about the EBRD’s early efforts in relation to gender issues. Most importantly, the programmes were for a long time concentrated into a relatively small part of the EBRD’s operations.<sup>11</sup> Rather than being developed through a widely shared institutional agenda, the WiB programmes and awards were developed by Birgitte Watson, regional manager for Small

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Charlotte Ruhe, Director of the Small Business Team, *EBRD*, London 7 March 2013.

Business Support in Georgia and Armenia and Betsy Nelson, the EBRD's first female vice-President.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, interviewees suggested that the WiB programmes were a form of window-dressing through which the EBRD could publicly appear to be paying attention to gender issues:

“Since 2005, there has been a Women in Business Awards Panel at the annual meeting. This has actually not been a sign of mainstreaming; it has been a sign of ghettoization. You can speculate as to what the motivation for that is, but you were feeling harsh you could say that this is window dressing rather than the heart of what the Bank feels it is at.”<sup>13</sup>

The WiB programmes indicate how the agenda around gender issues was isolated within the Bank's organisational structure. Especially by being managed by the Small Business department they are separated from the EBRD's banking departments, As argued in Chapter 1, the EBRD sees itself as a project-oriented institution and grants a privileged role to the banking teams that generate new investment opportunities for the Bank. The WiB programmes have for the most part been organised in separation from the EBRD's banking activities, and relied upon the support from the Bank's bilateral and multilateral donors. As will be returned to in Chapter 6, at the time of this research the EBRD's strategies in relation to women entrepreneurs were beginning to combine consultancy with access to finance.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Gender mainstreaming as managing risk in EBRD lending*

Providing loans to support the private sector is at the core of the EBRD's activities. These loans are managed by members of staff in the EBRD's

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Natalia Meylunas, BAS Regional Programme for Western Balkans, *EBRD*, 26 August 2013

<sup>13</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Charlotte Ruhe, Director of the Small Business Team, *EBRD*, London 7 March 2013.

banking departments. Since 1994, the banker responsible for a loan need to demonstrate that it meets the EBRD’ main criteria for lending: sound banking, additionality and transition impact. In brief, these criteria mean that the banker responsible for a potential loan needs to demonstrate that the loan has the potential to generate revenue for the EBRD, that it will not be done in competition with private investors and that it will contribute to the construction or expansion of markets (Bronstone 1999, 74; EBRD 2014a, 53). Remaining largely intact ever since 1994, the criteria aims to ensure that loans are provided in an expedient manner and that each loan contributes to the EBRD’s objective to expand markets through supporting the private sector.<sup>15</sup>

Gender mainstreaming at the EBRD has primarily targeted the process through which the Bank’s staff assesses the impacts of its loans on local populations. The 2008 Environmental and Social Policy established risk management as the main objective of gender mainstreaming in the EBRD.<sup>16</sup> The Bank’s approach to gender mainstreaming is underpinned by an emphasis on ‘gender as difference’, where in order to avoid negative impacts of project lending, women’s difference from men within specific localities needs to be recognised and accommodated for (True and Parisi 2013, 39-40). The 2008 Environmental and Social Policy discusses women exclusively in the terms of a vulnerable social group, as occupying a marginalised position within indigenous communities and as at increased risk during involuntary resettlement caused by the Bank’s projects (EBRD 2008a, 38, 50).

To supplement this rather minimal framework, EBRD staff developed a checklist for identifying gender issues and potential risks for women within its lending, focussing especially on the infrastructure and energy sectors. Designed by staff in the EBRD’s Environment and Sustainability Departments, these checklists prompt colleagues within the Bank to collect gender disaggregated data on their clients as well as seeking the input of local

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<sup>15</sup> The EBRD defines the state sector as that part of the economy that includes “national and local Governments, their agencies, and enterprises owned or controlled by any of them” (EBRD 1990, Article 11.3 [iia]).

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Nato Kurshitashvili, Gender Adviser, *EBRD*, 12 March 2013.

women during project consultation (EBRD 2010a; EBRD 2010b). However, rather than using this material to try and challenge gender inequalities, the EBRD frames gender mainstreaming as a means to ensure the success of the Bank's lending:

“Projects and policies impact men and women differently and it is important to examine who is affected and in what manner, in order to distribute project benefits equitably. Mainstreaming gender into projects does not require radically new skill-sets but it does necessitate that gender be considered as an important factor for the success and sustainability of the project.” (EBRD 2010a, 1).

The 2008 Environmental and Social Policy positions gender equality as an optional objective of gender mainstreaming. Within the policy, the due diligence process of each project is suggested as a potential tool through which EBRD staff can identify opportunities to pursue ‘additional environmental or social benefits’ (EBRD 2008a, 11). In similarity to True’s (2003, 385-386), argument that gender mainstreaming has often taken the form of identifying means that will encourage women to participate in markets, the EBRD’s interest in this respect is to ensure that measures are taken to include women among the beneficiaries of its projects (EBRD 2008a, 36, 38, 50). Nonetheless, even in this market-oriented framing, the pursuit of gender equality at this point remained a ‘bonus’ activity that was not fundamentally linked to the success and failure of the EBRD’s operations (Ferguson 2015, 391). Chapter 5 returns to this theme and analyses the implications of the EBRD’s integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming with regard to the Bank’s operations in Turkey. By doing so, it is suggested that the model has severe limitations in terms of providing a meaningful way in which the Bank can promote gender equality.

Paying attention to gender issues is increasingly the norm among governance institutions (True and Mintrom 2001) and a key part of how international

institutions advancing neoliberal policies “employ legitimacy-enhancing techniques that serve to underscore their relevance in the face of wider societal criticism” (Elias 2013, 154). This section has addressed the ways in which the EBRD has adjusted to events in its external environment and criticisms from civil society groups, highlighting how more attention has been paid to women and gender issues as the Bank as it began to revise its free-market approach to economic development in the early to mid-2000s. Beyond being used as a form of ‘window-dressing’ to the Bank’s critics, the agenda around gender equality and women’s economic empowerment lacked anchoring and support from across the EBRD and was relatively isolated into specific units of the Bank. As a result, the introduction of gender mainstreaming into the Bank is indicative of an integrationist policy approach rather than a transformative approach. That is, the EBRD’s model of gender mainstreaming is intended to add to the Bank’s existing lending strategies without altering the core principles and assumptions upon which these are based. In turn, the objective of promoting gender equality has been subsumed to, or conceived of as an optional add-on, to the EBRD’s primary interest to promote market economies in its region (True and Parisi 2013, 39-40). The implications of this are discussed at length in subsequent chapters.

### **Feminist strategy and gender expertise in the policy-making process**

By the mid-2000s calls were being made among the EBRD’s Board of Directors for the EBRD to develop a more comprehensive approach to promoting gender equality. In particular, the Canadian, the UK and Swedish delegations were important allies to gender advocates working for the Bank and contributed with research resources during the preparation of policies on gender.<sup>17</sup> As argued by Hannan (2013, 79-80), working together with government delegations can be an effective way for gender advocates within an organisation to garner support and momentum for their agenda. However, as will be argued throughout this section, translating these requests from

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Chikako Kuno, Former Director of the Small Business Team, Former Head of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, 22 March 2013.

donors into practice was not necessarily an easy or straightforward task for the EBRD's employees. This section traces the steps through which the EBRD developed a policy framework specifically on gender issues, especially in terms of how feminist strategy in the Bank has evolved through responses to pressures and constraints from the wider institution.

Before doing so, it is necessary to outline how policies are being produced within the EBRD. As argued in Chapter 2, this thesis understands policy-making as a political process, where policies are made through a combination of power, facts and evidence (Kardam 1991, 8). Technical accounts of the EBRD's policy-making process have highlighted how policies are accepted or rejected through voting at the EBRD's Board of Directors, with a new policy necessitating a majority of no less than two-thirds of the total votes (Cogen 2015, 17; Strand 2003, 119). Interviews at the EBRD highlighted how reaching this near consensus means that the official vote is often preceded by a long process of informal deliberation and discussion through which the aims, scope and even wording of the policy are negotiated to become acceptable to the Bank.<sup>18</sup> In turn, these processes are crucial to determining the kinds of ideas and arguments an institution makes about gender equality (Ferguson 2014; Chant 2012). The ways in which institutional factors support or constrain the capacity of gender advocates to pursue more radical agendas during the policy-making process is analysed throughout this section.

### *Institutional resistance and constraints*

The EBRD's mandate has been a principal source of resistance against the introduction of gender equality as a new policy area. Institutions with economic mandates have generally been found to be more reluctant to incorporate feminist policy agendas, with these perceived as being in conflict with overarching institutional priorities such as economic growth (Razavi and Miller 1995b, ii). As established in Chapter 1, the EBRD differs from the

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Camilla Otto, Assistant to the EU Director, *EBRD*, London, 19 July 2013.

other multilateral development banks in the sense that its mandate excludes poverty reduction and it lends exclusively at market rates. Interviews with members of the EBRD's Board of Directors revealed that resistance to the new policy agenda had, at this level, been articulated as a concern that the EBRD would 'stretch' its mandate and 'dilute' its free market approach. The most critical members of this group of interviewees discussed working on gender issues in terms of providing resources to women by investing in public sector areas such as education and health. Within this particular frame, incorporating the new agenda would mean expanding the parameters of the EBRD's activities significantly. From the perspective of interviewees, doing so would move the EBRD into the domains of other international institutions and render it a redundant actor. As argued by the EBRD's Director for Germany, gender equality was only acceptable to the Bank insofar as it would 'add value' to what the EBRD was already doing:

"I am in the camp of those who do not believe that we should be doing gender projects. Unless, and there are always exceptions to the rule, unless it is plainly obvious that such a project derives or justifies its existence from a clear economic advantage that we achieve by doing this gender project. But you see again and again, I try to come from the angle of economy, market development and transition to a freer economy first and then we plug-in the gender element as a tool. It is not the objective. The objective is here and we have a lot of tools to get to that objective and if gender is the root, by all means."<sup>19</sup>

This lack of political will across the senior levels of the EBRD proved a major obstacle to the development of the GAP. In 2006 Bank President Jean Lemierre set up a Gender Steering Group with the instruction to provide the EBRD with a policy on gender issues (EBRD 2007a, 27). This first

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Joachim Schwarzer, Board Director for Germany, EBRD, London, 12 July 2013.



incarnation of the Gender Steering Group was comprised of managers from across the Bank. Exclusively male and largely ineffective, the group petitioned for its own dissolution within a year as it claimed that it had not been able to identify any gender issues within the Bank.<sup>20</sup> With Lemierre rejecting this statement, the group was revived under the management of the then Director of the Small Business Team. In her view, explaining to male colleagues the relevance of promoting gender equality to the Bank had been a principal challenge at early stages of policy development:

“I think for the women in the bank there was no question a lot of the first issues were just to make people understand or comprehend what the issues were. Because I would get comments from you know: my wife works at the bank, she's an executive assistant and she tells me there are no issues. It wasn't recognised initially that there was an issue, it had to come from an external push.”<sup>21</sup>

The EBRD's lending profile proved a further set of challenges to gender advocates. As established in Chapter 1, the EBRD's lending is primarily private sector-oriented with each potential loan assessed in terms of its profitability, impact on market expansion and additionality to private lending. In this respect, several interviewees involved in various stages of the policy-making process highlighted how members of the EBRD's banking staff had responded with hostility and ridicule toward the proposals that they should consider gender issues in their investments.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Chikako Kuno, Former Director of the Small Business Team, Former Head of the Gender Steering Group, EBRD, 22 March 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Chikako Kuno, Former Director of the Small Business Team, Former Head of the Gender Steering Group, EBRD, 22 March 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Interviews with Chikako Kuno, Former Director of the Small Business Team, Former Head of the Gender Steering Group, EBRD, 22 March 2013; Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay, Head of Civil Society Engagement Unit, Former Gender Action Plan Co-Ordinator (2009-2012), EBRD, London, 20 March 2013; Valeria Della Rosa, Senior Manager of Business Advisory Services and Caroline Bryant Bosa, Principal Manager of Small Business Support, EBRD, London, 6 March 2013.

This can, in part, be explained through differences in the educational background and objectives between staff employed to promote gender equality and those working as bankers. Staff within the EBRD's Gender Team come from backgrounds in law, anthropology and gender studies and their professional roles aim at developing, communicating and implementing policies on gender equality. In contrast, the bankers interviewed for this project had degrees in economics and finance-related subjects. In addition, their main role is to generate as many profitable investments as possible for the EBRD. In addition, bankers expressed a concern that because the EBRD lends on market rates they cannot be imposing an 'onerous lending process with lots of social criteria' or their clients will seek financing from other lenders.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, a report by US Congress argues that the EBRD and the other multilateral development institutions "suffer from a 'pressure to lend culture' that places more emphasis on signing project agreements and getting loans out the door than on actually improving the development level of the borrowing country" (US Congress 2010, 4).

The development of the GAP was further hindered by a lack of staff with experience of working on gender issues. Interviewees at the EBRD highlighted a lack of resources and knowledge about gender issues in the Bank, seeing for example that there was initially no dedicated policy unit or any employees who specialised in the area. Consequently, in many instances the requests from the EBRD's Board of Directors or donor agencies to incorporate gender concerns into a specific project needed to be responded to by staff with little prior experience of working on such issues. This group of interviewees described how they had responded to these pressures by trying to identify a specific angle through which they could address gender issues within the parameters of conventional EBRD lending and assistance:

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<sup>23</sup> Interviews with Fatih Turkmenoglu, Senior Banker, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 25 April 2013; Huseyin Ozhan Senior Banker in Transport, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 3 May 2013; Asli Erden Ozturk, Senior Banker, *EBRD*. Istanbul, 14 May 2013.

“I thought to myself - ‘how on earth are we going to target this as a private sector-focused organisation and in our department?’”<sup>24</sup>

“when you have an aluminium smelter, where is gender there?”<sup>25</sup>

The EBRD’s staffing resource was not expanded in a meaningful way during the duration of the GAP between 2009 and 2011. As argued by Ferguson (2015, 387), a clear sign that an institution does not consider gender equality to be among its core objectives is that this policy area is allocated to unqualified staff and compartmentalised into specific units or a narrow set of activities. In the EBRD the responsibility for the GAP was allocated to a manager in the Civil Society Unit who was to undertake this role in combination with her other responsibilities. To assist her she had one intern and a part-time employee, the latter leaving the position relatively rapidly. During an interview, the co-ordinator of the GAP described how she had reacted with surprise to the request from senior management for her to take on this new role - as she had no previous experience of working on gender issues.<sup>26</sup> Further supportive of the claim made above about how early attention to gender equality was a form of window-dressing by EBRD management, the GAP was, during this time isolated into the EBRD’s Stakeholder Department that deals primarily with donor and civil society relations rather than Bank policy and lending.<sup>27</sup>

In 2012, the EBRD’s agenda to promote gender equality had garnered new momentum through the election of Sir Suma Chakrabarti to the post of EBRD President. Having been the only candidate for the post who had included

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<sup>24</sup> Anonymous interviewee, *EBRD*.

<sup>25</sup> Anonymous interviewee, *EBRD*.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay, Head of Civil Society Engagement Unit, Former Gender Action Plan Co-Ordinator (2009-2012), *EBRD*, London, 20 March 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous interviewee, *EBRD*.

gender equality as an important policy area in his campaign platform, Chakrabarti provided impetus for increased efforts on gender issues and contributed to a shift in attitudes about the work done by the gender unit (Barder 2012).<sup>28</sup> In this respect, comparisons can be made between Chakrabarti and World Bank President James Wolfensohn (Bedford 2009a, 3-5; True 2003, 381) and UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon (Hannan 2013, 81), who have all used their Presidential positions to build momentum around gender and development in their respective institutions. The new EBRD President has subsequently played an active role in disseminating the EBRD's approach to gender equality through speeches and written commentaries (Chakrabarti 2013).

### *The EBRD's Gender Team*

Identifying the actors who define and delineate what kinds of inequalities are important and how they are to be addressed is a central concern in feminist research on governance. As argued by Razavi (1997, 1112) the role of the internal gender advocate is 'inevitably conservative' as they need to work within the parameters set by their employers. Establishing networks with institutional outsiders, for example feminist activists and scholars, can allow gender advocates to challenge these bounds and to introduce agendas that aim to alter the ways in which the organisation seeks to achieve its mandate (Razavi 1997, 1112). Interviews at the EBRD showed how the GAP and the SGI were developed in-house; principally by gender advocates conducting desk-based research together with staff in the EBRD's main research unit the Office of the Chief Economist (OCE).<sup>29</sup> As will be seen below, there is little to suggest that this process allowed the EBRD to incorporate and address

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<sup>28</sup> Interviews with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013; Nato Kurshitashvili, Gender Adviser, *EBRD*, 12 March 2013

<sup>29</sup> Interviews with Chikako Kuno, Former Director of the Small Business Team, Former Head of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, 22 March 2013; Nato Kurshitashvili, Gender Adviser, *EBRD*, 12 March 2013.

feminist insights that problematize the EBRD's overarching approach to promoting market economies.

Rather, the emphasis has been on the policy authors to be insiders to the EBRD and familiar with the ways in which the Bank operates. As established above, in-depth knowledge of the EBRD itself took precedence over expertise and experience on gender issues during the development and implementation of the GAP. The role of co-ordinating the GAP necessitated experience of communicating a new policy agenda across the EBRD, with the position primarily aimed at building support for the agenda on gender equality across the EBRD.<sup>30</sup>

This 'insider imperative' is also clear in discussion among interviewees of the experience of working with outsiders in the policy-making process. In 2006, a consultant from the Swedish company Step up Business Learning<sup>31</sup> was commissioned by the EBRD to develop a model through which the Bank could address gender issues (EBRD 2007a, 27). The parameters for the model designed by the consultant were established in terms of providing a business case that would "examine gender equality as an issue and factor that can contribute significantly to the efficient use of Bank and donor resources" (Lindeberg 2006, Annex 1, 2). As will be returned to in Chapter 5, the EBRD tends to work with business-oriented organisations that, broadly speaking, operate in a similar economic framework for the promotion of gender equality to that which has been established by the Bank.

There is however still scope for conflict and divergence even when the broader parameters for gender analysis between the EBRD and its partners are in alignment. Working with the external consultant in the policy-making process was largely seen as a negative experience and the model proposed by the consultant was rejected by the EBRD's Board of Directors because

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay, Head of Civil Society Engagement Unit, Former Gender Action Plan Co-Ordinator (2009-2012), *EBRD*, London, 20 March 2013.

<sup>31</sup> 'Step Up', <https://stenlindeberg.wordpress.com>. Accessed 14/08/2015.

“because it had been done outside of the Bank and it had been done in a way that perhaps did not take into account how the Bank did business.”<sup>32</sup>

By 2010 calls were made for strengthening gender expertise in the Bank; with the GAP described as having ‘plateaued’ and the Gender Steering Group perceived to have become a ‘talking shop’.<sup>33</sup> Since then, the EBRD’s Gender Team has been restructured and expanded with the recruitment of two new members of staff from the gender and development teams in the UN and the African Development Bank.

The manager of this team, Michaela Bergman, was appointed internally from the Bank’s Environment and Sustainability Department, which she had joined as a social development expert in 2006. Bergman was widely seen among interviewees as a key reason why the agenda around gender equality has garnered new momentum since 2011. Performing the function of a ‘policy entrepreneur’ (True 2003, 379), Bergman has been able to use her position within the Bank to strategically combine her own passion for working on gender issues with an ability to build alliances across the Bank.<sup>34</sup> In conjunction with this, gender advocacy at the EBRD has been shifted from its marginalised position in the Bank’s Stakeholder and Small Business Departments to the central Environment and Sustainability Department. In practice, this has contributed to the strengthening of the EBRD’s model of gender mainstreaming within project assessments.<sup>35</sup>

In order to gain support for their agenda, gender advocates at the EBRD have predominantly used economic arguments for why working on gender equality

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<sup>32</sup> Anonymous interviewee, *EBRD*.

<sup>33</sup> Anonymous interviewees, *EBRD*. Interview with Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay, Head of Civil Society Engagement Unit, Former Gender Action Plan Co-Ordinator (2009-2012), *EBRD*, London, 20 March 2013,

<sup>34</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*. Interviews with Nato Kurshitashvili, Gender Adviser, *EBRD*, 12 March 2013; Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013,

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013.

is important. As will be seen below, the authors of the GAP and the SGI have rearticulated the World Bank's 'Smart Economics' approach to emphasise the economic gains of investing in women in terms of progress in transition to market economies (EBRD 2009b; EBRD 2013a). This is not to say that gender advocates at the Bank are unaware of critiques targeted at this kind of approach for being reductionist and subjecting women's equality to market values. Rather several interviewees highlighted how, even though they might have their own reservations, aligning their approach with the EBRD's transition mandate was the only possible route for them to take to make their voices heard within the Bank.<sup>36</sup> As one of the designers behind the GAP explained:

“Well, clearly what the EBRD was set up to do was primarily to focus on the transition to the private sector. So in order to get resonance within the Bank we had to make a business case for it. It couldn't just be we are going to do this because we think it is right but in fact that by doing these things we were actually going to enhance the businesses that we support. That seemed to be in a private sector, project-orientated institution, the best approach.”<sup>37</sup>

The EBRD's Gender Team has since continued to avoid making appeals on non-economic grounds as to why gender equality is important. One of the designers behind the SGI explained their strategy in designing the policy in terms of what she saw as a common-sense approach:

“The approach we took was not to try and tell everybody that it was a human right or the right thing to do, but rather we tried to explain why it makes good sense for the EBRD to be

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<sup>36</sup> Interviews with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013; Nato Kurshitashvili, Gender Adviser, *EBRD*, 12 March 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Chikako Kuno, Former Director of the Small Business Team, Former Head of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, 22 March 2013.

working on gender issues in terms of what it does do for our client, then we try to integrate the agenda into our general business processes. This is because when you work in a bureaucracy, you have to get people on side and show them what you can do and why it is good for them.”<sup>38</sup>

In order to appease the EBRD’s leadership and appeal to colleagues, gender advocates have thus offered a largely depoliticised version of their agenda.

As will be returned to below, the EBRD’s rhetoric and policy on gender equality tend to emphasise how addressing gender inequalities benefits everyone rather than how it might subvert or challenge the structures that contribute to women’s inequality.<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that staff within the EBRD’s Gender Team do not necessarily see their proposed policy solutions as the optimal ones for addressing gender inequalities but rather as those that are possible within the constraints of the Bank. For example, one interviewee highlighted how she did not think that entrepreneurship was a panacea for all women to gain employment or to combat poverty:

“This is my personal view it is not every woman who is an entrepreneur but they always want to make women entrepreneurs and yes of course there is a need for that and this huge gaps and a lot of it by choice because women tend to be less risk averse or whatever but not every woman and especially not every poor woman is an entrepreneur.”<sup>40</sup>

This section has highlighted how gender advocacy at the EBRD was constrained by a combination of issues such as active resistance, a lack of understanding, and a shortage of resources. Following a difficult start, the

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<sup>38</sup> Anonymous interviewee, EBRD.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Anonymous interviewee, EBRD.



EBRD has increased its efforts on gender issues since 2011/12 and the agenda has shifted from a marginalised position to a more central unit in the Bank. By analysing policy-making as a political process, the power differential between gender advocates and between institutional representatives, especially bankers, within the EBRD's institutional hierarchy were recognised as shaping feminist strategy within the Bank. The responses by gender advocates resemble those seen in other institutions with economic mandates, such as the World Bank, and suggests the continued use of appeals to the economic gains of promoting gender equality as a feminist strategy within governance (Griffin 2009, 122-126). The next section examines how this discursive strategy has been translated into the EBRD's policies on gender issues and argues that it has afforded an instrumentalist approach that locates the promotion of gender equality firmly within the parameters of the Bank's neoliberal policy approaches, as expressed through its lending strategies.

### **Gender and equality through the market in the EBRD's policy framework**

This section explores and analyses the policies that the EBRD produced in relation to gender equality up until 2013. Starting with an overview of the GAP, the policy is organised into three main parts: first, a literature review assessing the impact of transition to market economies on women's economic situations in its region; second, a review of the EBRD's previous efforts to promote gender equality; and thirdly, a summary of actions proposed under the plan. The SGI is organised into five parts: the first sets out the EBRD's rationale for promoting gender equality; the second details the results from the gender gap analysis; the third outlines a new approach to gender mainstreaming; the fourth discusses impact assessments and monitoring; and the fifth, and final, part concentrates on resource implications. When compared with the GAP, the lengthier and much more technocratic discussion in the SGI evidences the gains in gender expertise in the Bank between the two policies.

Looking at specific activities proposed by the GAP and the SGI there are nonetheless similarities, especially in terms of their near exclusive focus on women. Both policies contain proposals for developing institutional capacity around gender issues, including the development of measuring and monitoring tools, promoting women on the boards of client companies and to enhance collaboration with other international financial institutions and NGOs (EBRD 2009b, 12-13; EBRD 2013a, 19-26). In addition, the policies establish the focus of the EBRD's externally oriented activities in terms of channelling finance and advice aimed at increasing the number of women who are active in markets as entrepreneurs, consumers and employers (EBRD 2013a, 16). Finally, the EBRD is seen to have a role in promoting women in corporate management roles, especially by supporting female candidates on its nominee company boards and by encouraging female borrowers to access business networks (EBRD 2009b, 13; EBRD 2013a, 21-22). This section analyses the kinds of ideas and arguments about gender that underpin these strategies. It does so by taking up the arguments made in Chapter 2 and pays particular attention to the ways in which the EBRD proposes to address the gender division of labour, as a major source of women's structural inequality.

### *Gender analysis and 'academic feminism' at the EBRD*

The way in which gender is articulated within the EBRD's policies needs to be analysed in the context of institutional politics. As argued above, the scope for gender advocates to advance more radical claims about gender was delineated by the EBRD's economic mandate. Interviews at the Bank indicated a degree of scepticism or hostility to what was called 'academic feminism' - with approaches to promoting gender equality that would challenge the EBRD's mandate and established procedures rejected exactly on these grounds. For example, rights-based approaches to promoting gender equality were rejected among several interviewees on the basis that the EBRD was simply 'not the animal' to engage in the kind of work that started from

the perspective of gender equality taking precedence as an objective on the basis of it being a human right.<sup>41</sup>

During the production of the GAP and the SGI, the EBRD's staff and leadership did not see the Bank as playing a potentially important role as a producer of knowledge on gender issues in its region. For example, EBRD President Suma Chakrabarti has argued that:

“The EBRD is not an ivory tower institution. We invest, principally in the private sector, in 34 countries from Central and Eastern Europe to Central Asia and the southern and eastern Mediterranean.” (Chakrabarti 2013)

The GAP and the SGI were written under the joint objectives of appeasing institutional resistance and to establish a route through which the EBRD can target women within the parameters of its existing lending model. The authors of both policies describe how they tried to identify evidence from organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank on how they could work on gender issues in the private sector as well as arguments as to how women can contribute to the EBRD's economic agenda. This was then complemented with examples of what the EBRD was already doing in relation to women – especially the WiB Programmes.<sup>42</sup>

In consequence, the EBRD's publications on gender equality are limited in their discussion about what the EBRD means by the concept of gender. Within the GAP and the SGI, gender is near exclusively used to refer to women (EBRD 2009b; EBRD 2013a). In turn, gender is regularly conflated with biological sex and both are described as biologically determined and

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<sup>41</sup> Interviews with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, EBRD, London 8 March 2013; Joachim Ockenden, Board Director for the United Kingdom, EBRD, London, 12 July 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Chikako Kuno, Former Director of the Small Business Team, Former Head of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, 22 March 2013

immutable characteristics that can ‘determine or impede a person’s economic opportunities’ (EBRD 2013a, 14). Based on this conceptualisation of gender in binary terms, as differences between women and men, the EBRD’s analysis of gender issues relies extensively upon the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics in different areas of the formal economy.

What is largely amiss within the EBRD’s official publications is thus an analysis of non-binary gender identities, sexuality and men and masculinity. One reason why this occurs is that the formats in which policies are produced rarely leave space for more complex academic discussion and tend to favour more easily presented statements about how gender equality contributes to the objectives of the institution (Chant 2012, 208-209).

