

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

CITIZENS BEYOND THE FRINGE: DOM IN LEBANON,  
DESTABILIZING CONCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP AS  
SOCIAL INCLUSION

by  
Julia Daley

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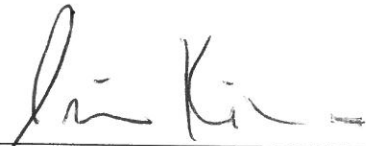
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Julia Daley for Master of Arts  
Major: Sociology

Title: Citizens Beyond the Fringe: Dom in Lebanon, Destabilizing Conceptions of Citizenship as Social Inclusion

Through a retelling of ethnographic fieldwork with the Dom community in the neighborhood of Hay el Gharbe, this study argues that Dom enjoy virtually no citizenship rights while being Lebanese citizens. Through an investigation into the lives of Dom, this study finds that formal citizenship is not a sufficient condition for the enjoyment of substantive citizenship. Two main factors are presented to explain Dom experience of citizenship. First, severe socioeconomic inequalities experienced by Dom dramatically reduce the ability to act as citizen. As such, the study recommends an examination of the hidden costs of citizenship when discussing citizenship amongst marginalized populations. Second, life in what this study calls a “state of abandon”. Borrowing from Agamben’s concept the “state of exception”, an exploration of the limitations to citizenship in the neighborhood of Hay el Gharbe.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In conversations around the Arabic speaking world the verb *titnawaran* and the adjective *nouri* evoke a behavior that is associated with lawlessness and dirtiness (Terre des hommes 2010, 31).<sup>1</sup> In conversations between Arabic speakers the use of the term *nawar* is used to define one who engages in a particular type of behavior frowned upon by majority society. Although used by many in everyday language, few think of the ethnic group for whom the term originates.

Dom, labeled as *nawar*, confused as Bedouin and referred to in the literature as the Gypsies of the Middle East, is an itinerant ethnic group living in the Arab region. As an ethnic group the Dom share a myth of origin located in the Arabian Peninsula, Domari as a common language and Islam as the most followed religion. Studies suggest that approximately 50,000 Dom reside in Iraq, 35,000 in Jordan, 6,000 in Gaza and 2,000 in occupied East Jerusalem (Kawakai 2005; Lindman 2005; Williams 2003; Williams 2004).

In Lebanon, more than 3,000 Dom live on the periphery of some Palestinian refugee camps and in the countryside in extreme poverty where they are most noticeable in tents along highways (Terre des hommes 2010, 19). Despite their status as Lebanese citizens Dom suffer dire socioeconomic hardship. A staggering 76% of Dom struggle below the lower poverty line. In 2010, approximately 8% of the Lebanese population lived below the World Bank extreme poverty threshold set at U.S. \$2.6 per Lebanese per day (Terre des hommes 2010, 38). This reality is particularly striking when compared to 7.9% of Palestinian refugees living below a similar extreme poverty threshold (*ibid.*, 38; Chaaban et al. 2012, 27).<sup>2</sup>

Poverty and exclusion are not unique to Dom as historically Lebanon is home to constant arrivals and movements of minority groups struggling to climb the ladder of a class-stratified society. In 1910 when Armenian refugees settled in Lebanon many found homes in international refugee

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<sup>1</sup> The Terre des hommes report will be abbreviated as TDH from this point on.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the extreme poverty line set for Palestinian refugees is U.S. \$2.17 per person per day. Moreover, 4.2% Palestinians outside of camps in “gatherings” live below the extreme poverty threshold (Terre des hommes 2010, 38; Chaaban et al., 27).



camps and low-income housing (Hourani 2011, 77). As Armenians moved out of these areas other groups such as Syrians, Kurds, Palestinians and Iraqis re-occupied homes in the same areas: al-Karantina, Burj Hammoud, Burj al-Barajneh, etc (*ibid.*, 17). Of these groups many left informal settlements for higher standards of living due in part to the social mobility made possible by citizenship (*ibid.*, 29). Of the minority groups that left camps the Palestinians remain, a reality that is attributed to their constant and systematic positioning as a people without civil rights (Chaaban et al. 2012). Many Dom, unlike Palestinians, have access to civil rights, as many became Lebanese citizens in 1994 (Terre des hommes 2010, 18).

While existing empirical studies highlight the living conditions of Dom and the effect of the state on ethnic belonging, this study puts into crisis generally accepted understandings of citizenship by telling the stories of four Dom families in the neighborhood of Hay el Gharbe. The main research question this study aims to address is: What factors contribute the dissonance between formal and substantive citizenship amongst marginalized populations such as Dom?

The first part of this study, Chapter One and Chapter Two, provides an introduction and review of existing and relevant literature. Methodology, Chapter Three, presents through an explanation of the choice of location, methods and research challenges. Moreover, Chapter Three provides an introduction to the four Dom families with whom the majority of fieldwork was conducted.

Due to the fact that few are aware of Dom history and the realities of their everyday lives, jumping directly into debates about citizenship in relation to Dom without providing a context threatened to leave readers in the dark. But more importantly, considering the little attention given to Dom in literature and the public debate, giving a daily account of their daily lives is a matter of a moral obligation to those who dedicated countless hours to making this research a reality. Chapter Four and Chapter Five seek to provide thick descriptions of Dom life and citizenship status before reflecting theoretically.

In Chapter Four, Dom experiences of healthcare, education, utilities, safety, justice and housing serve to provide readers with a better understanding of the every day lives of Dom. Chapter Five then aims to illuminate Dom experiences of citizenship through an explanation of non-Dom

conceptions of the citizen Dom, self-identification, liminal citizenship, derelict citizenship and myths to citizenship.

In the final part of this study, an attempt to engage fieldwork with debates on citizenship takes place in Chapter Six. Chapter Six is divided into two sections. The first section sheds lights on the reasons for which Dom are limited in their access to citizenship privileges. And, the second section draws a parallel to Agamben's "state of exception" in an attempt to begin to understand Dom practices of citizenship within their neighborhood (Agamben 2005).

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The little empirical research available about Dom in Lebanon will be compensated by looking at a wider scope of literature. This section is divided as follows:

First, an overview of “Gypsyism” followed by a review of the literature about Dom in Lebanon and nearby countries. Second, a special focus is placed on citizenship theory and citizenship in Lebanon. Third, the dire living conditions of Dom as illustrated by the literature prompts a discussion of the concepts of exclusion and deviance.

### 2.1 “GYPSYISM”

Attention by Western academics to the Roma in Europe began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with Heinrich Grellmann’s popular book, *Die Zigeuner* (Grellman 1783). Grellmann’s book established a paradigm in the study of “the Gypsies” by outlining three academic approaches. “The Gypsies” were to be studied sociologically as “archaic anomalies” in a modernizing world, anthropologically as primitive and “anachronistic” and linguistically as related to the Indic languages (Lee 2000, 135-136).

In 1888 a paradigm shift occurred with the founding of the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) (*ibid.*, 133). The establishment of the GLS and its subsequent publications through the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society (JGLS) constituted “the Gypsies’ as specific subjects for examination” and represented a self-appointed epistemological authority and legitimacy (*ibid.*). Ken Lee posits that “Gypsyism”, the discursive formation of “the Gypsies” as subjects, is comparable to or even a “particular variant” of Edward Said’s Oriental subjects (*ibid.*, 134, 132). Orientalism, creates and perpetuates “racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, and dehumanizing ideology” through an “externally imposed discursive construct that represents an alleged underlying essential reality” (*ibid.*).

Lee’s theory regarding Gypsyism as similar to Orientalism is limited in relation to Dom in Lebanon. The epistemological Othering of “the Gypsy” made possible by and reproduced through “asymmetrical exchanges of power”, locates Roma as the “exotic Other *within* Europe”

or the “Orientals within” (*ibid.*, 132). On the other hand, Orientalism locates the “Oriental Other” outside of Europe (*ibid.*). It is possible to say that Dom experience double Othering or twofold Orientalism. From the West, by virtue of being non-European, Dom are considered as Oriental Others. However, within “the Orient” itself Dom are labeled as outsiders. Bochi recounts through his ethnographic work with Dom in the Beqaa, how Lebanese from Aarsal (“*Arsalis*”) constructed the Dom as Other through processes of “symbolic and moral” othering (Bochi 2007, 58). Moreover, through their unique distinction, one formed and perpetuated by the likening of Dom to Roma in the field of linguistics, Dom become the “Oriental Other” *within* yet simultaneously *without* (Lee 2000, 132). The linguistic studies of Dom will be discussed in detail below.

