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**The Influence of Cooperative and Gendered Discourse
upon Women Empowerment in the Coffee Value Chain**
A comparative study of coffee cooperatives in Aceh, Indonesia

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List of Acronyms

FT	Fairtrade
GVC	Global Value Chains
MC	Men-dominated producer cooperative
SPO	Small-scale Producer Organization
WEPGY	Women-exclusive producer cooperative
WMC	Woman-led producer mix cooperative
WSL	Women-exclusive saving and loan cooperative

Abstract

The literature on global value chain (GVC) has shown that women are usually concentrated at the bottom of the chain with low-rewarding positions. In the context of coffee small-holder producers, women mainly work in harvesting and sortation. Women also have limited access to the decision-making process and benefits of coffee cooperatives (knowledge, trainings, network, premium, etc.).

This research investigates the extent to which cooperative characteristics and sociocultural contexts influence women's empowerment in coffee cooperatives. It examines women-exclusive cooperatives and mix-member cooperatives in Gayo, Aceh, Indonesia as a comparative case study and includes interviews with women workers from four different cooperatives with different roles (farmers, sortation workers, collectors, and exporters). The data is analysed through the concepts of power, agency, resources, achievements, and intra-household bargaining.

The women-only producer cooperative (WEPGY) demonstrates the most transformative change regarding women's empowerment as evident by a better distribution of women roles along the chains. Cooperative's establishment background, leadership, and exposure to GVC networks also determine the different trajectories of women empowerment. Furthermore, the study also discusses dominant gendered discourses and how they influence ambiguities in women's empowerment process. It invites readers to reflect on women's empowerment beyond clear-cut indicators and situate it within a wider institutional context. Finally, it concludes that the notion of women's empowerment needs to be directed at challenging the unequal gendered power relations in the household, community, and value chain governance.

Relevance to Development Studies

The global value chain framework and literature have shifted from the industrial context to the agriculture, from business development to social upgrading or development agendas. Several value chain interventions have been implemented to improve farmers' livelihoods, sustainability, working condition, and gender equity such as Fairtrade and direct trade. However, the interventions have had different impacts in different local governance context. Thus, this research is relevant to Social Policy for Development (SPD) major and local development strategies specialization. By examining women's experiences in Indonesian coffee cooperatives and their roles in value chain governance, this research seeks to enrich the discussion on global food value chain from a gender perspective in local context.

Keywords

Coffee value chain, women's empowerment, cooperatives, women-only cooperative, gendered discourse, Aceh Gayo

Chapter 1: Introduction

Why focusing on empowerment?

Empowerment has been a central concern within the Global Value Chain (GVC) literature and practice. GVC approach was developed to understand ‘how value is created, captured, sustained, and leveraged’ (Gereffi & Lee, 2016:27) by examining ‘the series of value-creating activities from raw or intermediate materials into the finished products’ (Lee, Szapiro, & Mao, 2017:425).

On one hand, development practitioners have been applying GVC approach to empower local, small and medium producers (Neilson & Shonk, 2014). In agriculture, producer’s entry into the global market is considered as a potential strategy to improve livelihoods due to new employment opportunities, improved knowledge and skills, and increased income (Matheis & Herzig, 2019).

On the other hand, the idea of empowerment also comes from the fact that the benefits of participation in GVC are not always distributed equally along the chain. Workers in the early stage of the chain tend to have precarious working conditions, low- or unpaid farm work (Matheis & Herzig, 2019), and a lack of voice and security (Pegler L. , 2015). This happens because ‘the value returns are captured downstream in the GVC where more powerful (and often male) GVC actors are located’ (Christian, Evers, & Barrientos, 2013). Further, informal work ‘allows producers to shift the risks of production such as price fluctuations onto workers in the sector’ (Barrientos & Dolan, 2003:1514). To emphasize the need of refocusing GVC analysis towards people’s well-being along the value chains, Barrientos, Gereffi, and Rossi (2011) proposed the concept of social upgrading, of which empowerment is an important element.

Social upgrading refers to ‘the process of improvement in the rights and entitlements of workers as social actors, which enhances the quality of their employment’ (Barrientos, Gereffi, & Rossi, 2011:324). It consists of two components: (1) measurable standards (type of employment, wage level, social protection, working hours), and (2) enabling rights (freedom, voice, empowerment)—the latter component often enables the bargaining for the former (Barrientos, Gereffi, & Rossi, 2011). These enabling factors are important in improving the chance to challenge inequalities in the value chain governance. With a special attention to empowerment, this research focuses on the ‘processual’ or ‘enabling’ elements of social upgrading, a process that potentially drives transformational changes towards a more just and equal value chain.

Why focusing on women empowerment in coffee value chain?

Coffee is a globally consumed agricultural product with a special place in agricultural GVC discussions and literature. Women experience relatively more unfavourable work conditions compared to men despite devoting disproportionately more labour time (ICO, 2018:12). For example, in North Sumatra, Indonesia, women contribute up to 80% of labour in coffee farms (ICO, 2018). However, women in global value chains are mainly concentrated in low-rewarding positions (Christian, Evers, & Barrientos, 2013). Influenced by the gendered feminine stereotype of women having ‘nimble fingers,’ women working in coffee production are mainly assigned in harvesting and sortation. Although coffee harvesting and sortation crucially determines the quality of the beans and, in turn, their price (International Finance Corporation, 2016), women’s labour and skills in this process are not formally recognized. Harvesting and sortation works are considered informal and paid per kilogram of outputs. In contrast, the male-dominated internal control staffs (ICS) enjoy fixed monthly

salary and job insurance. In some cooperatives, sortation workers are also considered ‘hired labour’ and not a member of the cooperative, hence their exclusion from any benefit and decision-making process.

Similar patterns are found in Ugandan coffee cooperatives. Women are positioned at the bottom of the coffee value chain and mostly as unpaid labours because the value chain involves family-based small-holder producers (Kasente, 2012). Men are actively involved in coffee sales and marketing, while women have no knowledge on coffee sales price, profit, and management. Very few women are in leadership positions. Kasente (2012) concludes that it is easier to improve gender relations at the household level rather than shift women’s position in the value chain.

Figure 1. Women's common positions in coffee value chains



Source: Author’s illustration, adopted from USAID, 2019

The illustration above demonstrates a common pattern of women’s participation along the coffee value chain (including in Aceh). Women are present in every node of the chain but concentrated in low-rewarding roles such as harvesting and sorting. There are few women in roles such as collectors, exporters, and cooperative delegates or leaders. Meanwhile, male-dominated activities such as land cultivation, coffee processing, and marketing expose men to more skills, knowledge, and network. This gendered division of labour signals an imbalance in the power relations between men and women in the coffee value chain structure. Inequality is seen in the different value and benefits enjoyed by traditionally female and male roles.

Following Kasente (2012), the analysis of women empowerment in value chain should ‘evaluate the degree to which it addresses gender inequality at the level of household, in institutions, and in value chain governance’ (Kasente 2012:116). I therefore argue that the efforts to empower women should aim to challenge this gendered value chain structure, or at least strengthen women’s abilities to choose their roles. This position is influenced by the two approaches towards women empowerment as discussed by Naila Kabeer (1999).

The *instrumentalist* approach sees women empowerment as a means for other development outcomes such as increased business benefits, improved children’s education, strengthened community development, and so forth. This approach emphasizes “women’s greater altruism and dedication to the family and collective welfare” (Kabeer, 1999:459). Meanwhile, the *alternative* model of empowerment interprets women’s altruism as an ‘evidence of women’s internalization of their own subordinate status’ (Kabeer, 1999:459) and focuses more on challenging the unequal gender power relations. In the alternative view, women empowerment should strengthen women’s ability to choose and have greater autonomy to fulfil their own goals and needs. This research analyses women empowerment from the alternative viewpoint and seeks to explore the mechanisms or processes that may empower women to transform their positions and roles in the coffee value chain.

Why studying women cooperatives in Aceh?

A handful of value chain interventions have tried to incorporate women empowerment to its mechanism, such as Fairtrade and Café Femenino. Smith (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of 20 studies about gender impact in Fairtrade in various countries and contexts and found mixed results. While in some contexts, women were empowered with increased income, improved capabilities and self-worth, they experienced heavier burden and less income after participating in Fairtrade in other contexts. The finding indicates the presence of **other factors besides Fairtrade or value chain interventions** that influences different impact on women.

Lyon (2008) found that women tend to devote their time in all-women groups (e.g: church and weaving groups) where they feel better represented and have better control of income compared to the coffee cooperative. This finding indicates that **women collectives contribute positively to women empowerment**. Agarwal (2020) studied women's group farming in India and found that it improved women's capabilities, strengthened their identity as farmers, increased their control of income, and enabled them to gain respects from the household and the community. She concluded that 'collectives are essential for women's social empowerment' (Agarwal, 2020:3).

A form of collectives is the cooperative. A case study of two Brazilian fruit cooperatives shows that worker participation, labour process, and equity are influenced by the types of cooperatives (Pegler & Chourdakis, 2018). The characteristics of the cooperatives consist of mobilization background (rooted in the sense of injustice), nature of cooperative leadership, and degree of solidarity. **The relation between women empowerment and the types of coffee cooperatives** is therefore an important thing to consider in this research. Smith also suggests assessing the impact within a 'site-specific socio-cultural, legal, and political context of gender relations' (Smith, 2013:118). In this research paper, women empowerment and the varied characteristics of coffee cooperative's characteristics are **situated in the sociocultural context** of Gayo community in Aceh, Indonesia.

In addition, there is no discussion of **all-women coffee cooperatives** in Smith's meta-analysis. Several studies have assessed gender equity in Fairtrade coffee cooperatives, but the units of analysis consist of mixed cooperatives. For example, only 7 of 116 cooperative members are women with minimum to no role in the board/managerial positions (Lyon S. , 2008). Another study found that Fairtrade has empowered women who worked as farm operators but excluded other women (Lyon, Bezaury, & Mutersbaugh, 2010).

Latest studies about women in Aceh's coffee value chain all point to their disempowerment and marginalization despite their significant roles. Women workers are only seen in the processing unit (coffee beans sortation) as manual workers without fixed salaries (Walker, 2015) and experience the 'time poverty', lack of access to knowledge, lack of income control, and lack of participation in decision making (Nespresso, 2017; CQI, 2015). Moreover, men own most of the lands due to the Islamic inheritance law (CQI, 2015). Because only land-owning farmers can be members of cooperatives, it is more difficult for women to become members. This in turn hinders women to actively participate in trainings, give their voices, and have influence in any decision-making process. These challenges show that women's inclusion in the value chain does not automatically lead to empowerment. Women participated in the coffee value chains but they are still underrepresented and excluded from their 'enabling rights'. The reports show that these challenges are influenced by the sociocultural values of the community in Gayo, Aceh. However, the characteristics and conditions of women-exclusive cooperatives remain unknown because they are not included in the research.

This research is interested in alternative ways of empowering women who participate in a global coffee value chain by investigating cooperative's characteristics as a determinant of women empowerment. Aside from the above research on women in coffee cooperatives in Gayo, several women-exclusive cooperatives in the region with members ranging between 400 to 1000 and an active participation in coffee production and exports have been excluded from existing studies. This prompts an examination into the extent to which the women-exclusive cooperative promotes women empowerment within the coffee value chain, by comparing the various types of the cooperatives.