The SGI introduces gender gap analysis as a key mechanism through which staff at the EBRD can assess inequalities within its region. In brief, gender gap analysis entails the quantification of the gaps between women and men’s participation in different areas of economic, social and political life and is widely used among governance actors to compare countries in terms of their progress on gender equality (Elias 2013, 158-159). The EBRD’s assessment of gender gaps in its region draws upon indexes developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the EBRD-IFC Women’s Economic Opportunity Index for 2012 and sector specific statistics (EBRD, 2013a, 8). The EBRD’s gender gap analysis targets seven key areas, including legal and social regulations, health, education, labour policy, labour practices, employment and firm ownership, and access to finance (EBRD 2013a, ANNEX II, 11-12).

At the time of this research, the EBRD was in the process of developing a more intersectional approach to gender analysis. Although this work is in its early stages, gender advocates at the Bank are clearly aware that their analysis needs to account for multiple sources of women’s inequality – and in doing so endeavour to recognise differences among women (EBRD 2010a, 1). The SGI

highlights the necessity of further research into gender inequalities at the country level:

“Whilst the Bank cannot address all of the gender gaps outlined in the table above, it is analytically interested in thoroughly understanding both the challenges that women face in each specific context as well as the multiple causes of gender inequality. This will require a closer look at each national situation, so as to better address these gaps through investments and/or policy dialogue.” (EBRD 2013a, 13).

Chapters 5 and 6 return to this issue, examining how women and their inequalities are conceptualised and addressed by the EBRD in its activities in Turkey. Below it is seen how by not foregrounding how gendered power relations organise women’s work across the public and private sphere, what is potentially lost in the EBRD’s gender analysis is the ability to address the reasons behind these gaps.

#### *Arguments and evidence in the EBRD’s policies*

The main argument made in EBRD policy is that there is a mutually supportive relationship between gains in gender equality and gains in economic growth. The EBRD’s policy authors thus draw upon arguments and evidence that is widely used among international institutions (Bexell 2012). The main influence on the GAP has been World Bank gender policy, and it is set in a similar framework of economic development as a form of modernisation (Elson 2009, 37; Bergeron 2003, 408). That is, the GAP assumes that market economies are *per definition* better for women as they provide for political and economic freedoms:

“Prior to the adoption of any other more specific initiatives promoting gender equality, the Bank’s work over the past 17 years has undoubtedly resulted in positive long-term benefits

for women. This is true of its actions taken to foster the transition towards open market- oriented economies (...).” (EBRD 2009b, 4)

As argued above, policy authors have borrowed from the World Bank’s ‘Smart Economics’ approach to make the case that promoting gender equality can contribute to the EBRD’s objective of economic growth within market economies (World Bank 2006). The first line of the GAP reads:

“Gender equality is recognised as an important component of the development and transition processes in particular to better leverage the untapped potential of women in emerging markets.” (EBRD 2009b, 4).

Women are in this document described as ideal targets of Bank lending and with potentially important roles to play in the construction and expansion of markets. For example:

“Gender equality leads to market expansion through the creation of products and services that appeal to women consumers. It leads to the strengthening of market-based institutions and policies designed to improve labour conditions, favour social inclusion and reduce discriminatory practices. It also leads to a transfer of skills and behaviours that enhance existing human resources. It further contributes to the adoption of the latest management best practices, including policies related to corporate social responsibility.” (EBRD 2009b, 11)

In order to make these arguments, gender advocates relied upon data and evidence that show a mutually supportive relationship between gender equality and economic gains among corporations. The principal sources cited in the GAP and the SGI are research on gender diversity and corporate

performance by the IFC (2008), the think tank Catalyst (2004) and business consultants McKinsey (2007, 2012). Gender diversity research begins from the claim that women are fundamentally different from men, and as such, bring traits, experiences and perspectives that can contribute to enhancing corporate performance (True 2014, 329-330). However, as argued by True (2014, 329-330), this kind of approach is rarely based upon an analysis of how structural inequalities and the gendered organisational logics of corporations impact on women's ability to enter these senior positions. For example, McKinsey (2007, 2012) offers a combination of corporate management advice based on emulating best practices with a self-help guide for women to get ahead. Chapter 6 returns to this point, and discusses it in terms of how the EBRD and its partners articulate gender equality as primarily the responsibility of individual women.

#### *Articulating equality and inequality*

As established above, the EBRD's strategies to promote gender equality concentrate on promoting women's equal opportunities in accessing markets. As argued by Elson (2009, 37) and Bergeron (2003, 408), the modernisation framework of World Bank gender policy principally conceives of gender inequalities as rooted in traditional societies and cultures, as primarily operating on the level of attitudes and negative gender stereotypes rather than in material conditions. In similarity, the EBRD's liberal approach to gender inequality identifies gender-based discrimination and negative stereotypes among employers and financial institutions as the main issues that the Bank will need to address to increase the number of women who are active in the formal economy (EBRD 2009b, 5-7; EBRD 2013a, 10).

There is nonetheless some evidence that suggests that the EBRD recognises women's gendered responsibilities for socially reproductive work in the household as a structural barrier to their participation in labour markets. This is especially so within the GAP, which highlights how women were

disproportionately affected by the retrenchment of the public sector in the 1990s:

“Indeed, many women had to choose between participating in the formal labour market and undertaking “caring” jobs. The shrinking of public expenditures allocated to childcare or care for the elderly shifted the burden of child and elder care from the public sector onto the individual. These caring tasks mostly fell to women.” (EBRD 2009b, 5)

By discussing women as a homogenous category little nuance is given to this analysis of labour markets. In contrast, a report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), highlights how the biggest discrepancies in labour force participation, quality of employment and wellbeing in the EBRD’s historical region are not necessarily between women and men but in terms of class (UNIFEM 2006).

In addition, policy authors offer few suggestions for how the EBRD can address women’s socially reproductive labour. There are, for example, no mentioning of support of policies such as the expansion of affordable provisions for care work outside of the household or initiatives that will address the ways in which care jobs are constructed and rewarded, or that seek to incentivise men to do more childcare (Elson 2012, 180). Rather, the market is positioned as the best route for the EBRD to alleviate women of unpaid labour as they enter the labour force. For example, the SGI briefly discusses how women’s double burden can be addressed by further marketisation of services and infrastructure.

“Reducing the amount of time women spend on unpaid work via improved infrastructure can free women’s time and help them spend it more productively and efficiently, such as engaging in economic activities that will eventually contribute



to women's empowerment and closing of gender gaps in the labour market." (EBRD 2013a, 13)

This key point is developed in subsequent chapters, starting with an analysis in Chapter 4 of continuity and change in terms of how the EBRD understands the role of the public sector in economic development. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the implications of the EBRD's market-oriented approach to providing for social reproduction, highlighting its limitations in terms of a gender equitable approach to increase women's employment in Turkey.

### *The co-optation of gender mainstreaming*

Both the GAP and the SGI highlight gender mainstreaming as the key approach through which the EBRD will promote gender equality. The GAP initially proposes to mainstream gender to identify "potential disparities which may exist within policies, strategies and projects of the Bank" (EBRD 2009b, 11). Although this statement would suggest a more comprehensive approach than the risk-mitigating model discussed above, the measures set out in the GAP concentrate on developing and communicating the Bank's existing strategy (EBRD 2009b, 12, 15). The GAP thus sets out a largely *ad hoc* and opportunistic approach to promoting gender equality in which the EBRD is encouraged to carry on its existing activities in relation to women, such as the WIB programmes (EBRD 2009b, 10-15). Indeed, even one of the new measures proposed in the policy - development of pilot projects on gender issues in Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic and Romania – originated in the finding of counterparts within the Bank who were open to the policy agenda.<sup>43</sup>

In contrast, the SGI is purposefully designed to provide the EBRD with a more structured approach to gender mainstreaming. In one part, this is intended to decrease the reliance upon the Gender Team and spread the responsibility for gender equality more widely across the Bank (EBRD

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Chikako Kuno, Former Director of the Small Business Team, Former Head of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, 22 March 2013.

2013a, 7). In order for this approach to be transformative, this would entail the use of assessments and consultation on all of the EBRD's policies and strategies to ensure that they do not reproduce gender biases. However, the SGI proposes a technocratic approach that still locates gender analysis within the assessment of specific projects – rather than the policy agendas and objectives that these projects are intended to contribute to.

“Mainstreaming refers to the fact that staff will consider gender needs and perspectives throughout its strategies and operations, even though in only a few selected cases will there be project opportunities, a strategy response or indeed a need for Bank safeguard action. The regular pipeline review under the ESP provides the principal tool by which the Bank - within the confines of its mandate and business model - can filter opportunities to apply gender considerations within the context of a specific project and in line with client demand.”  
(EBRD 2013a, 15)

In the model set out in the SGI, gender mainstreaming is still effectively subsumed as a tool that will support the EBRD's objective to extend the share of private sector participation in the economies in its region. The authors of the SGI stress how mainstreaming gender will not stretch the Bank's resources, but rather provide a model through which staff can identify opportunities to promote gender equality within the parameters of the EBRD's investment priorities (EBRD 2013a, 6, 10, 15- 16). Within the parameters of the SGI, gender equality remains a secondary or optional objective to the EBRD's lending, and should primarily take the form of adding a 'gender component' to a project that is already approved under the EBRD's lending criteria (EBRD 2013a, 16-17). The discussion of IDO Ferries in Chapter 5 offers an example of this type of loan – wherein the EBRD as a part of its loan to support the privatisation of a publicly owned company has also sought to encourage the client to increase its number of female employees.

The SGI does also provide scope for projects to incorporate gender equality among their key objectives and to be designed to principally target women (EBRD 2013a, 16-17). These kinds of projects are however to be targeted into the countries and sectors in which the Bank has identified the most significant gaps, especially focussing on Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia and the Western Balkans (EBRD 2013a, 15- 16). This suggests that the EBRD's new approach to gender mainstreaming is also used to rationalise why gender equality should not be a focus of all operations (EBRD 2013a, 14-15). The SGI highlights that the efforts on gender equality need to be targeted where they can have the maximum impact on the wider market or sector, for example by setting a new standard in providing equal opportunities for women and men (EBRD 2013a, 10). In this frame, gender gap analysis is not so much a tool to understand the gendered power relations that underpin these gaps but it is rather a form of policy relevant knowledge that will allow the EBRD to identify how it can channel its resources. That is, the SGI introduces the EBRD's wider institutional language of transition impact – as the extension of markets - into its policy framework on gender (Bronstone 1999, 74).

Looking at the number of projects implemented under the GAP and the SGI confirms that there has been an increase in the EBRD's efforts on gender equality since 2011/12. Up until 2013, the EBRD had implemented or commenced the implementation of 15 projects addressing women's access to finance, services and employment (EBRD, 2013a, Annex 1). In contrast, under the framework provided by the SGI, a total of 32 projects that aim to promote gender equality were in progress in March 2015. Geographically, a majority of EBRD's projects on gender issues have been concentrated into the financial and municipal sectors in Central Asia, Turkey and North Africa (EBRD 2015d, 4).

However, overall, projects and activities on gender equality are a very limited part of the EBRD's total activities and investments. Between 2009 and 2014 the EBRD's total lending figures reached a total of €48, 781 million invested

in 2,239 separate projects (EBRD 2014b, 3; EBRD 2015e, 3). This means that during the course of the GAP and the SGI only around two per cent of the total number of EBRD projects incorporated gender equality as an objective. This policy area also falls largely outside of the EBRD's core budget. The total budget for the GAP was €2 million to be provided by the EBRD's Shareholder Special Fund and donors (EBRD 2009b, 14). The SGI does not specify a budget, but states that the Gender Team will be seeking to generate resources from a wide range of donors in order to avoid reliance upon the EBRD's Shareholder Special Fund (EBRD 2013a, 26).

## **Conclusions**

The analysis of the EBRD's approach to gender equality needs to be placed in the context of institutional politics. This chapter has demonstrated that gender advocates at the EBRD have had to navigate an institutional environment that was often opposed to the introduction of new policy agendas aimed at gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. A major source of resistance was identified in terms of the EBRD's economic mandate and how this has been translated into the Bank's private sector and profit-oriented lending profile. In consequence, the early stages of developing policies and strategies on gender equality saw this agenda being severely under-resourced, allocated only to a few individuals and occupying an isolated position within the EBRD's organisational structure.

The chapter has established that gender mainstreaming at the EBRD has been done in accordance to an integrationist model. The reason why this has happened has been explained through feminist strategy in the EBRD, which has consistently aimed at garnering support for gender equality by aligning the new policy agenda with the Bank's mandate and lending strategies. The increased supply of gender expertise during the policymaking process has meant that gender analysis in the Bank has taken on more technocratic and instrumentalised forms. By doing so, gender advocates have become more increasingly successful in gaining the approval of their work among

colleagues, management and at the EBRD's Board of Directors. The implications of pursuing integrationist and instrumentalist strategies were however critiqued throughout the chapter, especially in terms of the secondary position of the objective of gender equality to the EBRD's market-making objectives and borrowing strategies. The third part of the chapter warned that this means that the EBRD excludes analyses of gender power relations and how these may shape inequalities across the productive and reproductive spheres of the economy. The remainder of the thesis address the implications of how women have been added to the EBRD's market-making agenda. The next chapter does so by discussing change and continuity in the EBRD's role and strategies for advancing markets since 2008.

## Chapter 4

### Gender in economic theory and policy at the EBRD

“If you are a Bank established in 1990 it is fairly obvious what you don't like. Essentially, the Bank was born at the time where the Washington Consensus could more or less get away with it. It bears those scars, it is very market-oriented, it is very private, it believes in markets full stop.”<sup>44</sup>

“But then, under the Deauville process we started working in SEMED countries and there clearly gender is an issue, you cannot ignore it.”<sup>45</sup>

This chapter continues the analysis of institutional change at the EBRD, focussing on how the Bank's interest in gender issues relates to continuity and change in its economic strategies. The chapter begins by examining the economic logic that informs and is reproduced by the EBRD and demonstrates how this has rendered the Bank blind to gender issues within its region for most of its history. It then turns to an exploration of how the EBRD's role and strategies have been repositioned and revised in the aftermath of the 2007/8 financial crisis. In particular, it is seen how the concern with inequality has become more pressing to the EBRD as it has expanded beyond the former communist states to start lending to the countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED). The empirical analysis in this chapter examines how gender advocates in the Bank have capitalised upon these shifts to promote their agenda.

The chapter makes a number of arguments, the main one being that feminist economic insights continue to be marginalised by the Bank. The expansion southeast has prompted the EBRD to, at least in part, move away from its free market approach and adopt more interventionist strategies to advance

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<sup>44</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*.

<sup>45</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Gender Team, *EBRD*.

economic inclusion in its borrowing countries. By incorporating their agenda into the Bank's protocols for economic inclusion, gender advocates are argued to have linked gender equality to the Bank's strategies for advancing competitiveness as the main policy goal among its member states.

### **Gender in the EBRD's economic analysis**

The organisation and practice of economic research at the EBRD are integral parts of the analysis of gender-related institutional change in this thesis. As argued at length in Chapter 2, neoliberal economic policies reproduce gender biases from mainstream economic theories – often to the effect of having disproportionate impacts on women (Beneria 2003, 50-52).

The Office of the Chief Economist (OCE) is the main research unit at the EBRD and it provides the economic analyses that inform Bank reports, policies and lending strategies.<sup>46</sup> The research economists within the office are educated to PhD level in economics-related areas, primarily from prestigious North American universities, and who specialise in the various sub-fields that are seen as particularly relevant for the EBRD transition economics, foreign direct investment, international banking and trade, behavioural economics.<sup>47</sup> As explained by an interviewee at the OCE, her job role is to “produce research that is Bank relevant, containing data from the Bank's countries of operations and research which is relevant to the Bank's mandate.”<sup>48</sup> In turn, the outputs from this office are published in the EBRD's Transition Reports, a working papers series and peer-reviewed articles in economics journals.

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<sup>46</sup> The Chief Economist oversees this office and also works as a special adviser to the EBRD's President. The post has been held by Erik Berglöf (2006 – 2015), Willem Buiter (2000-2005), Nicholas Stern (1994-1999).

<sup>47</sup> EBRD, 'Economics researchers', <http://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/economic-research-and-data/researchers.html>, accessed 10/07/2015.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Michelle Brock, Research Economist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.

### *Gender-blindness in economic theory and policy*

To understand the intersection between economic research and neoliberal economic policy, it is helpful to consider their shared ideational and methodological premises. Griffin (2009, 64) highlights these in terms of four key assumptions about the premises of effective economic organisation: value neutrality and objectivity of economic research and policy; functional individualism; competition; and the centrality of the market. Starting with the first, the research produced by the Office of the Chief Economist is framed within the methodological convention of quantitative and ostensibly value-neutral research. The survey of the EBRD's working paper series showed how research economists use a variety of theoretical approaches associated with mainstream economics such as variants of neoclassical economics, institutional economics and behavioural economics and rely extensively upon econometric methods. In turn, economic research at the EBRD is characterised by a high level of abstraction and the use of quantitative methods.

The EBRD's publications on labour markets are particularly interesting to consider, not least because this is the area in which the Bank targets the majority of its efforts on gender equality (EBRD 2009b; EBRD 2013a). Labour markets are a key area of the EBRD's research, especially in terms of their role in economic competitiveness (Yakovlev and Zhuravskaya 2011; Haltiwanger *et al.* 2010). In this context, EBRD analyses have concentrated on the dynamic between wages and foreign investment (Bircan 2014; Damijan and Marcolin 2013) and management practices and firm performance (Bloom *et al.* 2011; Cornelli *et al.* 2009). From these studies, it can be deduced that the EBRD understands labour markets as situated in the public sphere of productive economic relationships. This includes both formalised relations and legal arrangements and work that is informal in the sense that it is illegal, unregistered or taking place without social security coverage (Krstić and Sanfey 2010; EBRD 2000, 101-102).



Within the EBRD's labour market analysis workers are primarily treated as a form of human capital that should be distributed in the most effective manner to achieve economic gains. This is based upon the conceptualisation of efficiency in terms of market gains that are assumed by economics researchers to benefit the population as a whole (Griffin 2009, 66-67; 74). The EBRD's labour market research thus tends to exclude consideration of how unpaid work in the household and community impact on whether and how different social groups participate in paid production (Elson 1999). It is also important to recognise that the EBRD's labour market analysis has paid little attention to how processes of privatisation and liberalisation have impacted on the conditions of employment for women and men. As argued by True (2003b, 78-79), the establishment of a private sector in the EBRD's countries has afforded a new segmentation of the labour market in which low-paid and insecure forms of employment are more prevalent outside of the public sector.

During the EBRD's 'first phase of transition' in the early 1990s, markets were to be constructed through rapid and large-scale policy packages of liberalisation and privatisation (EBRD 1994, 3; EBRD 1995, 2). The Bank's economic strategies mimicked the 'Shock Therapy' model of the IMF and Jeffrey Sachs and aimed to delineate the options available to national policy makers to ensure that transformation followed a neoliberal route (Lipton *et al.* 1990; Balcerowicz 1994; Shields and Wallin 2015, 388). To lock these reforms in among national governments, the EBRD proposed that economic recovery was to be achieved by attracting an inflow of international capital in the form of foreign direct investment (Ivanova 2007; EBRD 1995, 5-6). In a retrospective, the EBRD discusses its concept of transition during the 1990s in the following terms:

“Transition was about reducing direct state intervention in the economy and establishing some basic market mechanisms: allowing prices to be determined by supply and demand; moving to private ownership of firms; reorientation of domestic and international trade; creating competition,

increasing financial intermediation of savings to investment.”  
(EBRD 2009a, 3)

The role of individuals in the making of market economies is an important theme in the EBRD’s policy and rhetoric. Often invoking anti-communist sentiments, early rhetoric by the EBRD describe individuals engaging in markets is the most efficient and most desirable form of economy. For example:

“Transition is not only an intermediate goal contributing to economic development. It may also be regarded as an ultimate objective in itself. The market economy, in contrast to central planning, gives, in principle, the individual the right to basic choices over aspects of his or her life: occupation and place of work, where to live, what to consume, what risks to take or avoid, and so on. The right to these choices may be seen as a basic liberty and as a fundamental aspect of standard of living.” (EBRD 1994, 3)

The EBRD’s economic discussion assigns individuals key roles in recovering from the repeated recessions in the 1990s. The rational individuals in the Bank’s publications from this time were willing to endure economic hardship against gains in political freedoms and a promise of prosperity through markets in the long run. Indeed, individual sacrifices in terms of health, incomes and inequality were discussed as a necessary ill to ensure the establishment and duration of market economies (EBRD 1994, 3; EBRD 1995, 2; EBRD 1998, 3). Meanwhile, the Bank’s second Annual Report applauded the citizens of East and Central Europe for their “steadfast determination to establish the necessary institutions, on their ability to face up to challenging reappraisals. There is no doubt their history, culture and skills will help” (EBRD 1992, 8).

Individuals were encouraged by the EBRD to do so by competing in the market, especially by engaging in entrepreneurial activities (EBRD 1997, v). By becoming entrepreneurs, individuals were to ensure economic growth, enable the making of a private sector-led economy, and compensate for the shortfall of state-provided sources of income and (EBRD 2003a, 3). When the EBRD started to address gender inequality it shifted from these undifferentiated individuals to an emphasis on women's roles in extending market relations. This point was suggested in Chapter 3 and it will be returned to below and in the following chapters.

The EBRD's role and strategies for transition from communism have for the most part been premised upon the privileging of the economic over the social. As argued in Chapter 1, struggles and reforms during the early years of the EBRD amounted to the institution being disassociated from addressing issues such as poverty and inequality as it seeks to establish market economies through structural reforms (EBRD 1995, 2). In advancing structural reform, the EBRD's economists did not account for how women were positioned differently from men in the Eastern and Central European economies. Women's employment was concentrated into sectors that faced extensive cutbacks in the initial rounds of privatisation including care, services and light industry (Pollert 2003). In turn, the loss of both male and female employment had implications on women's workload within the household – where women have been widely shown to increase their paid and unpaid labour to compensate for the loss of income and publicly available and affordable childcare (Corrin 1992; Einhorn 1993; Molyneux 1994).

The analysis of the EBRD's Annual Reports and Transition Reports nonetheless found that the EBRD has never been entirely silent on the effects of market reforms on other parts of the economy and society. In contrast, the Bank has regularly included data on impacts on health (EBRD 1995, 22-24), employment and labour force participation (EBRD 1992, 34), poverty and inequality (EBRD 1997, 14; EBRD 1999a, 13-14). However, these issues are not discussed in terms of how they are structured along the lines of gender,

race, class or age nor are they suggested to be something that the Bank can take responsibility for. Rather, at best, the EBRD hoped that the benefits from its market reforms would have positive ‘trickle down’ effects on human wellbeing (Bayer 2013; EBRD 1994, 3). Indeed, as argued in Chapter 3, only by the early 2000s did economists at the EBRD start to discuss a potential role for the Bank to play in reducing poverty in its region.

The exploration of the role of the state in the EBRD’s economic analysis found change as well as continuity in the kind of neoliberal economic logic that the EBRD seeks to impose on its member states. As argued in Chapter 2, neoliberal ideology posits the ideal role of the state in terms of a facilitator of markets (Harvey 2005, 5-9). In 1994, the Bank established that privately owned enterprises and competition within markets are the key ingredients of a well-functioning market economy (EBRD 1994, 4-5). The role of the state is discussed here in the minimal terms of providing and ensuring the legal framework for market exchange especially through securing private property rights and the collection of taxes (EBRD 1994, 4-6). However, in the light of issues of corruption, rent seeking and oligarchy within privatisation processes, the EBRD stressed that market reforms needed to be accompanied by the reform of institutions in order to achieve well-functioning market economies. (Shields and Wallin 2015, 388-389).

The EBRD’s economic strategies aim to introduce competitiveness as a main objective of economic policy among its member states (Carroll 2012; Shields 2015). This objective garnered a more central role in the EBRD’s publications from the late 1990s and onward, wherein the Bank’s economists have urged for governments to maintain sound fiscal policies, ensure good governance practices and discipline on labour in order to attract international capital (Shields and Wallin 2015, 388-389). The EBRD’s deployment of foreign direct investment as a means to discipline national governments is clear in its 1999 medium-term operational priorities, titled ‘Moving Transition Forward’:

“Political and economic competition is vital to pressure the government to provide essential public goods and to encourage firms to restructure and innovate rather than to rely primarily on state support. The process of competition is therefore central to the development of institutions that are able to support markets and private enterprise.” (EBRD 1999b, v).

Further to this, when the EBRD welcomed the entry of its Central European members into the EU it concomitantly pressed for the continuation of market liberalisation to accommodate the “(...) ever-growing need for private investment to keep driving transition forward within an environment of greater competitiveness and rigorous constraints on national budgets” (EBRD 2003a, 10).

In practice, competitiveness promotion in the EBRD’s policy advice has often taken the form of advocating reforms to the welfare state. Within its early publications, the EBRD argues for the state’s welfare functions to be directed to ensure that individuals were able to participate in markets: either by providing education and health services for workers or to provide a social security net to alleviate poverty for those unable to participate in market competition (EBRD 1994, 5-6; EBRD 1997, 14). In addition to calling for restraints on public expenditure, the EBRD has aimed to construct markets within welfare provision and increase the share of the private sector. The EBRD is for example a major proponent of private pension schemes in its region, having called for limits to state contributions and raises in the pension age in order to increase discipline upon labour and promote economic growth (EBRD 1998, 38, 161, 163, 183, 191; EBRD 1999a, 239, 251; EBRD, 2005b, 130; Deacon 2000, 147 - 154).

What is excluded from these strategies is an account of the reliance on women on the welfare state and the consequences for women of these kinds of reforms. For example, pension reform in the EBRD’s countries has been

linked with an increased risk of poverty among older women. As argued by Zajieck *et al.* (2007), the privatisation of the Polish pension system in the 1990s had disproportionate effects on women because they, on average, earn less, live longer and are less likely to have alternative insurance schemes. Household level analyses have also highlighted how the pressure on young women to stay in the labour force combined with the withdrawal of affordable childcare, has meant that older women take on more work in caring for their wider family (Zajieck *et al.* 2007, 59-60; Smith and Stenning 2006, 195-200).

### *Gender as a variable in the EBRD's economic research*

How, and to what extent, can the EBRD's interest in gender equality since 2008 be seen within its economic research? As argued in Chapter 3, gender mainstreaming at the EBRD has primarily meant the adding of women to the Bank's lending strategies. The remainder of this chapter concentrates on what this means in terms of the EBRD's core economic framework as set out in its transition methodology. At this point it is interesting to consider the EBRD's working papers series, as the format of these arguably provides the most freedom for economists at the Bank to introduce theoretical innovations and different topics. Between 2008 and 2014 the OCE published 68 working papers on a variety of topics related to economic development in the EBRD's region, offering a rich source of evidence about the kind of academic research that is favoured by the Bank.

The main finding in relation to the working papers is that gender analysis is rarely a part of the EBRD's economic research. The main topics of these papers are labour markets; the 2007/8 financial crisis; economic growth, competitiveness and macroeconomic policy. The papers relied extensively upon econometric methods and engaged a variety of theoretical approaches associated with mainstream economics such as variants of neoclassical economics, institutional economics and behavioural economics. In contrast, no references were made to work by feminist economists or heterodox economists using for example post-Keynesian theories. Only 16 out of the

working papers used the term gender. In these cases, this was done a in terms a decomposition by sex (see for example Akcura 2013) or as a control variable in sampling strategies (see for example Bloom *et al.* 2011; Friebel and Schweiger 2012). In one paper gender was employed as one of the factors that could explain income inequality, yet again more as a statistic than social relationship (Krstić and Sanfey 2010).