Where the Gypsylorism of the Roma in Europe represents a “particular variant” of Orientalism, through processes of double Othering most existing studies of Dom represent the intersection of Orientalism and Gypsylorism.

## 2.2 DOM

In the introduction to *A Grammar of Domari*, a book produced through fieldwork with a Dom community in Jerusalem, Yaron Matras provides a review of the varying accounts of Dom origins. Dating as far back as 1751 with Horton’s account of “gypsy tent-dwellers” in Lebanon and Syria, Matras finds that texts, by focusing attention on linguistics, relate Dom to either the “Gypsies of Europe” or to Indian origins (Matras 2000, 4). To give a sense of the plethora of text dedicated to predicting the origins of Dom a few samples are discussed. In 1923, John Sampson suggested that Dom migrated from India. Originally of the same ethnic group as European Roma, Sampson claims that the split with Dom occurred in Persia (Sampson 1923). Similarly, some suggest that Roma and Dom are descendants of the “Dom” caste in India (Bochi 2007, 17; Fraser 1992, 25; Grierson 1888; Matras 1999; 56; Meyer 2004; Moawwad 1999). On the other hand, Macalister’s 1914 monograph the “Language of the Nawar or Zutt, the nomad smiths of Palestine” found no significant linguistic links between Roma and Dom to substantiate Sampson’s theory (Bochi 2007, 18). Matras, the most recent scholar to study Dom in relation to linguistics, considers Macalister’s text as the “most influential documentation of Domari”

(Matras 2000, 10).<sup>3</sup> In his own work studying linguistic commonalities, Matras finds that it is likely that Domari and Romani “shared a period of continuous existence in India” (Matras 1999, 55).

Studies of Dom in the fields of linguistics are rooted in attempts to understand the origins of the ethnic group and thus fail to stray from Grellmann’s paradigm. Giovanni Bochi’s ethnographic study with Syrian Dom in Lebanon, one of the few to exclude an emphasis on linguistics, finds that language does not play a major role in shaping cultural difference (Bochi 2007, 19). Bochi criticizes the emphasis on Dom linguistics by quoting Stewart, “the mere existence of foreign origins does not explain the persistence of cultural difference.” (Stewart 1997, 326 quoted in *ibid.*, 21) Despite these criticisms, studies of linguistics are illuminating in as much as they offer an understanding of the geographic reach and influence of Dom in the Arab region. Accounts show that Dom, far from antecedent-less and non-influential, have traveled and worked from Syria to Central Sudan (Matras 2000, 14).

In spite of linguistic hypothesizing recent literature suggest that Dom do not consider India as their place of origin and in some cases claim to know nothing of Dom genealogy (Terre des hommes 2010; Bochi 2007, 19; Matras 2000). According to Matras, Dom in Jerusalem recount two different stories (Matras 2000, 30). In the first, Dom are the descendants of the Bani Murra tribe of the Arabian Peninsula. After a violent feud with the Bani Rabii, Dom were forced into exile and condemned to a life of nomadism (*ibid.*). The second story locates Dom origins with a peripatetic group of entertainers invited to settle in Iran by King Bahram Gur. The King, having given them land to tend, became enraged upon discovering that Dom preferred dancing and singing over farming. As a punishment for neglecting the King’s royal gift, Dom were “banished” and continue a life of nomadism (*ibid.*).

Matras’ recordings of Dom stories of origin contradict Gypsyologist texts that place Dom origins in India or Iran. Despite this Matras’ publications are contemporary examples of Gypsyology that focus primarily on linguistics and ultimately locate Dom origins in India along with Roma

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<sup>3</sup> Domari is the name given to the language spoken by Dom (Bochi 2007; Matras 2000; TDH 2010).

(Matras 1999; Matras 2000; Matras 2012). Interviews conducted by TDH and accounts from Giovanni Bochi's ethnographic work find similar myths of origin told in Lebanon (Terre des hommes 2010; Bochi 2007, 85). For researchers of TDH the "popular resonance" of the origin myth represents a common narrative that demonstrates a "consciousness of belonging" that connects a group of people (Terre des hommes 2010, 18).

This project will not investigate language or origin myths, as attempts to locate the origins of Dom replicate paradigms of Gypsylorism that perpetuate a discourse of Othering.

A survey of empirical research on Dom resulted in few studies outside of the categories established by Grellman in 1783 (Bochi 2007; Bochi 2011; Bochi 2014; Meyer 1994). Bochi finds that the influence of the state in Syria and Lebanon plays a significant role in shaping "ethnic belonging" and "social distinction" of Dom (Bochi 2007, 16). In another study, Bochi discusses the role of Dom men working as informal dentists in the "neoliberal health governance" system of Lebanon (Bochi 2014, 1). Through a discussion of mobility and settlement Bochi details how Syrian Dom traveling between Syria and Lebanon are able to recreate social relations (Bochi 2011, 52). Unlike Bochi, Meyer studies Dom living in the urban setting of Damascus and the processes of Dom cultural change (Meyer 1994). Adding to his 1994 work, Meyer's chapter, "Biography and Identity in Damascus: A Syrian Nawar Chief," sets out to understand "the subjectivity of an individual and to understand his behavior as an expression of the shaping and social possibilities." (*ibid.*) Through the life story of a prominent Dom figure, Meyer concludes that Dom "flexibility and resourcefulness" have allowed for adaption into society (Meyer 2004, 77). These studies mark a paradigm shift that attempts to shed light on how Dom "reproduce themselves 'from within' large non-gypsy societies." (Bochi 2011, 52)

Although studies by Bochi and Meyer illuminate the ways Dom negotiate within non-Dom society they provide limited context. Thus the 2010 "Child Protection Assessment", produced in Lebanon by TDH, is a particularly noteworthy contribution in the literature (Terre des hommes 2010). The report sheds light on literacy, access to healthcare and the general living conditions of Dom through the analyses of 206 surveys of Dom households and interviews. Research finds that

Dom, as an ethnic group, experience severe marginalization. To give an example the study found that in Beirut 46.8% of families, averaging 6.1 members, reported earning less than 250,000 LBP per month, per household. In other words, the earnings of Dom, working mostly as unskilled laborers, provide 1,350 LBP or \$.91 USD per family member, per day (*ibid*, 38).

According to the report in 2010, the majority of Dom in Lebanon are Lebanese citizens (*ibid.*, 19). Despite this reality the literature shows that Dom are not benefitting from most civil rights. This disconnect necessitates a discussion of citizenship theory and citizenship in Lebanon.

## 2.3 CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship in the liberal democratic sense represents a relationship between the individual and the State through which the former is guaranteed equal access to resources of the latter (Davis 1997, 3). T.H. Marshall defines civil, political and social as the three classical elements of citizenship (Turner 2008, 409). Marshall theorizes that only through “social citizenship” can the other two categories be enjoyed (Glenn 2008, 18). Evelyn Glenn finds that Marshall’s multiple categories of citizenship are beneficial in illustrating that individuals can be “citizens in some respects and not in others” (*ibid.*, 3). However, Glenn posits that Marshall’s categories do not take into account the “fluidity of citizenship” (*ibid.*, 3). Glenn challenges Marshall’s *formal* and *substantive* citizenship by arguing that while social rights are necessary to benefitting from substantive citizenship, they are not necessarily “*sufficient*” (*ibid.*, 2). She argues that it is essential to “take into account local practices that recognize or deny standing to certain groups and individuals irrespective of their formal standing under constitutional provisions or statutory law.” (*ibid.*, 3)

Dina Kiwan critiques Marshall’s three elements for failing to expand upon social inclusion “despite its relevance for broadening the scope of citizenship” (Kiwan 2008, 41). Marshall’s “three strands”, Kiwan argues, do not make room for “ethnic and religious diversity” (*ibid.*). In Uri Davis’ comparative study of citizenship legislation in the “Levant” he adds a “material component” of citizenship allowing for an analysis of social inequalities that is excluded from Marshall’s influential work (Davis 1997, 3).

Categories of citizenship (civil, political, social and as Davis suggests, material) as posited by Rogers Brubaker are a “bundle” accessed by a “legally cognizable class of ‘citizens’” (Abrams 2013, 409). Resulting from the creation of a class, citizenship becomes an object of desire and an exclusive distinction. By becoming a citizen one becomes a member of a club “in a world of insecurity.” (Turner 2008, 51) Thus citizenship takes on an element of division and exclusion, as is clearly seen Lebanon through state authority’s systematic denial of citizenship or any of the associated rights to the Palestinian population.