1.1. Research Problem

Table 1. Summary of previous research

Authors	Research Site/Sampling	Findings and Gaps
Christian et al., 2013	Women in value chain (varied commodities)	Women are concentrated in low-rewarding positions; feminine stereotypes; <i>not focus in coffee/agriculture</i>
Kasente, 2012	FT coffee mix cooperatives in Uganda	Women mainly work as unpaid labor (harvesting), men in business marketing; lack of knowledge, very few in leadership positions. <i>No discussion on women-exclusive coop</i>
Lyon, Bezaury, & Mutersbaugh 2010	FT coffee mix cooperative in Mesoamerica	Empowerment is experienced significantly in female farm operator but exclude other women. <i>No discussion on women-exclusive coop</i>
Lyon, 2008	Guatemalan mix cooperatives	Only 7 of 116 members are women with minimum to no roles in managerial position. <i>Women tend to devote their time in all-women group rather than in the mix cooperative, not coffee coop</i>
Pegler & Chourdakis, 2018	Brazilian fruit cooperatives	<i>Workers' empowerment was influenced by the elements of cooperatives such as cooperative's background, solidarity, and leadership; Not focus on women in coffee value chain</i>
Agarwal, 2020	Women farmers group in India	Women collectives are more effective in empowering women; <i>Not focus on women in coffee value chain</i>
Smith, 2013	Meta-analysis of gender impact on FT cooperatives	Varied gender impacts depend on local context; <i>no discussion on women coffee cooperatives</i>
Walker, 2015	FT coffee mix cooperatives in Gayo, Aceh	Women are mainly work as sortation workers; <i>No updates on women-exclusive coop</i>
Nespresso, 2017	Women coffee farmers in Gayo, Aceh (household)	Women are experiencing lack of access to land, coop membership, knowledge, participation, leisure time, control over income; reproductive works; <i>No updates on women-exclusive coop</i>
CQI, 2015	Women coffee farmers in Gayo, Aceh	

Source: Author's elaboration

Previous studies on women empowerment in the value chain have left a number of gaps which this research intends to address. First, only one study drew its data from women-exclusive farming group (Agarwal B. , 2020). However, the research was not in the context of coffee value chain. The other studies observed women's empowerment in mixed or men-dominated coffee cooperatives. Moreover, Lyon (2008) emphasized the importance of focusing research on women-exclusive cooperatives because they seem to have more potentials to empower women (Lyon, 2008; Agarwal, 2020). This provides an important basis to

understand *the role of women-exclusive coffee cooperatives* in empowering women and how it is different from mixed or men-dominated cooperatives.

Secondly, many studies have shown that participation in value chain intervention (Fairtrade) leads to varied gender impacts. In other words, these studies focused on the *result* of whether women are empowered and further research is still needed to understand 'how and why these differences in impact occurred' (Smith, 2013:118). Further reflection is needed also in exploring the mechanisms and *processes* that may influence empowerment such as cooperative characteristics, dominant gender discourses, and women's perceptions. This research will discuss beyond measurement or assessment of empowerment by reflecting on how women themselves perceive empowerment.

Thirdly, studies on coffee producers and workers in Asia are still limited, especially in the context of gendered value chain impact analysis (Smith, 2013). Latest studies that specifically observed the Fairtrade-certified coffee cooperatives in Aceh have not included women cooperatives as these cooperatives are relatively new (Walker, 2015; CQI, 2015; Nespresso, 2017). Meanwhile, two women coffee cooperatives in Gayo, Aceh have been Fairtrade certified in 2015 and 2017. This research is interested to see any changes in empowerment after the establishment of women-exclusive cooperatives and provide *updates* and new insights to complement the existing studies.

1.2. Research Questions

This research aims to explore Gayo women's experiences of empowerment through their participation in women-exclusive cooperative. This research objective is translated into the following research questions:

Main question:

To what degree (if any) do women-only cooperatives promote women empowerment?

Sub-Questions:

1. In what ways are women involved in the cooperative? Do they experience empowerment as a result?
2. How do different types of cooperatives influence women's perception and experience of empowerment? What other external mechanisms within the value chain influence these outcomes?
3. How does the sociocultural context influence women's perception and experience of empowerment?

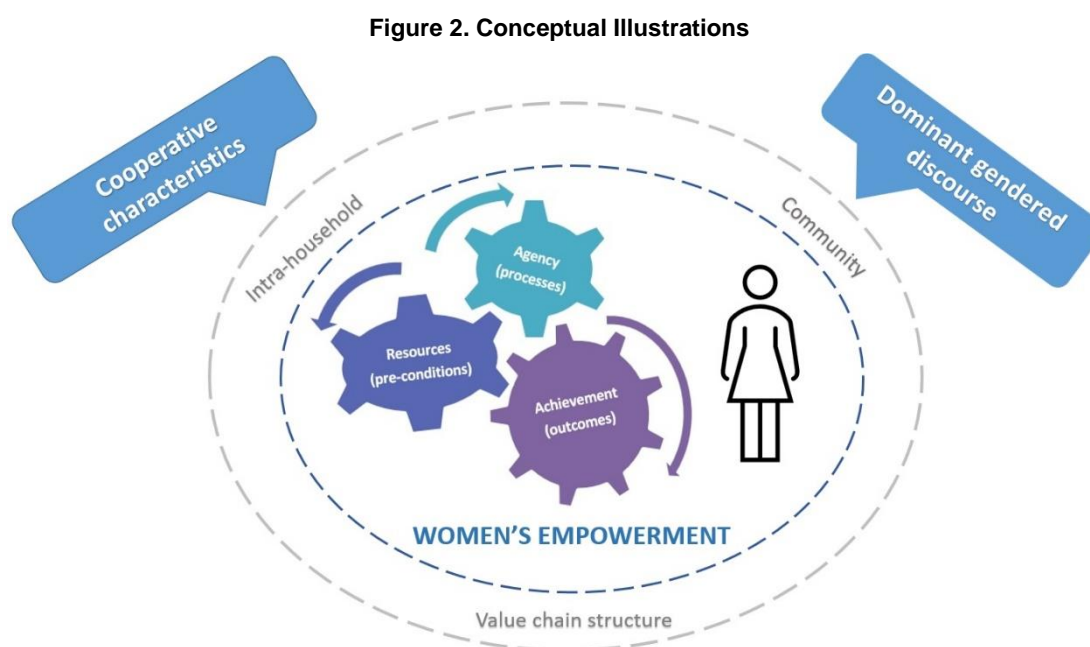
1.3. Chapters overview

This research paper is structured into seven chapters. In this first chapter, I have presented the research problem and contribution for the gendered GVC and women empowerment discussion. The second chapter presents the conceptual framework for analysing women empowerment, followed by a methodological journey of this research in the next chapter. Chapter 4 discusses Gayo's sociocultural contexts including its gender discourses, while tracing back to the initial background of value chain interventions for the coffee cooperatives in Gayo. It also describes the characteristics of the four different cooperatives being examined in this research. After that, the findings will be analysed in the light of the conceptual frameworks discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 5 discusses the variety of women's experiences and perceptions of empowerment while Chapter 6 elaborates on how it is influenced by the types of cooperatives and the wider sociocultural context. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with reflections on the findings and analysis while recalling the research questions.

Chapter 2: Conceptualising Women’s Empowerment

This chapter explains the conceptual frameworks which guide the analysis of the research findings. The first set of concepts is the empowerment concepts from Naila Kabeer which is useful to break down women’s empowerment into three interrelated dimensions: agency, resources, and achievements. As discussed in the introduction, this research examines the underlying power relations both in horizontal (intra-household and community) and vertical contexts (value chain governance). The concept of power and intra-household bargaining helps to analyse women’s empowerment in these contexts.

Furthermore, this research investigates two factors that influence women’s empowerment: (1) cooperative characteristics, and (2) dominant gendered discourse. The cooperative characteristics include cooperative’s background, leadership, organizational structure, gender ratio, and other important elements.



2.1. Agency, Resources, Achievements

Empowerment refers to the ‘processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability’ (Kabeer, 2005:13). Kabeer (2005:14) breaks down the concept of empowerment into three interrelated dimensions. Changes in one dimension will influence changes in the other dimensions (Figure 2). (1) *Agency* refers to the processes through which choices are made, including its underlying meaning, motivation, and purpose. It encompasses the decision-making process as well as more intangible forms such as “cognitive processes of reflection and analysis” (Kabeer 1999:438). This research uses this concept to highlight women’s participation in the cooperatives, their self-confidence, motivations, goals, and perceptions that shape their choices.

(2) *Resources* are the means through which agency is being exercised. It includes not only access and economic material resources, but also ‘human and social resources that will enhance the ability to exercise choice’ (Kabeer, 1999:437). The examples include cooperatives membership, land ownership, private income, time, network, access to services, access to decision-making process, knowledge, and skills.

(3) *Achievements* represent the outcomes of exercised agency. Increased participation and self-confidence in decision-making process (exercised agency) may lead to various outcomes such as more equal distribution of labour and resources within the household and along the value chain, better community acknowledgement of women, and transformed community values with high respect of gender equality.

2.2. Power

Empowerment is the process to challenge inequalities caused by power imbalance in the relations between men and women. Power is not only attributive (e.g. in positions, authority, or resources) but also *discursive*. Foucault describes power as ‘diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them’ (Gaventa, 2003:1). It implies that power is (re-)produced through social relationships and *shapes individual’s beliefs, desires, and behaviours*.

Consequently, women empowerment requires an exploration into the discursive power that shapes women’s perceptions of empowerment and their choices. Kabeer (1999:441) wrote that ‘power relations are expressed [...] also through the *kinds* of choices people make [...] It allows the possibility that power and dominance can operate through consent’. This discursive power influences women to accept or normalize their lesser status within the household or society. Therefore, women’s perceptions are viewed in relation to the dominant gender discourses in Aceh in the context of this study.

In addition, Mosedale (2005:250) assessed women’s empowerment by analysing the underlying concept of power: power within, power to, and power with. *Power within* refers to the personal potential before anything else can be achieved, such as self-confidence. *Power to* is power which improves the limits of what is achievable, for example increased knowledge and skills or access to decision-making process. *Power with* refers to women’s collective action.

2.3. Intra-household bargaining

Women’s empowerment within the household is closely related to the ‘intra-household bargaining power’ concept from Sen (1990) and Agarwal (1997). Women’s bargaining power can be strengthened through increased resources such as access to employment, increased income (Sen, 1990), access to land ownership (Agarwal, 1997), access to knowledge, ‘product and factor markets, credit and public services’ (Aguilar in ICO, 2018:15). Sen (1990) argued that women’s increased earnings may influence the family members to acknowledge the women’s *perceived contribution* to the household’s well-being, which then will determine the ‘deservingness’ of the member for household allocation (Sen, 1990:134). In the context of this research, this concept assumes that women may receive more power within the household (e.g. control over income/expenses) if their work in coffee gives significant financial contribution to the family.

Agarwal (1997) approached Sen’s concepts critically and argued that resources should be seen beyond income or economic assets. Moreover, Sen’s model was criticized for its failure to see the ‘embeddedness of households within a *wider institutional environment* and *the role of groups/coalitions as determinants of bargaining power*’ (Agarwal, 1997:37). Therefore, this research examines the characteristics of coffee cooperatives and the dominant socio-cultural norms in Aceh, Indonesia, as the determinant factors of women’s empowerment.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research employs qualitative case study approach because it observes a particular phenomenon at a specific point in time (Gerring, 2007). In this case, the women-exclusive cooperatives in Gayo, Aceh, Indonesia, becomes the unit of observation; followed by the mixed cooperatives and men-dominated cooperatives as the counterfactuals. A qualitative approach was chosen for its interpretive nature of inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018) which helps in understanding the meaning, experience, and contextual processes of women's empowerment in coffee cooperatives.