Economic research at the EBRD has nonetheless seen a significant degree of innovation. As argued by Bergeron (2003, 400), the increased interest in poverty among development institutions since the early 2000s has been underpinned by major shifts in economic research. In particular, economic research has developed theories about institutions, social capital and individuals to consider how “market imperfections can affect non-market functions such as social arrangements and cultural norms, and, conversely, how social arrangements, particularly social networks, can affect economic outcomes” (Bergeron 2003, 400). At the EBRD theoretical innovations in economic research can be seen through the Bank’s increased interest in individual behaviour and attitudes. For example, together with the World Bank, the EBRD has commissioned two large-scale surveys of individual attitudes and experiences of economic and political reform in its region (EBRD 2006c; EBRD 2010e). Since 2011, the EBRD’s working paper series has also included new topics related to how individual behaviour and social norms contribute to market outcomes (Brock *et al.* 2012; Brock *et al.* 2014). This type of theoretical framework has been applied to investigate the impacts on microfinance initiatives on poverty reduction (Attanasio *et al.* 2011; Augsburg *et al.* 2012).

The EBRD’s studies of individual and households continue to rely upon quantitative methodologies and a high level of aggregation. The EBRD’s papers on microfinance focus on women as the main category of borrowers. However, rather ascertaining the effects on women’s social status and economic empowerment of loans, the efficiency of lending strategies are assessed in terms of aggregate household income and the viability of women’s

enterprises over time (Attanasio *et al.* 2011; Augsburg *et al.* 2012). The role of the household in market economies has attracted gradually more attention from the EBRD's economists. Already in 1994, the household was suggested by the Bank as one of the 'basic ingredients of a market economy' together with enterprises, markets and financial institutions (EBRD 1994, 4). It would nonetheless take until the late 2000s for the EBRD to discuss the household at any real length in its publications.

The EBRD's analysis of the 2007/8 financial crisis positions the household as an important site for understanding the impact of the crisis, especially in the terms of losses in employment and income (EBRD 2010e, 7-8). However, the household is primarily as an aggregate unit and principally through its role in consumption (EBRD 2010e, 8-12). For example, male-female distinctions are made on an inter-household basis where female-headed households are found to have experienced more difficulties in maintaining their basic consumption and health expenditures than the average household (EBRD 2010e, 11). In contrast, using an intra-household model of analysis can help illuminate how consumption and labour are organised between different household members (Kabeer 1998, 92-93). By opening up the household as a central unit of analysis, feminist research on economic crises have shown how economic downturns are linked to rises in the incidence of domestic violence (Knowles *et al.* 1999), put pressures on women's unpaid labour, and to push women and men into informal or precarious forms of employment (Aslanbeigui and Summerfeld 2011; Seguino *et al.* 2009).

The EBRD's research on economic inclusion (see below) use household characteristics to measure inequalities. This nascent strand of research at the Bank aims to measure the extent to which differences in wealth across households can be attributed to characteristics of household members such as sex, age and urban-rural location (EBRD 2013b, 78-79). In this context, the EBRD's research economists treat gender and other social constructs as fixed attributes of individuals. In turn, inequality is not understood as a product of power relations but as form of injustice that needs to be addressed because



having attributes such as being female, young, disabled or black is not a person's own fault.<sup>49</sup> This point is returned to below in relation to the Bank's economic inclusion agenda. Economists themselves recognise that the research on inequality needs to be developed on a country-to-country level to examine also characteristics such as ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability (EBRD 2013b, 80). There are nonetheless clear heteronormative and universalist assumptions in the Bank's discussion as to why it does not consider gender relations important in its examination of households:

“One important limitation applies: because spouses or domestic partners are usually of a different gender, it makes no sense to measure the influence of gender on household wealth. While gender is always a characteristic, or “circumstance”, of the head of the household, it is rarely a circumstance of the household. Hence, it is not considered in the statistical analysis.” (EBRD 2013b, 80).

As argued by Razavi (2013, 229), “economic governance has tended to evade claims for gender equality, or has responded to them only very partially.” This section has identified the continued marginalisation of feminist insights by economists at the EBRD, even after the Bank started making efforts to promote gender equality in 2008. The incorporation of gender analysis in the EBRD's economic research has been limited both in scope and form, and not afforded the necessary widening and deepening of the Bank's conceptual apparatus to include reproductive labour and household power dynamics. Rather, as argued in Chapter 3, the promotion of gender equality by the EBRD takes the relatively superficial form encouraging women to enter into markets as producers and consumers without considering how they are already implicated in market relations through their unpaid labour.

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Michelle Brock, Research Economist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.

## **Crisis, continuity and expansion of the EBRD's neoliberal economic strategies**

This section examines how the EBRD's leadership has repositioned the Bank as a governance actor since 2008. By analysing the EBRD's response to the 2007/8 financial crisis and the debates surrounding the decision to start investments in Turkey and SEMED, it is argued that the Bank's shareholders have reasserted the legitimacy of the Bank's neoliberal economic strategies. Nonetheless, the geographical expansion opened up a window of opportunity for gender advocates working for the EBRD to make their voices heard. Increasing the number of women who participate in markets and politics has been an important aim of the EBRD's policy and rhetoric on the new region.

### *The EBRD's response to the 2007/8 global financial crisis*

By the mid-2000s, the US and the UK had started to argue that the EBRD's historical mission was completed and were calling for the EBRD to be dismantled.<sup>50</sup> Fuelling their argument was the entry of the EBRD's original member states in Central Europe into the EU, with the Czech Republic 'graduating' from the EBRD in 2007 by shifting its membership status from a borrowing to a donor country and lending to the other seven accession countries being phased out (EBRD 2011b, 46-47). The 2007/8 financial crisis stalled the exit of the EU countries and saw the reinvigoration of the EBRD's lending and activities in this part of its regions.

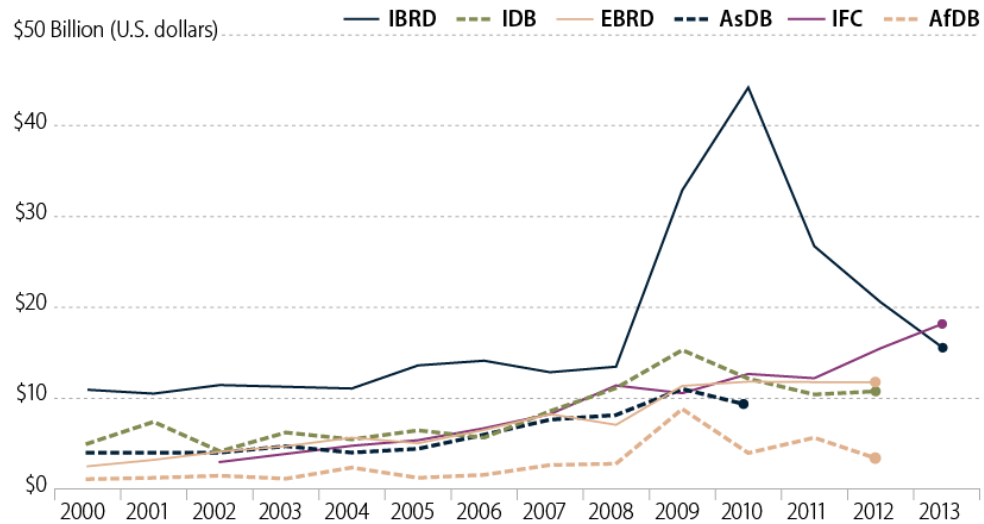
The EBRD, together with EIB, the IMF and World Bank, was one of the founders of the European Bank Coordination Initiative (the Vienna Initiative) in 2009. During the first phase of this initiative, the Bank committed to channelling investments worth €25 billion in the financial sectors of East and Central Europe (EBRD 2009a, 12). In parallel, the EBRD's total business volume grew by 55 per cent between 2008 and 2009, principally because of

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<sup>50</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*.

increases in lending following the crisis response (EBRD 2009a, 13). The below table shows the EBRD’s investments compared to other MDBs, illustrating the spike in lending during the financial crisis.

*Chart 2: MDB Financial Assistance 2000-2013*



Source: Nelson (2013, 6)

The 2007/8 crisis initially prompted a concern within the EBRD about popular backlash and the loss of legitimacy for the Bank’s neoliberal economic strategies. In an overview to the Board of Governors, economic strategists at the Bank worried about countries being ‘pushed off the path that led to market- oriented democracy’:

“But the most important impact of the crisis on the transition process may be political, and its direction remains unclear. Questions about the market and globalisation are being asked by politicians, business people and ordinary citizens across the globe, not just in the transition region. The fact that the crisis started in the mature market economies and spread into emerging markets, rather than the other way around, may erode confidence in the model that the transition countries have been encouraged to follow for the past 20 years.” (EBRD 2009a, 8)

Subsequently, the EBRD's economic rhetoric has consistently pushed for countries to undertake further market-reforms (Shields 2015, 9). In the 2010 Transition Report, Chief Economist Erik Bergl f argued that: "complacency would threaten not only recovery, but also long-term economic growth. There can be no return to the region's pre-crisis dynamism without new reform" (cited in EBRD 2010c, iv).

Turning to the EBRD's more concrete policy advice, the Bank manifests the revitalisation of neoliberal economics that have been seen since the crisis (Razavi 2013, 217). The main focus of the EBRD's economic advice and research has been the realms of finance and production (EBRD 2009a, 4; De Haas *et al.* 2015; De Haas and Van Lelyveld 2014; Bergl f *et al.* 2009). One important shift within the EBRD's economic advice is a new sense of caution of its countries being over-reliant upon foreign financing. The EBRD has particularly called for economic recovery through the development of local sources of finance and the recapitalisation of private banks, which then are to invest in the 'real economy', conceived of primarily as SMEs and the energy and infrastructure sectors (EBRD 2009a, 8; EBRD 2013b, 18-19; EBRD 2011b, 45-46).

The EBRD's crisis response has thus, for the most part, been gender blind and omitting any substantial consideration of how the crisis and austerity have impacted on the sphere of the household and social reproduction. At the national level the EBRD has urged for austerity measures, with low public expenditure facilitated through further privatisation and commodification of publicly provided services (EBRD 2010c, 127; EBRD 2009c, 20). In addition, the EBRD continues to advocate the further deregulation of labour markets and applauds countries such as Estonia for having continued down the path of labour market flexibility in the context of economic downturn (EBRD 2012, 111; EBRD 2010c, 112). Crucially, austerity policies have been widely argued to have the most severe impacts on poor women and mothers because these groups tend to rely the most on the welfare services provided by the state

and need support to return to employment (Elson 2014, 206; Rubery 2014, 24). In contrast, in line with the EBRD's overall focus, the Bank's staff have primarily considered potential gender impacts of the crisis in terms of a potential reduction of credit available to female borrowers.<sup>51</sup>

*From a temporary to a permanent institution*

The EBRD's publications from the late 2000s indicate that the Bank's institutional identity was beginning to be repositioned from an institution with a very specific and highly normative mission of democratisation and marketisation and into a form of expertise. In a 2009 letter to the EBRD's Governors Bank, President Tomas Mirow argued that although the responsibility for economic recovery was with national governments the EBRD could offer:

“Attributes that are very valuable in these circumstances, in particular the skills and capacity to take direct risks, ability to provide equity as well as liquidity and long-term funding (including in local currencies), direct access to the private as well as the public sectors, and strong on-the-ground presence in all 29 countries of operations.” (EBRD 2009a, ii)

This depoliticised representation of the EBRD as set of tools and experiences has been significant within the debate among the Bank's leadership as to whether the Bank should start providing loans to new countries. This process started by a request from the Turkish government for Turkey to shift its status from being a donor country to become a recipient of EBRD finance (Wagstyl 2008). The request was deliberated over between May and October 2008, resulting in the acceptance by the EBRD's Board of Governors (EBRD

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Henry Russell, Director of the Small Business Team, Member of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, London, 21 March 2013.

2009d, 12). Those in favour, especially EU countries and institutions as well as Japan, saw the process as potentially important to Turkey's accession to the EU (Wagstyl 2008). In addition, during interviews with senior representatives from the EBRD it was highlighted that the decision had been motivated primarily upon pragmatic grounds, in terms of diversifying the EBRD's portfolio away from Russia and to gain access to a new and large market. According to these interviewees, the process had not been technically difficult as Turkey fell within the EBRD's mandate to operate within European countries.<sup>52</sup>

The decision to expand nonetheless saw the backing down of the US and the UK, who had opposed it partially on the following grounds:

“So, we didn't want it because our view of the Bank at that point was that it was a temporary institution, that it had a particular historic mission tied to a particular geography and a particular sector and particular circumstances.”<sup>53</sup>

Vice versa, supporters of the expansion to Turkey and SEMED described their reason for this in terms of their faith in the EBRD's operational model as something that could be valuable to supporting economic development far beyond the EBRD's original region:

“The other big element is that I strongly believe that the concept of EBRD and that is this transition concept is a message, is a business model if you like that can also be applicable in other parts of the world. It is not necessarily only for former Soviet countries. (...) We have a project and

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<sup>52</sup> Interviews with Michael Davey, Country Director for Turkey, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 22 April 2013; Memduh Ackay, Board Director for Turkey (Romania, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic), *EBRD*, Istanbul, 13 May 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*.

therefore we can also go beyond. For me this is not the end of the story.”<sup>54</sup>

The EBRD’s expansion into North Africa and Jordan proved a more complex and protracted process compared to Turkey. In part, this was because it required the revision of the EBRD’s founding articles hence necessitating the approval of all of its shareholder countries (EBRD 1990). Nonetheless, in May 2011, the EBRD signed the G8 Deauville Memorandum, committing to provide technical cooperation and financial resource to the Arab Spring region. The Bank approved its first investments in Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco in September 2012 and the first project in Egypt signed off in December 2012. Possibly even more challenging has been the political situation in the region, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, which has meant that the EBRD’s planned investments and programmes have been delayed on repeated occasions (Guest 2014). Since then, the Bank’s political assessments and investments in the region have faced staunch critiques from human rights organisations for pursuing ‘aggressive privatisation programmes’ whilst paying insufficient attention to reforms of legal and judicial systems and the support of freedom of speech, religion and assembly.<sup>55</sup>

The EBRD has in its public rhetoric compared the Arab Spring to the revolutions in Europe in 1989, positioning itself as a legitimate and skilled promoter of democratisation.<sup>56</sup> Interviewees at the EBRD were often dismissive of these kinds of claims, highlighting how difficult it had been for them to start working in SEMED and how they still felt the need to proceed with caution and adjust to their new environment.<sup>57</sup> However, the legitimacy

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<sup>54</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*.

<sup>55</sup> Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (2013); Bankwatch ‘Southern Mediterranean’, <http://bankwatch.org/category/region/southern-mediterranean>, accessed 10/08/2015.

<sup>56</sup> EBRD, ‘The EBRD and the SEMED’, <http://www.ebrd.com/the-EBRD-and-the-SEMED.html>, accessed 10/08/2015.

<sup>57</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*; Interview with Camilla Otto, Assistant to the EU Director, *EBRD*, London, 19 July 2013; Interview with Charlotte Ruhe, Director of the Small Business Team, *EBRD*, London 7 March 2013.

of the EBRD as an actor in SEMED has been publicly presented in terms of the Bank's history and experience in advancing market-oriented democracies – repackaged as a set of value neutral techniques, lending strategies and contacts. For example, the Group of Eight (G8) has called the EBRD a 'unique instrument' to engender similar transitions as in Europe.<sup>58</sup> Chapters 5 and 6 return to this point by exploring how gender equality is being incorporated into the kind of expertise that the Bank and its partners provide in Turkey.

*'Seeing women' in the EBRD's new region*

The expansion to Turkey, Jordan and North Africa has had significant consequences for the EBRD's Gender Team. As argued by a Gender Adviser at the Bank, the work of her team "had taken a few years but now the time is coming."<sup>59</sup> An amalgamation of factors had led to a wider shift in attitudes across the EBRD about the relevance of gender issues to their operations, including the support by Suma Chakrabarti and the popularity of the new manager of the Gender Team (see Chapter 3). As suggested by the quote below, a major factor in this had also been the EBRD's decision to start lending in countries with low rates of women in public life.

"The reason why the gender initiative got a lot of support in the end, I think, was not only because you got new impetus from the very top and people are in general supportive; it is also because of the new region EBRD is operating in where people are recognising that the gaps in some of these aspects are tremendous."<sup>60</sup>

Put in context, Turkey and North Africa display some of the lowest rates of

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<sup>58</sup> EBRD, 'The EBRD and the SEMED', <http://www.ebrd.com/the-EBRD-and-the-SEMED.html>, accessed 10/08/2015.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Nato Kurshitashvili, Gender Adviser, *EBRD*, 12 March 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Camilla Otto, Assistant to the EU Director, *EBRD*, London, 19 July 2013.



women active in the labour market or in employment. In 2012 the average rate of female employment for the Middle East and North Africa was at about 27 per cent, compared with an average of 57 per cent for the OECD countries (OECD 2014b, 18). Research commissioned by the EBRD found that the labour force participation rate of Jordanian women was at approximately 15 per cent; Egypt and Morocco about 25 per cent; and Turkey just below 30 per cent (EBRD 2015c, 23).

Even interviewees who were otherwise adopting a relatively cautious stance to the EBRD's role in promoting equality argued that the agenda was necessary in the new region:

“I think there is no need to explain further why this might be important, but I understand that involvement, the strong involvement of women in the economy is an achievement anyway and looking at the political mandate of this Bank, promoting market economy and democracy, I think better involvement of women in politics, in the debate or development of society would also be an achievement with this respect to this, culturally and politically.”<sup>61</sup>

Vice versa, several interviewees hypothesised that the EBRD's previous disinterest in gender inequality had stemmed from the comparatively high rates at which women were employed or in the labour force in East and Central Europe.<sup>62</sup> As argued by a member of staff at the Bank: “In our

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Joachim Schwarzer, Board Director for Germany, *EBRD*, London, 12 July 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Interviews with Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, and Ralph de Haas, Deputy Director of Research, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013; Valeria Della Rosa, Senior Manager of Business Advisory Services and Caroline Bryant Bosa, Principal Manager of Small Business Support, *EBRD*, London, 6 March 2013; Henry Russell, Director of the Small Business Team, Member of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, London, 21 March 2013.

traditional countries of operation gender is actually not that big of a deal to be honest.”<sup>63</sup>

An important legacy of the communist regime was a well-educated female population and a high percentage of women in the workforce and in political institutions (Toth 1993, 214, 221; Verdery 1994, 222). In the early 1990s the average rate of female labour force participation in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia was 60 per cent (70 per cent for men) (UNIFEM 2006, 22). However, as interviewees were aware of<sup>64</sup>, these rates dropped significantly during the 1990s and were down by 10 per cent for both women and men in 1995 (UNIFEM 2006, 22). In addition, the conditions for both male and female workers have deteriorated significantly since then with increases in insecure and informal forms of employment and labour migration (UNIFEM 2006, 6). Women are in effect still primarily visible to the EBRD in terms of their relative absence or presence within markets and the public sphere.

Since commencing operations in Turkey, Jordan and North Africa, the EBRD’s staff and leadership have nonetheless broadened the scope for the discussion on gender issues in the Bank. One important change is that individuals at the EBRD have begun to link gender equality to the Bank’s political mandate of democracy promotion in the region. For example, Michaela Bergman in her position as head of the Gender Team has in a speech on the EBRD’s role in the new region argued: “Promoting democracy goes hand in hand with promoting gender equality.”<sup>65</sup> In addition, in a keynote speech to the 2013 Trust Women Conference, EBRD President Suma Chakrabarti highlighted women’s movements as key forces of

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<sup>63</sup> Anonymous interviewee, EBRD.

<sup>64</sup> Senior Manager of Business Advisory Services and Caroline Bryant Bosa, Principal Manager of Small Business Support, *EBRD*, London, 6 March 2013

<sup>65</sup> EBRD ‘Half the world’s population’, 12 November 2013, <http://www.ebrd.com/news/2013/half-the-worlds-population.html>, accessed 15/07/2015.

democratisation in the Arab Spring region.<sup>66</sup>

The advancement of women in their economic roles nonetheless remains the focal point of EBRD strategy. The EBRD has started to complement its lending strategies with new capacities in relation to research and advocacy. As argued in Chapter 3, the EBRD had up until 2013 not positioned itself as a producer of knowledge on gender issues or sought to influence the policy agendas of national or local governments. In contrast, the members of the EBRD's Gender Team had by 2015 commissioned research on topics such as legal barriers to women's access credit in Morocco and the Kyrgyz Republic; legal barriers to women's participation in the labour force in the Kyrgyz Republic. At the time of writing, staff from the EBRD were also involved in policy initiatives that aim to promote women's entrepreneurship in Tajikistan and allow women to obtain licenses to drive trolleybuses in Kazakhstan.<sup>67</sup>

In 2015, the EBRD published the report 'Enhancing Women's Voice, Agency and Participation in the Economy' which discussed socio-cultural barriers to women's participation in the economy in SEMED and Turkey (EBRD 2015c). This report is interesting in terms of how the EBRD contributes to a wider body of knowledge on gender issues, as well as how it shifts the ways in which gender analysis is done within the Bank. By commissioning this research, the EBRD aims to contribute to the World Bank's research agenda on women's agency empowerment (EBRD 2015c, 5). More specifically, the EBRD's report aims to complement the World Bank's 2014 report "Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity (Klugman *et al.* 2014). The World Bank report is significant in terms of its emphasis on social norms and how they constrain women's opportunities in multiple parts of economic and social life (Klugman *et al.* 2014).

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<sup>66</sup> EBRD, 'Speech transcript: Sir Suma Chakrabarti at Trust Women conference in London on 4 December 2013', <http://www.ebrd.com/news/2013/speech-transcript-sir-suma-chakrabarti-at-trust-women-conference-in-london-on-4-december-2013-.html>, accessed 15/07/2015.

<sup>67</sup> Email correspondence with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, EBRD, London, September 2015.

The EBRD's report is a rare example of the EBRD engaging with feminist academics and including a significant element of qualitative research. The research team appointed to prepare the report were recruited amongst regional and country-experts, and included feminist academics Professor Saniye Dedeoğlu (Mugla University, Turkey), and Afaf Jabiri (SOAS, UK) and Soulef Guessoum from the United Nations Development Programme in Egypt. The team was led by Led by Professor Jacques Charmes, from the Indian development research institute, Centre For Development Alternatives (CFDA) (EBRD 2015c, 155). Between April and June 2015, this research team together with the EBRD's Gender Staff interviewed over 80 representatives from women's organisations in the five countries (EBRD 2015c, 18).

Rather than utilising the EBRD's transition mandate as the main frame through which it articulates gender equality the authors of the EBRD's report adopts a similar framework to the one used in the World Bank's report - which has toned down the 'Smart Economics' rhetoric significantly (EBRD 2015c, 19). Indeed, the EBRD's report inverts the concern of the GAP and the SGI to establish how women can contribute to markets (EBRD 2009b, 4; EBRD 2013a, 5) and aims to identify how the EBRD can "design projects that better reflect and respond to women's strategic and practical needs" (EBRD 2015b, 14). In turn, statistical analysis of women's participation in political institutions and labour market is in the EBRD's report complemented by a discussion of complex issues such as women's political rights and status, the role of gender based violence, the organization of household labour affect their citizenship status (EBRD 2015c). Chapter 5 returns to the issue of how the EBRD's staff engage with the political, social and cultural norms that shape women's participation in Turkey.

In summary, the EBRD's role as a governance actor advancing neoliberal economic strategies has been continued and expanded since the late 2000s. In doing so, the EBRD's shareholder government's and management have repositioned the Bank into a depoliticised form of expertise and tools for constructing market economies anywhere in the world. Taking up the

argument made in Chapter 3, this section has seen that the EBRD focuses its activities in relation to gender issues to countries that it deems to be less progressed on their route to being market economies. That is, targeting women has gradually become a more important means through which the EBRD can press for reforms within and beyond its historical region. On the one hand, this agenda is still premised upon a narrow understanding of the economy as primarily constituted in the realms of finance and production. On the other hand, moving into the new region has provided a window of opportunity for the introduction of more complex forms of gender analysis into the EBRD – yet in ways that reasserts the EBRD as a part in the powerful knowledge structure on gender issues that is led by the World Bank.

### **Economic inclusion and competitiveness promotion at the EBRD**

As the EBRD commenced operations in its new region, the Bank’s leadership became increasingly concerned with how economic inequalities might impact on its agenda of marketisation and democratisation. In the 2013 Transition Report, economists at the Bank argued that a lack of access to labour and financial markets for parts of the population could lead to a popular turn against market-oriented reform and result in the slowing down of economic reforms by governments. More specifically, income inequalities were seen as a worry to the Bank as they might cause social conflict in which deprived groups threaten asset holders or high-income individuals (EBRD 2013b, 25). As argued by Razavi (2013) in her analysis of economic governance since the 2007/8 crisis:

“There is growing adherence to the view that if economic liberalisation is to stay on course and not be derailed by social protest and simmering unrest then it needs to be “embedded” through social policies and anti-poverty programmes.” (Razavi 2013, 220)

In 2012, the EBRD's senior management appointed a new member of staff to work with the OCE to develop a strategy through which the Bank could address inequalities and embed market reforms in its societies. As argued by Buvinic *et al.* (2004, 4-5), inclusion the key strategy through which governance institutions have sought to compensate for the failure of their market-led strategies to distribute income and opportunities across populations. Recruited from the London Development Agency, this development expert had previously worked on economic inclusion programmes from UK and international development contexts. During an interview, she explained that her principal role with the OCE was to utilise her professional background to investigate how the EBRD could work on economic inclusion.<sup>68</sup>

The parameters for developing the EBRD's approach to economic inclusion were established in terms of integrating the agenda into the EBRD's transition mandate and to develop a methodology to promote inclusion through the EBRD's lending into projects.<sup>69</sup> This section explores how the newly appointed development expert and her colleagues in the OCE responded to this imperative in terms of the choices they made and the research they conducted. By doing so, the section highlights how technocratic and integrationist strategies around economic inclusion have contributed to the insertion of inequalities into the EBRD's core frameworks for competitiveness promotion and marketisation. In turn, this shows how the EBRD's neoliberal economic strategies are beginning to be widened and deepened.

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.

*Inequality and economic growth in the EBRD's agenda for competitiveness*

The first task of the OCE was to incorporate economic inclusion into the EBRD's macroeconomic analysis; especially the framework through which the Bank assesses the progress in market reforms among its member. Together with the newly appointed development expert, a research economist at the OCE approached this in terms of expanding the EBRD's transition indicators and analysis.

The centrality of benchmarking and surveillance to advance the policy goal of competitiveness within neoliberal economic governance has been well documented within the political economy literature (Fougner 2008; Berger and Bristow 2009; Taylor 2010; Cammack 2006). From this perspective, the Transition Reports constitute a key part of the EBRD's agenda on competitiveness. Published in the EBRD's annual Transition Report, these indicators have been used by the Bank since 1994 to ascertain the progression of market reforms among its borrowing countries. The main areas measured by the EBRD are the extent of private ownership, degree of liberalisation, the efficacy of financial institutions and the regulatory environment. Indicators in these areas are used both on a country level and in terms of the EBRD's main sectors of investment (see Chapter 1) (EBRD 1994, 9-12; EBRD 2010c, 2). As argued by Myant and Drahokoupil (2012, 71-74), the EBRD's transition indicators tend to give high scores to countries that are undertaking rapid and sustained privatisation whilst not accounting for the level of social and economic development in each country.

To start incorporating inequality indicators into this framework, the research economist conducted a literature review with the aim of providing the EBRD with its concept of economic inclusion – defined by the Bank as “the opening up of economic opportunities to previously under-served social groups” (EBRD 2014e, 6). This definition is informed and inspired by the World Bank's approach to economic and financial inclusion in the sense that it privileges equality of economic opportunity and aims to expand access to

markets and finance to ‘underserved’ or ‘excluded’ populations.<sup>70</sup> As argued by the researcher, this approach appeared to her the most sensible because the “EBRD is not directly about social welfare but it tries to support it implicitly through feeding the private sector”<sup>71</sup>

During this process, the staff in the OCE together with the Gender Team agreed that women, young people and rural populations should be the key targets for the EBRD’s inclusion agenda.<sup>72</sup> Researchers in the OCE together with staff used datasets and indicators to ascertain the levels of inequality along the lines of gender, age and geography within the EBRD’s countries. In doing so, they extended the statistical analysis of gender gaps from the SGI to (see Chapter 3) to cover gaps between different age groups and people living in different localities in the EBRD’s countries. As argued by the social development expert,

“What we found is, we are in the process of developing 'inclusion gaps' which are very similar to the existing transition methodology where you have transition gaps.”<sup>73</sup>

As with the SGI, the purpose of these gap analyses are to target the EBRD’s efforts to where it can have the maximum combined impact on extending markets and including more parts of the population. The EBRD’s use of gender gap analysis is different from the WEF’s in the sense that it does not use this as a tool to rank its member states on economic performance (Elias 2013).<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Michelle Brock, Research Economist, EBRD, London, 10 April 2013.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Michelle Brock, Research Economist, EBRD, London, 10 April 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.