The very nature of citizenship, as membership to a polity, desires to protect the limited resources of the State (*ibid.*). Traditionally, such protection surfaces as a community based on national unity and the “conjunction of the dominance of both ethnic and national identities.” (*ibid.*, 49) Any threat to homogeneity is a threat to the resources of the state, the future of the nation and therefore the secured rights of its members. Kymlicka, as discussed by Kiwan, argues that another factor in understanding national unity is that of a “shared identity” (Kiwan 2008, 42).

Kymlicka’s notion of a shared national identity implies shared practices. Calling to mind Kiwan and Davis’ critique of Marshall’s three strands of citizenship and Glenn’s consideration of the “frequent disjunction” between formal and substantive citizenship, Engin and Nielson point out that hitherto citizenship studies place an emphasis on both the legal certificate and the “practices – social, political, cultural and symbolic” (Engin and Nielson 2008, 2; Glenn 2011, 2). Thus, citizenship studies “implicitly or explicitly revolve around or even hinge on the conduct and habitus of the subject called the citizen.” (Engin and Nielson 2008, 2) In other words the subject of investigation “is always the citizen whose acts, conduct and habitus are at stake” (*ibid.*).

In the book *Acts of Citizenship*, Engin and Nielson suggest a focal shift through which the subject of investigation is the act through which “subjects constitute themselves as citizens or, better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due.” (*ibid.*) This paradigm innovation is particularly applicable to Dom in Lebanon that occupy two categories: legal citizens and non-citizens of “liminal legality” (Menjivar 2006). This paradigm shift allows for an investigation of how Dom, who do not participate in the traditional acts of citizenship (e.g. voting, claiming social rights), might act as citizens through other channels. Institutions and politics take more



fluid definitions where it becomes possible to examine ethical, cultural and sexual acts as political (Engin and Nielson 2008, 2). Therefore investigating acts of citizenship at the micro-level, within a Dom community or a neighborhood where Dom reside is not outside of the realm of citizenship studies. “Acts of citizenship” makes room for non-citizens to enter the debate by discussing how non-citizens act as citizens.

## 2.4 CITIZENSHIP IN LEBANON

In a study of citizenship legislation in Lebanon and countries of the region, Uri Davis draws a clear distinction between *muwatana* and *jinsiyya* (Davis 1997,7). *Muwatana* being rights of equal access to the civil, political, social and economic resources of the state while *jinsiyya* offering little more than a legal certificate to being Lebanese.

With the passing of Presidential Decree No. 5247 in 1994, following the 1992 Commission on Naturalization, over 100,000 people were granted *jinsiyya* (*ibid.*, 153). Controversy was sparked by the first postwar government’s decision to naturalize individuals under the premise that the Decree would solve the issue of stateless groups in Lebanon (Hourani 2011, 38).<sup>4</sup> The Decree was accused of granting citizenship without eligibility requirements and failing to address the issue of non-citizens with over 40% Syrians and 6% citizens of other countries acquiring Lebanese documents (*ibid.*).

While Muslim “circles and clerics” praised the Decree, the Maronite League found that it “granted citizenship to unentitled persons” (*ibid.*, 39). Moreover, some feared that the registering of new citizens would upset the “socio-sectarian” balance. To borrow the words of Rogers Brubaker citizenship in Lebanon momentarily ceased to be “an object of closure” (Brubaker 1992, 23). However with the end of the temporary window, citizenship in Lebanon returned to and continues to represent “an instrument of closure” (*ibid.*).

The continuing criticism of the Decree is evidence that Lebanese citizenship is to be safeguarded

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<sup>4</sup> See the lists submitted by Acting Interior Minister Ahmed Fatfat to the National Dialogue Roundtable in 2006 and Akram Hamdan, The Total Number until March 2006: 202527 Naturalized from 80 Countries, Al Mustaqbal newspaper, 30 March 2006 (Hourani 2011, 38).

for an ‘entitled few’.<sup>5</sup> Undocumented domestic workers and Palestinians living as refugees often posit that civil rights is the primary remedy to socioeconomic difficulties. However, the status of Dom in Lebanon stands counter to arguments presented by stateless groups. For Dom citizenship acquisition was neither an “upward event” nor the source of privileges worthy of protection by and for the entitled few. So, the case of Dom presents an anomaly and illustrates the distinction between *muwatana* and *jinsiyya*, where “it is possible for two individuals or two constituencies to be of the same nationality yet unequal citizens of the same state.” (Davis 1997, 5)

## 2.5 DEVIANCE AND EXCLUSION

According to Bill Donovan gypsies are historically persecuted both for their “cultural and ethnic identity” and their “alleged deviant behavior.” (Donovan 1992, 33) Studies about Dom in the Arab region and in Lebanon all address the characterization of Dom as deviants of society (Terre des hommes 2010; Bochi 2007; Kawakai 2005; Lindman 2005; Williams 2010).

In Howard Becker’s *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, deviance is the creation of “social groups” through processes of rule making (Becker 1963, 9). Thus deviance is not about the “quality” of an act committed outside out of what is socially acceptable, “but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an ‘offender’.” (*ibid.*) Much like Becker, Kai Erikson, rejects the idea that there are characteristics “*inherent in*” deviant behavior and suggests that “audiences” produce deviance when notions are “*conferred upon*” behavior (Erikson 1962, 308). Thus, the subject of investigation is the “social audience” rather than the “individual actor” (*ibid.*).

Along the grain of Erikson’s theory, Bochi examines “the ‘Nawar’ stereotype among” Arsalis in relation to socially accepted standards of morality (Bochi 2007, 56). Through this Bochi finds that Dom stereotypes are “incorporated into a symbolic and moral repertoire” of a Lebanese

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<sup>5</sup> President Michel Suleiman recently signed two decrees (Decrees 6690 and 6691 dated 28 October 2011) withdrawing Lebanese citizenship from 53 persons in the first decree and 123 persons in the second decree, as well as all their family members who were naturalized correspondingly either by marriage, or by birth, or by judicial or administrative decisions. These decrees are a first step towards implementing the decision taken by the State Consultative Council (Majlis Shura al-dawlah) in 2003 to revoke Lebanese nationality from those who had fraudulently acquired it in 1994 based on the naturalization decree 5247 of June 20, 1994 (Hourani 2011, 40).

community (*idib.*, 58). Bochi suggests that the emergence of the “new Sunni Muslim conservative model”<sup>6</sup> and the “new neo-local residence”<sup>7</sup> highlight perceived differences in gender relations between Dom and Lebanese society (*ibid.*, 65-74). As a result of this, “Nawar” stereotypes symbolize a “male-female relationship” unlike that of non-Dom society (*ibid.*, 58). Stereotypes are largely related to perceptions of Dom women as sexually “loose” and “shameless” and Dom men as lazy and unemployed (Terre des hommes 2010, 32; Bochi 2007, 45).

As Foucault argues sexuality is the title “given to a set of interlocking historical mechanisms” (Foucault 1978, 5). Bochi’s discussion of Dom stereotypes sheds light on such mechanisms by analyzing “local notions of morality” rather than the validity of sexual stereotypes about Dom (Bochi 2007, 58). Differing from Bochi’s lens of analysis, a recent shift analyzes the exclusion and labeling of peripatetic peoples as ethnic minorities (Bochi 2007, 57; Berland and Rao 2004, 23; Meyer 2004).

In *Customary Strangers*, Berland and Rao call on Simmel’s concept of “The Stranger” to begin to understand “not only the nature of peripatetic peoples, but also their structural relationships with client communities” as ethnic minorities (Berland and Rao 2004, 23). “The Stranger” is one who is both “a full-fledged member” of society, but at the same time “outside it and confronting it.” (Simmel 1964, 402-3) This particular definition of “The Stranger” is pertinent to Dom in Lebanon. The report found that Dom regardless of being legally a part of the community as Lebanese citizens, are not considered by majority society as Lebanese. Moreover, the idea that Dom live in poor conditions out of choice is widely regarded as true amongst non-Dom (Terre des hommes 2010, 33). This idea assumes that Dom, financially capable of living in better conditions, choose to beg and live in poverty (*ibid.*, 23). Bochi found that Arsalis echoed similar sentiments believing that Dom refuse to “integrate through work and settled residency.” (Bochi 2007, 56-7) This common perception about Dom calls to mind another characteristic of “The

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<sup>6</sup> “Whereby the man becomes the breadwinner and gender roles are more sharply distinguished” (Bochi 2007, 73).