3.1. Research Site and Sampling

Indonesia is the fourth biggest coffee producer in the world after Brazil, Vietnam, and Colombia. Among other provinces, Aceh is one of the most well-known coffee exporting regions in Indonesia that produces high quality arabica coffee. It has the largest smallholders land for Arabica in Indonesia at about 124,045ha (Bappenas, 2012). In addition, Aceh is the only region in Indonesia where smallholder women-exclusive coffee cooperatives can be found. However, with a rank of 30 out of 33 provinces, data from the Ministry of National Development Planning of Indonesia (2012) show that Aceh has a very low Gender Equality Index.

Table 2. Gender Equality Index (Aceh 2010)

Indicators	Men	Women
Education participation	0.641	0.596
Economic participation	0.501	0.325
Political Representation in public	95.20%	4.80%
Labor force participation rate	79.80%	47%
Paid workers status proportion	27.70%	13.40%
Labor wage	Rp 1,569,372	Rp 1,420,286
Temporary Agricultural workers	Rp 683,854	Rp 489,511
Temporary non-agricultural workers	Rp 956,471	Rp 381,599

Source: Author's summary from (Bappenas, 2012)

The table above demonstrates how women in Aceh experience gender disparities in education, economic, and political aspects. The biggest gender gap is seen in political representation where very few women have assumed leadership positions.

Gayo coffee is produced in three main regions in Aceh known as 'Tanah Gayo': Bener Meriah, Central Aceh, and Gayo Lues. People there identify as Gayo people rather than Aceh people. 'Gayo' is also the term used in this research to refer to this particular region and its people. This research involves coffee cooperatives from Bener Meriah and Central Aceh regions.

Figure 3. Research Site Map



Source: Leuserantara.com

Informants were sampled using *purposive snowball sampling* because this research focuses on examining the role of women cooperatives. Therefore, I chose two different women cooperatives in Gayo (WEPGY & WSL¹). These two women cooperatives have different characteristics in terms of their establishment background, organizational size, structure, and goals. From each cooperative, I interviewed the chairwoman of the cooperatives and the cooperative members (women farmers, committee, collectors, staff and sortation workers). Women in different nodes of the value chain² were interviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of women's experiences along the whole value chain.

In addition, women with similar characteristics from two mix-cooperatives were interviewed as counterfactuals. One cooperative (WMC) is led by the chairwoman and consists of around 40% women farmers members. The other cooperative (MC) is dominated by male members and led by the chairman. These diverse characteristics of cooperatives helped me to analyse if there are patterns between the nature of women cooperative with the women experience of empowerment.

Furthermore, I interviewed local figures who have good understandings of the community and can give additional information about how the community perceives women or the changes in the community. I also interviewed the Fairtrade's Gender Consultant who intensely engages with all Fairtrade-certified cooperatives in Gayo. These interviews are important for data triangulation in a qualitative research. The detailed list of the interviewed informants and their characteristics/roles can be found in the *Appendix 1*.

3.2. Data collection

Data analysis was based on primary data (Whatsapp call interviews) and secondary data (literature reviews of academic research, NGO reports, organizations documents, videos, photos, and websites). Semi-structured qualitative interviews were used to explore the nature of the cooperative and the experience of women cooperatives members regarding their agency, access to resources, and empowerment outcomes, in the context of intra-household and extra-household. The call interviews were conducted in Indonesian. An online survey was initially disseminated but later dismissed from the study due to minimal responses.

¹ These are pseudonyms, list of informants and their details can be found in the Appendix 1

² See Figure 1. Illustration of women's common positions in the coffee value chains

Even though the research was conducted remotely, close attention was given to the digital data from the informant such as pictures and texts posted in their Whatsapp Status. This additional information gives useful information to help interpret the interview data.

Table 3. Data and Methods

No	Research Area	Elements	Data collection method	Source
1	The nature of the co-operatives	(1) Descriptive characteristics: background, number and composition of members, activities, organizational structure (2) Type of cooperative: division of labor, cooperative principles and goals, financial management, leadership, and decision-making process	Desk research & Call Interviews	Fairtrade Reports & interviews with Fairtrade's gender consultant and interviews with the cooperatives' leaders
2	Dominant discourses surround women's empowerment	Women's empowerment discourse in development strategies Gender discourses in Aceh, Indonesia Gayonese Women's perception of empowerment	Desk research & Call Interviews	Academic research & interviews with cooperatives leaders and members
3	Women's experiences of empowerment (intra & extra-household)	(1) Agency (2) Resources (3) Achievements/Changes	Call interviews	Interviews with Women coop & mix-coop members

Source: Author's elaboration

3.3. Data analysis

Data gathered from the primary and secondary sources were analysed in a two-staged approach: coding and interpreting the data (Banerjee & Jackson, 2017). I used both deductive (theory or research design-driven) and inductive (data-driven) coding process (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2010). First, a list of codes was prepared based on my research design and conceptual framework. Codes are labels that refer to certain ideas or themes. Secondly, I transcribed my call interviews and started to develop open codes based on the interview data. These codes are meant to categorize, classify, or refer to certain ideas and themes that are drawn from the text (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2010). The categorization was done by sorting out the similarities and differences which then helped me to describe and interpret the patterns. After that, I examined the relations between the recurring themes to the conceptual framework from literatures on cooperatives, coffee value chain, and women's empowerment. This process led me to construct the axial code, the 'second stage' codes that are broader, more abstract or analytical (Banerjee & Jackson, 2017) (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2010). Finally, I will analyse the connections or patterns between the codes. In this case study, certain forms of women's empowerment experience may be related to the cooperative's nature, Fairtrade standards, or direct trade interventions. Chapter 4 and 5 will discuss the findings and analysis by using the term 'themes' instead of codes. The example of the coding process can be found in *Appendix 2*.

In addition, I also used 'metaphor' technique to identify the themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). I examined the metaphor or analogies that the informants used to interpret the underlying meaning that the informants perceive or want to express. For example, they mentioned about 'Kartini', Indonesian female national hero and Wonderwoman. I will discuss about these women's portrayals in Chapter 6 by reflecting its connection to the development of gender discourses in Indonesia (Chapter 4).

Moreover, I always remind myself of the '*reflexivity*' whenever I interact with the informants. The contexts, process, gestures, and the silences could represent findings too. For example, informants from women cooperatives were very welcome and accessible, while women from men-dominated cooperative always asked permission or verified me to the chairman first before accepting my request to interview them. Other examples will be discussed in the analysis section.

3.4. Positionality

I am a young, Chinese-Christian, middle-class woman who is studying as international student in the Netherlands. I never visited Aceh and I have no knowledge or experience about coffee cultivation, processing, and its business mechanism. With this background, I am considered as an 'outsider'. However, all the cooperatives that I contacted were very welcoming and willing to help. Access to three of the cooperatives (WEPGY, MC, YMC) was obtained from their websites. I also received the contact of MC's chairman from a Fairtrade's staff and a contact from WSL cooperative from my personal contact in Aceh.

After several conversations with the informants, my background as an international student seemed to play a considerable role in obtaining access for data collection. At the same time, however, it posed some possible limitations. Knowing that I am studying in the Netherlands and have several contacts in Fairtrade, they might have seen me as a potential buyer or an auditor. Sometimes I felt that the answers they gave were adjusted to what they thought I wanted to hear. It is therefore very important to be reflective and aware of my position when interpreting their answers.

My academic background as a sociology student and now a master student in ISS has sharpened my concerns and analytical lens towards unequal power relations. This has influenced my way of thinking and seeing of everyday practices as 'political' and development or empowerment strategies as a 'politics of everyday practices'. This explains my tendency towards the alternative or gender justice approach rather than instrumentalist approach in seeing empowerment. I will elaborate more about the implication of my positionality in the analysis section.

3.5. Research ethics and limitations

Qualitative fieldwork might be the most ideal approach to conduct this case study research. However, it was not feasible and ethical to conduct fieldwork data collection due to the Covid-19 pandemic. There was a travel restriction for people outside Central Aceh to enter the region. Thus, this research mainly relied on literature reviews and Whatsapp call interviews, which limit the depth of the collected data. Technical issues such as internet connection and informant's access to the Whatsapp were part of the challenges during the data collection.

Due to the snowball purposive sampling, this study relied heavily on contacts provided selectively by the leader of each cooperative. In addition, my initial plan to interview women with varied roles along the coffee value chain was only partly achieved since many of them do not use WhatsApp or have their phones shared with their children. This leads to unequal composition of informants between the cooperatives.

Informants were asked to provide verbal consent before the interviews. I also obtained their permission to record the interviews and explained that all data will only be used for academic purposes. Informant identities were not recorded; rather, pseudonyms are used in quotations throughout this research paper.

Chapter 4: A Journey to Tanah Gayo, Aceh

This chapter is divided into several sections to provide a holistic sociohistorical context of the case study. To help the analysis of women's perception of empowerment in Chapter 6, the first section discusses sociocultural context of Tanah Gayo, Aceh, including its dominant discourse on women. The second section provides a background of the establishment of coffee cooperatives in Aceh. The last section discusses the four coffee cooperatives under study to help understand distinct features in each cooperative and their influence on women's empowerment.

4.1. Sociocultural context

Aceh is the westernmost province of Indonesia and one of the few regions with special autonomy. Amid a long history of armed conflicts and a call for independence from the Acehnese and the GAM (Free Aceh Movement), the central government granted a special autonomy that allows Aceh to govern its region differently from the rest of Indonesia, such as by enacting Sharia law. Aceh's history and politics have influenced its community's sociocultural norms and values, including those related to women. The following section discusses the history of gender discourses surrounding women in Indonesia and Aceh.

4.1.1. *Ibuism*³ as the dominant gender discourse in Aceh

Edriana Noerdin (2005) discusses Indonesia's gender discourses developed in the pre-independence era, during the independence, and in the New Order, as well as the dominant gender discourse under the Moslem scholars/leaders in Aceh. She found a common thread throughout the history in the exclusion of women from public participation⁴ via domestication. The analysis of women's perception about themselves and about women's empowerment will be connected to this context in the chapter 6.

In the colonial era, women actively participated in the struggle for independence and women's emancipation movements. Cut Nyak Dien is a well-known hero who led the war in Aceh against the Dutch soldiers (1899-1901). Kartini (1879-1904) is a 'national hero' from Java who advocated for young women to receive the same education as men. Despite her determination to continue her study, Kartini was secluded when she reached the age of 12. It was a common practice in a Javanese aristocrat family to prepare girls for marriage. This raised her concerns on gender equality, women's freedom, and education for girls. Kartini was critical towards Javanese traditions, Islamic laws, and Dutch colonization (Noerdin, 2005). Around 1920, number of female activists and organisations grew dramatically, indicating that women were seriously involved in public sphere since the colonial era. However, the colonial administration soon prohibited these organisations. Further, women's emancipatory movements were again silenced during the independence as Indonesian leaders concentrated women in the household affairs (Noerdin, 2005).

During Suharto's administration of the New Order, women's domestication was institutionalized through several propaganda instruments. First, a hierarchical organizational structure ran from the president to the wives of the village heads in rural areas, civil servants, and the military (Noerdin, 2005). With a special organisation to accommodate the wives of the village heads and civil servants, this organizational structure institutionalized the idea of a woman's role in supporting her husband's works and systematically put her in her husband's shadow. Second, national programs for women associated women with household

³ In Indonesia, 'Ibu' means 'mother'

⁴ Public participation here refers to any decision-making process and form of participation outside the household/private sphere, such as village meetings, leadership, business, etc.

chores, education, and charity, effectively distancing women from decision-making activities in their community. Thirdly, the state explicitly and systematically promoted the ideology of women as a housewife, a propaganda that Suryakusuma called '*state ibuism*'.