Arguably one of the most important shifts that the concept of inclusion has engendered in the EBRD is an interest in promoting employment. Although job losses in the 1990s were ‘politically unattractive’ and caused contention among the EBRD’s Board of Directors, they were still desirable to economists at the Bank as an indicator of progress in transition to market economies because these were often the result of the privatisation of Soviet industries.<sup>75</sup> In contrast, at the time of writing, economists at the EBRD had started to consider job increases a potential positive indicator. This has nonetheless been done with a significant degree of caution, with the EBRD’s potential positive impact on employment as a form of economic inclusion being defined as within the parameters of supporting private sector enterprises which benefit a country’s economic prospects overall rather than providing employment security for individuals (EBRD 2013e, 4-5).

“Whilst even a subsidised job may be of great value to a person, its value to society is low since it is fundamentally unsustainable and, in some instances, may even hinder the creation of employment opportunities in economically productive (and therefore sustainable) areas.” (EBRD 2013e, 4-5).

The 2013 Transition Report includes economic inclusion for the first time. Reflecting the repositioning of the EBRD, this report follows a new format that includes major new sections on democracy, education, economic institutions and inequality in its countries of operations (EBRD 2013b). However, the overall theme of the report is the promotion of competitiveness through the continued convergence of economic policy and institutional arrangements among its countries (EBRD 2013b, 4). In this context, the EBRD discusses inequality as an impediment on the economic performance of a country. Indeed, the Bank proposes that 35 per cent of the variation in

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with Henry Russell, Director of the Small Business Team, Member of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, London, 21 March 2013.

wealth in some transition countries is explained by inequalities in access to labour and financial markets (EBRD 2013b, 78). In turn, the EBRD's economists argue that there is a mutually supportive relationship between equality and economic growth:

“Besides the intrinsic appeal of spreading opportunities and benefits widely, inclusion generates good incentives: if people are given a chance to succeed, they are more likely to pursue education, participate in the workforce and invest or engage in activities that lead to economic growth and prosperity.”  
(EBRD 2013b, 79)

Taken together, the agenda around economic inclusion demonstrates the continued faith in markets at the EBRD. As argued by the research economist developing the inclusion methodology, the exclusion of certain social groups is a form of market failure or economic inefficiency:

“Inclusion is important for transition as it means having more people involved in the labour force. When 30 per cent of women do not work, at least not in the workforce but might be doing things at home although also wanting to work for pay, this is inefficient and shows that the markets are not working.”<sup>76</sup>

The above quote illustrates how ideas and arguments from the Gender Team have been diffused across the Bank. Interviewees at the OCE discussed their cooperation with the Gender Team in very positive terms, welcoming especially their ability to ‘speak the same language’ as the economists.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Michelle Brock, Research Economist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.

More problematic in this sense is the way in which, in order to have this shared language, evidence around gender equality can again only be used in a very selective manner. The proposition that women's exclusion from labour markets due to discrimination or responsibilities for unpaid work is always a market inefficiency is common within development policy. It has also been staunchly criticised for failing to recognise how the extraction of gains and profit in the market often rely upon the supply of cheap, or unpaid, labour in the household (Elson 1999, 618-619). Furthermore, feminist scholars have contested the empirical evidence for a mutually supportive relationship between equality, growth and competitiveness to show high levels of growth in countries with high levels of wage inequality (Seguino 2000a; 2000b) or high competitiveness rankings even when they have significant gaps between the number of men and women who are active in the economy (Elias 2013, 160-161).

#### *Economic inclusion and market expansion in EBRD lending*

During the second phase of developing the inclusion methodology, the social development expert sought to identify how economic inclusion could be integrated into the EBRD's lending into projects. This preparatory work identified four main areas that the EBRD could contribute to closing such gaps, including: access to employment; access to services and products created by the project; skills transfer, especially for women, young people or rural populations and; and improved corporate standards and practices in areas such as human resources procedures and corporate social responsibility.<sup>78</sup>

Prior to this, the OCE had commissioned a review that aimed to update the ways in which the EBRD conceptualised progress in transition, especially in the context of its lending strategies (Besley *et al.* 2010, 7-8). Named after its lead author, Timothy Besley from the London School of Economics, the 2010

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<sup>78</sup> Interviews with Michelle Brock, Research Economist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013; Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.

Besley Report suggested an increased focus on the role of institutions in market economies. One of the more radical suggestions made in the report is that the EBRD might be at a point where it ‘should adopt broader goals such as poverty reduction, increased well-being, gender equality, social cohesion or environmental sustainability’ (Besley *et al.* 2010, 13). Indeed, the report authors suggest that the EBRD might want to consider ‘lending into areas such as education, healthcare, (social) housing, environment, and innovation and knowledge’ (Besley *et al.* 2010, 2). At the time of writing, the recommendations from the Besley report were still being debated within the EBRD.

In the context of EBRD lending, transition impact refers to the capacity of the loan to extend or support markets. As argued in Chapter 3, the endeavours of gender advocates to integrate gender mainstreaming into the EBRD’s lending protocols mean that the EBRD’s efforts on gender equality are deployed primarily in the support of market-objectives. At the time of writing, extending markets remained the primary indicator of transition impact at the EBRD. Interviews with banking staff suggested how, in practice, the way in which gender equality had been incorporated into their work was closely linked to the generation of profitable investments:

“Gender touches upon banking via transition impact – it is currently under discussion how gender can contribute to higher transition impact. This in turn contributes to the team’s result in the end of year scorecard which measures the transition impact in the end of year achievements. It has not really been difficult to include gender. It is not so much about aligning or combining transition impact with social issues but getting commercial deals and these have been successful on combining both.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with Oksana Pak and Sariga Sambayeva, Senior Bankers, *EBRD*, London 19 March, 2013.

The EBRD's agenda for economic inclusion suggests that the Bank's neoliberal economic strategies have become widened since 2007/8. They are widened in terms countries they apply to, the potential new sectors of the economy they might come to reach, and the groups of the population that are being targeted by the EBRD. This section has examined how gender expertise has been brought together with the EBRD's economic research, affording the integration of inequalities into the Bank's strategies for marketisation and competitiveness. It has demonstrated how statistical analyses of inequality can be instrumentalised in ways that support the promotion of other economic objectives, and how this continues to be done at the expense of excluding important feminist insights.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has explored change and continuity in the EBRD's economic theory and policy. In doing so, it has continued to critique and challenge the ways in which insights from feminist scholars have continued to be marginalised by the EBRD. Although the EBRD has started to pay more attention to women as agents of its economic agenda, it in many ways remains gender blind. In particular, economists at the Bank are still to account for how activities and events in the public sphere of markets, production and finance are constituted through the realm of social reproduction.

Although the EBRD remains committed to advancing neoliberal economic policies, the ways in which it does so are beginning to change. The 2007/8 financial crisis and geographical expansion concomitantly reasserted and extended the Bank's role. In responding to mounting governance challenges and questions over the Bank's legitimacy, the EBRD's management and staff took up new policy concerns with inequality and unemployment. As argued in this chapter, doing so granted a much more important role to the gender advocates who are working for the Bank. These individuals have contributed with a new area of expertise to the EBRD's market making strategies that has been integral to developing the Bank's economic inclusion agenda. In

practice, this has to a significant extent taken place through a relatively standardised, and distanced, processes of doing research at the EBRD in order to fulfil the requirements specified by management at the Bank.

Up until this point, the thesis has examined the processes of policy development and gender-related institutional change at the EBRD using evidence from research conducted at the EBRD's headquarters in London. A major finding so far is that gender equality has been articulated primarily as an add-on the EBRD's agenda of competitiveness and marketisation. Next, the thesis turns to explore how the EBRD's interest in gender issues is translated into its economic strategies and activities in Turkey.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Gender in the EBRD's operations in Turkey**

Using the first substantial set of materials from the field research, this chapter begins to trace how the EBRD works to promote gender equality in Turkey. The first aim is to address how the EBRD's strategies around gender are mobilised to support or transform the political and economic agendas that the Bank pursues in Turkey. This is done through an analysis of how gender mainstreaming is deployed within the EBRD's strategies for Turkey. The second, and related, aim is to examine how the EBRD implements its policies on gender equality in the context of its country-specific operations. As argued in Chapter 2, the analysis of policy implementation in this thesis foregrounds the ways in which different actors made sense of the EBRD's framing of gender issues. This includes individuals working within different parts of the EBRD as well as the partners and clients that the EBRD works with during the development and implementation of specific projects on gender equality.

By discussing these two areas, the chapter develops the central argument that gender equality has been co-opted to the EBRD's overarching agenda to increase the private sector share of its economies. A key tension is identified throughout the chapter between the EBRD's business-oriented strategies to promote gender equality and the norms and relationships that shape women's economic participation in Turkey. This leads to the argument that the objective of women's economic empowerment is even further diluted or lost during policy implementation in favour of profit motives.

The chapter is organised in three main parts, beginning by providing the empirical context for the analysis in terms of the economic, political and cultural factors that influence women's participation in labour markets in Turkey. The second part examines how gender mainstreaming has been brought into the EBRD's lending strategies for Turkey, highlighting how the

EBRD's institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality are weak also at country level. The third part considers how gender equality initiatives have been developed and implemented within EBRD lending, offering case studies of the EBRD's credit lines to women entrepreneurs and equal opportunities models.

### **Contextualising women's employment and labour force participation**

Turkey is internationally known for its low number of women participating in the workforce (OECD 2014a). In 2013 approximately 29 per cent of Turkish women were active in the labour force – a rate which is far below the global and OECD averages of 45 and 65 per cent respectively and more comparable with the 20-25 per cent share of women who are active in the labour force in the Middle East and North Africa (TurkStat 2014b, 77; ILO 2014, 65-66). Looking at Turkey specifically, national statistics for 2013 show that the overall labour force participation for women and men was 50.5 per cent, total unemployment rate 9.9 per cent, and employment rate 45.5 per cent. When disaggregated by sex, 29 per cent of women were active in the labour market compared to 71.5 per cent of men, and 27.1 per cent of women were in employment compared to 62.5 per cent of men. A moderate increase in women's labour force participation rates from around 25 to 29 per cent took place between 2004 and 2014 (TurkStat 2014b, 78). However, longitudinally, Turkey has not mirrored the global trend of an increase in women in the labour force over the last thirty years. Rather, female labour force participation rates fell from 47.3 per cent to 24.9 per cent between 1975 and 2006 (Rich and Palaz 2008, 189).

There are also significant regional differences in women's labour force participation and employment between the more rural east and the urbanised west of the country. Agricultural production within in the southern and eastern parts of Turkey accounted for 37 per cent of all women who were registered as in employment in 2013. Women's within this sector is typically low-skilled, low paid and organised within the family unit, in 2013, 78 per cent of



women working in the agricultural sector were self-classified as unpaid family workers (TurkStat 2014b, 85). The services sector is the second main source of employment for women, contributing with 37 per cent of jobs for women compared with ten per cent for men. In contrast, industry and manufacturing account for about 19 per cent of women's and 23 per cent of men's jobs (Ilkcaracan 2012, 10).

Horizontal and vertical segregation of formal employment contribute to a significant gap in wages between women and men. Selim and Ilkcaracan (2002) show that Turkish women earn approximately 60 per cent of men's income. When broken down by sector, only 80 per cent of the wage gap in their sample can be attributed to human capital endowments, occupational and industrial affiliations, and differences in the institutional characteristics of their jobs, leaving the remaining 20 per cent as caused by discrimination (Tansel 2005).

A substantive body of research has examined the reasons behind these figures. As will be returned to in Chapter 6, general analyses by international financial institutions have tended to stress labour market regulation as a general barrier to employment for both men and women in the formal sector in Turkey (OECD 2014b). More valuable to the discussion below are the rich analyses provided by feminist economists and political economists, which highlight a combination of social and cultural norms, and economic and social policy as explaining women's exclusion from the formal labour market. A majority of these analyses highlight education as being the most important determinant of whether women can access employment outside of the home (Ilkcaracan 2012; Toksöz 2007). In 2013, the labour force participation rate for illiterate women was 17.4 per cent; women educated below high school 26.3 per cent; high school graduates 32.1 per cent and; higher education graduates at 72.2 per cent (TurkStat 2014a).

Feminist political economists have highlighted neoliberal reforms of the agricultural sector as a major reason behind the shortage of women who are registered in the formal labour market. Economic restructuring during the 1980s prompted a significant wave of migration from the eastern and southern parts of Turkey into the major cities, especially Istanbul (Erman *et al.* 2002). As argued by Ilkkaracan (2012, 8-9), the expansion of services sector and industry during the 1980s and 1990s was not enough to absorb losses of jobs in agriculture. Meanwhile, women's labour market participation rates fell as migrant women who were previously registered as 'unpaid family workers' in the agricultural sector often changed their status to housewives following their arrival in the cities (Toksöz 2011, 23-24)

Neoliberal economic strategies in the 1980s did not contribute to a rise of women in the labour force. In contrast to developing economies in South-East Asia, the shift from import substitution to export-led development in Turkey did not generate a growth in demand for female factory workers as a cheap source of labour (Cagatay and Berik 1990). This is not to say that women did not contribute to such production. As argued by Dedeoğlu (2010), women constitute a majority of the workforce who provide piece production for export or for circulation within neighbourhoods. However, they often do so within home-based and informal working arrangements within the major cities. Nonetheless, within state economic planning, the pursuit of competitiveness for Turkish manufacturing was positioned rather in terms of productivity gains than in labour advantages (Toksöz 2007, 8). Indeed, as highlighted by Toksöz (2011, 25) state economic planning for the period of 1985 to 1989 envisaged a mere increase of 1000 women in the labour supply for industrial production over the five years.

The prevalence of male breadwinner norms and patriarchal family structures in politics and society mean that women's primary roles are often seen as being wives and homemakers (Ilkkaracan and Gündüz 2009, 13-14; Arat 2010a). Women undertake the majority of the unpaid labour involved in social reproduction. Time use studies show that both unemployed and employed

women do far more house work than men, averaging 5 hours and 17 minutes per day on household work, compared with 51 minutes for men (TurkStat 2014b, 97). The highest number of total working hours per day, including both paid and unpaid labour, was found among female labour force participants, among whom urban women worked 8 hours and 11 minutes per day, and rural women 8 hours 32 minutes (TurkStat 2014b, 97). Women's responsibilities in the household have been widely identified as a key explanation for why women retreat from the workforce following marriage (Dedeoğlu 2010; Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits 2008).

The conservative social policy environment in Turkey also impacts on women's ability to take up work outside of their homes. During its first term, from 2002 to 2007, the AKP (Justice and Democracy Party) government carried out a package of comprehensive reforms to the welfare state in which women's status was transformed from dependent on men to gaining formal equality (Acar and Altonouk 2012; Kilic 2008; Dedeoğlu 2012, 270; Arat 2010b). However, the Turkish welfare model continues to rely upon women's provision of care for children and the elderly within the household (Bugra and Keyder 2006, 212). Social policy reforms under the conservative AKP Government have primarily sought to expand opportunities for welfare provision within the household, for example by providing resources to support the expansion of the care for the elderly and disabled at home (Acar and Altonouk 2012, 4-5; KEIG 2014, 25-29).

In contrast, provisions for childcare outside of the household are still very limited. For example, only 61 per cent of children aged over 5 are enrolled in primary school education (Illkaracan 2012, 16). More significant gaps have been identified in terms of services for very young children; especially children under the age of three, who are catered for by a small number of, often expensive, private nurseries (Dedeoğlu 2012, 283). As argued by Bugra and Yakut-Cakar (2010, 534) the combination of long working days and a lack of childcare make it 'practically impossible for women to reconcile work and family life'.

This brief overview depicts how women's participation in the formal and public realms of the economy needs to be understood against their roles and responsibilities in other spheres of the economy. The discussion throughout this chapter concentrates on women's unpaid labour in the household, with a more detailed discussion of issues related to paid work in the informal sector in the next chapter. In addition, Chapter 6 carries on the analysis of the economic and social policy environment within which institutions such as the EBRD seeks to increase the number of women in the labour force.

### **Mainstreaming gender in the EBRD's economic strategies for Turkey**

The previous chapters established that gender mainstreaming at the EBRD has been developed through an integrationist model, primarily as a procedure to address negative impacts on women of Bank project lending. In this model, gender equality is devised as an optional objective that would 'add value' the EBRD's investments rather than as an objective that requires the transformation of the Bank's economic policies and strategies. This section examines how gender mainstreaming has been communicated between the EBRD's headquarters and its country offices, and how it has been implemented within the EBRD's strategies and lending in Turkey. It identifies and analyses two principal forms of gender mainstreaming at the country level: first, as the use of gender assessments in Bank strategy and, second, through the social and environmental due diligence of EBRD loans.

Before doing so, it is necessary to outline how the EBRD is organised to operate at the country-level and identify its channels of communication with the policymaking units in London. The EBRD has around 50 members of staff working in its offices in Istanbul, Ankara and Gaziantep, opened in 2009, 2012 and 2013 respectively. The main office is the Istanbul one, which hosts a majority of the staff as well as the EBRD's Country Director for Turkey who is the most senior manager at the national level. The role of these offices is to manage the EBRD's banking portfolios, develop lending strategies, organise

its programmes with SMEs (see Chapter 3), and to conduct policy dialogue with national and regional policymakers.<sup>80</sup>

Interviews at the EBRD's offices in Istanbul and Ankara gave an impression of close co-operation between these members of staff and those based at the EBRD's headquarters in London.<sup>81</sup> One reason for this is that the banking teams are organised on the basis of sector of investment, meaning that banking staff within the same team may be located in London or in the resident offices. In turn, these individuals report to the head of their respective team (often based in London) as well as to the country director.<sup>82</sup> More important in terms of the discussion below is the fact that staff from the EBRD's Environment and Sustainability Department and Gender Unit travel regularly to the EBRD's countries of operation. In practice, throughout this chapter it is seen how the EBRD's efforts on gender at the country-level rely upon a small number of individuals, who were often the same as those who developed the Bank's policies and strategies on gender equality.

#### *Gender analysis in the EBRD's country strategies*

The first way in which the EBRD has implemented gender mainstreaming in its country-level strategies is by starting to include so-called 'country gender assessments' of its borrowing members. Updated every three years, the EBRD's country strategies contain economic and political analysis of each of its borrowing members and set out the Bank's lending priorities in the respective country. The political assessment is a relatively brief overview of the EBRD's operational environment, including electoral processes and

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<sup>80</sup> Interviews with Michael Davey, Country Director for Turkey, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 22 April 2013; Engin Goksu, Head of Ankara Office and Serpil Cetincift, BAS National Programme Manager for Turkey, *EBRD*, Ankara, 11 June 2013.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Michael Davey, Country Director for Turkey, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 22 April 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Huseyin Ozhan Senior Banker in Transport, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 3 May 2013.

outcomes, as well as major political agendas pursued by the governing party (EBRD 2012a, 9-10).

In contrast, a majority of each document is dedicated to the analysis of the macroeconomic environment and the EBRD's operational priorities in the country. This is organised around what the Bank refers to as 'transition gaps', referring to the extent of private sector-participation in different areas of the economy. In turn, this analysis is intended to direct the EBRD's lending to where it can have an impact on enhancing the role of the private sector (Besley *et al.* 2010, 15). The gender country assessments within these strategies entail an overview of women's economic and political situation in the country and are intended as the research basis allowing the identification of potential areas for intervention. This method was introduced in the GAP (EBRD 2009b, 13), yet by 2013 the EBRD's Gender Team had only added gender assessments to the country strategies for Morocco, Turkey and Tajikistan.

In line with the EBRD's overall policy focus, the Bank's gender assessment of Turkey concentrates on women's labour market participation. This analysis outlines a relatively broad and complex set of issues, highlighting the institutional and structural barriers that women face as employees and entrepreneurs including their duties in the household and the lack of childcare services, weak parental leave policies, a shortage of flexible work arrangements and a lack of access to finance, education and training (EBRD 2012a, 48-49). However, as suggested in Tzannatos' (2006, 25) analysis of the World Bank, this kind of gender analysis is used to identify specific activities that align with wider operational priorities and instruments of an institution. In addition to this, gender country assessments are essentially soft instruments, containing no requirement for country directors or banking staff to include attention to gender equality in their operations (Tzannatos 2006, 22).

The EBRD's gender assessment of Turkey means the narrowing down of more complex issues to fit with the EBRD's lending priorities and protocols. The 2012 to 2015 country strategy for Turkey does for example not provide any suggestions for how the EBRD will tackle childcare issues. The strategy overall contains few detailed proposals for the EBRD's overall gender-related activities. Thus, rather than integrating gender equality a central concern of the EBRD's activities, the strategy proposes that the Bank is to 'seek opportunities' to work on gender issues within the parameters of the GAP and the EBRD's broader operational framework for Turkey (EBRD 2012a, 22).

This model of gender mainstreaming signals the co-optation of gender equality work to the EBRD's overall economic agenda in Turkey. This economic agenda is set out by the EBRD in terms of enhancing the competitiveness of Turkey in the global economy by promoting structural reforms in the energy-, industry-, and municipal infrastructure sectors, and by channelling resources to SMEs (EBRD 2012a, 1-2, 15-16). In political terms, as will be returned to in Chapter 6, the EBRD's lending and policy dialogue is intended to work in conjunction with the AKP Government's privatisation programme and to support Turkey's accession to the EU (EBRD 2012a, 16).

In terms of EBRD lending, the Bank has disbursed nearly € 5 billion into 140 projects between 2009 and 2015 and 95 per cent of this has gone to the private sector. Broken down by sector, 44 per cent of EBRD finance has gone to financial institutions and SMEs, 24 per cent to industry, commerce and agribusiness, 22 per cent to infrastructure and 10 per cent went to the energy sector.<sup>83</sup> It is thus within these parameters that the EBRD's staff are to seek opportunities for increasing access to finance among female entrepreneurs; to consider developing technical assistance activities; and address equal opportunities and human resources policies and practices among its clients (EBRD 2012a, 22).

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<sup>83</sup> EBRD, 'EBRD Project Summary Documents', <http://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/project-finance/project-summary-documents.html?c33=on&keywordSearch=>, accessed 15/08/2015.

### *Gender mainstreaming in project finance*

The second way in which gender mainstreaming has been implemented in Turkey is through the EBRD's project assessment cycle. Chapter 3 established environmental and social impact assessments as the EBRD's main strategy for mainstreaming gender concerns in its lending, principally by seeking to mitigate negative impacts on women (EBRD 2008a; EBRD 2009b). By 2013, EBRD policy placed increased emphasis on project assessments as a means to identify projects to which the EBRD's staff could incorporate additional objectives related to gender equality (EBRD 2013a, 16-17). These kinds of projects are the focus of the subsequent analysis in this chapter.

A key finding from the field research was that the integration of gender objectives into the EBRD's projects relied on staff in the Bank's Gender Team and in the Environment and Sustainability Department. The interviews with EBRD staff and management working in Turkey and in London strongly suggested that the Bank's projects on gender issues in Turkey had been more *ad hoc* than a clear-cut application of policy and strategy.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, members of the EBRD's Board of Directors highlighted the pivotal role played by gender champions at the Bank in identifying projects.<sup>85</sup> As argued by Long (2006, 45-48) in her analysis of gender mainstreaming at the World Bank, when gender equality is not a compulsory objective of all operations, incorporating gender concerns into lending projects often hinges upon a small number of individuals.

Establishing support from their colleagues has also been an important factor in the relative success of the EBRD's gender champions in Turkey, with

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<sup>84</sup> Interviews with Michael Davey, Country Director for Turkey, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 22 April 2013; Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Memduh Ackay, Board Director for Turkey (Romania, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic), *EBRD*, Istanbul, 13 May 2013.



interviewees from the Istanbul and Ankara offices expressing their welcoming of the policy agenda on gender issues.<sup>86</sup> As argued by an interviewee at the EBRD's Board of Directors, the relatively high profile of gender equality in the Bank's operations in Turkey compared to elsewhere, can largely be explained by the coming together of motivated individuals:

“It is a case of look for the individual. Nothing works unless somebody wants to take it seriously and that is what's happened in Turkey essentially (...) you get people who are committed to this kind of stuff and who see it as a market opportunity and that has obviously been crucial in Turkey, it helps.”<sup>87</sup>

The inclusion of gender equality objectives within the EBRD's project lending is further contingent upon the agreement of the borrowing partner. This refers to activities that go beyond the EBRD's hard criteria for lending, in which the client needs to meet the minimum legal requirements of non-discrimination and equal opportunities set out in the EBRD's Environmental and Social Policy (EBRD 2008a; EBRD 2014c). Beyond this, the EBRD's staff can propose the development of a gender action plan to address issues related to hindrances women's equal opportunities in a borrowing company that are not a legislative matter (EBRD 2010d, 14). These gender action plans are not built into the core lending agreement for a project but are negotiated and goals are agreed between the EBRD, potential co-financiers and project partners (EBRD 2010d, 7-8; 14-15).

Indicative of the 'softness' of the EBRD's approach, no specific sanctions or reinforcement mechanisms are detailed in the Bank's policy and lending protocols in the event that clients fail to meet their agreed targets in relation to

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<sup>86</sup> Interviews with Fatih Turkmenoglu, Senior Banker, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 25 April 2013; Michael Davey, Country Director for Turkey, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 22 April 2013; Aynur Dincer, Senior Banker, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 26 April 2013; Huseyin Ozhan Senior Banker in Transport, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 3 May 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Anonymous interviewee, Board of Directors, *EBRD*.

gender issues (EBRD 2013a; EBRD 2010d). Rather, the EBRD's protocols point toward monitoring visits during which the Bank's staff can advise and collaborate with the client as the main mechanism to ensure progress on gender-related objectives (EBRD 2010d, 15, 31).

Staff in the EBRD were found to continue using economic arguments to persuade client companies to endorse gender-related objectives. As argued in Chapter 3, articulating gender equality as a 'business case' has been an integral part of feminist strategy at the EBRD, yet has come at the cost of excluding attention to women's structural inequality. Given the non-binding nature of project-level gender action plans, a major concern for the EBRD is to avoid deterring the client company. For example, the authors of the SGI emphasise that the process of establishing gender action plans should be 'kept as lean and simple as possible, in order to make the process light on costs and human resources' (EBRD 2013a, 15).

Similarly, staff at the EBRD worried that because the Bank lends at market rates if they were to more binding social criteria to their lending protocols their clients would eventually turn to other lenders. That is, 'doing too much gender' was seen to potentially compromise the EBRD's central interest in generating the maximum number of profitable loans and investments.<sup>88</sup> Interviewees from the EBRD's Gender and Small Business teams explained that they negotiated these concerns by taking a 'business-friendly approach' and highlighting the potential economic gains for the client.<sup>89</sup> For example, a manager in the Small Business Team described their strategy to work on gender issues with clients in the following terms:

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<sup>88</sup> Interviews with Deborah Cousins, Senior Environmental and Social Adviser, *EBRD*, London 15 March 2013; Huseyin Ozhan Senior Banker in Transport, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 3 May 2013.

<sup>89</sup> Interviews with Valeria Della Rosa, Senior Manager of Business Advisory Services and Caroline Bryant Bosa, Principal Manager of Small Business Support, *EBRD*, London, 6 March 2013; Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013.