<sup>7</sup> A new model in which newlyweds are “increasingly expected to move into a newly build house, the cost of which had to be covered entirely by the groom.” (Bochi 2007, 69)

Stranger”, being that the Dom individual’s place in society is “determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself.” (Simmel 1964 ,402)

Simmel’s concept of “The Stranger” is limited when considering that in Lebanon there are few who “belonged to it from the beginning” and a heterogeneous many who live within it today (*ibid.*). However Simmel’s concept is insufficient to account for Dom interaction with other groups that are equally ‘Strangers’. According to Bochi, Dom in the Beqaa self-distinguish from and stigmatize another ethnic group known as Pardom (Bochi 2007, 95) For Dom, the Pardom are the true *nawar* who beg, dance and engage in sex work. The Pardom are perceived as at fault for the negative stereotypes Dom suffer (*ibid.*, 83, 95). Bochi accounts for this distinction between groups as the production of “an ideology of commonality” that places value on the essential characteristics, modes of production and common origins of Dom ethnicity. These commonalities determine “the everyday interactions and mechanisms of boundary maintenance.” (*ibid.*, 85)

Like Bochi’s accounts from the Beqaa, the TDH report found that perceived “essential characteristics of Dom ethnicity” plays a part in determining Dom relationships with others. However, the report’s findings disagree with the positive value placed on ethnic characteristics by Dom in the Beqaa (Terre des hommes 2010, 34). According to the report it is common for Dom to self-identify with pejorative “*nawar*” characteristics perpetuated by non-Dom. The self-identification by Dom with abject “*nawar*” characteristics is, for many labeling theorists, “the crowning point of oppression.” (Memmi 1962, 321-2 quoted in Brown 2010, 33) Oppression for the Dom agent, to borrow Albert Memmi’s words, is “so familiar to him that he believes it is a part of his own constitution.” (*ibid.*)

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. ENTERING HAY EL GHARBE

Children play, day in and day out, up the sides of a hill littered with shattered glass and overgrown shrubs. From this playground, one of the highest points of Hay el Gharbe, the neighborhood entirely exposes its parts. Metal roofs, grey walls and a touch of color from a blue United Nations water tank. The “Neighborhood of the West”, taking its name from its location on the western periphery of Shatila refugee camp, is a farrago of cinderblock, *zinco* roofs and recycled billboards. Last year’s advertisements for fast food, once serving to entice hungry crowds of students in Hamra, find a second life. The old billboards seal off corrugated metal roofs, protecting families from the winter rains and the mid-August sun.

From Sabra market exist many entrances to the lower half of the neighborhood, *hay el tahti*. At one particular Sabra entrance a regular group of young men waft in crescent form drinking coffee from an espresso machine that is precariously hoisted on the uneven ground. Next to a shop run by Bangladeshi women, two women sell food-colored cabbage to children looking to spend their allowance of 250 cents. Many children of the neighborhood attend school in the upper half, *hay el foqi*. Despite being predominantly inhabited by displaced Shiaa, migrant workers and Palestinians, it is known that in Hay el Gharbe lives a specific group of people, the Dom or in Arabic, *nawar*.

Dom are known to live in many locations around Lebanon and so the decision to locate my research in Hay el Gharbe requires explanation. In an attempt to spend as much time as possible with interlocutors it was important to select a location that would allow for frequent visits. The neighborhood’s proximity to my home and the AUB made daily visits manageable. It might be suggested that living amongst Dom in rural or urban areas and not returning home on a daily basis would have allowed for thicker descriptions of everyday life. However, most families sleep in one-bedroom homes, a reality that presents challenges as an independent female researcher.

Unlike Dom who live in rural areas, Dom in Hay el Gharbe live amongst a heterogeneous population. Refugees from occupied Palestine and Syria, displaced Lebanese from the south and

migrant workers populate the neighborhood. Thus, Dom in Hay el Gharbe are more accustomed to outsiders than those living in rural camps. Despite my attempt to select a neighborhood with a Dom population that might be more accessible to research, I felt it necessary to secure a gatekeeper in order to facilitate my entrance into the neighborhood.

“*Miss, miss!*” children regularly called after me when walking from house to house in the neighborhood. The very act of being an outsider in Hay el Gharbe made me a “*miss*”. Either a teacher or social worker, likely associated with Tahaddi, a local NGO providing services in the neighborhood. If not out of association with Tahaddi, few outsiders would wander the streets. The children were correct give me the label “*miss*”, as my relationship with Tahaddi, although necessary, proved to be complicated.

On what I considered to be my “first day” of fieldwork I met Nadia Khoury and Catherine Mourtada in the “Drama room” of a three-story school. Nadia Khoury is the director of Tahaddi’s medical center and Catherine Mourtada runs the school. At the end of the Lebanese Civil war, along with Agnes Sanders, Catherine established Tahaddi. Twenty years later, the organization is registered as a local non-profit that provides services to many families in the neighborhood. The organization was initially established to work with Dom and after two decades, Catherine is a living legend amongst people of the neighborhood. Adult Dom volunteered stories and photos of Catherine caring for them as babies.

Dom regularly visit Tahaddi’s health clinic, attend classes at the school and in some cases work for the organization. Tahaddi’s long commitment to providing social services earned the organization and its employees noticeable respect amongst many Dom. In the months working up to the design of the thesis proposal, my extensive exploratory research informed the decision to pursue a relationship with Tahaddi.

According to both Bochi and NGO workers, accessing and developing enough trust to enter Dom communities presented a challenge to research (*ibid.*; Terre des hommes 2010). Researchers involved with TDH reported facing “hostile attitudes from Dom community members” and were “threatened to leave the site” in the Beqaa (Terre des hommes 2010, 15). A possible explanation for the hostile reception was a lack of contact with “NGO activity” as many were from Syria

where, at the time, NGO work was more restricted (*ibid.*, 90).<sup>8</sup> In a “multi-sited ethnography” with Dom in the Lebanese village of Aarsal, the nearby Hana camp and the city of Homs in Syria, Bochi describes his association to a local NGO as his “main point of reference” and the assistance of Lebanese friends as “invaluable” to his building of Dom contacts (Bochi 2007, 36). He recounts how Dom remained “suspicious” and not until after “several negotiations”, with the assistance of non-Dom members of Hana, was he able to easily and regularly enter the Dom camp (*ibid.*).

After speaking to representatives of TDH and the Insan Foundation working with Dom in Lebanon, Yaron Matras a linguist who faced challenges while studying Dom in Jerusalem and reading the available literature it became clear to me that it was necessary to enter the community through an organization or person with previously established relationships.

Through an agreement with Nadia and Catherine, Tahaddi acted as my initial “gatekeeper” into the neighborhood. I accompanied the organization’s social worker on regular home visits in order to become a more familiar face and to introduce my research. For nearly two months I visited, along with the social worker, Syrian and Dom families that benefit from Tahaddi’s services. During the first moments of home visits the social worker introduced me as a student conducting research about Dom in the neighborhood. It was emphasized that my presence was optional and that my work was independent of Tahaddi. The social worker then continued with her tasks, asking questions and recording responses for a Tahaddi survey. During home visits I only spoke to introduce myself.

### 3.2. DATA COLLECTION

Accompanying the social worker did not prove as meaningful in meeting Dom families as the opportunity the home visits provided to walk the neighborhood with a destination in mind. It is uncommon that strangers enter the neighborhood and so the idea of walking alone and unknown would have been unusual. Because the streets in Hay el Gharbe are spaces for socializing, walking was an important part of becoming more familiar.

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<sup>8</sup> By “from Syria” it means Dom in the area that hold Syrian nationality (Terre des hommes 2010, 90).

Once comfortable enough to walk the streets, it was through *kazdura* or strolls that I bumped into people outside of homes or in the market. *Kazdura* proved to be an important and unexpected method for meeting Dom in the early stages of my fieldwork. People sitting on the street accepted my answer, “*rai7 kazdura*,” in response to questions about where I was going or what I was doing. Where most are unemployed and many children are not attending school, going for a walk with no particular direction was a relatable past time.

*Kazdura* left meetings to chance and their spontaneity allowed me to find families in the middle of their everyday activities rather than planned and more formal receptions and visits. None of the Dom families I knew had a telephone line making arranging visits in advance difficult. I was often nervous about visiting people’s homes unexpectedly out of respect for privacy and fear of being seen as an intruder. Although there were moments when being welcomed inside from the street was in fulfillment of a social obligation, over time I began to sense when invitations inside were only pleasantries. As my relationships developed I began to stay longer and the nature of visits went from sitting while answering and asking questions to people going about their daily business in my presence. Rarely though did I feel peripheral, a feeling I welcomed when it was allowed.