'State ibuism was a concept described in the State Regulations, GBHN⁵ in 1973, stating that women's roles were in the families, consisting of guidance for family welfare and children's education. [...] women should assist their husband, help with the children's education, be the households' economic managers, and also be extra breadwinner' (in Nor, Roslan, Inayatillah, 2011:68-69)

After three decades of New Order, the propaganda effects have largely lingered in Indonesian society and governed people's perceptions and behaviours including women themselves. In Aceh, women's domestication is strengthened by certain interpretations of the Sharia laws which regulate how women dress and behave since a "woman is the symbolic bearers of the collective's identity and honour" (Noerdin, 2005:18). A Moslem scholar in an interview with Noerdin (2005) argued as follows:

"Islam does not allow women to lead men [...] even women who joined a war, can only stay at the most behind row to provide medical needs, cook, etc."

In other interviews with female activists in Aceh, Noerdin (2005) found that none was strongly against the prevailing interpretations of the Sharia. In her book, Noerdin (2005) emphasizes the current gender discourse as a situated knowledge. Although other interpretations of Sharia law that promote gender equity are available, her research shows that the dominant discourse in Aceh is the one that promotes women's domestication.

4.2. The history of Gayo Coffee Cooperatives

The mobilization background of a cooperative determines processes within the cooperative (Pegler & Chourdakis, 2018). With this in mind, this section provides a brief background of coffee cooperatives in Gayo.

In 2004, the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami hit Aceh and left extreme destruction especially in the western coastal area. The tsunami and 30 years of conflict left physical, economic, social, and psychological damages. Many farmers suffered economic hardship as they had to abandon their coffee lands during the conflict. Meanwhile, children, women, and the elderly were estimated to make up more than two-thirds of the tsunami victims (Nazara & Resosudarmo, 2007). In the wake of the disaster, many women were forced to become a breadwinner because their husbands died or went missing.

After the disaster and years of conflict, Aceh received many interventions from various international aid agencies, NGOs, as well as trade relations and investments. Together with development agencies, the Indonesian government attempted to reconstruct and recover Aceh's socioeconomic conditions, with one of the strategies being to strengthen commodities-driven exports by assisting cooperatives (Walker, 2015). Coffee farmers cooperatives began to rapidly grow followed by value chain interventions such as from Fairtrade's organic certifications. Two cooperatives in this research, WSL and MC, were established due to the influence and support of post-conflict and post-disaster interventions.

⁵ GBHN: Indonesian Broad Guidelines of State Policy

4.3 The characteristics of coffee cooperatives in Gayo

This section briefly discusses the characteristics of four cooperatives under study, such as background of establishment, goals, organizational structure, gender ratio, decision-making process, leadership, and activities. These elements determine the trajectories of women's empowerment.

MC, WMC, and WEPGY cooperatives are considered Small-scale Producer Organisations (SPO)⁶ consisting of smallholder farmers, collectors, and hired labours in their respective processing units. All three cooperatives are Fairtrade certified and independently export their coffee beans. The fourth cooperative under study, WSL, does not sell, process, or export coffee; instead, it only provides saving and loan services for its coffee farmer members and has no network with any value chain intervention. WEPGY and WSL are women-exclusive cooperatives, WMC is a woman-led mixed-member cooperative, and MC is a men-dominated cooperative.

4.3.1. MC: Men-dominated Cooperative (FT)

MC was established in 2008 through the influence of INGO reconstruction intervention and Fairtrade-organic certification agency. The cooperative has been focused on strengthening its organizational capacities to upscale their coffee production. In 2009, MC started to participate in global coffee export through Fairtrade-organic certification. It is now among the biggest coffee producer cooperatives in Gayo with 3000 members.

Besides NGO and Fairtrade, Root Capital also played a big role in enabling MC's export. Root Capital, a credit institution, pays MC 70-80% of its coffee sales in advance, therefore allowing the cooperative to cover the export costs (MC_Herman). Otherwise, it was impossible to cover the high cost of export only with the cooperative's profit and members' savings. WMC and WEPGY use the same loan support to export their coffee.

MC's management follows Fairtrade's standards and Indonesian regulations on cooperative. Figure 4 illustrates the decision-making structure for committee election, use of premium, and cooperative activities. In general, only cooperative members (leader, secretary and treasurer, farmer delegates, collectors) can participate in decision-making process. Due to its huge membership, MC uses a delegation system where a delegate represents 50 farmers. Number of delegates is determined by number of villages and members. Farmer delegates participate in the annual General Assembly, regular meetings, and village-specific activities which can also be attended by other members. The cooperative's leader, committee, and farmer delegates are elected every three years.

Farmer delegates play an important role in communicating members' needs and feedbacks—such as about members' activities or trainings needs—to the cooperative. The delegates are also responsible for communicating information from the management to the members. Such information includes, among others, coffee cultivation standards, programs, annual cost, profit, premium per village, and yearly budget plan.

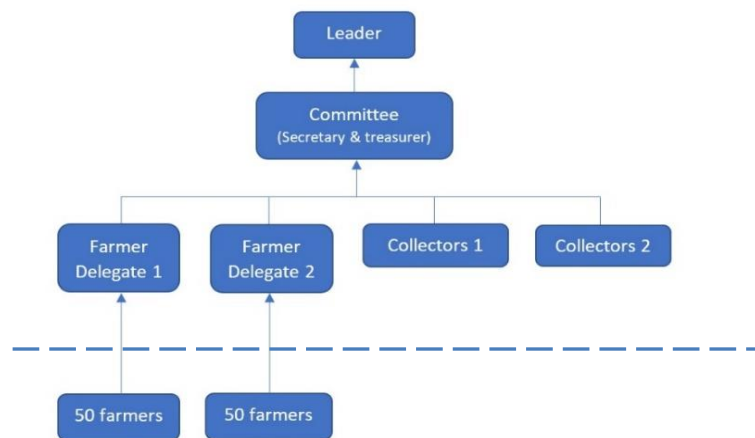
Outside the membership, supporting roles come from staffs with fixed contract and monthly payment working in field control (ICS), administration, and traceability. There are also hired labours who mainly work in the warehouse (for sortation, drying, transportation, etc).

Similar organizational structure is found in all Fairtrade-certified cooperatives in Gayo, including WEPGY and WMC, with only slight differences. In MC, staffs and hired labours are not cooperative members. In WEPGY, some staffs are also farmers/members while

⁶ Following the Fairtrade definition of SPO: 'at least two thirds (2/3 or 66%) of its members are small-scale producers' (Fairtrade International, 2019:12)

sortation workers are non-members. In WMC almost all sortation workers are cooperative members.

Figure 4. Illustration of Decision-Process Structure in Producer Cooperatives



Source: Author's illustration

MC's structure is male-dominated—there are only one woman as secretary and another as farmer delegate. In contrast, 80 workers in the sortation are all women (MC_Dina). The lack of women representation in the organization has affected the decisions made through the voting system. Half of the female members who felt excluded decided to form their own women-exclusive cooperative, which led to the creation of WEPGY (4.3.3).

'Farmer delegates are the one who come to the general meetings. From 2011-2015, 99% of the representative were males. From 60 people, only one or two women were present. In deciding the use of premium, many proposals related to women were rejected because of the voting system. Therefore, several women from several villages proposed to create their own women-exclusive cooperative so that they could decide the premium themselves' (MC_Herman)

4.3.2. WMC: Woman-led Mix Cooperative (FT)

WMC was initiated by the chairwoman of the WMC company in 2009. Coming from a farmer family in Aceh Tengah, she started a coffee business by helping her parents. After she was married, she opened a small grocery shop. Local farmers would sell their coffee to her and she paid with groceries. Later on, she began to develop her coffee business and export. As with MC and WEPGY, WMC relies on credits from Root Capital for export.

'I learnt how to export coffee from my friend's husband who lives in the Netherlands. He told me to apply for organic certification (CU) and gave me several numbers to contact. Then I asked the CU auditor and he told me that I should have farmer members and form cooperative to get the certifications. Then I asked my trader network to gather farmers' IDs. That time we got 600 farmers from 12 villages. [...] After that, a buyer asked me to sell Fairtrade coffee. So I applied' (WMC_Ratu)

WMC's establishment was highly buyers-driven and influenced by a strong leader rather than a collective. WMC's founding members were mainly female farmers and workers in the WMC company.

'One day, she told us [female workers] that when we were already this big/success, we could form a cooperative. Looks good to us, so we gathered our IDs to register' (WMC_Aisyah)

Even though one strong actor initiated its establishment, WMC seems to show great solidarity. The cooperative maintains good relationship between members through many informal activities such as weekly aerobics, regular field and warehouse visits, breaking the fast during Ramadhan, and karaoke.

WMC is probably the only mixed-member cooperative in Gayo that is led by a chairwoman. Even though membership is not limited to women, a considerable proportion (about 40%) of its 600 members are female.

WMC shares a similar organizational structure with MC: there are farmers, collectors, delegate committee, staffs, and hired labour. That said, WMC has more female members who are actively involved in meetings, trainings, and other activities and have more confidence compared to MC's female members. Compared to WEPGY, the roles of WMC's female members appear to be limited to harvesting and sorting activities. In WMC, collectors and staffs, especially ICS, are males. Female staffs act as treasurers, indicating the still dominant 'feminine labour' stereotype in this cooperative.

4.3.3 WEPGY: Women-exclusive Producer Cooperative (FT)

Established in 2014, WEPGY is the first women-exclusive cooperative in Gayo. WEPGY was formed by the former female members of MC who felt marginalized from MC's decision-making process, especially in the use of premium.

'The premium will be given back to empower farmers, but only males will benefit from it since majority of the members are males even though we might have different needs from men' (WEPGY_Sukma)

Many WEPGY members are wives of MC's members (WEPGY_Sinta). In MC meetings, female members used to hesitate to express their opinions because their husbands, fathers-in-law, uncles, or other male relatives were also there (FT_GC).

'Gayo women are very hesitant when their brother-in-law, father-in-law, and brother are present, so it's difficult to express our feelings. Women are expected to just follow any decisions. That's the reason this cooperative was established' (WEPGY_Sukma)

Although initially relying on MC to export its coffee, WEPGY now conducts its own export with the help of Root Capital. In 2015-2018, MC helped WEPGY to develop and learn coffee management, processing, administration, and marketing, until it could export by themselves (MC_Herman). MC members were initially reluctant to support a women's cooperative due to a concern about decreasing MC's premium, but later realized that women-exclusive cooperative has their own market and buyers (MC_Herman). A WEPGY member reported that WEPGY members would at times consider combining the premiums from MC and WEPGY memberships to buy common goods. For example, they once decided to buy an ambulance each village to help anyone in need (WEPGY_Sinta).

WEPGY's organizational structure is similar to MC's with a major difference in gender ratio, where all WEPGY members are women. They fill a variety of positions and roles along the chains: farmers, collectors, staffs, leader, and committee. In this cooperative, women have more chance to 'move up' the chain from merely harvesting in their parent's land to becoming an Internal Control Staff (ICS) (WEPGY_Sinta); or from a farmer to a professional exporter (WEPGY_Riris). These experiences are further discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3.4 WSL: Saving and Loan Women-exclusive Cooperative

WSL was established in 2007 by women who were victims of Aceh conflict. The aftermath of the conflict forced many women to become household heads and struggle financially to fulfil their family needs. As coffee farmers, they were very dependent on the coffee collectors (*toke*). During the low seasons, they would borrow money from the collectors who would in turn cut their payment from coffee sales during the harvest seasons. Usually, the collectors would even buy the coffee at a low price from indebted farmers.

This unfair relationship has driven the women farmers to form a cooperative to provide an alternative way of saving and obtaining credits for farmers. Loans are provided at a low return rate and should be repaid in two years. WSL's committee and members decide the amount and duration of loans on a case-by-case basis. WSL has 40 members with each member having one vote in every meeting.