“So, we basically tried to encourage our team co-ordinators who are project managers as well as the advisors that we contract on the projects to really think critically about gender and ask these questions, that said very few projects have had gender been you know key advisory issue. It is like a sub-product if that. It is kind of like energy efficiency, like that. It is hard to convince a company to focus on that, those issues. So you know we do everything that is profit-driven and will help them in those areas first and then as a by-product we bring this.”<sup>90</sup>

It is difficult to assess how effective the EBRD’s strategy to ‘sell gender’ within its lending has been. The next section suggests that the small number of staff working in this area of the EBRD have promoted gender equality objectives in project lending in a selective and opportunistic way. Vice versa, staff who were performing the function of gender champions in other parts of the EBRD’s work were at times found to refrain from pursuing this agenda within the Bank’s major projects in Turkey. For example, in 2012 the EBRD approved a loan of US\$100 million to support the Eurasia Tunnel under the Bosphorus, constructing a further link between the Asian and European sides of Istanbul. However, the EBRD’s social expert described how the loan negotiations with co-financiers EIB and Korean and German private financial institutions had been so complex that there was no scope for her to ‘push for a gender angle’.<sup>91</sup> This indicates the weak position of the EBRD as a potential driver for gender concerns in development co-operation.

The research process suggested that there are unresolved tensions between the EBRD’s strategy to promote gender equality and its commitment to free markets, especially in terms of disagreements as to whether the EBRD should play a role in changing the norms and attitudes that surround women’s

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with Caroline Bryant Bosa, Principal Manager of Small Business Support, *EBRD*, London, 6 March 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Deborah Cousins, Senior Environmental and Social Adviser, *EBRD*, London 15 March 2013.

economic participation. During interviews with senior management, who had often been with the Bank since its early years, at the EBRD in London these argued that the EBRD was not in the position to be changing norms and attitudes given its lending instruments.<sup>92</sup> In a more extreme version of this argument, the EBRD's free-market logic was invoked to reject interventions that would reposition women within labour markets:

“If they are happy for generations and maybe centuries to have women parole in a particular type of industry, i.e. carpet weaving, which generates revenue for them and for the economy - why should we then push them into bus driving? That is their culture and that is their way of integrating groups into the society, fine!”<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile, staff working on gender issues in the EBRD's projects suggested that tackling gender norms was almost an inevitable part of their efforts to increase the number of women who are active in the formal economy in Turkey. Up until 2015, when gender advocates started to conduct dialogue on topics related to women's economic participation in the EBRD's countries (see Chapter 4), EBRD staff discussed the Bank's projects as the main way in which they could challenge gender-segregation of the Turkish labour markets. This was especially in the context of the EBRD's investments in sectors with a male-dominated workforce.<sup>94</sup>

The EBRD's strategy of 'selling' gender equality has however attracted mixed responses among the Bank's borrowing clients. Interviews with two companies, one of which had agreed to implement a gender action plan with the EBRD and the other one had not, contended the possibilities of using the

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with Henry Russell, Director of the Small Business Team, Member of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, London, 21 March 2013.

<sup>93</sup> Anonymous interviewee, *EBRD*.

<sup>94</sup> Interviews with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013; Deborah Cousins, Senior Environmental and Social Adviser, *EBRD*, London 15 March 2013.

EBRD's construction projects to increase the number of women in employment in Turkey. Rather than necessarily opposing the idea per se, these interviewees highlighted that it is difficult to find women to recruit to construction work even if they wanted to.<sup>95</sup> As argued by one interviewee:

“How can I say, this is a construction job and in this sector it is generally masculine work sites because of the tough work. It is not nice to be in a construction site. No, we shouldn't think like that. I am just talking about the selection, when you go to a civil engineering faculty, you will see ten girls and 100 men. This is about people's selection and preference. I am not saying that it is man's job and men should do it, but the employees the people who are interested in the construction are mostly men”.<sup>96</sup>

The above quote suggests the kinds of problems that the EBRD's agenda to increase the number of women relative to men in various areas of economic life, engenders within the Bank's operations in Turkey. The analysis below relays a similar set of contentions between the EBRD's staff and clients, especially in the case of IDO Ferries, and highlights some of the issues that are guised by strategies that measure results primarily in terms of numerical increases.

The analysis of gender mainstreaming in this section identified that the EBRD's institutional incentives for incorporating gender equality as a concern in the Bank's country-level activities are weak. Gender mainstreaming across the EBRD's country strategies and project lending has followed an integrationist model in which gender equality continues to be positioned as an objective that is both secondary and complementary to the EBRD's wider

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with Necdet Buyukbay, Technical Manager, *TAV/EGE*, Izmir, 11 July 2013; Interview with Melih Murat and Ceren Alaca, Environmental and Social specialists, *ATAS Group*, Istanbul, 5 July 2013.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Melih Murat and Ceren Alaca, Environmental and Social specialists, *ATAS Group*, Istanbul, 5 July 2013.

economic agenda. The implications of this were established in terms of an excessive reliance upon a small number of individuals, rendering gender equality projects highly contingent upon the co-operation of the EBRD's clients and co-financiers.

In terms of the overall theoretical arguments of this thesis, the above analysis signals the importance of not overstating the consistency between rhetoric, policy and practice on gender issues among institutions advancing neoliberal policies. As will be returned to in Chapter 7, research in feminist IPE and gender and development has highlighted how policy and rhetoric on women's economic participation are key elements of how international institutions seek to maintain the legitimacy for neoliberal economic strategies (Roberts 2014; Prügl 2012; Elias 2013; Bedford 2009a). The empirical analysis of the EBRD has so far identified that this is partially the case, especially in terms of the heightened attention to inequalities in the EBRD's rhetoric on the SEMED region. However, at the time of this research, the Bank's public facing rhetoric was not matched within its practical efforts to promote gender equality. The EBRD's economic strategy for Turkey further supports the argument made in Chapter 4 about the overall continuity in Bank policy since 2008. That is, the EBRD still works primarily to increase the private sector share of the economy.

### **Gender equality in the EBRD's project lending**

This chapter now offers a more detailed discussion of projects that have included gender equality concerns among their objectives, focussing on two of the Bank's flagship projects on gender issues: Garanti Bank and IDO Ferries. The aim is to analyse how the EBRD's policy framing of gender equality as women's equal opportunities in labour and financial markets is being translated into concrete initiatives (EBRD 2009b; EBRD 2013a). In line with the theoretical approach set out in Chapter 2, the section foregrounds the actors involved in these processes and the roles that they played in challenging, defining and delineating what gender equality means and how it

can be promoted. The major contention advanced through this section is that gender equality in the EBRD's projects has been reduced to the number of women who participate in the private sector, as employees, managers or entrepreneurs. This model is argued to offer an inadequate approach to address women's responsibilities for socially reproductive work, because it, at best, seeks to identify routes that will allow women to combine paid and unpaid labour.

### *Equal opportunities in the privatisation of IDO Ferries*

The municipal services sector has been a focal point of the EBRD's efforts to extend privatisation (EBRD 2012a, 16, 35). Between 2010 and 2015 the EBRD provided loans to publicly owned enterprises or authorities on six occasions, all targeted at the increase private sector provision or introduce commercial practices within municipally provided transport and water services.<sup>97</sup> In 2011 the EBRD approved its first two loans aimed at the privatisation of a publicly owned transport company in Turkey.<sup>98</sup> The loans were worth a total of US\$ 150 million and aimed to facilitate the privatisation of the Istanbul-based company IDO Ferries (EBRD 2011a, 7). Founded in 1987, IDO is one of the largest commuter ferry companies in Turkey and provides shuttle ferries across the Bosphorus strait and the Sea of Marmara. Following a series of company restructures since the mid-2000s, the Istanbul Greater Metropolitan Council put the company up for full privatisation in 2011. The tender process was won by the specially formed consortium TASS Denizcilik (TASS Marine), comprising of Sera Gayrimenkul Yatırım, Tepe İnşaat, Akfen Holding and Souter Investments LLP (Hurriyet Daily News, 4 August 2011; Lester 2015, 2).

Put in context, Turkey has under the AKP Government seen the increased commercialisation of municipal services, especially in terms of growing

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<sup>97</sup> EBRD, 'EBRD Project Summary Documents', <http://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/project-finance/project-summary-documents.html?c33=on&keywordSearch=>, accessed 15/08/2015

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Asli Erden Ozturk, Senior Banker, *EBRD*. Istanbul, 14 May 2013.

involvement of multinational companies in the water sector, yet local authorities still maintain responsibility for provision much of urban transport (Cinar 2009).

Feminist research on the privatisation and commercialisation of public companies in Turkey has identified the often negative impacts on women as employees, highlighting for example how male breadwinner norms render women at increased risk of redundancy (Tansel 2002) or the negative impacts of work displacement on women's family lives (Gunluk Sensen and Akduran 2006). Chapter 3 established that the EBRD's interest in promoting women's equal opportunities originate the concern among its staff to counteract the tendency for women to lose their jobs or retreat from the labour force during mass-privatisation in East and Central Europe (EBRD 2009b, 5-6).<sup>99</sup> The EBRD's Gender Team subsequently developed so-called equal opportunities audits, which they use to survey the human resources policies and practices among its borrowing companies. In addition to IDO Ferries, the EBRD's staff have applied this method in Bank lending to support the privatisation of energy, municipal services and food and agricultural production in Serbia, Egypt, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic (EBRD 2015e, 39).

During the EBRD's social assessment of IDO Ferries, staff raised concerns about the low number of female employees at the company. The gathering of sex disaggregated data showed that IDO had only 17 female employees on its payroll, all of whom were working in administrative roles and only one held a managerial post. Because IDO did not breach the EBRD's requirement for non-discrimination, a voluntary gender action plan was established through which the company was to increase its number of female employees and managers.<sup>100</sup> This time, the EBRD's appeal to economic rationales appeared to have purchase with the borrowing client. During interviews, managers from

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013.

<sup>100</sup> Interviews with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013; Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.



IDO framed the agenda in similar terms to the EBRD's arguments for gender parity in business (EBRD 2009b, 11).

“The company would always of course benefit from different perspectives, different points of view. So, a man's perspective and a woman's perspective would you know. Half of our population is female so they cannot be overlooked when it comes to employment and recruitment.”<sup>101</sup>

The gender parity approach was driven by the consultancy firm Shevolution which had been commissioned by the EBRD to provide the majority of research and strategy for the equal opportunities initiative with IDO. Shevolution is a UK-based firm and is led by Lesley Abdela, a journalist and campaigner with a long career in providing gender expertise to national and international organisations. Shevolution specialises in promoting gender parity in the workplace and provides training courses, assessments and communication strategies that are intended to balance out the number of women and men (Abdela *et al.* 2012, 17). In terms of IDO, the consultants from Shevolution focused primarily upon reforming the company's recruitment process and their recommendations included changes in recruitment strategy, advertising, interviewing and the use of positive discrimination where possible (Abdela *et al.* 2012, 20). The final project plan agreed by IDO entailed a more narrow set of actions, including the draft of a new vision statement for the company, the promotion of information sharing across the company and changes to its recruitment and career progression framework. No contact from Shevolution responded to requests to be interviewed for this research project.

Interviews with IDO's management suggested that the interaction between IDO, Shevolution and the members of the EBRD's Gender Team had not necessarily been without strain. During these interviews, it was often clear

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Murat Orhan, Human Resources Manager, IDO Ferries, Istanbul 2 May, 2013.

that the interviewees sought to demonstrate that they were making efforts and were being responsive to the EBRD. Nonetheless, IDO's General Director discussed his interactions with the EBRD's staff and consultants in somewhat critical terms:

“The EBRD always follow us very closely and I met with them. Believe me, they cornered me. I was cornered by EBRD members. I know that at the end of, some day we will meet EBRD members and they will ask me how many for example women have you appointed. Knowing this question, we didn't have a different chance.”<sup>102</sup>

From his perspective, the EBRD's insistence on increasing the number of female employees was based upon an inadequate consideration of the workforce available to the company:

“It is too hard. I think, I don't know exactly what is the reason for this. It is an educational problem of this country. We couldn't understand, it is normal. Our tradition is different from your country. We are a Muslim country especially women's and parents doesn't allow their daughters and women to for example decision makers. Our job, everyone see this job as a male job. Unfortunately, the normal a person living in the EU assumes that every country is the same as his country. Everyone assumes in the Europe.”<sup>103</sup>

Although this argument could be used to guise a lack of efforts, it should be recognised that women account for approximately 0.5 per cent of the seafaring workforce in Turkey (compared to about 2 per cent globally). In real terms, this means that about 210 women were registered as working on board

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<sup>102</sup> Interview with Ahmet Paksoy, General Director, *IDO Ferries*, Istanbul, 2 May 2013.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Ahmet Paksoy, General Director, *IDO Ferries*, Istanbul, 2 May 2013.

ships in 2009 (Basak 2015, 105-106). Women have also only been allowed to train as seafarers since 1992, and the number of women accepted to these courses has been consistently low at about five per cent (Basak 2015, 105-106). Explanations for these figures have highlighted the importance of gender norms, with seafaring long deemed as a male profession due to it being physically taxing. Research focussing on Turkey has identified conservative gender norms as having an effect in terms of a reluctance among parents to see their daughters enter such a profession, a preference among young women to work until they get married, and high levels of prejudice against women and sexual harassment on the ships (Basak 2015). Indeed, this issue prompted IDO to go beyond the scope of its agreement with the EBRD and to start sponsoring educational initiatives for women in the maritime sector.<sup>104</sup>

In terms of numbers, the initiative at IDO initiative has been a significant success. Using data provided by IDO’s Human Resources Department, tables 3 and 4 show marked increases in the number of women working for the company between 2011 and 2013.

*Table 1: Employees on IDO payroll before and after privatisation*

	<b>Pre-Privatisation</b>	<b>Post-Privatisation</b>
<b>Number of female employees (IDO Payroll)</b>	17	32
<b>Number of male employees (IDO Payroll)</b>	627	713
<b>Total Payroll Staff:</b>	644	745

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with Ahmet Paksoy, General Director, *IDO Ferries*, Istanbul, 2 May 2013

Table 2: IDO outsourced staff before and after privatisation

	<b>Pre-Privatisation</b>	<b>Post-Privatisation</b>
<b>Number of female employees (outsourced)</b>	72	99
<b>Number of male employees (outsourced)</b>	1034	1103
<b>Total Outsourced Staff:</b>	1106	1202

(Employment data provided by IDO).

The number of women in management positions increased from one to seven and one woman was recruited to work as a seaman on the vessels. The majority of the newly hired women were however placed into the female-dominated administrative departments of IDO.<sup>105</sup> In addition, the EBRD's initiative around recruitment sought to overcome fragmentation between different parts of the company and better integrate the new members of staff into the company's organisational culture. This primarily took the form of joint activities and staff events, such as bowling competitions, organised by a new 'motivational team' composed by individuals working in different areas of the company.<sup>106</sup> According to the EBRD's gender unit, the initiative was however arguably the most significant in the sense that IDO agreed to promote the introduction of equal opportunities policies within its supply chain companies.

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Murat Orhan, Human Resources Manager, *IDO Ferries*, Istanbul 2 May, 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Murat Orhan, Human Resources Manager, *IDO Ferries*, Istanbul 2 May, 2013.

The focus groups conducted with staff at IDO Ferries, one female group and one male group, offered more complex perspectives on how equal opportunities were being promoted within the context of company restructuring. The female focus group comprised of five women, working within administrative roles as well as on the ships. All women were educated to degree level, and several had migrated to Istanbul from other parts of Turkey to find employment. They had been with the company for longer periods of time, ranging between 3 to 11 years. The male focus group had four participants, working in managerial or more senior positions in the administrative and legal parts of the company. The length of employment at IDO varied from about six months to ten years.

Generally, both focus groups described their employer in positive terms and highlighted the company as an attractive employer. In addition, the both groups welcomed the EBRD's equal opportunities initiative, especially as a welcome means to open up IDO's recruitment processes to appoint more staff externally rather than from within the company. Across both groups, only one participant expressed more critical views on the agenda increase the number of female employees. In his view, 'every family should make these decisions by themselves' and there could be social reasons for why women should stay at home and look after the children, such as 'inadequate care by strangers' or 'increased rates of divorce in families where women have better careers'.

The privatisation of IDO Ferries had mixed impacts on the working conditions for its staff. A major point made in the female focus group was that the employees that joined the company after its privatisation had been recruited on a contract basis, which separated them in terms of pay and job security from the old members of staff. By being recruited as 'experts' these new members of staff could at times earn more than people who had worked for the company for longer. For example new office staff could earn between TL 3000 – 4000 (£640 – 850) per month compared with the average of TL 2000 for long-term employees. However, in other parts of the company wages for staff had decreased with the use of contracted labour. For example, the

workforce on the vessels had experienced a long-term wage decline from about TL 3300-3500 in 2005 to about TL 2000 in 2013 and about TL 1500 for the newly hired workers. In addition, staff employed by IDO before the privatisation were more likely to be unionised compared to the new employees. Importantly, the marine staff were still predominantly unionised so the changes were mainly relevant to land personnel.

The female focus group highlighted how company restructuring had impacted negatively on their working conditions and career development. As argued by Gunluk Sensen and Akduran (2006, 18) in their study of a manufacturing company, individuals that are perceived as performing feminine or unskilled work are more likely to be displaced during company restructuring than those performing more skilled, or masculine tasks. The women at IDO highlighted how they had been moved across departments and roles regularly since the company started to be restructured in the mid-2000s. Following this, the women who were working in the offices were regularly transferred into new roles - often as a symbolic gesture when the company changed management – which meant that they had lost out on opportunities for training and promotion.

In addition, the company's decision to outsource a part of its labour force in 2005 had major impacts on its female administrative workers. As a part of this process, women working for IDO were transferred into its subcontracting firms and often started to work at the tollgates. In their view, work at the tollgates was not just below their skill level but it was tough and lonely work that was organised into long shifts where they worked far from IDO's main offices. These insights suggest that some of the problems that are most important to the women that are already working for IDO have been sidelined through the focus on recruitment within the EBRD's equal opportunities initiative.

In contrast, a majority of participants in the male focus group highlighted how their job situation had improved since 2011. Within this group, the decline in

wages that was experienced across the company was offset against how many had been promoted into managerial roles since then. However, some members of the male focus group highlighted how their workload had increased significantly since 2011. In part, this could of course be explained by their new roles. However, there was also a broader shift in the company culture since 2011. As described by the company's director, his business now needed to be profit-oriented and not rely on subsidies from the municipality.<sup>107</sup> Since privatising, IDO has implemented significant cut backs on its operating expenditures, from over \$230 million in 2009 to less than \$176 million in 2013. At the same time, IDO increased its operating revenue by more than \$10 million to over \$265 million (Lester 2015, 17).

The EBRD's equal opportunities initiative appeared to have had limited effects on the overall organisation of socially reproductive labour among IDO's employees. Within the female focus group, it was suggested that little had changed around maternity and childcare provisions in the company since 2011. Although this is mentioned within Shevolution's assessment of IDO, the initiative did not bring to fruition proposals for providing workers with flexible working hours, provisions for maternity leave or in-house crèches (Abdela *et al.* 2012, 19). The women described how IDO followed Turkish regulations in terms of the provision of maternity leave as well as allowing women 1,5 hours each day for breastfeeding. As the company employs less than 150 women it is not legally required to provide crèche facilities on its facilities (KEIG 2009, 19). The focus group participants did nonetheless suggest that combining family life with their work at the company – especially for those doing shift work – was difficult as the EBRD does not provide help with childcare or has a crèche on its premises. The male focus group described how they sought to contribute to household work, but they were often restricted to do so during evenings and weekends because of their breadwinner roles.

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with Ahmet Paksoy, General Director, *IDO Ferries*, Istanbul, 2 May 2013.

### *Garanti Bank and loans to women entrepreneurs*

In September 2012, the EBRD approved a loan of US\$ 60 million to Garanti Bank for lending to women entrepreneurs. In their own figures, Garanti Bank is Turkey's second largest private bank and operates through a wide network of nearly one thousand domestic branches.<sup>108</sup> Although Garanti Bank had received finance from the EBRD to channel to SMEs already in 2008, this loan marked the first time that the EBRD had specifically targeted women as recipients of finance.

The loan to Garanti Bank is seen as path-breaking within the EBRD in terms of providing a route through which the Bank can target women within the parameters of its lending criteria. Interviews at the EBRD indicated that the project had been particularly welcomed in terms of its capacity to generate profit for the Bank, making it relatively uncontroversial even among interviewees who were otherwise vary of the Bank's gender equality agenda.<sup>109</sup> From the EBRD's part, the loan was vetted against the same criteria of additionality, transition impact and sound rates of returns as all other loans (see Chapter 1). More specifically, the value of the project was to contribute to market expansion by engaging a new segment of entrepreneurs as well as setting an example for other Turkish banks.<sup>110</sup> In practice, individual efforts and interpersonal relationships were arguably more important to seeing the loan off the ground. Within an interview, the lead banker highlighted how she had previously worked for Garanti Bank and

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<sup>108</sup>Garanti Bank. 'About Garanti',

[http://www.garanti.com.tr/en/our\\_company/about\\_garanti/garantibank.page](http://www.garanti.com.tr/en/our_company/about_garanti/garantibank.page), accessed 15/08/2015.

<sup>109</sup> Interviews with Joachim Schwarzer, Board Director for Germany, *EBRD*, London, 12 July 2013; Joachim Ockenden, Board Director for the United Kingdom, *EBRD*, London, 12 July 2013; Paul Vlaanderen, Board Director for the Netherlands (Mongolia, FYR Macedonia, Armenia), *EBRD*, London 12 July 2013; Camilla Otto, Assistant to the EU Director, *EBRD*, London, 19 July 2013.

<sup>110</sup> EBRD, 'Garantibank: Women Owned and Managed SMEs Credit Line', <http://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/projects/psd/garantibank-women-owned-and-managed-smes-credit-line.html>, accessed 15/08/2015.



suggested that this had made it easier for her to organise the loan.<sup>111</sup> The project was nonetheless initiated by Garanti rather than by staff at the EBRD, a process explained by the EBRD's main counterpart at Garanti in the following terms;

“I went to the EBRD in London nearly four years ago (...). I went and I said that, this is really my imagination and just a wish; I would really want to have a credit line from EBRD just for disbursing to women entrepreneurs. Just a little chat. Then, after a while, EBRD came and visited Turkey and we worked on SMEs. At that time I said that we can have a programme or funding just for disbursing to women entrepreneurs. They said, yes, you are right. They saw the things we had done for women entrepreneurs.”<sup>112</sup>

The EBRD has provided resources that continue Garanti's financial services and programmes for women entrepreneurs. Garanti has been offering women specially designed loan packages, banking products and business training courses since 2005 (Garanti Bank 2012). Garanti's packages have been developed to target women as a specific segment of entrepreneurs, emphasising their difference from men in terms of enhanced risk adversity, a desire for developing a personal relationship with their banks, and as wanting their businesses to be sustained over time to provide for their children.<sup>113</sup> In practice, this means that women are allowed to borrow money on slightly different terms than men especially with lower requirements for collateral. The companies eligible for these kinds of loans need to fulfil at least one of the following criteria: full female ownership; a 50 per cents of shares owned by women; or if lower than this, a company in which a woman has an

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<sup>111</sup> Interview with Aynur Dincer, Senior Banker, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 26 April 2013.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Selin Oz, SME Marketing Manager, *Garanti Bank*, Istanbul, 15 May 2013.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Selin Oz, SME Marketing Manager, *Garanti Bank*, Istanbul, 15 May 2013.

influential role in its running”<sup>114</sup> The loan agreement between EBRD and Garanti does not shift these criteria in any significant way, beyond stipulating that Garanti should aim to disburse 50 per cent of their loans to companies in locations other than Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.<sup>115</sup>

These loans effectively work to expand the reach of finance and contribute to corporate profitability, by the means of encouraging women to take on more debt. By 2013, approximately 7, 400 women had taken out entrepreneurship loans from Garanti (Xhunga 2010). In spite of efforts to support women to open businesses in sectors beyond those conventionally associated with women’s businesses, a majority of Garanti’s loans to women entrepreneurs have been within the services sector.<sup>116</sup>

The EBRD itself has not provided an evaluation of how these loans have impacted on loan recipients. The Bank’s official rhetoric positions the credit lines as a means to support the engagement of women in the formal sector, often with the in-built assumption that entrepreneurship is empowering for women (Xhunga 2010). In addition to this, Garanti Bank primarily monitors factors such as customer characteristics, sector of borrowing companies, company performance and profitability.<sup>117</sup> For example, a joint report by Garanti Bank and the IFC evaluates the strategy in terms of the number of female clients and the performance of their businesses. Within this report, the business angle is more clear; highlighting women who have been able to grow their businesses as particularly profitable customers to Garanti and as no more likely to default on their loans than men (IFC 2014, 22-24). The IFC makes the following recommendation for future lending:

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<sup>114</sup> Interview with Selin Oz, SME Marketing Manager, *Garanti Bank*, Istanbul, 15 May 2013.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Aynur Dincer, Senior Banker, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 26 April 2013

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Selin Oz, SME Marketing Manager, *Garanti Bank*, Istanbul, 15 May 2013.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Selin Oz, SME Marketing Manager, *Garanti Bank*, Istanbul, 15 May 2013.

“Greater emphasis needs to be placed on profitability and sustainability of WE (women entrepreneur) businesses, through improved analytics and CRM to create a level of transparency in terms of performance. While there are social objectives related to the support of women entrepreneurs, it must remain a profitable business proposition, just like any other.” (IFC 2014, 23)

Interviews with EBRD staff and project partners suggested that the profit-orientation of Garanti’s approach had caused concerns in terms of whether it did really provide a sustainable model for addressing women’s financial exclusion. Since the Garanti Bank loan, the EBRD has developed similar programmes with private banks to target women entrepreneurs. During this research, projects were in the process at Yapi Kredi and IsBank, neither of which had a representative available for interviews. Seeking to avoid the use of appeals to gender equality as superficial ‘marketing tool’, the next phase of the EBRD’s work with Turkish banks entailed a much more interventionist approach through which the banks themselves were to be transformed in order to better target female clients.<sup>118</sup>

This time, the Canadian consultancy firm, the Thomas Yaccato Group, was commissioned by the EBRD to develop the projects with Yapi Kredi and IsBank. The Yaccato Group specialises in providing gender expertise to corporations and banks in terms of how they can best approach and engage with women as a consumer group. It bases its approach to gender analysis on the claim that women consumers constitute an underexploited resource for corporations, highlighting how women’s gendered responsibilities for household consumption is a potential source of increased corporate gains.<sup>119</sup> In order to do so, women are depicted through stereotypes as ‘sophisticated

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<sup>118</sup> Interviews with Michael Davey, Country Director for Turkey, *EBRD Istanbul*, 22 April 2013; Joanne Yaccato, President, *The Thomas Yacatto Group*, 10 July, 2013.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Joanne Yaccato, President, *The Thomas Yacatto Group*, 10 July, 2013.

consumers' and as essentially different and more advanced than men due to their social and biological characteristics. For example:

“Women are incredibly sophisticated consumers for a whole variety of reasons. There are biological reasons for this, the fact that we were given very purposeful consumer training at an early age at our mother's knee, far more so than little boys so we end up growing up to be the primary shoppers for the family. So, plus the fact that we control 80 per cent of the consumer dollar spent in the developed world. It is in our best interest to have a sophisticated radar when it comes to consumer behaviour. So women are not the least bit interested in what I call pinkwashing, in fact they can smell a fem-marketing rat a mile away. They are much more interested in products and services that actually authentically meet their very specific and unique needs.”<sup>120</sup>

The background research she conducted with Yapi Kredi and IsBank focussed on identifying women's consumer preferences in banking. The result of this included the finding that women wanted to work with banks in ways that would allow them to develop their businesses in less-time consuming ways: “The fact of the matter is that they have far less time to put into developing their businesses, certainly when compared to men because they are primarily responsible for the work at home.”<sup>121</sup> The EBRD and its partnering banks have championed online businesses as a means for women to work from their homes.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Interview with Joanne Yaccato, President, *The Thomas Yacatto Group*, 10 July, 2013.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Joanne Yaccato, President, *The Thomas Yacatto Group*, 10 July, 2013.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Joanne Yaccato, President, *The Thomas Yacatto Group*, 10 July, 2013.