The “data” used in this study is taken from recollections of informal conversations and moments that I shared with four Dom families in Hay el Gharbe. During four months of visits I did not conduct structured interviews, make recordings and rarely took notes. I sensed that taking notes would be counterproductive to my research for two reasons. First, walking the neighborhood with pen and notebook would be seen as suspicious with a group of people unaccustomed to research and in a neighborhood where few researchers go. I, like Bochi, believed that “formal methods of inquiry” with Dom were “simply unthinkable” (Bochi 2007, 43).

This is attributed not to an “underlying ‘gypsy’ essence”, but to the fact that Dom are “socially stigmatized” and thus suspicious of the intentions of outsiders (*ibid.*). Second, writing notes in front of interlocutors was inconceivable considering that most Dom are without the ability read or write. To write notes would have highlighted the unequal position between researcher and informant.



Thus research data for this study consists of recollections of observations and informal conversations. The choice not to record or take notes while in field might make data less precise. For example, the use of direct quotes is not possible. All quoted text is an approximation from memory. However, for what is lost in precision is gained in allowing for a more secure and comfortable environment for Dom. And, I would argue the opportunity for interlocutors to speak about sensitive subjects with lessened hesitation. Upon returning home from the field, with few exceptions, I wrote extensive field notes from my immediate memory. In field notes I wrote in detail my observations and conversations from that day. What started as mostly observations about the feel and looks of the neighborhood quickly changed form. As months passed my notes became less descriptive and more analytical reflections.

The speakers referred to in this study are from four Dom families with whom I spent many hours over the period of four months. I will refer to the families and individuals with pseudonyms for both first and last names. Pseudonyms were employed in an attempt to protect the identity of interlocutors.

Oral consent was taken from all interlocutors in accordance with IRB standards. The process of receiving IRB approval for this study took a few months from start to finish. Beyond some clarifications on the type of consent that would be taken, particularly by people in the same room as those who had already consented to participation in the study, the IRB did not find a study amongst Dom to be a highly sensitive case. However, some issues related to gender brought up by IRB are cause for concern.

The IRB office requested that consent for participation by Dom below the age of 18 be taken from parents. However, if a Dom female youth was married I was to take consent from her husband, who himself might be below the age of 18. In response to the IRB, I offered the following amendment, making no reference: "If the minor is married to an adult permission by the adult spouse will be requested. However, if a minor is also married to a minor consent will be taken from the minors' parents." Although the IRB accepted the amendment, it should not go unmentioned that in issuing their initial request, the IRB fails to acknowledge and denies the realities of disadvantaged communities. In the context of Hay el Gharbe, a Dom woman or

‘youth’ is likely to quickly become a mother. Capable of bringing life into the world and running a household, a Dom woman, despite her age, is perfectly capable of consenting for herself. The issue of motherhood aside, the IRB’s request is a representation of the patriarchal status quo in which, through marriage a woman is no longer the ‘responsibility’ of the father, but rather that of the husband. Institutions such as AUB and IRB should serve to protect interlocutors rather than to further reinforce deeply rooted gender inequalities. I was relieved that I did not come into contact with any married youth, although I was aware of their presence in the neighborhood, and was therefore not obliged to take permission from either her parents or husband.

### 3.3. ETHICAL CHALLENGES

Upon revisiting homes alone without Tahaddi’s social worker, it became evident that I was not providing social services. Although the intention of my presence as a researcher was explained from the first visit with the social worker, the expectation was understandable. First, my relationship with Tahaddi was complicated and my claims to independence from the organization were unconvincing. Not only was my introduction to the neighborhood through the context of social work, but I was also seen at the Tahaddi school and clinic.

In exchange for Tahaddi’s efforts to introduce me into the neighborhood I felt committed to return the favor through assisting with communications related projects. I wrote newsletters, updated the website and developed a photo portfolio for the organization. This work blurred the lines of research and social work. However, as unclear as the line might have been I believe that it was because of my association with Tahaddi that I was able to access the neighborhood and to develop relationships based on mutual experience. The way in which I met many young women included in this study will be discussed in more detail in the section 3.6.

Despite efforts to explain that my presence was for the purpose of understanding the lives of Dom and that I was not associated with Tahaddi’s assistance, many families pressed me about Tahaddi related services. When it became clear that I was not able to affect the social worker in her decisions, many families became distant. And, out of fear of creating false expectations and jeopardizing Tahaddi’s work in the neighborhood I chose to distance myself from certain families.

The idea that I could sway the social worker into providing assistance waned. On multiple occasions people walked passed an open door and asked if I was associated with Tahaddi. These inquiries were two-part. People asked about my affiliation with Tahaddi in hopes of benefiting from the NGO's assistance. And, people tried to make sense of my presence as an outsider. Over time, I sensed that my position or the perception of my person by people in the neighborhood began to change. Passerby's inquiries about my presence were no longer mine to answer and instead those around me took responsibility for explaining my work. With what appeared to be pride, interlocutors would explain that I was independent of the school. Sometimes my research was introduced as being about Dom or about *ihna*, us. Some families, at first distant, later warmed to my presence when observing the close relationships I had developed with their relatives.

Still, the lingering belief that I might be able to interfere with Tahaddi related issues remained, a factor that limited the number of families with whom I developed strong relationships. So, out of more than ten Dom homes I visited with the Tahaddi social worker, it was with only one family that I developed a long relationship. My decision to continue visits to only one family out of the many I met early in my fieldwork.

### 3.4. LIMITATIONS

My experiences and reflections explore the lives of a small group of Dom during a short window of time at a specific moment in their history. Not only are these reflections an exploration of a small part of Dom living in a particular neighborhood it offers limited understanding to a group of people self-identified, at times, as Dom who live all around the country, region and world.

Although outside of the scope of this study, rural isolation provides another angle of research. Although TDH points to geographic isolation as a mechanism of further disadvantage, Bochi finds that for Dom in the Beqaa isolation is advantageous in providing a niche clientele for cheap dentistry work (Bochi 2007, 131).<sup>9</sup> So, a perspective on the relationship between Dom living in rural areas with the State and non-Dom society is not to be disregarded as unimportant and

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<sup>9</sup> Syrian Dom dentures cost approximately \$100-200 as compared \$200-300 by Lebanese dentists (Bochi 2007, 113).

should be considered as a point of further research.

### 3.5. MEETING DOM

Beyond the one family I met during visits with the Tahaddi social worker it was through my association with Tahaddi that I met the other families included in this study. In an attempt to improve my language skills and to meet Dom women I began to attend Arabic literacy classes. Through these classes I met young women in the neighborhood. As we became friends, together we attended Tahaddi events. Tahaddi became the place where we could attend events allowing for more natural conversations based on mutual experiences. Through the literacy course I began to study outside of the classroom with three young women. We taught one another, making our relationship one of mutual learning that helped to destabilize the power imbalance between researcher and interlocutor.

Certainly my meeting of Dom through Tahaddi affected which Dom I came to know. Tahaddi does little outreach to families who are not already associated with the organization and so the first families I met represent those with similar outlooks on education and healthcare. Aware of this weakness in “sampling” I joined an afternoon literacy class. Although already literate in Arabic I hoped to improve my spoken Arabic and to get to know some of the young men and women who had not attended Tahaddi. Still though, I did not meet any Dom who did not have any connection to Tahaddi whatsoever. It was through this class that I befriended four young Dom women. Although ten years younger than me our friendships developed in ways that were not possible with women my age. As unmarried women, unconcerned with taking care of children, and with more free time we were able to share moments that felt natural to friendship. We spent afternoons joking, paying no attention to time. With the younger girls I also felt that the power dynamic shifted. Not only were they teaching me about Dom, but they were also teaching me Arabic. Something they took pride and pleasure in. Visits to Nadia’s house, busy with eight children, involved short and distant conversations interrupted by sudden surges of electricity during which she would have to quickly run a clothes wash. It was difficult to hold a conversation and I could not have expected her to with eight children in the house.

The remaining three families I met through friendships I developed with the younger daughters

between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. In most situations it was sufficient to explain that I was writing something about Dom. Interlocutors understood that I was there to learn about their lives and when my usual answer was insufficient inquiries were usually about who audience of my writing would be. Families were curious to know if Lebanese or foreigners would read about their lives and my honest answer to them was, "I hope both."

### 3.6. INTERLOCUTORS

This section provides a snap shot of the families represented in this study. And, a short description of how I came to know each family.