Several NGOs supported the establishment of WSL. Since 2005, WSL members have received organization trainings from Female Volunteers for Humanity (RPUK). Members also learned to facilitate and support women victims of conflict through mental and financial support, legal facilitation, and sociocultural advocacy.

'in LBH (legal aid institution), we received trainings and knowledge. We don't have money to pay for trainings, so we push ourselves to join several NGOs. [...] There are not many lawyers here and we can only become legal companions under LBH or NGO' (WSL_Eni)

WSL is thus not only a financial cooperative but also a self-help group from and for women farmers. These social activities were driven by WSL members' experiences of injustice:

'I wanted to do this because I was also a victim of conflict. Since then, I hope that no one will experience the same as I did. I didn't get any justice. [...] At the time, money talked in the court. In order to have a legal companion, the victim should pay for transport money because no one was part of any NGO.' (WSL_Eni)

Its networking with NGOs has also influenced WSL to raise gender awareness in the wider community.

'We help women to be accepted in their community. In weekly religious meetings, we often spread the message that men are not the only one that can contribute to development. Women were the ones who restored family's resilience during the conflict by becoming a family head' (WSL_Yanti)

WSL also attempted to run small businesses that produced fruits or vegetable chips and were meant to help the women generate additional income during the low seasons. However, the businesses failed to grow and compete in the market. WSL wants to become a coffee producer cooperative but currently lacks enough capital, knowledge, and capacities (WSL_Yanti). Further, it also lacks connection with GVC actors or mechanisms such as Fairtrade or specialty coffee.

In this chapter, I have described the context of women's domestication in Indonesia through the '*ibuisism*' propaganda, followed by some gendered stereotypes that are reinforced even more in the context of Shari'a law in Aceh. This serves as the reference point to analyse the perceptions of women themselves in the chapter 6. Moreover, the descriptions of the cooperatives indicated that the different roles along the chains have different level of benefits. This context helps to examine in which kind of cooperative women are empowered and able to access higher-rewarding positions, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Women’s empowerment as a process of change

This chapter discusses women’s experiences of empowerment in the cooperatives. Focusing on the empowering changes that women experienced in terms of resources, agency, and achievements, it highlights several things that the women were denied but have now become accessible or improved, especially in the women-only cooperatives (WEPGY and WSL). Women’s experiences of empowerment in the other cooperatives (MC and WMC) are discussed further in Chapter 6. At the end of this chapter, I will indicate that there are ambiguities within the women’s empowerment process which I will elaborate in Chapter 6.

5.1. Change in Resources

Empowerment is an ongoing process rather than an absolute final product—a change process in which “people’s ability to make strategic life choices is expanded, from the context of where this ability was previously denied to them” (Kabeer, 1999:437). The latest studies on women coffee farmers in Aceh have shown that women are marginalized despite their significant roles in coffee production. Women are concentrated in sortation work (Walker, 2015) and lack access to land, knowledge, income, and decision-making process (CQI, 2015; Nespresso, 2017). Nevertheless, this research found considerable, women-empowering changes, especially in the women-exclusive producer cooperative (WEPGY).

Access to land and cooperative’s membership

As briefly discussed in Chapter 1, land ownership mostly goes under the husband’s name and, since cooperative membership is contingent on owning a land, becomes the biggest challenge for women to access any benefit from a cooperative. In the case of the women-only cooperative, WEPGY, 30% of its 300 female members were able to register because they inherited their parents’ land.

Meanwhile, the remaining 70% became members as a result of WEPGY’s initiative to have the women share an authority of the land via a formal letter co-signed by the village head and the husband (FT_GC; WEPGY_Sukma). The letter specifies the size of the shared land which the women can then register for their cooperative’s membership. Although the land ownership is still under the husband’s name, the formal agreement letter ensures women’s authority to cultivate the land and membership in the cooperative.

Meanwhile, the gendered land ownership is formed not only through marriage but also intergenerational.

“The majority of Gayonese farmers only have one piece of land. They start to transfer the land to their children when they got married. In general, parents bequeathed their land with a legal certificate mainly to men, not to women’ (WEPGY_Sinta)

Sinta, a WEPGY member, has helped her mother in coffee harvesting since 2014. Although Sinta’s mother—also a WEPGY member—owns the land under her name, she has shared the land with Sinta. As a young internal control staff (ICS) at WEPGY, Sinta is determined to learn and build networks. She decided to register her part of the land to the MC cooperative which has a youth council.

‘By chance, there was an open registration for new members at MC specifically for youth farmers, but the majority was men. Because I still have land yet to be registered in any cooperative, I decided to register as a member in the youth council. Even though the land is not fully mine yet, still owned by my parents, I got to learn a lot from there because it is a new community and only for youth’ (WEPGY_Sinta)

This shows that agency and resources are interconnected and influence one another. WEPGY as a women-exclusive cooperative exercises its agency to strategically bargain the shared authority of land for women (*resource*), which then enhance women's ability to choose (*agency*). For example, Sinta was able to become members in both WEPGY and MC from her parent's land. Furthermore, she gained new network in the youth council (*resource*) and was able to exercise her *agency* even more. By becoming members of a cooperative, women can participate in any decision-making process and trainings.

Access to self-growth: knowledge, trainings, and network

Access to cooperative's membership enhances access to knowledge, trainings, and network that women were denied before.

'According to a Nespresso's survey (2017), 41% of women compare to 0% of men in Aceh 'rely solely on their spouse for coffee practices information'. Thus, almost all women (97%) expressed 'desire to attend coffee trainings and farm visits' (Nespresso, 2017:14). [...] On the other hand, 71% of men had the opinion that only men should attend a coffee training. The reasons are related to women's low ability to understand and women's responsibility of domestic works.' (Suharno, 2020)

The women-only saving and loan coop (WSL) is not affiliated with any value chain intervention and thus has limited network and support, although it sometimes receives support from the government. WSL sometimes hires professionals or asks officers from the Ministry of Agriculture to provide trainings on coffee cultivation. These trainings are not regularly conducted but still at least provide access to knowledge for their female coffee farmers members.

In big cooperatives such as WEPGY, MC and WMC, trainings are usually provided only to farmer delegates, cooperative committee, and active members. The delegates are then expected to train other members in their village. MC, as a men-dominated cooperative, only has one female delegate from its 3000 members. Meanwhile, in the women-exclusive (WEPGY) and woman-led mixed-member (WMC) cooperatives, women enjoy greater opportunities to become farmer delegates and therefore have better access to trainings and network.

Trainings are paid by the cooperative and enabled by the network consisting of the cooperative, international buyers, roasters, and NGOs.

'in September-October, we usually have guests from Australia and the US visiting our cooperative. Many of them are championship roasters, cupping experts. When they come, we would make the most of it by conducting cupping and roasting trainings. From the trainings, members know the importance of processing from tasting their own coffee.' (WEPGY_Sukma)

These trainings help women understand value creation in coffee chain and encourage them to learn more and be conscious of the possibilities to grow their capacities in mastering various roles throughout the chain. As an example, Riris, a committee member in WEPGY, helped her coffee collector husband before joining WEPGY. Her husband participated in several trainings on coffee processing, while she did not know much about it. After becoming a WEPGY member, she started to improve her knowledge and skills from cooperative trainings. Riris is now a professional collector who works independently from her husband.

Financial independence

Eni, a treasurer at WSL, expressed her appreciation of the great support the cooperative has given her. Loans obtained from the cooperative have enabled her to start her own small business and send her children to school without relying on *toke*. Being part of WSL also

allows her to avoid bank loans, which are often more difficult for women to obtain due to bank's requirement to show possession of a land certificate. (WSL_Eni)

'Initially, I had to search for funds for whatever business I wanted to build. If I take loans from the bank, they require land or house certificate. But that is not the case in the cooperative. As a member, I have savings and I can borrow from the cooperative.' (WSL_Eni)

5.2. Change in Agency

Improved confidence and self-esteem

All women informants reported that they are more comfortable and have greater confidence and strength to face difficulties in women groups. Eni has received tremendous support and life lessons from the solidarity between cooperative members, especially during a legal problem she experienced in 2011 due to the Aceh conflict. Afterwards, she gained more confidence to express her aspiration and encourage other women. This improved confidence has helped her speak up in the court for women victims whom she facilitated.

Kabeer (1999:438) defines agency as the "ability to define one's goals and act upon them". This implies both *power within* (how women perceive themselves) and *power to* (how women pursue their own goals). I asked Sinta about the things that she would have missed had she not joined WEPGY, and she said the following:

'I would not find my true self if I didn't join this cooperative. Before, I felt like going nowhere and had no purpose. But joining the cooperative has broadened my knowledge, I have found my self-confidence' (WEPGY_Sinta)

Participation in WEPGY has given women the opportunity to interact with other women and share their concerns and experiences. A good example is the "gender school," a gender leadership training for women leaders and women-exclusive producer cooperatives. The training is a collaboration between Fairtrade and TPSA Canada (FT_GC). WEPGY also initiated another gender training by inviting gender activist from Jakarta, Indonesia. All informants from WEPGY have had good impression of the training. Through interactions in the training, women inspired and encouraged each other to do something. In fact, Sinta considered her participation in the gender school a personal achievement. Echoing Sinta, Maya felt that the gender school was a life-changing achievement for her. As a farmer delegate in WEPGY, a traditionally male role, Maya said of her experiences:

'I'm not taking pride on becoming a delegate. But I'm grateful that [through that] I was able to meet wonderful women in the gender school. I have been keeping all the modules [from gender school]. I was very inspired listening to their struggle stories. It made me think that I also need to grow and have ideas to do something [...] for example actions to address the deforestation problems.' (WEPGY_Maya)

The findings above have made clear that women-exclusive cooperative has contributed significantly in improving women's confidence (*power within*), women's solidarity and collectivity (*power with*), and women's ability to define their own goals and pursue them (*power to*).

Improved participation in decision making

All-women collective seems to also improve women's participation in decision-making process. As a young farmer, Sinta participates in farmer's meetings to determine their use of the premium. As an internal control staff, she also mediates between WEPGY management and the farmers. Women farmers often tell her about their difficulties, and she will communicate them to the cooperative. She claimed that women farmers feel more comfortable to voice

their aspirations to a women-only cooperative rather than a mixed-member or men-dominated cooperative.

‘It feels easier and more comfortable because we are all fellow women. So, whenever we conduct a socialization or want to exchange thoughts, not a single member is shy or hesitant to express their needs. In some other cooperatives, men dominate, and women are cornered. When men talk, women will just follow. Therefore, it is more complicated in WEPGY because women have many demands, but it is fun. Everyone speaks up.’ (WEPGY_Sinta)

5.3. Achievements: structural change?

Women’s initiatives for change

As discussed earlier, women-exclusive producer cooperatives enable more women’s participation in decision-making process about the use of premium, cooperative’s activities, or other initiatives. A Fairtrade gender consultant for Indonesia who works closely with all Fairtrade-certified coffee cooperatives in Aceh observes that women leaders and women-exclusive cooperatives tend to have more insightful initiatives than men-dominated cooperatives.

In addition to Fairtrade, WEPGY receives its premium from Café Femenino, an ‘independent non-profit that provides grants to select projects requested by Café Femenino’s women farmers to enhance the lives of their families and communities’ (Cafe Femenino, 2020). Formed by Peruvian women farmers, Café Femenino has become a global women coffee network and an ethical sourcing initiative that provides direct compensation from buyers or roasters to women farmers. Fairtrade does not mediate between Café Femenino and WEPGY, the Fairtrade gender consultant reported. Rather, WEPGY expands its network through direct trade relationships with international buyers.

Aside from productivity improvement purposes, WEPGY uses its premiums to provide women’s needs such as cervical cancer tests, cataract tests, pre-school for their children, and gender trainings.