The consultancy exercise thus rearticulated what are often effects of unequal social and material relations into potential business opportunities. That is, rather than seeking to alleviate women from their responsibilities for household labour, or revise the ways in which this kind of work is valued, the EBRD and its partners have promoted strategies that allow women to combine entrepreneurship with this kind of unpaid labour. Although the kinds of businesses the EBRD is supporting may differ from the more conventional developmental approach to encourage women to commodify their socially reproductive labour within home-based micro enterprises (Osar 2007, 3-4), it still renders this kind of work essentially female. By focussing on disbursing loans that are profitable both for the EBRD and its partnering banks, the conditions of women's work as entrepreneurs are largely negated. Chapter 6 returns to this point, highlighting how distinctions between different categories of women entrepreneurs are obfuscated within the business and market-oriented approach through which the EBRD seeks to promote gender equality.

Overall, the process of developing these new programmes appeared more challenging than in the case of Garanti Bank. This was particularly the case with the Yapi Kredi project, which was delayed by nearly three years and only started to disburse loans to women entrepreneurs in 2015. The consultant from the Yaccato group suggested that the reasons behind this were a combination of a lack of engagement from the bank and mistakes made by the EBRD's staff.<sup>123</sup> This further supports the above argument about the contingency of the EBRD's efforts on gender equality on the willingness of the borrowing party. Perhaps more interestingly, this also suggests that more attention needs to be paid to how international gender experts translate approaches and experiences as they move between different institutional settings.

The consultants hired by the EBRD at times also challenged the Bank's approach to gender issues. Once the overarching framework has been agreed,

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<sup>123</sup> Interview with Joanne Yaccato, President, *The Thomas Yacatto Group*, 10 July, 2013

these individuals often have a relatively high degree of freedom in developing a project.<sup>124</sup> When comparing her experience of working for the EBRD to working for the World Bank, the consultant from the Thomas Yaccato Group discussed in rather critical terms how she had been taken by surprise by the lack of experience and established protocols for working on gender projects within the former.<sup>125</sup>

The second consultant working on the Yapi Kredi and IsBank projects was commissioned from the Frankfurt School for Finance and Management. With its main offices in Germany, the Frankfurt School for Finance and Management is a private business school that also specialises in providing consultancy to companies and organisations. Although the company does not have a strong profile on gender expertise, the Frankfurt School for Finance and Management had previously managed the EBRD-sponsored ‘I want to be an entrepreneur’ seminar series for women. The seminars were held in 2012 twelve cities in eastern and southern Turkey with an estimate of 1,085 attendees (EBRD 2012b, 1).

During an interview, the consultant from the Frankfurt School for Finance and Management expressed her concerns about the EBRD’s strategies in relation to female entrepreneurs. Although coming from a background in business administration and banking, this consultant was highly aware of conservative gender norms paired with inadequate childcare facilities constituted major barriers to women’s employment and entrepreneurship in Turkey.<sup>126</sup> However, conscious of the EBRD’s specific lending-profile, this interviewee had primarily sought to convince the Bank to redefine its definition of a female entrepreneur. In her view, the EBRD’s definition was too broad,

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with Merve Akinci, Consultant, *Frankfurt School of Finance and Management*, Istanbul, 14 May 2013.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Joanne Yaccato, President, *The Thomas Yaccato Group*, 10 July, 2013

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Interview with Merve Akinci, Consultant, *Frankfurt School of Finance and Management*, Istanbul, 14 May 2013.

especially vague in its acceptance of women with an important management role.

“I think this broad definition actually could facilitate the disbursement of the loans, but from a development perspective it may be better if it is more tightened. This is again my personal opinion, I told this to the EBRD. The Bank should really strive a little bit to find real female entrepreneurs.”<sup>127</sup>

This section has examined in detail how the EBRD mobilises projects on gender equality to support and extend its neoliberal economic agenda. This analysis identified that the EBRD tends to work with gender experts from the sphere of business and finance. By working on contracts these kinds of consultants are largely excluded from the EBRD’s policymaking process, but they play important roles in translating the EBRD’s policy framework into practice. In doing so, they bring in their own rationales and strategies for promoting gender parity and perform the function of diffusing these across international institutions and corporations.

The above analysis demonstrated that the corporate rationales for women’s economic participation advanced by the EBRD and its partners fail to adequately consider and address women’s structural inequalities in Turkey. Indeed, a major concern was raised about how the EBRD’s quantitative measurements of women are collapsed into assumptions of empowerment without including more qualitative analyses at the level of individuals and households. In the case of IDO Ferries, the gendered organisation of work and opportunities within the company as well as the labour involved in social reproduction were negated by the focus on equal opportunities in recruitment. Meanwhile, the EBRD’s engagement with financial institutions highlighted

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with Interview with Merve Akinci, Consultant, *Frankfurt School of Finance and Management*, Istanbul, 14 May 2013.

how women's empowerment remains linked to the extension and deepening of finance within neoliberal governance (Roberts 2015; Rankin 2001).

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has explored and analysed how the EBRD has brought its commitment to gender equality into practice in the context of its operations in Turkey. In doing so, the central argument made across previous chapters that gender mainstreaming has been co-opted by the EBRD's policies to promote private sector-led economies was developed further. The second part of this chapter argued that EBRD's strategies to mainstream gender issues in its country-level operations were ineffective in positioning gender equality as an objective of its activities. Rather, the EBRD's strategies propose an approach to incorporating gender equality agendas into projects that leaves the advancement of gender equality highly contingent upon the willingness of the Bank's clients.

Building upon the overview of women in the Turkish labour market, the chapter has consistently argued that the EBRD has failed to account for, accommodate or challenge women's responsibilities for social reproduction in the household as it works to promote women's participation in the formal economy. The third part of the chapter examined on how the concept of gender equality has been defined and promoted within the context of EBRD project lending. The empirical findings from the EBRD's loans to IDO Ferries and Turkish private banks were used to address the strategies through which the consultants appointed by the EBRD sought to empower women as employees and entrepreneurs. In doing so, it was highlighted that within corporate approaches to gender equality women's structural inequalities are positioned as something to be capitalised upon rather than as an issue that needs to be addressed.



## Chapter 6

### **The EBRD and business-partnerships for gender equality**

This chapter continues the exploration and analysis of how policy and rhetoric on gender equality are a part of the EBRD's operations in Turkey. The previous chapter examined how the EBRD's policies on gender equality have been implemented in the context of Bank lending, arguing that these strategies had been instrumentalised to support the EBRD's agenda to increase the share of the private sector in the Turkish economy. A further finding from Chapter 5 was that business consultants are the key partners to the Bank's Gender Team in the development of specific projects on gender issues. This chapter extends this theme by shifting the focus to address the wider structures of governance that the EBRD is a part of in Turkey. The core contention made throughout the chapter is that business and business-oriented actors have a growing role in shaping the policy agenda on gender equality in Turkey and globally. Within the Turkish context, entrepreneurship and flexible working are being advanced as the key strategies for promoting women's economic participation.

The empirical analysis examines what the EBRD can tell us about how the promotion of women's employment in Turkey has been inserted into neoliberal governance processes, through which the provision for social goods such as equality is increasingly done through the market. In doing so, it takes up the core argument from Chapter 2 that paying attention to the actors and voices that are included and those that are excluded are an integral part of a feminist analysis of gender politics in global governance. It is identified how elite-centred and individualistic representations of women provide for strategies in which individual women as responsible for tackling inequalities that are often structural. In addition, the context of limited state provision, a particular concern is raised about the 'softness' of the strategies advanced by

the EBRD and its partners to ensure that employers provide for socially reproductive labour.

The chapter begins by providing a discussion of how the agenda around women's employment in Turkey has been articulated through a broader politics of competitiveness promotion. In this context, the private sector is not just positioned as the main employer of women but has also taken on a more active role in shaping the policy agenda on women's economic participation. The main body of the chapter examines the EBRD's role in partnerships that promote women's entrepreneurship and flexible working patterns as employment strategies.

### **Business strategies for women's employment**

Over the last decade, business actors have become more vocal on issues related to gender equality and taken on new roles as partners to states and international institutions in the advancement of women's economic participation (Elias 2013; Prügl 2012). The literature has to date examined this phenomenon at the global level, identifying how public-private partnerships on gender equality are a part of the wider reordering of state-business relations that has been afforded by neoliberal economic policy (Prügl and True 2014, 1139-1140). As argued by Prügl and True (2014, 1141), with private actors taking on responsibilities for the provision of gender equality as a public good what is new about transnational public-private partnerships is that "actors driven largely by private and economic motives have entered the realm of public policymaking and are participating in making rules and implementing policies in the name of the public interest." This section considers the influence and role of business actors in shaping the debate and providing for women's employment in Turkey, highlighting the convergence on the market-based strategies of flexible working patterns and entrepreneurship.

The EU has been the major force behind engendering policy shifts with regard to employment in Turkey generally, and women's employment and legal status specifically. Although Turkey's accession process has been stalled on repeated occasions, EU's gender equality directives have had the significant impact of granting women equal legal status to men in the Turkish labour market, the constitution and in the social insurance system (Dedeoğlu 2012, 270; Stivachtis and Georgakis 2011). In addition, the European Employment Strategy (EES) sets out the target employment rates for EU countries at 60 per cent for women and 70 per cent for men (Toksöz 2007, 53-54). Since 2007, the EES has been a major source of impetus Turkish authorities to include specific goals and objectives related to employment and to implement legal reforms that provide for flexibility in the labour market (Bolukbasi and Ertugal 2013; KEIG 2012).

In response, Turkish state departments have since 2010 developed a more cohesive approach to address low levels of employment in the country, in which more attention has been paid to women's employment and labour force participation. The country's 10<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan (2014 – 2019) sets out the aim to increase women's labour force participation rate from 29.5 to 34.9 per cent by 2018 (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Development 2014, 164). Under the instruction of the Prime Ministerial Circular No. 2010/4 on Women's Employment and Equal Opportunities, national, regional and local institutions are to develop their institutional capacity and protocols in relation to equal opportunities (KEIG 2012, Appendix 1). Going beyond equal opportunities monitoring, the core policy proposals concentrate on education, developing the policy framework around flexible working and enhance state support for SMEs (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Development 2014, 40, 50, 105; KEIG 2013, 19-20).

Feminist scholars have highlighted how the agenda for women's employment in Turkey is situated at the intersection of the AKP Party's neoliberal economic policy and conservative social policy (Toksöz 2007; Ilkkaracan 2012). During its first term, from 2002 to 2007, the AKP government carried

out a package of comprehensive reforms to the welfare state in which women's status was transformed from dependent on men to gaining formal equality (Acar and Altonouk 2012; Kilic 2008). However, as argued by Kilic (2008, 498) repositioning women's access to welfare from their participation in the household to their participation in the labour market potentially negates how women's *de facto* role in the latter is still mediated through their responsibilities in the former. In contrast, the AKP's gender politics remain based upon the valuation of women as mothers and carers and places the family as the central unit of society (Kandiyoti 2010; Arat 2010a). In turn, its welfare reforms have maintained the family and the household as the main providers of care and primarily sought to expand opportunities for welfare provision within the household, for example by providing resources to support the expansion of the care for the elderly and disabled at home (Acar and Altonouk 2012, 4-5; KEIG 2014, 25-29; Bugra and Keyder 2006, 212).

Since the late 2000s, the principal extension of childcare has arguably come from business actors. A report by KEIG suggests that this has primarily taken the form of the provision of private childcare centres in industrial zones (KEIG 2012, 15). As defined by Schäferhoff *et al.* (2009: 451-452), public-private partnerships are types of governance in which private actors take on new responsibilities for the provision of collective goods. One example of this is the 'My Mum's Job is My Future' partnership between the car company Borusan Oto together with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and the Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology launched the project. The aim of the project is to increase women's employment rate in industry by opening six daily childcare facilities in industrial zones in the Anatolian region.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> 'My mum's job is my future', <http://www.anneminisi.org/en/Home.aspx>, accessed 15/08/2015.

### *Women's employment as competitiveness promotion*

The advancement of women's economic empowerment through their employment has been increasingly fused with notions of economic growth and competitiveness in Turkish policy discourse. The AKP government has articulated the country's demographic composition, especially as maintaining a large proportion of young people, as central to ensuring a strong position for Turkey regionally and globally. A key aim of the proposals for flexible working strategies in the 10<sup>th</sup> Development Plan is set out in terms of ensure high fertility rates by enabling women to combine work with motherhood (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Development 2014, 50). Within government policy, the linkages between women's economic roles and economic competitiveness are thus primarily articulated along conservative lines that maintain women's primary economic roles as giving birth to and nurturing a male labour force within the home (KEIG 2013b). Perhaps most famous is Erdogan's call for all women to have at least three children:

“One or two children mean bankruptcy. Three children mean we are not improving but not receding either. So, I repeat, at least three children are necessary in each family, because our population risks aging. We are still on the good side, as we still own a young and dynamic population. But we are slowly aging. Presently, the whole western world is trying to cope with this problem.” (Recep Tayyip Erdogan, cited in Hurriyet Daily News, 3 January 2013)

In contrast, international organisations have articulated the low number of women in the public sphere as a barrier to Turkish macroeconomic performance. Published annually since 2010, the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Gender Gap Reports directly link aggregate measures of gender equality to measurements of economic competitiveness (Elias 2013, 159). The WEF's Gender Gap Reports assess discrepancies between women and men in

four main areas: health, education, economy and politics. The gaps are then given a score from 0 to 4 that is used to rank countries on their performance in each area (WEF 2012). These indexes can be used to a number of political functions. First, at the at the time of research, activists, businesses and media used Turkey's rank at 124 out of a total of 135 in the area of women's economic participation to call for the AKP government to increase its efforts (WEF 2012; Fowler 2011).

Gender indexes place the promotion of gender equality within governance strategies and techniques that have been developed to promote economic competitiveness as a national policy goal (Elias 2011, 530-531). There are clear similarities between the claims about gender equality that are being made by the WEF and the EBRD and the methodologies that underpin them (see Chapters 3 and 4) As argued by Elias (2013, 159), the WEF's gender gaps are employed as an indicator that of economic inefficiency based on the view that large gaps suggest that women are being wasted as human resources. Although the empirical grounds on which these claims are being made are disputable (Elias 2013, 159), they constitute a principal rationale for the business partnerships for women's economic participation that are discussed below.

Labour market flexibility is an important part of how international institutions promote the competitiveness of Turkey in the global economy. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has highlighted Turkey as the member having some of the 'most rigid employment protection rules' in areas such as temporary employment, employment through work agencies, and severance. From this perspective, rigid labour market regulation is a major contributing factor to the size of the informal work (OECD 2014, 2). In addition to encouraging the movement of labour between different parts of economy, the EU has been a major force in the establishment of legal provisions for flexibility in terms of working patterns and arrangements in Turkey. Act Number 4857 in the 2003 Labour Law introduced two new elements of flexibility, including: first, part-time work,

on-call work, fixed-term contracts and temporary employment in the formal sector and second, arrangements for flexible working hours including flexitime, compensatory work and a temporary reduction in working time (Bolukbasi and Ertugal 2013, 242).

The EBRD endorses the further deregulation of the labour market in order to encourage employment in the formal sector and ultimately, economic growth.<sup>129</sup> As argued in Chapter 5, one major element of the EBRD's agenda to promote women's employment in Turkey is the promotion of equal opportunities for women in the private sector. The theme of flexible working patterns for women is clearly set out within guidelines for 'family friendly working' among clients that have been developed by the EBRD's Gender Team. Representing a soft form of governance, these guidelines aim to support best practices in human resources management among borrowing clients. Within these, the EBRD's Gender Team suggests that the client should think about introducing practices such as flexible working policies and hours, part-time work, job sharing or remote working to allow employees to combine work with household labour (EBRD 2008d, 6-8). Importantly, the EBRD in these documents also encourages the use of work place crèches and warns that part time can have a negative impact on the income and job security of an employee (EBRD 2008d).

Large Turkish business actors have championed the joint cause of employment and competitiveness within the public debate. The 2006 Women's Employment Summit in Istanbul held by Confederation of Employers' Associations of Turkey (TISK) contributed significantly to the visibility of women's employment situation (KEIG 2006). The recommendations from this meeting proposed to increase women's employment levels by the use of private employment agencies, flexible employment strategies and the use of tax reductions for employers (Dedeoğlu 2012, 281).

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<sup>129</sup> EBRD, 'Transition Report 2014: Turkey Highlights', <http://2014.tr-ebd.com/turkey/>, 15/08/2015.

Since then, business actors have aimed to improve women's employment situation both through corporate social responsibility initiatives as well as by lobbying policy makers. The interest of business in women's employment can in part be explained in terms of how Turkish business has supported EU accession as a means to ensure access to world markets and stability in trade relations (Önis and Turem 2002, 442; Bayer and Önis 2010, 185). In addition, female leaders within the secular segment of internationalised businesses that is associated with this agenda have often been highly critical of the AKP Government's conservative gender politics. As argued by Feride Acar:

“This is a very new phenomenon for Turkey. The private sector is actually now the flagship in promoting women's employment and women's professional employment in these fields. This is directly linked to the government's conservative policy of orienting women into the home.”<sup>130</sup>

Businesswomen such as Ümit Boyner, President of the Turkish Industry and Business Association<sup>131</sup> (TÜSİAD) (2010 - 2013) and Guler Sabancı, Managing Director of Sabancı Holding, have been prolific in the public debate and lobbied for a wide range of causes such as increasing women's representation in politics, gender mainstreaming and the expansion of the social security system.<sup>132</sup> Below it is seen how these actors occupy powerful positions the governance partnerships for gender equality that the EBRD contributes to.

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with Feride Acar, Professor, *Middle East Technical University*, Ankara 18 June 2013.

<sup>131</sup> Formed in 1971, TÜSİAD has long held an influential political position in Turkey (Önis and Turem 2002, 442). In addition to promoting business interest in national politics, TÜSİAD has also been a major proponent of social and political reforms related to democratisation and EU accession (Önis and Turem 2002, 442).

<sup>132</sup> Interviews with Oyku Ulucay, Programme Manager, United Nations Joint Program for Promoting the Human Rights of Women, *Sabancı Vakfı*. Istanbul, 3 May; Arzu Ozyol, Founding President, *Turkish Federation of Business and Professional Women*, Istanbul, 25 April 2013.



A substantial body of research has highlighted that the promotion of flexible work for women has not been adequately backed up by developments in social policy. Studies of the social security system have highlighted persistent issues for women due to how state-provided benefits in Turkey are based upon registration in the labour force (Ozar 2007; Bugra and Keyder 2006, 213). The transformation of work through agricultural reforms and the rise of urban home-based in the 1980s and 1990s contributed to a significant proportion of women and men working without being registered. Toksöz (2008, 46-47) estimates that 65 per cent of women and 42 per cent of men in Turkey work outside of the coverage from any social insurance scheme.

Since 2008 part time and on-call workers are included within the social security system, yet with full coverage only available to non-full time workers if they pay the excess premium (Majcher-Teleon and Bardak 2011, 6-7). Part-time employment accounted for 13, 22 and 27 per cent of female employment in 2005, 2008 and 2011 respectively. In comparison, part-time work accounted for 3, 6 and 8 per cent of male employment for the same years (Duzgun Oncel and Eris Dereli 2015, 86). In effect, as argued by KEIG (2014, 15), promoting part-time work can have the potential effect of making women even more at risk of working outside of social insurance system.

Having sketched out the contours of the convergence among the state, business and international institutions on market-oriented strategies for women's employment, the remainder of this chapter explores and analyses the role played by the EBRD within governance landscape.

### **The EBRD's Women in Business Programme in Turkey**

On 22 October 2014, the EBRD launched its Finance and Advice for Women in Business Programme in Turkey. Constructed as a partnership between the EBRD, the EU and the Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) the programme is intended to create 21,000 new employment opportunities for women (Rosca 2014). The

EBRD manages the programme as well as provides up to €300 million to six private Turkish banks for lending to women entrepreneurs. The EU and the Turkish authorities provide €38 million for credit lines, advice and assistance to small businesses and partner banks (Rosca 2014).

The publicity around the WiB programme in Turkey has focussed on the potential of women entrepreneurs to contribute to economic competitiveness at the national level. From the EBRD's it was argued that:

“The entrepreneurship of women plays a key role in driving the economic growth of a country and we firmly believe that creating equality of opportunity for women in business is not only a gender issue, but also an economic priority.” (Şule Kılıç, EBRD Deputy Director for Turkey, cited in Rosca 2015)

Meanwhile, representatives from the Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security proposed that:

“The great success and effort that women demonstrate in all aspects of life is proof that they should be more extensively involved in the workforce. At the Ministry, we think it is vital to increase the role of women in business life in order to bring more dynamism to our economy and enable Turkey to rank among the 10 biggest economies in the world.” (Cited in Rosca 2015)

Garanti Bank, as a participating bank in the programme, has previously framed its activities in relation to women's entrepreneurship as a means to counteract women's low employment figures and to contribute to national goals of competitiveness and growth. Garanti's Vice President Nafiz Kadere made the case for specialised loans to women on the basis of their potential to contribute to the Turkish economy as well as to the profit margins of the bank

itself.<sup>133</sup> Within Garanti's marketing, the credit packages to women are described as "giving women entrepreneurs managerial and consultancy support to help them reach a competitive level in global markets", which, in turn, would "contribute to Turkey's social and economic development by increasing the number of women entrepreneurs who create economic value." (Oz 2012). Having identified its linkages to the policy discourse on gender equality and competitiveness, this section explores in detail the WiB programme for Turkey was developed by the EBRD and its partners.

### *The role and influence of donor agencies*

The EU is the EBRD's main partner organisation in its activities to support women entrepreneurs in Turkey.<sup>134</sup> Since 2010, this co-operation has been organised under the EU-EBRD Finance Facility that works with five public and private banks to provide training and access to finance to entrepreneurs. The EBRD is responsible for the implementation of the facility, including the commissioning of consultants to provide business training and it also contributes with financial resources.<sup>135</sup> It is under this umbrella that the EBRD has worked with several of the partners discussed in Chapter 5, including the Frankfurt School for Finance and Management, Garanti Bank, Isbank and Yapi Kredi. The EU provides the framework for the facility, set out under its Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) to target southern and eastern Turkey.<sup>136</sup> Since 2007, the management of the IPA has been decentralised to Turkish state departments.

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<sup>133</sup> Interview with Selin Oz, SME Marketing Manager, *Garanti Bank*, Istanbul, 15 May 2013.

<sup>134</sup> EBRD, 'EU: EBRD shareholder profile', <http://www.ebrd.com/who-we-are/structure-and-management/shareholders/european-union.html>, accessed 15/08/2015.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Oksana Pak and Sariga Sambayeva, Senior Bankers, *EBRD*, London 19 March, 2013.

<sup>136</sup> European Commission, 'Turkey - financial assistance under IPA II' [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/turkey/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/turkey/index_en.htm), accessed 15/08/2015;

Organising the WiB programme in Turkey entailed a complex process of negotiation over access to EU funding. In the words of a senior manager of the EBRD's Small Business Team: "Without the EU we would hardly exist in Turkey, I mean let's be honest. They pay forty per cent of our donor funds."<sup>137</sup> The talks over the WiB programme in Turkey were managed by the EU Coordination Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.<sup>138</sup> This department oversees the implementation of the EU's Human Resources Operational Programme that encompasses EU-Turkey co-operation in the areas of education, employment and social policies. Women's employment is included as one of the priorities under employment and the first phase of cooperation encompassed a large-scale initiative with the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) to provide guidance and skills training to women.<sup>139</sup> The EBRD entered negotiations with the EU Coordination Department as they started the next phase of their work on women's employment and entrepreneurship in 2012. Of critical importance to the EBRD was an operational amendment that allowed for the EU Coordination Department to contract IFIs with the aim to increase the leverage of EU funding.<sup>140</sup> As a result, the EBRD was able to put in a bid for funding under a competitive tender procedure.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Interview with Charlotte Ruhe, Director of the Small Business Team, *EBRD*, London 7 March 2013.

<sup>138</sup> Interviews with Zeynep Aydemir, Social Policy and Employment Sector Manager, *Delegation of the European Union to Turkey*, Ankara, 27 June 2013; Nelih Akin and Cerem Erdem, Programme Managers, *EU Co-ordination Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security*. Ankara, 28 June 2013.

<sup>139</sup> Delegation of the European Union to Turkey, 'Promoting Women's Employment', <http://avrupa.info.tr/tr/eu-projects-at-a-glance/social-policy-education-health-culture-employment/promoting-womens-employment.html>, accessed 15/08/2015.

<sup>140</sup> Interviews with Zeynep Aydemir, Social Policy and Employment Sector Manager, *Delegation of the European Union to Turkey*, Ankara, 27 June 2013; Nelih Akin and Cerem Erdem, Programme Managers, *EU Co-ordination Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security*. Ankara, 28 June 2013.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Serpil Cetincift, BAS National Programme Manager for Turkey, *EBRD*, Ankara, 11 June 2013.

The reliance upon donor-resources thus suggests the continued precariousness of the EBRD's gender-related initiatives. As argued in Chapter 3, the EBRD offers very little of its own financial resources to its gender-related activities which means that the implementation of the WiB programmes, and the EBRD's gender policies more generally, are dependent on resources from bilateral and multilateral donor organisations. Interviews with representatives from the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the EU highlighted the importance that the EBRD's strategies and approach would match their own developmental agendas within a specific country.<sup>142</sup> From these interviews, it transpired that the EBRD does not have a reputation for being an institution that works on gender issues. As argued by one interviewee,

“But I think the EBRD are making an effort to ensure gender mainstreaming, but to do an action in the field of women's employment doesn't necessarily mean that they are taking care of gender issues because gender issues are both men and women, not only women, so we need to be careful.”<sup>143</sup>

Rather, perhaps as to be expected, the EBRD is first and foremost engaged as a partner for these donor organisations to channel assistance to the private sector. More interesting is how the EBRD is providing a vehicle through which other organisations can implement specific elements of their strategies on gender equality.<sup>144</sup> As argued by Eyben (2011), donor organisations have increasingly adopted similar market-oriented strategies to the promotion of gender equality as seen among development institutions and turned to

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<sup>142</sup> Interviews with Annika Palo, First Secretary of the Swedish Embassy, *Sida*, Ankara, 26 June, 2013; Clare Dansereau, Board Director for Canada, *EBRD*, London, 11 July 2013; Nina Orlova, Senior Programme Officer, *Sida*, Embassy of Sweden in Chisinau. 24 June, 2013.

<sup>143</sup> Anonymous interviewee.

<sup>144</sup> Interviews with Annika Palo, First Secretary of the Swedish Embassy, *Sida*, Ankara, 26 June, 2013; Clare Dansereau, Board Director for Canada, *EBRD*, London, 11 July 2013; Nina Orlova, Senior Programme Officer, *Sida*, Embassy of Sweden in Chisinau. 24 June, 2013.

business and finance for the advancement of women's economic empowerment. For example, Taipei-China and Luxembourg used their role as sponsors to advocate for the integration of lending to women entrepreneurs within the EBRD's WiB programme in the Western Balkans.<sup>145</sup>

Donors have the opportunity to intervene during policy implementation in ways that might potentially modify the EBRD's approach to gender equality. One important way in this happens is through the imposition of regional requirements. For example, interviewees at the EBRD highlighted how the EU's instruction to target resources to the southern and eastern parts of Turkey was to some extent resisted by the EBRD as it means that the Bank might lose out on profitable investments into women's businesses in the more developed city regions.<sup>146</sup>

Sida is an important partner to the EBRD's WiB programmes outside of Turkey. This is interesting because Sida works under a framework to women's economic empowerment that aims to go beyond the World Bank's market-based approach to address structural inequalities (Törnqvist and Schmitz 2009, 9). In practice, interviews suggested that Sida might be limited in their interest and ability to shift the EBRD to work on new areas – but might be more influential in terms of the forms through which the Bank works. For example, Sida's Senior Programme Officer in Moldova described how she had during negotiations with the EBRD's local staff over a joint WiB programme focussed on expanding the co-operative element of the programme to link up with the organisational infrastructure provided by UN Women, primarily in terms of the use of local business networks and meeting facilities. In addition, Sida requested that the programme should also encompass start-up businesses, target larger enterprises with a majority female employees, focus on the poorer parts of the country, and provide a local

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<sup>145</sup> Interview with Natalia Meylunas, BAS Regional Programme for Western Balkans, *EBRD*, 26 August 2013.