What is described as Hay el Gharbe, in the singular, is actually parceled by its residents with boundaries based on access to resources, closeness of family, the angles of the streets or nearness to the camp. The upper *hay el foqieh* and lower *hay el tahti* are described as though kilometers away, another world. But in measured distance not more than one hundred meters apart. If not for the clamor of traffic noise of the nearby Sabra market, almost everything is within ear's reach. The Al Salah and Sheib families live in in *hay el tahti* and the al Kreita and the al Malek families live in *hay el foqieh*.

#### *BEIT AL SHEIB*

Even though distances in the *hay* are not long, the choices of route between houses are many. Alleyways, like tributaries of cement frozen midstream, feed into the wider streets of the neighborhood. At first, the makeshift stairs and carpets laid down to collect mud were just a part of a mangled maze of unfamiliarity. In my navigating the neighborhood, I somehow often ended in a narrow alleyway in front of the Sheib home. Unlike most alleyways in the neighborhood, this particular stretch is not interrupted. There is only one entrance and one exit for a set of approximately eight houses on either side. For the Sheib family the alleyway is an extension of their home, like a neighborhood all to itself.

I first met members of the Sheib family when walking passed their house on the way to a home visit with the Tahaddi social worker. The extent of our interaction was a greeting on the street as they chatted outside their home. Not long after that encounter I began attending the literacy classes at Tahaddi where I became acquainted with Hanan Sheib. By then I felt comfortable

enough, or rather not uncomfortable enough, to walk the neighborhood. On my first *kazdura*, I found myself passing the Sheib house. And, although until then we had never spoken, Hanan invited me into her home. I was welcomed by her mother and a rambunctious group of Dom women sitting around a wood burning stove.

The home's low entrance gives way to a covered veranda where a long mirror reflects each family member after bathing with a large pot of fire-heated water. *Mai helweh* is brought from the neighbor's house because running water is not an option in a neighborhood not given access by government services. Two rooms make up the house. The main room is where the children of the family sleep, watch television, eat and play. One windowless frame is propped open by a piece of wood that lets in natural light when there is not enough electricity to illuminate the single bulb hanging from a wire. In another room, husband and wife sleep separately on a mattress and bedframe, one of the few framed mattresses in Hay el Gharbe. Like most homes the Sheib house has a *zinco* roof. The home's walls are made of cardboard boxes held together by metal rivets. Most houses in the neighborhood are built of cinderblock, however in years prior cardboard was a common construction material and a telltale sign of a Dom home.

The Sheib family lives in their cardboard home in Hay el Gharbe throughout most of the year. However, they own two homes outside of the neighborhood. The family hopes to sell their property in Hay el Gharbe in order to move permanently to their recently constructed villa in a village along road to Saida. The family also owns an apartment along the airport road.

The Sheib family is one of two marriages. Hanan's mother is the first wife of Mahmoud. Together they had ten children one of whom is no longer alive. Of the ten, seven are girls, that in the neighborhood have a well-known reputation. The first marriage ended in divorce when Mahmoud decided to take a second wife. With his second wife, a Syrian non-Dom, they have three children and are hoping for two more.

Unlike many families in Hay el Gharbe none of the Sheib children have attended the Tahaddi school. Members of the family are often coming and going with the house occupied by different people depending on the day. Mahmoud is the only official income earner although his claims to employment changed on a regular basis. At times he would say that he is employed at the horse

tracks. However, he was often at home or walking the streets during the set work hours that are demanded by such work. Many Dom men work at the Beirut Hippodrome feeding and grooming the horses on two shifts of four am to ten am and twelve pm to four pm. On other occasions Mahmoud would state that he is a driver for rich tourists from the Gulf looking to visit the Beqaa valley. Moreover, each family member had different stories regarding their father's work. Of the many daughters of the Sheib family, one and only after months of alluding to her life outside of Hay el Gharbe, shared her work experiences.

My interactions with the Sheib family and the constant changing of stories regarding work, citizenship and place of residence provoked methodological challenges to research. Family members kept me in a constant state of question, confusion and doubt. Feeling sometimes as though a joke was being played on me, stories changed from one minute to the next. Over cloudy months and the arrival of the summer, temporary windows of clarity opened. But, for the most part the same stories were told in many different colors. The details about their lives – who lives where, what one does for work, why a few family members were missing – cast a shadow of inconsistencies. However, rather than trying to piece together a “truth”, it became more meaningful to read into what was being said in between “realities”. Through not saying, much more was said.

Although at first questions about my life and research intentions were constant, my presence became routine. And, unlike other families the Sheib family allowed me to remain on the periphery as they continued with their everyday chores.

#### *BEIT AL KREITA*

A few meters up the street from the Sheib house after some twists and turns passed other Dom homes is the al Kreita home. The al Kreita family is made up of three boys, four girls and their parents. Of the seven children, two attended the Tahaddi school for a few years and neither completed the program.

I first met Hanan and Dina at the Tahaddi literacy class. The two sisters, fourteen and sixteen, are dark skinned with slim noses and light brown eyes. They were friendly and curious about my presence and interest in the Dom. In some ways I was taken under their wing as it felt as though

took the responsibility for teaching me about their lives. After the first few classes the girls invited me to study with them at their home. I happily accepted the invitation and our studying became a habit that we continued through most of my fieldwork.

The al Kreita house is a structure made of corrugated metal, making up one dark room. The only natural light that enters is through small piercings in the metal, a pattern that looks much like the remnants of a gunfight. The concrete poured floor is covered in an old red carpet in the room where the whole family sleeps at night. Not serviced by either water or electricity, the al Kreita house is the most simple of all the Dom homes I visited. To bring power to the dangling light bulb and old television the family connects to a relative's power supply.

Um al Loz, the mother of the household, has a job cleaning homes outside of the neighborhood and so Hanad and Huda are responsible for cleaning the home and preparing meals. Most of the day while the older girls clean and the mother is out at work the children play on the street with relatives while their father walks around chatting with other men. Between us it was a joke that their father did not do anything and that in Dom households it is the woman's job to work while the men stay at home. Despite this stereotype of Dom spoken openly about by the al Kreita family, the eldest son has a job bagging groceries at a nearby Spinneys super market. His family spoke about his schooling and work with pride.

The al Kreita family has always lived in the neighborhood and in the same house. However the way in which the neighborhood looks has significantly changed since the years when Um al Loz was young. In a suitcase filled with documents and photos Um el Loz has a collection of images from her younger days. Sitting on the hood of a car, baby on her hip, parked in front of the same house in which her many children live today. However in those days mostly empty lots and not the tightly arranged collection of makeshift homes surrounded the house. Unlike many Dom families during the time of this study the al Kreita family did not make any visits to relatives living in the south of Lebanon.



### *BEIT AL MALEK*

During the first study session with Huda and Hanad, a young veiled woman entered the house. She sat down on the foam mattress and began to correct Arabic mistakes. Dima is a second cousin of the two eldest daughters and the next door neighbor of the al Kreita family.

Unlike most Dom women Dima attended government school for the better half of her youth. Although she is no longer in school she takes English classes at the Tahaddi educational center. Our friendship developed through study sessions in English that naturally turned into talking about one another's lives. It was with Dima that I was able to ask detailed questions about the neighborhood, her life, her aspirations and the Dom community. Dima shared a mutual curiosity about my life and unlike most of my relationships in Hay el Gharbe we entered into long and thoughtful conversations about feelings of nationality, the meanings of *shaabi* and the stereotypes around dancing in the neighborhood. I sensed that Dima, more than the other women included in this study, understood that she has a role to play in this study. Moreover, as the only literate member of the household she was responsible for dealing with the State in ways that other Dom men and women could not. Dima seemed to see the world outside the boundaries of the neighborhood.

The al Malek house is one of the better equipped and built homes of the neighborhood. The front door facing other Dom homes is usually left open exposing the parts of the three-bedroom house. The cement walls, roofed with *zinco*, are painted white and covered with religious decorations. At the home's entrance Dima's mother, having just had heart surgery, usually sits on the floor peeling vegetables or cooking on a single gas flame. Meat and other perishables are kept in one of the few personally owned refrigerators in the neighborhood. However, having such an appliance is not necessarily useful considering that electricity cuts often occur. Electricity and water are managed at an informal level by borrowing electricity from neighbors and purchasing water. Water is brought from a well owned by a powerful neighborhood family at a monthly fee.