‘We proposed to Café Femenino to use our premiums for conducting gender leadership trainings for delegates and cooperative member from each village. We brought trainers from NGOs in Jakarta. They are really gender warriors’ (WEPGY_Sukma)

As discussed, the gender training has inspired WEPGY members and driven them to address issues beyond the cooperative’s productivity, such as youth unemployment and environmental problem, as well as issues related to women’s capacity and opportunity improvement.

‘It’s getting more difficult now for youths to find jobs, while we have so many potentials in coffee production. There are also young people who cannot continue their study and help their parents. So, every time I visit the villages, I would encourage them not to be ashamed of being a young farmer. Because we can keep growing from coffee.’ (WEPGY_Riris)

Showing her desire to form a female youth council, Sinta demonstrates in the following quote her awareness of the common gendered division of labour where women mainly work in harvesting, and her resolve to challenge it. As women-exclusive cooperatives have enabled women to break through the gendered constraints, she hopes that a female youth council will enable women to grow more.

‘For now, my burning desire is to gather young members to join the cooperative and establish a female youth council, so that members can become female farmers who understand not only coffee harvesting, but also land preparation, nursery, and post-harvesting processes. From there, we can organize our own agricultural products’ (WEPGY_Sinta)

Women's roles are more distributed along the chains

The common pattern of women's roles along coffee value chain has been illustrated in Figure 1 (Chapter 1). Women mainly work as coffee cherry pickers and sortation workers. Very few women have knowledge in land preparation, coffee cultivation, and coffee processing (Nespresso, 2017). On the other hand, farmers delegates, coffee collectors, and coffee exporters in Gayo are mostly men.

However, that is not the case in WEPGY, a women-exclusive producer cooperative whose members are all female. In this cooperative, women have diverse positions and roles throughout the chain—farmers, collectors, staff, leader, and committee members—and have bigger chance to 'move up' along the chains. Informant accounts are replete with stories of this movement along the chain: from mere harvesting in her parent's land to becoming an Internal Control Staff (ICS) (WEPGY_Sinta), from a farmer to a professional collector (WEPGY_Riris), and from a farmer and collector to an exporter (WEPGY_Sukma).

“By participating in the cooperative, women's roles are highlighted. We give women chances to show themselves, for example to become a collector. This way, it's evident that women are able [to do things that men do]. [...] She (WEPGY_Riris) started as a farmer, she was educated only until junior high school. Now she has become the cooperative's secretary. When she was still learning and her economy was weak, she worked with her husband. Now she's become a professional who hires people and conducts export by herself. She's now an expert in processing ready-to-export coffee” (WEPGY_Sukma)

Maya, a WEPGY farmer, said that she has performed every task in coffee cultivation except pruning with machinery. Maya is capable in land preparation, seedling, and fertilisations because of the knowledge she gained from trainings provided by the cooperative. The knowledge has also helped her increase her land's productivity. She no longer relies on her husband to nurture or rejuvenate her coffee after a pest attack.

Improved recognition of women in household and public

Improvements in women's confidence and participation are apparent not only in the cooperative, but also in the wider community. More women are now increasingly vocal in expressing their aspirations outside the cooperative. In addition, there is a growing public recognition of the importance of women's participation as evident in the inclusion of more women in public meetings and more suggestions from women being implemented. Maya's experience and observation clearly illustrates the change:

“The Gayo ethnic group treats men and women differently. Gayonese women were marginalized. But now many things have changed. That was one of the aims of establishing the women's cooperative, so women would have freedom to speak up [...] The Village Annual Forum⁷ used to be mainly attended by men. From 50 invitees, there were only about 15 female invitees. Sometimes only half of the women came. Most of them said that they were busy with their kids. However, now I can see that more women have come when they are invited. They have courage to raise their opinions. [...] Once I attended the village forum and asked whether they had a budget plan for women and the elderly. They said they did, and I could see that it was being implemented. I do not feel that women are being underestimated anymore. They listen to us. In fact, the majority who came to the meeting were not active or ask anything, only few people. So, I feel quite happy about it. This means what our [women's] suggestions are considered and even implemented.” (WEPGY_Maya)

⁷ Village Annual Forum or *Musrembang Desa* is an annual forum of village stakeholders where village development plan and budget for the upcoming year is discussed.

Sukma, the chairwoman of WEPGY, succeeded in lobbying the male-dominated Fairtrade Producer's Network to support the establishment of Women's Coffee Forum (FT_GC). This forum provides a shared space for women from several cooperatives to build capacities. The fact that other mixed-member producer cooperatives agreed to provide financial and technical supports for the forum shows that women's movement and works are being recognised.

'I was very nervous when I had to convey a message about the women's forum in a meeting of the Association of Fairtrade Producers of Indonesia last February [2019]. Most of those who attended were men. I thought that many of them would oppose us and think that gender equality and women's leadership in co-ops are not important, or even contrary to Islamic law. But the results were positive.' (WEPGY_Sukma, in TPSA, 2019:3)

In the household, husbands have started to recognise the benefits of permitting women to participate in a coffee producer cooperative. Ratu, the chairwoman of the mixed-member producer cooperative WMC, seems to be aware of this change:

'Initially, I had to ask the husbands to give permission to their wives to join the cooperative. This is because the culture here is different from [the culture in] Java. We were afraid that the husbands would misunderstand us. But now it is the opposite. *The husbands come to me to register their wives.* Maybe because they see many farmers coming here and that we brought farmers to travel to Singapore, Malaysia. So, it looks different.' (WMC_Ratu)

The above quote indicates that the husbands might have better appreciated the contribution of women's work for the family. However, it remains unclear whether this perceived contribution translates to a stronger bargaining power for women in the household. Aisyah, a WMC farmer, reported that she still has less control over income. Moreover, there is an indication of a remaining power imbalance from the finding that the husbands would come to register their wives into WMC membership, which raises a question on voluntariness. If the registration is decided by the husbands, the notions of recognition and empowerment become questionable and ambiguous.

This chapter has applied the first level of analysis by breaking down the women's transformative experiences into Kabeer's dimensions of empowerment: agency, resources, achievement. However, I found some ambiguities as I look further to the underlying power relations. The next chapter will discuss these ambiguities and how the cooperative characteristics and the discursive power influence the women's empowerment process.

Chapter 6: Ambiguities and determinant processes

The first section of this chapter invites reader to reflect on the empowerment further, that it is not always a ‘clear-cut’ or merely a ‘checked-list’ condition. It discusses the ambiguities of women’s empowerment by analysing women’s perceptions, motivations, and choices at the individual, intra-household, and extra-household levels. In the second part, I argue that the uneven and ambiguous processes of empowerment, as shown in how women’s empowerment pattern differs across the cooperative types, are influenced by each cooperative’s characteristics and the dominant gender discourse that governs women themselves. This chapter also provides detailed discussion of the men-dominated and mixed-member cooperatives (MC and WMC) to highlight contrasting and counterfactual experiences to the women-only cooperatives.

6.1. Ambiguities in women’s empowerment process

I have discussed in the previous chapter that women have experienced notable empowerment since joining the women-exclusive cooperatives. The producer cooperative (WEPGY) has significantly improved women’s agency, resources, and positions in value chain governance and the wider community. On the other hand, the saving-and-loan cooperative WSL has improved women’s confidence and access to financial services. That said, WSL seems to struggle to transform gendered sociocultural norms and values in the household as indicated by husbands denying their wives-members active participation in the cooperative. From 40 WSL members, only two actively participate in WSL activities.

‘Some of them don’t have free time, some others are not allowed to come by their husbands. [...] We usually communicate through phone and keep all members updated’ (WSL_Eni)

Improved agency and strengthened resources provide higher *potentials* for women to transform the gendered power relation. These potentials do not necessarily produce achievements or structural changes. Rather, a key ingredient for change comes from women’s own perceptions and motivations. Since women in the cooperatives now have greater chance and ability to choose, they can *choose to not choose*. For example, Maya joined WEPGY after obtaining her husband’s legal permission to share his land. She reported improved knowledge and skills after becoming a member, which allows her to improve her land’s productivity. From the increased earnings, she was able to buy a new house and acquire more land. Curiously however, Maya decided to put the properties under her husband’s name. When asked about her reason, she hesitantly giggled and said:

“Well.. yeah.. It’s okay. I trust my husband. We looked for it (money) together.” (WEPGY_Maya)

Looking at members’ intra-household dynamics, empowerment in WEPGY seems ambiguous. On one hand, WEPGY seems to be successful at initiating structural changes in value chain governance (indicated by improved women’s positions and roles) and the wider community (as shown by public recognition). On the other hand, women still prioritize their husband over themselves. As Kabeer wrote, “*women’s acceptance of their secondary claims on household resources, [...] are all examples of behaviour by women which undermine their own well-being*” (Kabeer, 1999:440). Women may have internalized their subordinate status in the household due to the discursive power that shapes women’s choices.

Moreover, almost every woman along WEPGY’s value chain (female farmers, collectors, staffs) seems to have experienced empowerment, except the sortation workers. Uni, a female sortation worker, did not participate in any meeting or training. Because she is not a member, she has no work insurance. Uni aspires to be a successful woman like the

chairwoman, but she is not sure about how to improve herself. Uni never thinks about registering as a member or bargaining her wage for sorting the beans (WEPGY_Uni). It was also apparent in the interview that Uni lacks confidence from the fact that she repeatedly asked whether she had given a correct answer.

This finding indicates that empowerment may have an uneven impact. Arguably, little effect of empowerment on the sortation workers might be due to the informality of the job. In WEPGY, sortation workers are considered seasonally hired labour outside the cooperative membership, which leads to their exclusion from cooperative activities and benefits. To compare, in WMC sortation workers are considered members. WMC's sortation workers are confident, highly aware of their rights and the cooperative's Fairtrade mechanism, and have their voices heard when deciding the use of the village premium. This is an example of how cooperative characteristics may influence women's empowerment process.

6.2. Structure and processes that influence empowerment

6.2.1. Cooperatives Characteristics

Previous discussion has shown that having an all-women membership in a producer cooperative (WEPGY) can challenge the gendered coffee value chain structure by enabling women to assume diverse positions and roles throughout the chains. All-women members as the main feature of women-exclusive cooperatives appears to significantly determine women's empowerment outcome (in agency, resources, and achievements). However, there are ambiguities in women's experiences and perceptions along the process which are influenced by cooperative characteristics.

This section highlights the major distinctive features of each cooperative and their impact on women's empowerment. Also discussed here is the experiences of female members in MC and WMC to provide contrast with WEPGY and WSL.

Types of cooperative & GVC interventions

As Fairtrade-certified producer cooperatives, MC, WMC, and WEPGY have more capacities compared to WSL due to their exposure to external actors and mechanisms in the global coffee value chain. They are able to export due to loan support from Root Capital and receive premiums and valuable trainings from Fairtrade, Café Femenino, and international buyers and roasters. All these supports have strengthened their capacities to thrive.

As a women-exclusive cooperative, WEPGY has gained a wide recognition for its ability to demonstrate women's abilities, contributions, and achievements in the coffee agribusiness. Members of WEPGY have expressed that now women are being heard and active both in cooperative meetings and village meetings. Meanwhile, women farmers in WMC have experienced direct encounters with international buyers. Some of these buyers or roasters have visited the farmers directly to build a trade relationship based on trust and shared knowledge (Vicol, Neilson, & Hartatri, 2018). This direct relationship has allowed two WMC farmers members to sell their coffee to international buyers under their own brands. WMC helps them to export but keeps their brands separate from WMC's coffee. Their buyers have also promoted the brands using the farmer's name.