<sup>146</sup> Interviews with Serpil Cetincift, BAS National Programme Manager for Turkey, *EBRD*, Ankara, 11 June 2013; Memduh Ackay, Board Director for Turkey, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 13 May, 2013.

language webpage in Moldovan and Russian as well as the EBRD's standard English one.<sup>147</sup> Sida's priorities for development co-operation on gender equality in Turkey focus on women's democratic participation and rights; hence it is not a partner to the EBRD in this particular country (Sida 2010, 3-4).

#### *How the EBRD targets women entrepreneurs*

The EBRD is far from alone in targeting women entrepreneurs as a means to empower women economically and to improve Turkish labour market statistics. Rather, as argued by Ecevit (2007, 2-4), promoting entrepreneurship as a way to ameliorate women's economic situation in Turkey has been an important part of the agendas pursued by women's and feminist organisations and international institutions since the early 1990s. The World Bank has been a major actor in shaping this agenda as a market-based strategy to empower women and reduce poverty. Although there is a broader convergence on promoting women's entrepreneurship, this agenda is internally diverse with actors working toward a variety of aims such as increasing household income, increasing the number of women in the labour force and in employment, enhancing the efficiency of women's economic activities, providing for gender equity and achieving women's empowerment (Ecevit 2007, 45). In addition, efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship are, in part, characterised by the lack of coordination among multiple actors (Ecevit 2007, 53).

Some of the most interesting findings from the field research concern how the EBRD has positioned and promoted itself in its work with women entrepreneurs in Turkey. The EBRD's policies on gender issues encourage the Bank to seek co-operation with other international financial institutions in order to "harmonise the collective efforts as well as to be able to leverage results that might not otherwise be attainable" (EBRD 2013a, 13). Interviews

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with Nina Orlova, Senior Programme Officer, *Sida*, Embassy of Sweden in Chisinau, 24 June 2013.

suggested that there was relatively little formalised co-operation between the EBRD and other actors working in the area of women's entrepreneurship. For example, by 2013 dialogue between the EBRD's Gender Team and the General for the Status of Women (KSGM) within the Ministry of Family and Social Policies - the main state department responsible for women's equality in Turkey – was only in its initial stages and no joint projects had been established.<sup>148</sup> The EBRD's local staff have rather tried to co-ordinate their activities with other major actors working on women's entrepreneurship in order to avoid duplication of initiatives.<sup>149</sup>

The presence of multiple other organisations working on women's entrepreneurship posed challenges for the EBRD's staff. The national manager of the EBRD's Small Business Team highlighted how Turkey had been 'a difficult market' for her team to start targeting women entrepreneurs in because of this issue. During an interview she especially highlighted that it was challenging to align with the EU directives to prioritise the southern and eastern regions of Turkey because many other institutions already operating there.<sup>150</sup> Consequently, the EBRD's local staff engaged in a significant amount of promotional activities to make the EBRD a familiar name in Turkey and to attract SMEs to its consultancy programmes. Perhaps more importantly, the EBRD has by not working on microenterprises and start-up businesses sought to target a less exploited segment of female entrepreneurs.<sup>151</sup> The selection of businesses that are eligible to participate in

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with Goknur Akcadag, Head of Department, Directorate for the Status of Women, *Ministry of Family and Social Policies*, Ankara, 13 June, 2013

<sup>149</sup> Interviews with Martin Raiser, Head of World Bank Ankara Office, *World Bank*, Ankara, 21 June, 2013; Necla Haliloğlu, Entrepreneurship Development Director, *KOSGEB* Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation, Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology, 10 June 2013. Although KOSGEB does not have its own programs that target women specifically, the organisation applies a positive discrimination toward women entrepreneurs within its grant funding and utilises EU-funding to provide as well as providing business incubators for women;

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Serpil Cetincift, BAS National Programme Manager for Turkey, *EBRD*, Ankara, 11 June 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Serpil Cetincift, BAS National Programme Manager for Turkey, *EBRD*, Ankara, 11 June 2013.



the WiB programmes is done in accordance to the size of the business (less than €50 million in annual turnover and less than 250 employees), the percentage of female ownership, or management, as well as an assessment of whether the business is within a sector that is deemed competitive by the EBRD.<sup>152</sup>

These findings continue to raise questions as to the order of priorities within the EBRD's efforts on gender equality. This is especially because there is little evidence that suggest that the Bank's preparation for the WiB established that more support to manage and run their own business is called for by the people who live in the specific localities where the Bank operates to address gender inequalities. Rather, the EBRD's consultation and preparation activities focused on business or business-oriented organisations such as the local development agency, chambers of commerce and industry, local women's business association and banks.<sup>153</sup>

Turning to the more concrete activities entailed in the WiB programmes, it is interesting to consider the role that the EBRD assigns to the partnering banks. The WiB programme in Turkey was the first in which the EBRD started to link the participants to potential lenders as well as providing mentoring and consultancy services.<sup>154</sup> As argued in Chapter 5, the EBRD's consultants had during previous loans to Garanti Bank, Yapi Kredi and IsBank positioned women as an underexploited, and profitable, segment of the market. A similar role for the EBRD was discussed in the context of the WiB programme, where the EBRD was to provide services to improve business practices among

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<sup>152</sup> Interview with Valeria Della Rosa, Senior Manager of Business Advisory Services and Caroline Bryant Bosa, Principal Manager of Small Business Support, *EBRD*, London, 6 March 2013.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Serpil Cetincifti, BAS National Programme Manager for Turkey, *EBRD*, Ankara, 11 June, 2013.

<sup>154</sup> Interviews with Valeria Della Rosa, Senior Manager of Business Advisory Services and Caroline Bryant Bosa, Principal Manager of Small Business Support, *EBRD*, London, 6 March 2013; Severian Gvinepadze, BAS National Programme Manager for Georgia, *EBRD* Tbilisi Resident Office, 24 June, 2013; Natalia Meylunas, BAS Regional Programme for Western Balkans, *EBRD*, 26 August 2013.

female entrepreneurs and offer research and strategies to the banks that will assist them in targeting female borrowers.<sup>155</sup> Because the risk of women defaulting on their loans lies with the commercial banks, the EBRD's staff however suggested that their role in the context of WiB did not include trying to shift the lending practices of the banks. This quote illustrates the continued free market orientation of the EBRD with respect to the WiB banks:

“So if the banks decide to make it interest-wise more attractive, it is their decision, we do not interfere there. As we said, we do not distort the market in a way. We do not pressure them to say ‘Ok, because you are a woman you get 2 per cent lower interest’. That is not what we are doing, we are not interfering. The actual lending rate is up to the banks. They might know already this client, they might be more confident with the risk. But any bank has its own way of doing it, now they assess the risk and the rates they decide to give at the end. That is not really our kind of area of decision really, it is not.”<sup>156</sup>

The EBRD has within its policies and projects on gender equality consistently assigned women central parts getting themselves ahead as well as helping other women to do so (EBRD 2013a, 7). As argued by Bexell (2012, 401-402) market-oriented strategies for women's empowerment allocate responsibility for tackling inequality to individuals rather than collective forms of action or provisions by the state. The assumption that underpins the EBRD's strategies is that women are more likely than men to support other women hence, for example, helping one woman to become a manager means that chances are that she will recruit and promote other women (EBRD 2013a, 21).

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with Engin Goksu, Head of Ankara Office, *EBRD*, Ankara, 11 June 2013.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Engin Goksu, Head of Ankara Office, *EBRD*, Ankara, 11 June 2013.

The EBRD's rhetoric on the WiB programmes, in Turkey and elsewhere, argue that entrepreneurship is a means for women to increase their income and as a strategy to avoid facing discrimination by employers or even migrate to make a living (EBRD 2013a, 9-10). In addition, empowering women economically is seen as a route challenge conservative gender norms and even allow women to act as role models for their spouses and communities (Greenberg 2010).

The EBRD's WiB programmes in Turkey position successful businesswomen as role models and instructors. As argued by Roberts (2015, 109-110), the activities around entrepreneurship in economic governance are increasingly taking the form of a financial deepening, emphasising women's financial literacy as a key route to embed finance in their everyday lives. The second element of the WiB programme in Turkey seek to increase women's business skills and networks by offering mentoring to 80 programme participants, to be provided by successful businesswomen from the Turkish Women's International Network (Rosca 2015). At the time of writing, the details for this element of the programme were not finalised. Within the EBRD's strategies, the onus is nonetheless primarily upon women to educate and adapt themselves to become more successful with some interventions into the institutions in which they participate. For example, the EBRD's partnership with Garanti Bank (see Chapter 5) has also entailed financing of business training for women. These programmes were initiated by Garanti and are run by the Lifelong Learning Centre at Bogazici University in Istanbul. As expressed by the project co-coordinator, the EBRD had had relatively little input on developing the training programme:

“Then the EBRD liked the project and we did some meetings here at the university. They really liked it. They liked the curriculum and all the other processes about the project. They gave some advice, because in a training programme we hadn't

thought that it could be an idea to put 'best practices' as one of the training programme.”<sup>157</sup>

In making these claims about women’s empowerment, staff at the EBRD marginalise insights from the substantive body of research and evidence on women’s entrepreneurship from across the EBRD’s regions. For example, research on Eastern Europe and Central Asia highlight how empowering women through the market is not straightforward: as starting an enterprise is often a survival strategy rather than a choice and although it might mean new freedoms for women within and outside of the household there is often little income security (Werner 2004; Crate 2004; Aidis *et al.* 2007; Welter *et al.* 2003). Studies of women’s enterprises in Turkey show that these are concentrated into traditional feminine sectors, that they are often small and home-based, and started because of difficulties in finding employment elsewhere (Osar 2007).

Feminist analyses of women’s income earning in Turkey have demonstrated the difficulty of making claims about women’s empowerment without considering how women themselves understand empowerment and how this relates to their role within the household (Erman *et al.* 2002; Dedeoğlu 2010). Of course, as seen in Chapter 3, the EBRD’s mandate and role restrict the claims and analysis that are included in the Bank’s policies and publications. However, as argued by Bergeron (2003, 405), what this means in practice is that, rather than something to be identified, women’s characteristics and needs are pre-defined in ways that allow for further marketisation.

### *Women’s and feminist organisations*

Turkey has a rich variety of women’s and feminist organisations that have played important roles in bringing attention to women’s economic situation and often worked as partners to international and regional institutions in

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<sup>157</sup> Interview with Dr. Isil Keskin, Project Coordinator, *Bogazici University Lifelong Learning Centre*, Istanbul, 1 July 2013.

engendering legal, institutional and attitudinal changes (Ecevit 2007, 47; Acar *et al.* 2007). The field research identified that the EBRD had engaged with this category of actors only on very selective terms, during the preparation of the WiB and more generally.

The Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey (KAGİDER) was the sole invitee to comment on women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship during the preparation of the EBRD's country strategy for Turkey and it has since been the main partner to the EBRD's Gender Team in Turkey (EBRD 2011b).<sup>158</sup> Founded by 37 female business owners and members of TÜSİAD in 2002, KAGİDER is a key example of the powerful role of business in shaping the debate on gender equality in Turkey that was discussed above. KAGİDER operates in two main ways: first, by working directly with women entrepreneurs through the provision of training and mentorship and second, as a policy advocate promoting Turkey's accession to the EU and engaging with multiple issues such as the promotion of gender mainstreaming, awareness-raising and policy change (TÜSİAD, KAGİDER 2011). In doing so, KAGİDER has supported not just women's entrepreneurship but also the expansion of flexible working patterns for women as means to increase the number of women in employment (Ecevit 2007, 31).<sup>159</sup>

There was little evidence of the EBRD's staff having engaged with feminist organisations that are working in the area of women's employment from non-market perspectives. The organisations interviewed for this thesis offer a snapshot of the kinds of issues, such as men and masculinities, education and

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<sup>158</sup> Interview with Yesim Muftuler-Sevig, Secretary General, *Kagider*, Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey, Istanbul, 7 May 2013. Information updated and confirmed through follow up email in August 2015.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Yesim Muftuler-Sevig, Secretary General, *Kagider*, Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey, Istanbul, 7 May 2013. Information updated and confirmed through follow up email in August 2015.

gender-based violence, that are critical to women's position in the Turkish labour market but that are excluded by the EBRD.<sup>160</sup>

From the perspective of this thesis, the lack of cooperation between the EBRD and the Women's Labour and Employment Initiative Platform (KEIG) is particularly significant. During an interview, KEIG's main co-ordinator highlighted that there had been no contact between the platform and the EBRD.<sup>161</sup> Including thirty organisations and academics working and campaigning on questions related to women's labour, the (KEIG) is among the most prominent voices in the debate on women's employment in Turkey.<sup>162</sup> The platform was formed in opposition to the 2006 Employment Summit by TISK (see above), and has since provided extensive critiques of the strategies to promote women's employment through for labour market flexibility and entrepreneurship (KEIG 2006; 2012; 2013; 2014). In particular, these critiques have highlighted how these strategies fail to challenge the AKP Party's understanding of women's primary roles as mothers and wives but rather being routes that will allow women to undertake paid work without compromising their duties in the household (KEIG 2013, 16-20). An interviewee from the feminist organisation Flying Broom expressed a similar view:

“The government is now very loudly speaking about half-time work for women. Of course it is not a good thing, it means lower pensions when you are getting old. It is also just bringing poverty to women. With the Prime Minister saying

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<sup>160</sup> Interviews with Sevna Somuncuoglu, Coordinator, *Flying Broom: Women Communication and Research Association (Uçan Süpürge)*, Ankara, 25 June 2013; Serap Güre, Coordinator, *KEIG*, Istanbul, 5 July 2013; Bilhan Gozcu, *SOGEP: Social Development and Gender Equality Policies Centre*, Istanbul, 14 May 2013.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Serap Güre, Coordinator, *KEIG*, Istanbul, 5 July 2013.

<sup>162</sup> KEIG, 'About Us', <http://www.keig.org/eng/icerik.aspx?id=1>, accessed 10/08/2015.

'continue to give birth to 3 children or 5 children', of course they will advocate half time work."<sup>163</sup>

### **Business partnerships for equal opportunities**

The exploration of the EBRD's public-facing activities provided further insights about how the Bank works within governance networks and partnerships that aim to increase the number of women in Turkey. The EBRD has since starting operations in Turkey in 2008/9 hosted a number of high profile events on topics related to women's labour market situation, including the 2012 Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) Summit on Women's Employment as well as panels during its 2013 Annual Meeting in Istanbul. The first of these was organised by the EBRD's Gender Team in the function of chair of the MDB Gender Working Group. This working group includes the EBRD, the World Bank, the Asian, African and Inter-American Development Banks as core members with the addition of representatives from the Islamic Development Bank and the IFC in 2012. The aim is to provide a forum for gender experts from these institutions to share ideas and experiences and to harmonise strategies.<sup>164</sup>

In addition, the EBRD's networking events provide a platform for business actors to make their voices heard. In addition to the Women in Business Awards ceremony (see Chapter 3), the 2013 Annual Meeting in Istanbul included a panel discussion titled 'The Female Factor: Women in Business and Financial Performance' with women who were on the boards of Turkish business conglomerates and multinational companies – several which had been within their family for generations. The panellists discussed their careers and offered advice and strategy for how women can get ahead in the corporate world. Illustrative quotes include:

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<sup>163</sup> Interview with Sevna Somuncuoglu, Coordinator, *Flying Broom: Women Communication and Research Association* (Uçan Süpürge), Ankara, 25 June 2013.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Michaela Bergman, Chief Counselor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013.

“The really talented women should decide which company they want to work for, if there is a glass ceiling they should move company.” Svetlana Balanova, General Director IBS.

“Women have to show confidence, speak up when something is wrong – this way they gain respect in a company. It is your responsibility, nothing will fall from the sky.” Lada Tedeschi Fiorio, Vice President of the Supervisory Board, Atlantic Grupa Plc

“Women need to have leadership qualities, know their stuff and speak like the clients.” Shermine Dajani, CEO, Panmed Energy

Within this individualistic discourse, panellists opposed to further government intervention to increase number of women in corporate life. For example, a majority of the respondents expressed negative views on the use of quotas as a means to increase the number of women as employees and managers in the corporate world:

“Success starts in the head of a woman, it should happen naturally. Women don’t want to be treated like they are handicapped. Instead women should be trained to help them understand what they want and how to get there. This should also include things that women are worse at than men, such as networking.” (Svetlana Balanova, General Director, IBS Company)

“I am against quotas, it has to be natural. A company has to see the woman’s talent and women have to show them. Talk about business, don’t talk about gender and that will help you” (Lada Tedeschi Fiorio, Vice President of the Supervisory Board, Atlantic Grupa Plc)



“You need quotas but you also need confidence. Management should identify and ‘groom’ talent, especially in huge corporations it is important to find someone senior who will help you progress.” (Shermine Dajani, CEO, Panmed Energy)

These panels continue the elite-centred strategies in which successful women use their own lives as examples for others. As argued by Elias (2013, 164), the positioning of elite women as champions of gender equality and as representatives of all women causes obfuscates how women are divided along the lines of class, race and age. Most of the panellists highlighted that combining motherhood with their careers had been difficult, requiring for example working during maternity leave and in the evenings, yet not insurmountable given their familial support networks. There is little recognition in this kind of public discourse of how women’s opportunities in the business world are shaped by differences in their socio-economic status. For example, KEIG has raised major concerns about how entrepreneurship and flexible working strategies may exacerbate women’s risk of working outside of the social security system with up to 90 per cent of self-employed women in Turkey not being covered by social insurance (KEIG 2013, 22-23).

#### *Equal opportunities schemes for business*

EBRD’s events in Turkey have provided opportunities for the promotion of business-oriented initiatives for women’s employment. At the 2012 Employment Summit KAGİDER presented the Gender Equity Model and at the 2013 Annual Meeting a panel was dedicated to the WEF’s Equality at Work Platform. These are both voluntary certification schemes to ensure women’s equal opportunities in the private sector and they are organised through transnational public-private partnerships. The Gender Equity Model was adapted from the World Bank’s Private Sector Leader’s Forum and Equal Opportunities Model by KAGİDER in cooperation with Sabanci University,

Pricewaterhouse Coopers and Ernest & Young.<sup>165</sup> The process entails the ratification of a CEO declaration and the use of self-audits of human resources policies and practices. Since 2011, the Gender Equity Model has been piloted by multinational corporations and been ascribed to by several state departments as a means of setting standards for publicly owned companies in Turkey (EBRD 2012c).<sup>166</sup> This kind of partnership can be traced back to at least 2004 when UNIFEM and the US investment firm Calvert investments formulated a series of principles for corporate conduct on gender issues (Bexell 2012, 393).

The EBRD's Gender Team encourages client companies to subscribe to the Equality at Work Platform. One example of this is the airport operating company TAV EGE, with which the EBRD in 2012 signed a lending agreement of 70 million euros to the construction of a new terminal in the city of Izmir. In an interview, the manager indicated that the EBRD had been an important factor in the company's interest in signing the equality at work declaration.<sup>167</sup> TAV's formal reporting to the EBRD focuses primarily on the number of women employed within the company and its subcontractors.

The Equality at Work Platform was a key output from the WEF's 2012 Gender Gap Report. After the publication of the 2012 report, the Women's Leaders and Gender Parity Programme at the WEF organised three Gender Parity Taskforces in Turkey, Mexico and Japan as countries with major gaps in women's economic participation. The aim of these public-private partnerships is to work with business to close the gap between men and women's economic participation by up to 10 per cent over three years (Sayin and Turkmenoglu 2013, 14-15). In Turkey, the partnership is managed by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies together with the CEOs from Sabanci

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<sup>165</sup> Interview with Yesim Muftuler-Sevig, Secretary General, *Kagider*, Istanbul, 7 May 2013.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Yesim Muftuler-Sevig, Secretary General, *Kagider*, Istanbul, 7 May 2013.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Necdet Buyukbay, Technical Manager, *TAV/EGE*, Izmir, 11 July 2013.

Holding and Dogus Holding. In the introduction to the Equality at Work Platform Fatma Sahin Minister of Family and Social Policies in Turkey, expands the individualistic discourse on women's empowerment:

“The primary objective of establishing gender equality in all respects is to ensure that individuals of the society contribute to social development and improvement, leading a self-sufficient, productive, happy, peaceful and a healthy life. (...). The understanding that the women are subjects of “social and human capital” is important for economic improvement to be sustainable and perpetual. Providing women with equality of opportunity, career and salary in business life will have butterfly effect on economic and social improvement. The measures which facilitate/stabilize business and family life will increase the duration of women employment.” (Fatma Sahin quoted in Sayin and Turkmenoglu 2013, 1-2)

Shifting gender equality governance into the realm of corporations has seen the rise of informal and non-binding mechanisms (True 2014). The Equality at Work Platform adopts a similar voluntary approach as the Gender Equity Model; companies sign up, produce a CEO declaration of commitment, and undertake a process of self-auditing of human resources policies and practices. The scope of the Equality at Work Platform is nonetheless more comprehensive, and incorporates check-lists and best practices in the areas of recruitment, professional development, family-work balance and for preventing and managing cases of sexual harassment (Sayin and Turkmenoglu 2013).

The protocol for the Equality at Work Platform highlights how childcare is a major barrier to women's access to employment and promotion. This includes the recognition that care services, crèches and provisions for return to work after maternity all need to be expanded. However, the emphasis in the document is on promoting a shift in the attitude among male colleagues and

managers about how women's responsibilities for care work impact on their performance in the workplace (Sayin and Turkmenoglu 2013, 14 -16). Thus, rather than extending resources to redistribute the organisation of unpaid work, the Platform makes its key recommendations in the area of flexible working patterns for women. For example, the introduction of policies and initiatives that will allow women to combine their dual responsibilities, including the use of flexible working hours, training schemes for mothers on work-life balance and allowing children to visit their mothers at work (Sayin and Turkmenoglu 2013, 34).

## **Conclusions**

By examining in detail the ways in which the EBRD's staff engage with other actors and partners in Turkey, this chapter has identified the manner in which the EBRD contributes to the growing dominance of market-oriented strategies for women's employment. It was seen that the EBRD privileges business and business-oriented actors, at the expense of marginalising feminist perspectives and actors. The policies of entrepreneurship and flexible working patterns that the EBRD and its business partners are advocating have been critiqued throughout the chapter for perpetuating the idea that socially reproductive work is primarily women's responsibility.

The detailed analysis in this chapter has further contributed with several important findings as to the internal dynamics of the EBRD's work in relation to gender equality. It has been argued throughout this thesis that an important reason as to why gender equality has become co-opted to the EBRD's market-making objectives is that the agenda for gender equality lacks support within the EBRD itself. In previous chapters, it was suggested that this weak institutional grounding has meant that gender advocates working for the EBRD have articulated their agenda in economic terms and sought to work primarily with actors who share similar rationales. Two points from this chapter are particularly noteworthy in this respect: first, the reliance upon donor-funding can also provide a route through which other influences and

ideas are incorporated during the process of policy implementation and second; the continued exclusion of feminist knowledge and perspectives that might counter or contend the EBRD's strategies.

The thesis now turns to its final chapter, in which the research findings are brought together into a more theoretical analysis about what the case of the EBRD can tell us about the processes and forms through which gender equality is governed today.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusions

The manner in which institutions advancing neoliberal economic strategies have responded to demands by feminist activists and scholars constitutes an important area of research (Rai and Waylen, 2008; Bedford 2009a; Griffin 2009). The premise for this body of literature, and this thesis, is that by neglecting gender relations, norms and material conditions – especially as they are structured across the public and private spheres - economic governance risk the exacerbation of inequalities not just between but women and men but amongst women themselves (Bakker 1994). The EBRD in many ways represents the institutionalisation of the ‘old neoliberalism’ of the early 1990s, with free market economics embedded into its mandate and role. As demonstrated through this thesis, the EBRD’s narrowly defined economic mandate and role have contributed to it being a difficult environment for new policy agendas related to gender equality to be accepted within and made meaningful.

By tracing the journey through which policy and rhetoric have become more accepted and important to the EBRD, this thesis has provided insights that are relevant to the understanding of how gender equality agendas have been defined and promoted within neoliberal governance. The analysis in this thesis has been guided by the theme of co-optation, defined as the process in which ideas and strategies that were developed to promote gender equality are transformed and used to support other policy objectives (Stratigaki 2004, 32). The empirical chapters concentrated on the EBRD’s model of gender mainstreaming and argued that gender advocates at the EBRD have positioned gender mainstreaming in an integrationist fashion. That is, rather than using gender analysis to transform the way in which the EBRD produces economic policies and advice, new concerns with positive as well as negative impacts on women have been added into the EBRD’s lending strategies.

Several of the key findings from this thesis thus support the concern among critical feminist scholars that gender mainstreaming can be a policy agenda that lends itself to being submerged under the protocols and processes through which neoliberal policy agendas are enacted (Bacchi and Eveline 2003). Chapters 3 and 4 highlighted that, also in the EBRD, this has been facilitated by the use of instrumentalist and technocratic analyses of gender issues, primarily as the use of sex disaggregated statistics (Mukhopadhyay 2004; Baden and Goetz 1997).

This concluding chapter brings together the main findings of the thesis to answer the research questions. In doing so, it makes the central argument that feminist insights that are critical to the advancement of gender equality continue to be marginalised by actors advancing neoliberal economic policies. The chapter finishes by setting out areas for future research on gender and governance that have emerged from this project. These include: the impact of corporate-led approaches to women's empowerment on gendered power relations, the workings of business consultancies and feminist strategies in the RDBs.

### *Analysing gender politics*

This thesis was written as a contribution to the research agenda on how feminist actors and ideas work within the institutions, structures and processes of neoliberal governance. It is especially an intervention into and extension of the debate around 'neoliberal feminism' that flourished within feminist IPE at the time of research. Within this debate, a growing number of publications outlined and critiqued the power of corporations in shaping the debate and policy around gender equality since the 2008 financial crisis (Prügl and True 2014; Prügl 2015; Bedford 2009b; Roberts 2014; Roberts 2015; Elias 2013). As argued in Chapter 2, to date, these studies have mapped this in terms of a shift in the forms and strategies that the governance of gender relations is taking and the discursive strategies through which this privatised form of governing is legitimised (Bexell 2012; Prügl and True 2014; Roberts and

Soederberg 2012; True 2014). Indeed, the shift in the actors that were dominating the policy landscape on gender equality led several feminist scholars to argue that the convergence among elites on economic rationales for gender equality constitutes a new form of elite feminism that works toward the re-legitimation of neoliberal economic strategy (Roberts 2014; 2015; Elias 2013).

This thesis has demonstrated how the EBRD, in similarity to many actors before, has turned to markets and market actors to achieve objectives such as women's empowerment and employment (Parpart *et al.* 2003). At the EBRD, this was perhaps the logical conclusion given the Bank's focus on the private sector. However, it does raise questions about how the objective of gender equality is now being defined; by whom and in what ways it is to be achieved. For feminist actors turning to the market for resources might be a response to the state retreating from social provisioning (Kantola and Squires 2012). However, for the EBRD this is a part of a broader agenda that actively aims to limit and redefine the role of the state in society and the economy.

This thesis has contributed to feminist IPE by exploring how particular framings around gender are constructed, by whom, and how they are brought into action. It has done so by trying to foreground the voices and perspectives of actors working for and with the EBRD, identifying how they in their professional roles have navigated and reconstituted the Bank's market-oriented agenda by adding gender. As argued by Eschle and Maiguashca (2013), critiques posited by feminist scholar of how feminism has become co-opted by neoliberalism run the risk of writing feminist history in a nostalgic and romanticised manner where the internal diversity of feminist movements and strategies is omitted (see also Funk 2013; Fraser 2009; 2013; Eisenstein 2009). The challenging and strategic encounters between feminist actors and bureaucracies are perhaps nowhere better depicted than within the substantive literature on gender mainstreaming in development bureaucracies that has been an important source of inspiration for this thesis (Razavi 1997; Moser and Moser 2005; True 2003b).