The only income earner for the family is Dima's father who works at a CD shop in Sabra. Ahmad, Egyptian by nationality, came to Lebanon as a tourist many years ago. During his visit he fell in love with Nour and since their marriage has hardly returned to his country. All four of

the al Malek children are Egyptian citizens despite their mother's holding of a Lebanese passport. Dima and her brother Ali continue to live in their home in Hay el Gharbe although the family often visits relatives and their married siblings in the Beqaa valley or the south of Lebanon. To other Dom in the neighborhood the al Malek family, although part Dom is Egyptian.

### *BEIT AL SALAH*

The Al Salah household is one of ten people, eight children born to Nadia and Nadim. Nadia's mother and father are Dom from Syria, where she was born and raised. Nadim's mother is Dom and his father is half Kurd and half Dom. Born during the Lebanese war, when many Dom fled Lebanon, Nadim spent the first years of his life in Iraq. After the death of his mother, his father moved to Beirut where extended relatives could help raise the large family.

Before becoming married, Nadia worked in the kitchen of a restaurant in the south of Lebanon. The point in her life during which made the permanent move to Lebanon was never made clear. Before the war in Syria travel back and forth between countries seemed regular. Although Nadia has settled in Lebanon, her brothers have migrated. According to Nadia her male siblings have found a better life living in Sudan and Spain. They work as dentists, a trade considered to be traditional to the Dom community. Unlike Nadia's brothers, her sisters have been less fortunate in her eyes. Her first sister is now caring for four children alone after the accidental death of her husband by electrocution. Nadia's other sister, of whom she did not often speak, is in Syria waiting for her husband to buy her a ticket to join him in North Africa.

Unlike Nadia's family, Nadim's brothers and sisters are mostly living in and around Lebanon. Although his brother's occasionally visit Hay el Gharbe they live in "walled" houses outside of Beirut.

At the age of thirteen and fourteen Nadia and Nadim eloped, *khataf el khatifeh*. The families believed that the couple was too young and so they were not given permission to marry. In the first years of their marriage they lived in Khalde and then Hay e-Silum in a wall house. However after some "trouble" that was never made clear, the family bought a house in Hay el Gharbe. The house is two-bedrooms with a small kitchen and bathroom. The family sleeps on foam mattresses

in one room. Unlike many houses in Hay el Gharbe the Salah house has *dawli* electricity and water.

For many years Nadim rented a wooden vegetable cart and wheeled it around the neighborhood selling produce. However over the last ten years he has worked for the Beirut Municipality collecting garbage. Nadia does not work outside of the house any longer, as she spends most of her time taking care of their eight children. Four girls and four boys. Her mornings are characterized by clearing up the usual disaster that naturally becomes of a room shared by eight young children.

I first met Nadia during a home visit with the Tahaddi social worker. After introducing my research Nadia was proud to declare that she is the most fluent Domari speaker in the neighborhood. I was invited back and after the first few visits became more comfortable sitting for hours sometimes talking, going through family photos, watching Bollywood films or playing with the children. Nadia often went about her daily business and felt free to tell me that she was too busy to sit and chat. This however is much due to the fact that Nadia has a family to care for while other women represented in this study were not yet married or with children of their own.

Due to the fact that Nadia lived at one of the nearest entrances to Sabra market I often stopped by her house early in the morning with a cup of coffee. I visited her at her home about three to four times a week for the entire duration of my fieldwork. My knowledge of the Al Salah family comes almost exclusively from conversations I had with Nadia. Although I occasionally spoke to her husband or eldest son, during my visits they were mostly out of the house at school or working.



## CHAPTER 4. DOM LIVES

The first part of this chapter, through recollections of time spent with four Dom families, provides thick descriptions of every day life in Hay el Gharbe. Five subsections—Housing and Services, Education, Health, Income Generating Activities and Self-identification and Understandings of Community— attempt to illuminate a gap in research about Dom and the neighborhood in which they live.

### 4.1. HOUSING AND SERVICES

Before discussing two main subjects of this chapter, it is important to introduce an additional factor in the lives of the Dom through which housing and services are intertwined. With the exception of two tall buildings homes in Hay el Gharbe lay close to the ground. The two towers, built and owned by the neighborhood *mafioso*, loom windowless and unoccupied over the neighborhood. The cement structures serve little purpose but to act as a watchtower of sorts. From above those affiliated with “him” observe the comings and goings of the neighborhood. Few spoke of the neighborhood *mafioso* by name and as such beyond this point this study will refer to the individual in the same way as Dom interlocutors, by “him”, “he” or “his”.<sup>10</sup> Most things housing, security, and services are related to him and his power in parts of Hay el Gharbe. Other power players in the neighborhood will not be mentioned by name but only as “political parties”.

#### *SERVICES*

The way in which residents of the upper *hay* and the lower *hay* receive services differs greatly. However regardless of location most Dom homes do not have direct access to running water and for the few that do, water is salty and of little practical use. Salty water proves useful only for cleaning floors and bathrooms. Although international humanitarian organizations established two water tanks for public use, supplies are not sufficient to meet the community’s needs.

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<sup>10</sup> Conversations about “him” often ended in awkward gestures and silence. The younger girls never spoke of him by name and hushed anyone who did. As a way of indicating about whom they spoke many mimicked a physical handicap that marks him apart.

In the upper *hay*, in order to access water for cooking, drinking and showering as well as electricity, many Dom living in the upper *hay* pay a series of taxes and service fees. To first open the door to access services, a security tax or *khoue* should be paid. The word “should” is spurious, since in the absence of a police presence, a state service that in theory upholds and enforces safety, Dom wellbeing is dependent on paying *khoue*. Security is for purchase in Hay el Gharbe and to not pay is not an option. Thus, security is a service. The security tax might not be labeled and paid as such but negotiated and presented as the following:

A man might knock on a door to collect a service fee for fixing a television cable. Despite the fact that the cable was not broken, the fee must be paid. If not, one might return from the market to find the few household items they once had, such as a jar of cooking gas and a few mattresses, stolen.

The security tax or *khoue* not only acts as the cost of protection, but also grants access to electricity and water at an additional fee. The relationship between security and basic utilities is because it is the same powerful man that controls the both. So, without much choice, the residents of *hay el fouqi* pay 25,000 LBP a month for access to his well. An additional monthly fee for electricity provides power to homes. Electricity is supplied through a tangle of wires that are precariously attached to nails, live with electricity, drilled into a board of wood on the second floor of the his home.

Not only the usual rules of access to basic services such as electricity and water are suspended, but also justice and security. On rare occasions is state security present in Hay el Gharbe. It is only when an event or individual within the neighborhood disturb the peace outside of rest of the city that security forces become present. Not soon after fieldwork he was arrested by the Internal Security Forces on charges of arms dealing. In his absence, Dom continued to remain silent about the event and about his power in fear of the repercussions by those associated with him.<sup>11</sup> In the absence of the state security and justice Dom are defenseless against what they know to be an unjust arrangement with him.

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<sup>11</sup> Rumors circulate the neighborhood about his power and fearlessness. In the year prior to the start of this fieldwork it was rumored that in order to evade arrest, he gashed open his stomach with a box cutter. An act that was successful in avoiding the prison cell and one that the Tahaddi clinic was forced to repair. An obstetrician was called to the clinic to sew up his stomach as if conducting a cesarean.

For the al Salah family, access to water and electricity is not by way of him, rather state utilities are supplied by the political party in control. Although non-state actors make access possible, residents of *hay el tahti* consider themselves to be, like most residents of Beirut, on “*saat el dawleh*”. It is important to note however that unlike residents of Beirut, Dom do not live in an area that is assigned to the “State’s clock”. Instead Dom employ a strategy known as “*y’3lo a saah*” or hanging on the clock of the State. This is when homes are supplied with electricity by tapping into the nearest power grid.

### *HOUSING*

Unlike the streets of the refugee camp, where life goes on in the shadows of upward construction, in Hay el Gharbe houses rarely rise above one story. In an informal neighborhood government issued building permits are not necessary. However, should a family want to add an extension to their home, it is through one family that supplies and labor should be purchased. Failing to do could mean destruction of the home or in the case of larger construction projects the threat of an unauthorized building complaint to the state.

Although some Dom pay rent for their homes most claim ownership to homes constructed years ago. All homes in Hay el Gharbe are built on government property and cannot therefore be legally sold and purchased. However, in practice residents have ownership documents to homes. Paperwork showing a written agreement between the original person responsible for building and the succession of resident owners proves informal ownership of property.