Meanwhile, WSL is still struggling to gain recognition from members' family and community. Husbands forbidding women to participate in cooperative activities shows that local families have not acknowledged the contribution of women's participation in cooperative. Limited knowledge, skills, network, and capital provide obstacles for WSL to grow and access market. These limitations might be due to WSL's lack of exposure to external value chain mechanisms.

Social justice-driven cooperative

As discussed in Chapter 4, the four cooperatives were established with different backgrounds. WEPGY and WSL were driven by social solidarity based on justice, while MC and WMC were driven by the market and external actors (Fairtrade and buyers). The different background seems to influence different perceptions and directions of empowerment in each cooperative. Cooperatives driven by social justice tend to aim for social and transformative changes, especially related to women. Meanwhile, the market-driven cooperatives do not have other objectives beyond economic and productivity goals.

WEPGY's establishment was driven by injustices that women experienced from being marginalized in the men-dominated cooperatives. On this foundation, WEPGY strives to improve the shared legal authority of land for women, provide women decision-making autonomy, use the premiums to address women's needs, form a female youth council and women's coffee forum, and challenge the gendered coffee value chain structure. Meanwhile, WSL was formed to empower women who were victims of the Aceh conflict. WSL helps its women coffee farmers not only by providing access to financial services (saving and loan), but also through legal facilitation and consultations for women who are not able to hire a professional lawyer.

On the other hand, MC uses its premiums for trainings and to provide foods for farmers during the dry season (MC_Herman). Similarly, WMC's members often use their premiums to support farming activities and buy daily needs, such as land mowers, rice, sugar, and oil. In addition, women farmers often ask for travelling to foreign countries (WMC_Aisyah). They call it as 'comparative study' even though there is no training or dissemination activities are included in the trip. In sum, the women farmers have no other goals beyond increasing premiums and coffee sales.

Patriarchal cooperative

Women currently make up only 16% of MC's membership. Herman, the chairman of MC, claimed that MC's female members tend to be passive:

MC_Herman : "There is this kind of role allocation between male and female in Gayo culture. Men mostly work in organization. Women mostly work in harvesting. This is why we don't see many women actively participate in the organization"

Interviewer : Then, what attempts or initiatives has the cooperative done to encourage women's participation?

MC_Herman : "Because we already have a 'sister' cooperative (WEPGY), usually things related to women are addressed there"

The above conversation shows how the chairman has normalized the gendered division of labour within the cooperative which results in the marginalization of women's voices. Such way of thinking neglects women's empowerment for its female members and leave that responsibility to WEPGY. This possibly explains why MC's female members tend to be passive and lack confidence.

Diah, a young female farmer in MC, participates in the youth council and thus might be more actively involved in the organization compared to the other female members. However, it was apparent that she lacks confidence and has had limited participation or awareness about the organization. During the call interview, a male voice was heard nearby. It seems that she put the call on loudspeaker and would wait for the man to suggest an answer before answering my questions. She used buzzwords such as 'democratic process' and stated that there is no 'gender discrimination' and that she actively participates in the cooperative and

village meetings. However, when I probed further, she could not explain what the meeting was about and asked the man again. She then corrected herself as follows:

'I only participated once. It's open for all members but usually it's just the delegates who come to the meetings [...] because the members trust them and only follow their decisions' (MC_Diah)

Diah apparently provided answers that she thought I would like to hear. Her use of big words in her answers shows that language was not a problem and indicates knowledge of keywords related to Fairtrade and gender impact assessment. Reflecting on my positionality, she apparently saw me as an 'auditor' who would judge her answers according to a checklist. Diah is single, so the male voice was not her husband's. The fact that she relied on the man indicates her perception of the man as being more knowledgeable. Alternatively, she may have little awareness about the organization because men are more engaged in the cooperative.

Tiwi, a female committee member at MC cooperative, was previously an individual collector together with her husband. She claimed that being a member has helped her financially since the cooperative has more secured price contract with buyers. She confidently shared her stories, very different from Diah. However, she admitted that no other female members in MC are as active as she is:

'When we're discussing the use of the premium, the majority [of participants] are males. Therefore, I am usually there to help the women speak up' (MC_Tiwi)

Tiwi's confidence likely comes from her background as a collector, which is not the case for women farmers who usually start from below and struggle as in WEPGY. In terms of solidarity among members, Tiwi reportedly feels closer to the female farmers and committee in WEPGY. She also participated in the gender training provided at WEPGY, which is still absent in MC.

"I usually talk to my female friends at WEPGY. It's very convenient because we are all women. I also had a chance to join their 'gender school' and learned many things" (MC_Tiwi)

In sum, having all-women members in a coffee producer cooperative seems to significantly promote women's empowerment. On the other hand, it is apparently more difficult to empower women in a patriarchal cooperative like MC.

'Motherly' Leadership

I have mentioned briefly that the women farmers and sortation workers in the woman-led mix cooperative (WMC) are very confident and active in cooperative's meetings and activities. WMC encourages women to actively exercise their agency in two ways. First, it formally includes sortation workers as members. Second, a sympathetic female leader appears to have a great influence on members' solidarity and sense of belonging and motivate women to actively participate in cooperative's activities and works.

'Sometimes the chairwoman would come to our sorting desk, sit with us, and just be there listening to all our problems. So, we feel close and don't hesitate to talk to her at all. She always encourages us to work with a happy heart' (WMC_Aisyah)

Aisyah, a female farmer, mentioned that the members have great respect and trust for the chairwoman (Ratu) that they re-elected her as the cooperative's leader. Ratu earns their trust because she is considered a 'mother' and someone coming from 'below' like the other fellow farmers and because 'she cares about farmers' welfare'. She reportedly provided *zakat infaq* (alms) generously to the farmers during the Eid, which Aisyah claimed never happened in men-dominated cooperatives.

“It was the time to elect a leader for the new period. But the farmers chose her again. I asked the others too why we chose her again. They said it’s because she is very responsive. Whenever we express our struggles as mothers, *because she is also the mother of her children, right? So she understands and responds quickly to farmers.*” (WMC_Aisyah)

The members trust Ratu strongly and try to understand whenever the quantity for sortation beans is decreased due to falling coffee sales. In harvesting activity, women sometimes work in group and help coffee harvesting on each other’s land without getting paid. They call this practice ‘*bejamu*’ or ‘*gotong royong*’ in Indonesian, which assumes that if they share the work, the workload will become less. On one hand, this shows great solidarity between members in the cooperative. However, this may be considered ‘unpaid labor’ and women farmers accept the practice as normal.

Moreover, women farmers in WMC are apparently satisfied with their condition and do not question their positions in the value chain. When I asked about empowerment, Aisyah said that she is proud of herself. She showed me pictures—reportedly posted on international websites as well—of her with foreigners (buyers) who visited the coffee farms. Ratu reportedly calls her and other farmers ‘modern farmers’ because they are now able to use electric tools for pruning. The female members are also said to have travelled abroad several times funded by the premiums. These findings contrast with the following quote which shows her acceptance of her current position as a farmer and sortation worker:

WMC_Aisyah : I often participate in the coffee trainings, usually about coffee cultivation, fertilisations, those are for farmers. But it’s different for the delegates and collectors. They receive training on coffee purchasing, coffee processing, but I never joined.

Interviewer : Why? Do you want to learn about it next time?

WMC_Aisyah : (*laugh hesitantly*) Hmm.. that is not my role. I think I am not there yet’

These findings reveal different women’s perceptions of ‘empowerment’. In WEPGY, women are aware of the gendered division of roles along the coffee value chain, which leads to their desire to challenge it. However, women in WMC perceive ‘empowerment’ with a very modernist but reductionist perspective. They feel empowered when they can speak with foreigners, use machineries, and travel to foreign countries, but they don’t question their positions along the value chain. These findings point to the existence of dominant discourses that shape women’s perceptions of empowerment.

6.2.2. Discursive power of women portrayals

This section discusses the dominant gendered discourse that shapes women’s desire, behaviour, and belief about themselves. This discursive power makes their idea of ‘empowerment’ becomes ambiguous to some extents. The caricatures below were constructed from women’s own metaphors, analogies, and specific use of words when expressing themselves. These caricatures are helpful to understand how women’s perceptions of empowerment are influenced by their socio-cultural context.

An altruistic mother

Apparently, women’s idea of a ‘good wife’ is still very much shaped by the idea of women being altruistic and prioritizing the wellbeing of their family over their own. This dominant discourse has shaped women’s desire and goal to be preoccupied with concerns over family welfare. Eni provided a clear example:

‘Our dream is to see all members have capital/fund to open new business and send their children to schools. If the mothers able to do something, to gain money, we believe that the children will not be deprived of education’ (WSL_Eni)

Similar advice was given by Ratu to the WMC's members:

“We as mothers need to save money because in the future our kids will need money, many children of farmers become a doctor, police, bachelors” (WMC_Aisyah)

A domestic hero

Many women's empowerment interventions acknowledge the significance of 'creating opportunities for women to spend time with other women reflecting on their situation' (Mosedale, 2005: 250). However, in the WMC case, women collective can sometimes perpetuate the dominant gender norms that emphasize domestic roles as women's responsibility. As WMC's respected female leader, Ratu has apparently internalized the domestications of women and reproduced that idea in other women. Ratu mentioned:

'Sometimes we gather not to talk about coffee, but how to organize the household, how to be close/intimate with our husband, how to maintain the cleanliness and environment, financial management' (WMC_Ratu)

Ratu also associates women's domestic roles with religious identity, as Aisyah expressed:

'Don't just look for money, said the chairwoman. As Moslem women, we have lots of responsibilities at home. Don't neglect it' (WMC_Aisyah)

The domestic idea of a 'Moslem woman' might be influenced by Aceh's Sharia values as discussed in Chapter 4. Women in WMC have been 'empowered' because of their work and participation in the cooperative, but domestic roles are still simultaneously seen as women's primary duties. The women farmers themselves seem to normalize the double burden of being responsible for both productive and reproductive works. A farmer proudly expressed this by comparing themselves to Kartini:

'We are now the modern Kartini. That's our motto. How's it different from the old Kartini? We would say that we are doing *jihad* in the household. The original Kartini directly fought for independence against the colonizers, right? But today's women are striving to feed/support the family, educate their children, want to be like the others' (WMC_Aisyah)

As discussed in Chapter 4, Kartini is considered a pioneer of women's emancipation in Indonesia, but she did not fight a war like Cut Nyak Dien. The informant used Kartini as an analogy without understanding Kartini's original struggle which made her a national hero. She might normalize the double burden as a sacred duty through the use of religious labels such as *jihad*.

The hegemonic 'state-ibuiism' propaganda from the New Order era may have also influenced the normalization of women's domestic roles. Since the New Order, schoolgirls are expected to wear traditional clothes (*kebaya*) just as Kartini did on Kartini's day. This superficial celebration portrays Kartini as a 'mother' (*ibu*) or a 'good housewife' model and overlooks her struggle for women's emancipation.

A supporting hero

Besides domestication, the *ibuiism* propaganda also places women as a supporting figure to their husbands. Women and their works are therefore considered 'secondary', 'complementary' or an 'extra'.

As a consequence, women are perceived as a supporting wage earner, which in turn leads to the perception that women should not have more power over income within the household. For example, Aisyah earns her wage from the coffee cultivation and by teaching

as a civil servant. However, her husband has more control on the household's income since his 'heavy' work is seen to make him deserve more control in the family expenses.

'[I use my income] to buy face powder, clothes, (*laughing*). For the other needs, my husband will decide because he does heavy physical works such as hoeing the land. Well, it's the same (*laughing*)' (WMC_Aisyah)

Similar to Aisyah who described her income and expenses as '*makeup money*', Eni said that women are more inclined to accept '*small money*' to buy '*seasonings*' compared to men (WSL_Eni). Their uses of these metaphors seem to indicate their internalization of the secondary domestic position that women have in the family.