To address the EBRD and the strategies through which it has come to target women as actors in market development, Chapter 2 constructed an analytical approach that focussed on process. The framework of ‘gender politics’ has been engaged throughout this thesis to examine how meanings around gender equality have been constructed and delineated by actors who were employed or commissioned by the EBRD, who provided with Bank’s resources, or that were borrowing these. As well as considering broader issues around power and agency, the analytical approach germinated into a focus on the research and procedures during policymaking and implementation. This allowed the thesis to consider three important issues: first, the intersection between protocols and procedures aimed at competitiveness and marketisation and those that are aimed at the promotion of gender equality at the EBRD; second, the ways in which convergence on market-oriented strategies for gender equality occur; third, the way in which the EBRD’s frameworks are accepted or renegotiated by external actors. These three elements are foregrounded as the chapter now turns to answer the research questions.

### **Feminist agency and strategy in the policymaking process**

*Research question 1:* Why and how has the EBRD developed policies in relation to gender equality?

Chapters 3 and 4 identified a combination of factors as being behind the EBRD’s growing interest in gender inequality, including: external pressures and critiques, governance issues of poverty and inequality in the EBRD’s region, requests by the EBRD’s President and shareholders and, critically, the efforts of gender champions working for the Bank.

Nonetheless, the first substantive conclusion to be made from the empirical material presented in this thesis is that EBRD’s agenda around gender equality has been shaped through also resistance from multiple parts of the institution. Chapter 3 identified the EBRD’s mandate and role as an important source of resistance among staff and leadership. In this sense, the EBRD’s

role in economic governance has been premised upon the separation between economic and social objectives and the primacy of market values that is characteristic of neoliberal ideology (Rai 2004).

The strategies engaged by gender advocates at the EBRD need to be understood as taking place within a relatively rigid and hierarchical institutional environment. Turning to the question of how policies were developed, the analysis of gender politics at the EBRD began as the examination of the relative positions of power that were occupied by gender advocates at the EBRD. It was found that the policy unit with responsibility for gender equality had shifted from the margins to the centre of the EBRD. Chapters 3 and 4 showed how, by 2013, members of the Gender Team had access to the EBRD's bankers as well as its economists. On the one hand, this made them much more effective in communicating and gaining support for their agenda. On the other hand, this meant that gender equality was increasingly construed within the same frameworks of economic expertise through which the EBRD promotes policies of competitiveness and marketisation.

The process of developing policies on gender issues is inherently political, yet it often unfolds through processes of routine work wherein important decisions take on the character of being simply common sense. Chapter 3 identified how, at least initially, the making the case for gender equality was oftentimes a struggle for women working for the EBRD. By occupying marginalised positions in the EBRD's organisational structure, and by being acutely aware of the Bank's mandate, gender advocates came to appeal to economic arguments and strategies for gender equality as a common sense approach. The ways in which gender advocates present their case has become increasingly depoliticised and routinized. Between the GAP, SGI and the economic inclusion methodology, the route for gaining acceptance had been established in terms of technocratic and integrationist approaches in which little room is provided for introducing agendas that would amount to substantive changes of the ways things are done at the EBRD.

Chapters 3 and 4 highlighted that the routinized research work done by gender advocates is integral to how gender equality has become fused with the EBRD's economic strategies. As argued in Chapter 3, this process has demanded increased levels of expertise, manifest as the ability to integrate gender analysis into the specific protocols and procedures that the EBRD have in place – especially around its lending. The EBRD's Gender Team has added highly instrumentalised forms of gender analysis onto the EBRD's predefined frameworks and strategies. The main function of this data is rather the securing, directing and expanding of the EBRD's loans than at the promotion of gender equality. The role of the EBRD's gender advocates are thus in many ways similar to those described by Prügl (2011, 72), as providing forms of feminist knowledge that can be deployed to the purpose of governing. However, the combination of institutional characteristics and imperatives with the necessity of gender advocates to be able to do their job meant that there was little scope for articulating gender equality in other ways than as economic gains at the EBRD. Thus rather than explaining conceptual co-optation through discourse analysis (Stratigaki 2004), this thesis has done so through a focus on the day-to-day work of the EBRD's employees.

The kinds of gender expertise produced by the EBRD's Gender Team is as much premised upon the exclusion of ideas as it is on the inclusion of ideas. Looking at the actors involved in the process of policy design it is clear that gender advocacy within the EBRD has primarily taken non-inclusive and expert-oriented forms. Chapter 3 identified how perspectives and approaches to promote gender equality that might challenge what the EBRD is doing were rejected or even removed through a process of self-censorship among gender advocates. Resembling Ferguson's (2015) and Bedford's (2009a) findings about gender advocacy in constrained institutional settings, the EBRD's gender experts were highly aware of the political trade-offs they needed to make to be able to do their job for the EBRD. What is interesting here is perhaps the broader cognitive structure of that the EBRD presents us with, wherein gender equality and human rights are deemed to normative to be palatable but market values remain neutral and objective.

The research process behind the EBRD's policies and strategies on gender suggest how authoritative understandings of gender issues emerge within governance. The first thing to be notice is the relative absence of consultation and engagement with people from the EBRD's countries. Rather, the EBRD's staff engage in a research process which is more about identifying how and where the Bank can provide loans and training than whether these services are really what is needed to tackle gender inequalities. Given the limited resources available to the EBRD's Gender Team, it is perhaps not surprising to have found that these rely primarily on research produced by others. It is however interesting to consider what other sources of research they use, with the thesis consistently highlighting the frequent referencing to the World Bank and corporate research. These, and similar, sources are widely referenced by a growing number of governance actors and are an important sign of the growing influence of corporations in setting the agenda around gender equality (True 2014).

Vice versa, the thesis has demonstrated the marginalisation of insights from feminist economists and political economists by the EBRD. The temporal dimensions of the EBRD's agenda on gender equality are interesting in this respect. With the EBRD commencing its activities on gender equality much later than major institutions such as the World Bank, its gender analysis was at the time of writing relatively undeveloped in terms of defining and developing key analytical concepts. For example, the EBRD is still near exclusively focussed on women and rarely makes distinctions among women along the lines of sexuality, age, race and class. Rather, the EBRD's approach to promoting gender equality focuses primarily on women's roles in the formal and public realms of the economy.

Many of the interviewees at the EBRD were well aware that the Bank might be behind other international institutions in this area. The thesis has highlighted how as the work on gender equality has become more established within the EBRD, there is potentially more scope for gender advocates to bring in more complex analyses of gender issues. Chapter 4 discussed this

especially in terms of the commissioning of reports on women's situation in Turkey and SEMED. However, an important counter-tendency to this was detected in terms of the continued commitment to free market economics within the senior ranks of the Bank. Thus, more speculatively, as the old generation of management who have been at the EBRD since its inception start leaving the Bank there is the chance that new windows of opportunity might open up to challenge the institutionalised faith in markets.

Critically, as will be argued below, the EBRD has yet also to pay any real attention to unpaid work. In contrast to the World Bank (Bedford 2009), the EBRD's gender analysis has not included any discussion of men and masculinity in their gender-related work to any significant extent. Where men feature in the EBRD's rhetoric on gender equality, they do so in very small parts and primarily as conservative spouses within heterosexual marriages. For example, the concluding report on the Women in Business Programmes in Georgia and Armenia contain a brief discussion of how women entrepreneurs challenge conservative gender norms and become role models in their villages and towns (Greenberg 2010, 19).

### **Gender and economic theory and policy at the EBRD**

*Research question 2:* In what ways is the incorporation of gender equality as a policy objective linked to changes in the ways in which the EBRD understands and promotes economic reform?

The EBRD's interest in gender equality is a part of a wider process of institutional reforms that have shifted the ways in which the Bank understands and operates to promote market economies. Chapters 3 and 4 identified how the EBRD has been, albeit perhaps reluctantly, adjusting to the innovations in economic theory and practice that are associated with the Post-Washington Consensus for development. In this sense, the EBRD's increased focus on women's contributions to goals of economic development has followed a similar route to the World Bank – starting with an interest in targeting women

entrepreneurs in order to reduce poverty and expanding to seek the inclusion of women and other groups into financial and labour markets (Bedford 2009a). In this sense, the EBRD's rhetoric has started to position women as a potential means to resolve governance challenges related to inequality and poverty in its regions (True 2014). The focus on women and gender is arguably also a means to ensure the legitimacy of the Bank in the eyes of its shareholders and civil society as it has moved into a new region.

The analysis of the EBRD's economic policy highlighted continuity as well as change. Chapter 4 argued that the EBRD's emphasis on competitiveness through continued structural reforms has intensified since the 2007/8 financial crisis. Chapter 5 discussed the EBRD's policies and strategies for Turkey, seeing that marketization is still the overarching objective for its country-based lending and advice. The impact of working on gender equality is then perhaps better understood in terms of shifts in the form through which the EBRD advances this agenda. In this sense, targeting women is arguably a form of 'embedding neoliberalism' within societies (Craig and Porter 2006). As argued in Chapter 5, the EBRD's strategies in relation to women entrepreneurs function to support the Bank's agenda around SMEs. In doing so, they ensure that women are brought into financialised social relationships – as borrowers and as participants in business training - and aim to do so for the long run (Roberts 2015). In the case of IDO Ferries, the Gender Team was arguably the most visible part of the EBRD's activities in the company. A different form of 'embedding' can be seen in the EBRD's adding of women's equal opportunities as employees in the private sector – as making sure that women work for and provide a good public profile for privatised companies although the working conditions within these might be deteriorating.

Turning to the EBRD's economic research, this was arguably the area in which the Bank's interest in gender has had the least impact. Of course, as argued in Chapter 4, the Gender Team and economists are now working together to add gender analysis to the EBRD's Transition Reports. However, the EBRD is similar to many of the other institutions of economic governance

in the sense that the core methodological principles and assumptions about markets that inform its economic policies are intact (Roberts 2014; Razavi 2013).

Transforming macroeconomic policy is notoriously difficult, with feminist economists having consistently advocated for the broadening and deepening of mainstream economic theory to include and account for households and social reproduction (Elson and Cagatay 2000). Accounting for gender relations in the EBRD's economic strategies would require substantive shifts in how the EBRD operates, including the type of economist, economic theories and evidence that are employed by the Bank. In the light of the evidence from this thesis, this constitutes a major challenge for the future if the EBRD is serious about promoting gender equality through its operations.

### **Policy implementation and the EBRD's strategies for the governing of gender relations**

*Research question 3:* How does the EBRD its implement policies on gender equality?

The analysis of policy implementation in this thesis highlighted the weakness of the institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming at the EBRD. As argued in Chapter 3, the procedural and practical mechanisms which the EBRD's Gender Team have developed to integrate gender equality into the Bank's lending have also constrained the scope of these activities. In particular, projects that aim to have positive impacts on gender equality are purposefully narrowed down to target specific countries and sectors. These kinds of projects need to be identified and motivated through the EBRD's lending protocols. That is, before the loans gain the approval from the EBRD's Board of Directors the EBRD's staff need to motivate how addressing gender inequalities would add to the criteria of profit and market expansion. Nonetheless, how actors make sense of and work within these

parameters suggest that we need to be careful as to not read too much into these protocols.

Chapter 5 identified a series of contingencies in terms of whether and how gender equality is accepted as an objective of the EBRD's loans. At the time of research, the EBRD's Gender Team were in the process of developing a means to distribute the responsibility for identifying projects with a focus on gender equality across the Bank. However, the analysis in Chapter 5 suggested that the work by gender champions at the EBRD remains integral to these projects going ahead. In order to convince their management and the EBRD's clients about the value of incorporating gender equality as an objective of the loan, these individuals were found to rely on economic arguments. This discursive strategy was however not always effective or necessarily even employed, with the empirical evidence in Chapter 5 showing how the objective of gender equality might be withheld or rejected during loan negotiations between representatives from the EBRD's bankers, gender champions, co-financiers and clients.

Vice versa, the weakness of the EBRD's institutional mechanisms for gender equality opens up opportunities for other actors to influence the form which the Bank's efforts take on in practice. A key finding in this regard is that the EBRD's staff have rarely engaged with feminist organisations and actors that operate from a different framework on gender than the EBRD. In contrast, the most powerful influences on the EBRD are business actors and bilateral or multilateral donor agencies. Chapter 5 highlighted how the EBRD provides the parameters for gender equality projects, yet these are filled in by gender experts from the business world. Indeed, as shown by the case of Garanti Bank, the EBRD at times just adds to and extends the projects put in place by business. Chapter 6 discussed in more detail the influence of donor agencies on the EBRD's WiB programmes, highlighting how these provide not just funding but also influence the content of these programmes.



The interactions that took place in the context of EBRD policy implementation suggest how rationales around gender equality are operationalised. The argument that gender diversity among employees and borrowers contributes to corporate gains and competitiveness at the national level was identified in the research as the main governance rationale that unites the EBRD, business actors and other international financial institutions. As argued by Squires (2007, 16), tackling technocratic modes of governance that prioritises diversity rather than equality is a key task for feminist politics.

The convergence of powerful actors on this economic rationale for promoting gender equality might be an ideological project when looked at through a macro-level perspective (Roberts 2014; Robert 2015). However, the empirical analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 show how convergence occurs through shared research, processes of commissioning consultants, technical protocols and interpersonal relationships. Some of the more interesting findings from Chapter 5 pertain to practical difficulties in translating this rationale into concrete activities as well as disagreements between the actors who were involved in these processes. For example, the analysis of the EBRD's work with Turkish banks to channel finance to women demonstrated how there was scope for consultants to be critical of the EBRD and for borrowing parties to resist the imposition of these programmes. This supports the argument made in Chapter 2 that more careful consideration of policy implementation is necessary to feminist IPE if it wishes to identify inconsistencies and potential opportunities for change.

The analysis of policy implementation showed how the EBRD relies upon soft, or informal, forms of governance. The EBRD's own efforts on promoting gender equality take the form of advice, recommendations and voluntary action plans. Although the aim is to ensure convergence among the EBRD's clients on practices that advance women in their roles as entrepreneurs, consumers and employees, the EBRD's staff have little in the way of protocols and actions that ensure that agreed targets and objectives are met. Chapter 6 examined the ways in which the EBRD's role governing

gender relations in Turkey is defined and leveraged through coordination and partnerships. As argued by True (2014, 334) informal approaches have been used to fill in the gap between legislation and practice by ‘nudging’ corporations to start acting in different ways. For example, the use of corporate certification schemes showed how informal governance mechanisms are at work, with multinational corporations setting the standards for gender equality that are to be followed by both public and private corporations in Turkey.

Further important findings confirmed that women are being made responsible for their own empowerment within the approaches advanced by the EBRD and its partners (Bexell 2012; Rankin 2001). Chapters 5 and 6 highlighted how the EBRD’s projects aim to encourage women to take out loans and participate in business training. In addition, successful business women were also assigned key roles in helping other women get ahead. The EBRD’s interventions target the opportunity structures through which women are included or excluded in market relations in areas such as human resources policies and standards and lending practices among banks. However, as has been consistently argued throughout this thesis, the EBRD’s interventions do not target the deeper structures that shape the ways in which women are active in the economy and how they are rewarded. One important form of structural inequality is the organisation of socially reproductive labour, an area in which the EBRD has yet to make any substantial efforts. In addition, the EBRD’s in its policy and rhetoric on gender equality has yet to adequately address how women’s opportunities are structured along the lines of class, race and age.

A major concern raised by this thesis is the dilution of gender equality as an objective within contemporary global governance. Chapter 3 highlighted how gender equality and women’s empowerment were not positioned as the main objective of the EBRD’s policies and projects on gender issues. In addition, as argued in Chapter 5, the EBRD has in its internal discussion not resolved whether the Bank has a role to play in challenging gender norms and structures. The main aim of even this area of the Bank is to promote

marketization and competitiveness and it does so by seeking to increase the number of women who participate in financial and labour markets. The implications of the secondary status of gender equality were discussed in relation to the EBRD's operations. It was established that rather than seeking to identify the priorities of local populations or examine the impacts of economic participation on women's empowerment, the EBRD and its corporate partners have tended to focus on the profit that can be extracted from women – either directly to banks or indirectly to employers.

### **Feminist political economy and gender equality politics in neoliberal governance**

*Research question 4:* How can insights from feminist political economy applied to the analysis of the gender equality agendas promoted by the institutions of neoliberal governance?

This thesis has argued that research in feminist political economy has contributed with insights that are pivotal to analysing and transforming neoliberal governance. This chapter has already established that feminist economists offer important tools to identify, and rectify, gender biases in the theories that underpin neoliberal economic strategies. Therefore, this section concentrates on how insights from feminist analyses of neoliberal restructuring facilitate the analysis of the policies through which the EBRD and its partners aim to promote gender equality.

The analysis in this thesis has built upon the argument made in Chapter 2 that neoliberal economic strategies must be understood against the specific national and institutional context in which they unfold. A key argument made through this analysis is that the EBRD contributes to the pre-eminence of flexible working and entrepreneurship as governance strategies for women's employment in Turkey. Chapters 5 and 6 explored how the EBRD's market-based approach to gender equality intersects with traditional gender norms, neoliberal economic strategy and conservative social policies in Turkey. In

this context, it was argued that market-oriented strategies for women's employment maintain – rather than challenge - women's responsibilities for unpaid labour in the household and community. The growing push to bring women into the labour market and for dual income earning has not been sufficiently accompanied by the expansion of affordable and publicly available provisions for childcare.

Business actors in Turkey are taking on new responsibilities in campaigning and providing for women's employment. In part, the analysis of Turkey suggested that this could be a progressive moment in which pressure is put on the state to revise its gender politics. Understanding the effects of business mobilisation for gender equality require further analysis (see below). However, some concerns were raised in terms of the scope of business-led politics for gender equality. In particular, there is a major gap in terms of addressing women in the informal sector or who are running small-scale businesses.

### **Avenues for future research**

The research process highlighted a series of questions and themes that are important to future feminist research on governance, but that lie beyond the scope of this study. The first, and perhaps most important, of these are the impact on corporate-led approaches to women's empowerment on gendered power relations. As argued above, to date, a majority of research has focused on the global dimensions of this agenda. This thesis has begun to unpack in more detail how it is translated across the global, international and national levels of governance. In doing so, it was argued that concerns with gender equality and women's empowerment have been lost in favour of a focus on the number of women who are lenders or employees. The investigation of EBRD's investment in IDO Ferries in Chapter 5 suggested that the Bank's engagement with the company has had mixed impacts for its employees, arguably failing to address some of the most important issues related to working conditions. However, this analysis is only indicative of some of the

potential issues around equal opportunities promotion in the context of company privatisation and restructuring. Therefore in order to address gendered power relations, and to do so in a way that accounts for identity and difference, further research is needed that cuts across the workplace to the community and household. In addition to this, it was out of the scope of this thesis to address the effects of EBRD policy and investments that did not have a gender equality objective.

A second interesting avenue for future research is comparative research on gender equality politics among the RDBs. As argued in Chapter 1, there is a shortage of feminist research on these institutions. This study has seen how contemporaneous economic paradigms and global politics of the early 1990s are embedded within the EBRD's institutional structure. In turn, decisions made early in the Bank's history have had long-lasting implications for gender-related work. However, the Bank arguably represents an outlier as it was founded in the heyday of liberal optimism and neoliberal economics rather than the Cold War context of the other main RDBs (Bull and Boas 2003; Tzannatos 2006). Therefore, it is important that further work is done to unpack and compare the opportunities and challenges for pursuing feminist agendas within the other RDBs.

The final area of interest that emerges from this thesis is a closer analysis of how business actors, especially consultancies such as McKinsey, have acquired their role as a key provider of knowledge on gender issues. This research agenda would be particularly well-placed to be developed within the wider literature on how gender equality is becoming enmeshed within the form of expertise which is being produced to support neoliberal economic strategies (Prügl 2011; Prügl 2013; Kantola and Squires 2012). In turn, developing this research agenda to focus on the individuals that work for these companies, and how they do so, would be a valuable route of research.

Returning to the main question - what can the case of the EBRD tell us about how gender equality is understood and mobilised within neoliberal forms of governance – I hope that this thesis has offered a step toward unpacking the processes through which gender politics occur in neoliberal governance. Throughout this thesis, I have aimed to show the tensions between slow-moving institutional mandates and structures and potentially progressive policy agendas. In doing so, I have provided a critique of how feminist insights and perspectives have been marginalised by the EBRD and its partners as a part of wider structures of economic governance. It is clear that substantive changes remain to be made to the institutions of economic governance if we are to achieve greater levels of gender equality. As I have consistently argued throughout this thesis, maintaining dialogue and openness to multiple perspectives on gender equality is an integral part of achieving these changes. Nonetheless, arguably one of the most important insights, that I take away from this project is that the knowledge of gender issues and political commitment to gender equality by gender advocates, working both for and with the EBRD, are often filtered down as they adjust and adapt to their employer. Therefore, I would like to this thesis to be a call for the continued, and extended, cooperation and dialogue between feminist academics and gender advocates working from within the structures of neoliberal economic governance.

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## **Appendix 1: List of interviews**

1. Valeria Della Rosa, Senior Manager of Business Advisory Services and Caroline Bryant Bosa, Principal Manager of Small Business Support, *EBRD*, London, 6 March 2013.
2. Charlotte Ruhe, Director of the Small Business Team, *EBRD*, London 7 March 2013.
3. Michaela Bergman, Chief Counsellor for Social Issues, Head of Gender Team, *EBRD*, London 8 March 2013.
4. Nato Kurshitashvili, Gender Adviser, *EBRD*, 12 March 2013.
5. Deborah Cousins, Senior Environmental and Social Adviser, *EBRD*, London 15 March 2013. Phone interview.
6. Oksana Pak and Sariga Sambayeva, Senior Bankers, *EBRD*, London 19 March, 2013
7. Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay, Head of Civil Society Engagement Unit, Former Gender Action Plan Co-Ordinator (2009-2012), *EBRD*, London, 20 March 2013.
8. Henry Russell, Director of the Small Business Team, Member of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, London, 21 March 2013.
9. Chikako Kuno, Former Director of the Small Business Team, Former Head of the Gender Steering Group, *EBRD*, 22 March 2013. Skype interview.

10. Barbara Rambousek, Senior Inclusion Specialist, and Ralph de Haas, Deputy Director of Research, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.
11. Michelle Brock, Research Economist, *EBRD*, London, 10 April 2013.
12. Michael Davey, Country Director for Turkey, *EBRD* Istanbul, 22 April 2013.
13. Fatih Turkmenoglu, Senior Banker, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 25 April 2013. Phone interview.
14. Arzu Ozyol, Founding President, *BPW* Turkish Federation of Business and Professional Women. Istanbul, 25 April 2013.
15. Aynur Dincer, Senior Banker, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 26 April 2013. Phone interview.
16. Ahmet Paksoy, General Director, *IDO Ferries*, Istanbul, 2 May 2013.
17. Murat Orhan, Human Resources Manager, *IDO Ferries*, Istanbul 2 May, 2013.
18. Oyku Ulucay, Programme Manager, United Nations Joint Program for Promoting the Human Rights of Women, Sabanci Vakfi. Istanbul, 3 May, 2013.
19. Huseyin Ozhan Senior Banker in Transport, *EBRD*, Istanbul, 3 May 2013.
20. Yesim Muftuler-Sevig, Secretary General, *Kagider, Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey*, Istanbul, 7 May 2013.
21. Memduh Ackay, Board Director for Turkey (Romania, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic), *EBRD*, Istanbul, 13 May 2013.

22. Asli Erden Ozturk, Senior Banker, *EBRD*. Istanbul, 14 May 2013.  
Phone interview.
23. Merve Akinci, Consultant, *Frankfurt School of Finance and Management*, Istanbul, 14 May 2013.
24. Bilhan Gozcu, SOGEP: Social Development and Gender Equality Policies Centre, Istanbul, 14 May 2013.
25. Selin Oz, SME Marketing Manager, *Garanti Bank*, Istanbul, 15 May 2013.
26. Tamsyn Mileham, Partner, *DLA Piper*, Istanbul, 24 May 2013.
27. Necla Haliloğlu, Entrepreneurship Development Director, KOSGEB Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation, Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology, 10 June 2013.
28. Engin Goksu, Head of Ankara Office and Serpil Cetincift, BAS National Programme Manager for Turkey, *EBRD*, Ankara, 11 June 2013.
29. Goknur Akcadag, Head of Department, Directorate for the Status of Women, *Ministry of Family and Social Policies*, Ankara, 13 June, 2013.
30. Esra Kulak, Economic Expert, Directorate for the Status of Women, Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Ankara, 13 June 2013.
31. Feride Acar, Professor, *Middle East Technical University*, Ankara 18 June 2013.

32. Martin Raiser, Head of World Bank Ankara Office, *World Bank*, Ankara, 21 June, 2013. Phone interview.
33. Nina Orlova, Senior Programme Officer, *Sida*, Embassy of Sweden in Chisinau. 24 June, 2013. Skype interview.
34. Severian Gvinepadze, BAS National Programme Manager for Georgia, *EBRD*, Tbilisi Resident Office, 24 June, 2013. Skype interview.
35. Sevna Somuncuoglu, Coordinator, *Flying Broom: Women Communication and Research Association* (Uçan Süpürge), Ankara, 25 June 2013.
36. Annika Palo, First Secretary of the Swedish Embassy, *Sida*, Ankara, 26 June, 2013.
37. Zeynep Aydemir, Social Policy and Employment Sector Manager, *Delegation of the European Union to Turkey*, Ankara, 27 June 2013.
38. Nelih Akin and Cerem Erdem, Programme Managers, *EU Co-ordination Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security*. Ankara, 28 June 2013.
39. Dr. Isil Keskin, Project Coordinator, *Bogazici University Lifelong Learning Centre*, Istanbul, 1 July 2013.
40. Melih Murat and Ceren Alaca, Environmental and Social specialists, *ATAS Group*, Istanbul, 5 July 2013.
41. Serap Güre Şenalp, Co-ordinator, *KEIG: Women's Labour and Employment Initiative*, Istanbul, 5 July 2013.

42. Joanne Yaccato, Company founder and President, *The Thomas Yacatto Group*, 10 July, 2013. Skype interview.
43. Necdet Buyukbay, Technical Manager, *TAV/EGE*, Izmir, 11 July 2013. Skype interview.
44. Clare Dansereau, Board Director for Canada (Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia), *EBRD*, London, 11 July 2013. Skype interview.
45. Joachim Schwarzer, Board Director for Germany, *EBRD*, London, 12 July 2013.
46. Joachim Ockenden, Board Director for the United Kingdom, *EBRD*, London, 12 July 2013.
47. Paul Vlaanderen, Board Director for the Netherlands (Mongolia, FYR Macedonia, Armenia), *EBRD*, London 12 July 2013.
48. Camilla Otto, Assistant to the EU Director, *EBRD*, London, 19 July 2013. Phone interview.
49. Natalia Meylunas, BAS Regional Programme for Western Balkans, *EBRD*, 26 August 2013. Skype interview.

*IDO Ferries focus groups*

1. Focus Group 1 (Women). Purser, Sea Woman, Administrative Personnel - Legal Department, Administrative Personnel - Sales and Marketing Department, Administrative Personnel - Outgoing Documents. Istanbul, 16 May, 2013.
2. Focus Group 2 (Men). Technical Department Personnel, Quality Management Chief, Insurance Specialist, Attorney. Istanbul, 5 July, 2013.

*Additional meetings and events*

1. Empowering Women in the Workplace, Marketplace and Community: Selected Cases from the Gulf Countries, Turkey and Iraq. Hosted by Borusan Holding and co-organized by BPW-Turkey, UNGC Turkey Network, UNGC Gulf Countries and the UNGC Iraq Network. 10 May, 2013.
2. EBRD's Annual Business Meeting, 11 May 2013.
3. Informal meetings with activist in the Feminist Socialist Collective.