Sukma, the chairwoman of WEPGY, had the following idea about women's empowerment and control over income:

'There is a big doubt among the male community towards women. They assume that we made this cooperative to dominate the family. I said no. *Our roles are still as wives*. Whatever happened in the household, we should discuss it together. Joining the cooperative *does not mean we are becoming Wonderwoman*, no. We still appreciate our spouse, discuss every decision.' (WEPGY_Sukma)

Her statement implies an idea of a collaborative household where every decision is made together, therefore giving women equal power to men. However, Sukma also ambiguously referred to women's role as *wives* and never a '*Wonderwoman*'. Further exploration is needed to understand what she exactly meant. I personally see the idea as an expression of a desire for 'empowerment' from women's previous positions and simultaneously an admission that the new, improved position should always be secondary to their husband's. If this is true, this may explain, for example, Maya's decision to put her newly acquired land under her husband's name.

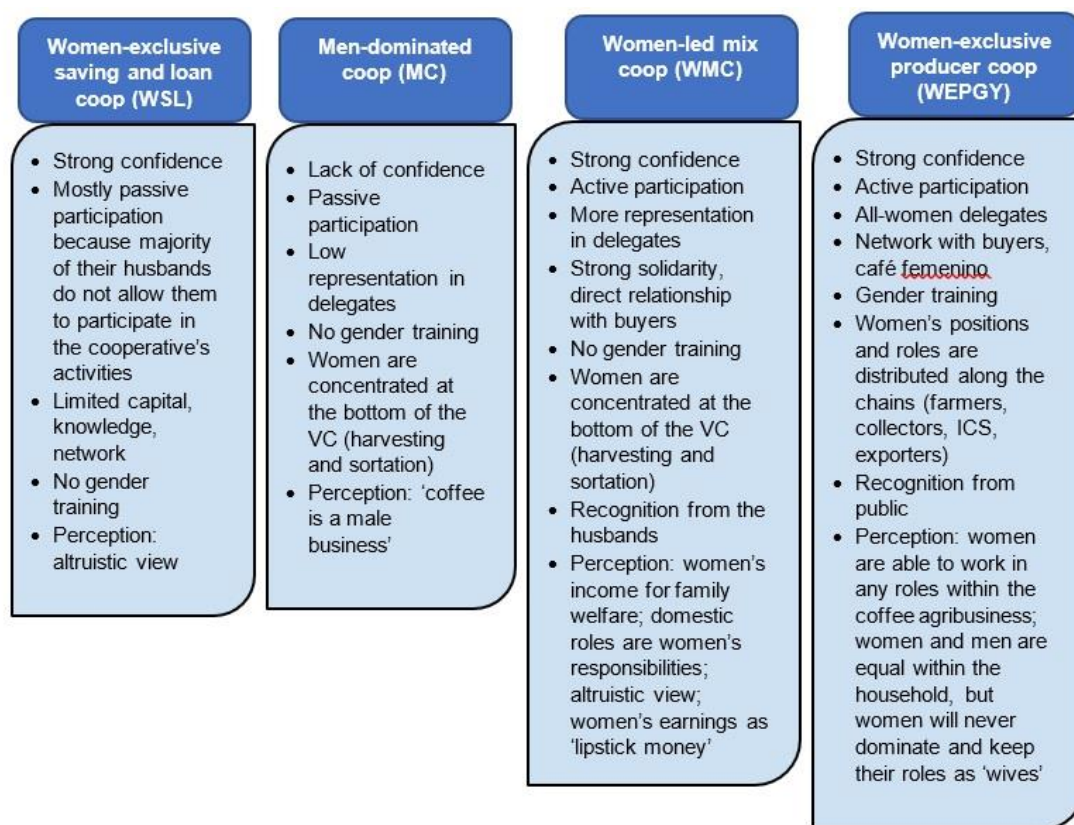
This chapter has demonstrated how different kinds of cooperatives impact women's empowerment differently. The caricatures of women's portrayals have also shown the ambiguities in women's perceptions regarding empowerment. Firstly, as if, being 'woman' is inseparable from being 'mother/wife' and being 'altruistic'. Secondly, as if being empowered means able to carry the double burden duties, without questioning women's domestication. Thirdly, as if women are empowered to be a 'hero', able to do everything, but should never take the main spotlight from men.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research has shown that WEPGY as a women-only producer cooperative has enabled the most transformative changes regarding women's empowerment in the cooperative. This is evidenced from women's improved agency, resources, positions in value chain structure, and recognition from the wider community. These changes represent a remarkably different phenomenon compared to the latest reports on women farmers in Gayo.

Women's empowerment is notably present in the women-exclusive cooperative. Meanwhile, women's marginalization is still visible in the men-dominated cooperative (Figure 5). Women's empowerment in the value chain should address the unequal gendered power relations and challenge the gendered division of labour along the chain. In this study, WEPGY is the only cooperative that has provided women abilities to participate in diverse roles along the chain.

Figure 5. Comparison of women's empowerment in the four cooperatives



Source: Author's elaboration

The findings demonstrate that different characteristics of the coffee cooperatives also influence women's empowerment differently. Besides the significant number and involvement of women members within the organizational structure, the exposure to the GVC actors and mechanism, and the critical gender awareness within the cooperative, seem to be the contributing features in enhancing the women's empowerment. This explains why WSL has not experienced empowering changes as transformative as those found in WEPGY despite being a women-only cooperative. WSL's limited capacity and exposure to diverse GVC supports hinders their growth and creates difficulty in obtaining recognition from members' family and the wider community.

In addition, cooperative's background and leadership also determine the *kinds* of women's empowerment. Cooperatives with a history related to injustice experiences (WEPGY & WSL) tend to have more social goals and aim to challenge the unequal gendered power relations. On the other hand, MC and WMC are driven more by the market and external actors and tend to focus on economic goals (productivity, premium).

This research also shows that women's empowerment is a process of change that is not always 'clear-cut'. Therefore, we should not separate empowerment indicators from their meaningful contexts, otherwise they would lead to different or even contradictory interpretations. For example, women's farmers in WMC are very confident, actively participate in cooperative's activities, and are involved in the decision making of the premium's usage. If women's empowerment is a checklist, WMC would appear to tick the boxes for enhanced women's empowerment. That said, upon closer look at the distribution of roles along the chain, WMC's female members are still concentrated at the bottom of the value chain and even normalize their low-rewarding positions.

Further exploration into women's perceptions of empowerment also reveals several ambiguities in women's empowerment process. In conditions where women enjoy improved resources and agency, they can still choose to accept their lesser status and ignore the gendered power relations. This research has shown that the ambiguities are mainly related to women's normalization of their dominant portrayals as altruistic mothers and domestic and supporting figures.

7.1. Reflection: Re-politicizing Women's Empowerment in Value Chain

The above reflections imply the need to re-politicize the notion of women's empowerment in coffee value chain in several ways. First, by focusing on unequal power relations between men and women as a central issue. Thus, we should treat women's empowerment and gender equity as a goal rather than an instrument for other objectives. For example, improvements of women's capacities should aim to strengthen women's capabilities to take higher-rewarding roles along the chain, not simply for the sake of improving coffee bean quality. Second, we should acknowledge that power imbalance works in both attributive elements (women's positions, representation, and resources) and discursive elements (gendered roles, norms, and discourses). Therefore, improving women's potentials (e.g: agency and resources) must be followed by improving their gender awareness and sense of social justice to enable women to exercise their potentials for their well-being.

It is worth clarifying that my interpretation of women's normalization does not negate the empowerment that women have achieved so far or suggest to forcibly push them further and change their values. As a process of change (Chapter 5), women's empowerment especially in the women-only cooperative has considerably improved from the context where many women's strategic life choices were denied. Recognising my subjectivity as an outsider, I believe that this empowerment process can still go further to transform the underlying gendered power relations within the community through reflective dialogues. Thus, I respect women's own interpretations and strategies within their societal context as I believe that any transformative change should be driven by women themselves. For now, this research paper serves as an analytical reflection on women's empowerment, especially in the women-only coffee cooperative. Any suggestions on practical interventions for women's empowerment would require further research.

7.2. Future Research

There are many other elements of women's empowerment in the coffee value chain that are impossible to cover in this research. First, this research does not discuss the role and experience of female seasonal migrant workers who seem to be even more vulnerable than women farmers.

Secondly, this research scope only covers value chain activities from pre-harvest to export. Future studies can extend the analysis to retailers and consumers. Thirdly, this research did not examine YMC, a women-exclusive producer cooperative with youth membership and a strong market orientation. YMC's chairwoman has expressed her awareness of the growing market for women cooperatives:

“We established this cooperative because we saw the [promising] market. It seems if it's about women, it will quickly become a booming business (*langhing*)” (YMC_Putri)

YMC's motivation and background are very different from WEPGY, even though both are women-exclusive producer cooperatives. Further research will be needed to analyse the kinds of women's empowerment that occur in this cooperative type. The study may also explore other angles, such as civic and industrial conventions theory or youth studies.

Finally, the 'third wave' of coffee connoisseurship is a new trend in Indonesia that is associated with specialty coffee initiatives with stronger focus on coffee quality. As the leading producer of specialty coffee, Tanah Gayo is exposed to new niche networks, knowledge, and trainings. Therefore, it will be interesting to explore the impact of this new value chain mechanism (specialty) on women's empowerment.

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Appendix 1

Table 4. List of Informants

No	Organization	Informant Roles	Education, Age	Pseudonyms
1	Women-exclusive coop (Fairtrade producer cooperative)	Chairwoman	HS, 46 years old	WEPGY_Sukma
2		Female Committee-Collectors	Junior HS, 38 years old	WEPGY_Riris
3		Female young Farmer & ICS	Bachelor, 24 years old	WEPGY_Sinta
4		Female Farmer's Delegate	Bachelor, 31 years old	WEPGY_Maya
5		Female sortation worker	Junior HS, 40 years old	WEPGY_Uni
6	Women-exclusive coop (Saving and loan cooperative)	Chairwoman	HS, 45 years old	WSL_Yanti
7		Female committee	HS, 38 years old	WSL_Eni
8	Woman-led mix cooperative (Fairtrade producer cooperative)	Chairwoman	HS, 45 years old	WMC_Ratu
9		Female farmer & sortation worker	HS, 50 years old	WMC_Aisyah
10	Men-dominated cooperative (Fairtrade producer cooperative)	Chairman	Bachelor, 48 years old	MC_Herman
11		Female Committee/Collectors	HS, 46 years old	MC_Tiwi
12		Female young farmer	Bachelor, 27 years old	MC_Diah
13		Female traceability staff	Bachelor, 31 years old	MC_Dina
<i>Additional informants</i>				
14	Youth female-exclusive coop (Fairtrade producer cooperative)	Chairwoman	Bachelor, 29 years old	YMC_Putri
15	Fairtrade NAP	Gender consultant/Program Officer for Indonesia		FT_GC
16	Local figure	Male coffee farmer/entrepreneur		LF_M

Source: Author's elaboration

Appendix 2

Table 5. Example of Coding Process

Deductive Codes	Open Codes	Axial Codes
Cooperative's establishment background	Resulted from women dissatisfaction of being marginalized in the decision-making process	Background: solidarity based on social justice
Agency	Improved self-confidence Finding true self and purpose of life	Improved 'power within'
	Confidence to express aspiration Initiative to create female youth council	Women's initiatives for change Or Improved 'power to'
Open Codes	Inductive Codes	Axial Codes
'Not a wonderwoman' 'Lipstick/seasoning income'	Women as 'supporting figure' Women's complementary/secondary income	Discursive power: women's portrayal

Source: Author's elaboration