With the current state of the real estate market, selling and renting rooms or homes in the neighborhood is profitable. However, despite Dom claim to owning and selling property many are aware that at any moment the government can and has destroyed settlements much like Hay el Gharbe. Dom now living in Hay el Gharbe at one point lived or had relatives living in an informal settlement in Khalde along the seaside road. The government destroyed the Khalde homes displacing Dom, many of who settled in Hay el Gharbe in similar conditions.

A conversation with Dima on a regular visit illustrates feelings about the current state of the neighborhood and its possible future:

Outside the al Malek house a clothing line hangs undistinguished from a tangle of electricity wires. One sunny day a collection of clothes, fresh with the smell of detergent, hanging from the line, prompted a conversation about property and government services. Like most everything, a simple question about a washing machine proves to involve many members of the community and complaints about the state of affairs.

As common with many housing appliances, the use of the washing machine is purchased at a small fee from a Syrian woman down the street. Dima explained that without running water and a constant supply of electricity owning a washing machine would be pointless. As Dima explained the network of borrowing and purchasing services she sat on the floor in the back room of the house. She pointed to the *zinco* roof and explained that this is a “*shaabi*” neighborhood. Amongst the Dom the *zinco* is most commonly referred to when expressing the difficult living conditions in the neighborhood. This building material is a symbol of the extreme poverty.

Elaborating what she meant by “*shaabi*” she explained that Hay el Gharbe is not like other places. “This is not like Hamra and Rouche”, she explained that other neighborhoods in Beirut have sweet water and electricity. “Here nothing comes from the state”. She explained that the land on which her family and relatives live is owned by the government and at any time the government can destroy everything they have built.

While most Dom in this study rarely venture out of Hay el Gharbe, a few families leave regularly and own property outside the neighborhood. Some Dom families, together with relatives, contribute towards the price of land and the construction of a “villa” or multistory apartment building. Relatives that contribute financially can claim one of the floors or a single apartment as their own:

On an early summer day Maya’s family prepared for her teenage sister’s wedding. Maya pulled on and off lycra many *abaya* in indecision as to which style to choose. Both black, either decorated by rhinestone hearts or leopard print frills. Meanwhile her sons played outside the concrete house, hair gelled upwards. Eventually rouge and blush was applied and final mirror checks made, the family left the neighborhood and hopped on a minibus in the direction of Sur. At a junction along the highway the half dozen family members piled into an old Mercedes taxi towards the village of Wadi Zani. Near the bottom of a hill Maya’s husband paid the driver and the family walked toward an empty lot of a wood cutting factory, what would soon be the wedding venue. Without the worry of injury by traffic in such a quiet town, the family walked in a short row in the middle of the street. Together they passed



multistoried villas, a far cry from the *zinco*, cardboard and cinderblock homes of Hay el Gharbe.

Small gatherings of people drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes on the balconies of the ornate villas shouted greetings below towards the family. Yousif responded with the raise of his palm to relatives on the balconies fashioned by detailed craftsmanship. Engraved stone of different colors gives character and prestige to the building. A few villas passed and the family made their way into a white stone villa. Unlike the ornate exterior the inner unfinished stairway was given little attention. Climbing the stairs Maya avoided snagging her *abaya* on rods of steel piercing through the stairs and exposing the intricate architectural crisscross support of the four-story building. At the top of the stairs, the door to the house was already open, exposing the spacious interior. Maya's family sat on newly upholstered floor cushions while chatting and listening to music on a sound system. Women straightened each other's hair and applied makeup in preparation of the wedding. After a quick meal the time of the wedding celebration arrived and friends and relatives descended from multi-storied villas to the empty lot spotted unevenly with plastic chairs in arrival of the new bride.

Maya's family was not the only in Hay el Gharbe to either have relatives or they themselves own property outside of the informal neighborhood. The Sheibs spoke proudly of their family home in Sibliin. Cellphones displayed photos of the daughters sitting in living rooms on showy velvet sofas or posing in large "American style" kitchens. The Sheibs and many other families emphasized that Dom live in conditions other than that of the *hay*. It was important to explain a relation to a *beit hijar*, either by ownership or by relation to a family member living in a walled home. Only Dom with citizenship status claimed to own property outside of Hay el Gharbe.

#### 4.2. EDUCATION

The streets of Hay el Gharbe are often filled by the quotidian commotion of children playing barefoot. At all hours of the day, regardless of school schedules, children play in the narrow alleyways that connect house to house, relative to relative. According to the TDH study, 48.1% of Dom children living in Beirut between the ages of four to sixteen have never stepped foot in a classroom (Terre des hommes 2010, 24). This section discusses Dom access and relationship to

education in relation to the two different options available in Lebanon government and informal.<sup>12</sup>

### *GOVERNEMENT EDUCATION*

Dom expressed a lack of nearby government schools, institutional discrimination and the high costs of enrollment as contributing factors to their not accessing government education. At the time field work no Dom children were enrolled in primary or secondary government school.

First and foremost, Dom families cited the costs associated with government schools as the main factor for which government schools are inaccessible. In order to attend a government school a Dom child would need to leave the neighborhood either walking or by public transportation to the nearest school (a nearby school was never mentioned by interlocutors).<sup>13</sup> Although distance of schools is an important factor, it is the high enrollment fees of 250,000 LBP in addition to the cost of transportation, uniforms and supplies that Dom cited to be the primary reason for not accessing government schools.<sup>14</sup> For most Dom families who earn less than 250,000 LBP per month, any expenses outside the necessities for survival are hard to fathom (Terre des hommes 2010, 27).

Despite these the financial obstacles to participating in government education, some Dom youth in the neighborhood attended a government vocational school. Their experience provides the opportunity to understand the challenges faced by Dom when government education is facilitated and the above mentioned financial obstacles are to the extent possible no longer a reality.

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<sup>12</sup> Although private school and semi-private schools are an option in Lebanon, considering the socioeconomic status of Dom such education options were never mentioned as possibilities during field work and will therefore be omitted in this section.

<sup>13</sup> At the time of the study Tahaddi offered 90,000 LBP towards a Syrian or Lebanese child's school enrollment fees.

<sup>14</sup> 78% of respondents stated that school fees were the main barrier to education, while almost one-third of respondents claimed that it was because parents did not encourage their children. Moreover, 18% said that distance to schools had a negative impact on children's education and 10% said that children were not registered because they are non-ID (Terre des hommes 2010, 47).

With the assistance of Tahaddi a small group of Dom teenagers were provided the opportunity to attend programs in nearby government vocational schools. Dom boys were trained to become carpenters, car mechanics or electricians while Dom girls were trained to work in beauty salons, sewing shops or kitchens of restaurants and hotels. The Tahaddi social worker tasked to supervise the group in the vocational program faced challenges with the initial enrolment process and with keeping the teenagers enrolled throughout the program. A short story about Mazen, a young Dom with Lebanese citizenship:

After weeks of administrative work by the Tahaddi social worker organizing payment and transportation with a government vocational school, Mazen began was given a scholarship to attend a carpentry classes. As a Lebanese citizen Mazen's tuition fees at the vocational school are half subsidized by the government. After the government contribution, Tahaddi paid approximately 1,000 USD, for program fees.

Not soon after the first weeks of classes, Mazen was seen throughout the day sitting on the corner chatting with his friends and family. He decided to no longer attend the vocational program. Mazen's mother Maya explained to the social worker the reasons for which Mazen would no longer attend vocational school. First, in order to reach the school bus arranged and paid for by Tahaddi, Mazen had to walk the neighborhood in the early morning hours. Without a police presence and with few people awake, Mazen was particularly susceptible to running into "bad people" and perhaps being robbed or injured. Youth walking alone at night or in the early morning is an unnecessary risk in Hay el Gharbe. Out of fear of walking alone, Mazen often missed the school bus and resorted to walking or taking public transportation. However, the price of daily public transportation quickly became too much for the family to afford.

Once outside of the Hay, on the street or in public transportation Mazen felt uncomfortable as he was often harassed because of his dark skin. And, at school his peers ridiculed him for being a nawar.

Because of Mazen's refusal to return to vocational school, his mother's Tahaddi earned salary would be partially reduced every month to cover the costs of non-refundable tuition costs. Despite this attempt to coax him back to school, Mazen's refusal was definite and he would not be returning to vocational school. Weeks later he was asked why he would not return to school to which he responded by explaining that spending time with friends is more enjoyable.

Mazen's experience shows how many factors affect the ability to access education. First, the environment of Hay el Gharbe, one unsafe and time for unaccompanied youth and women makes

walking alone towards public transportation a risk that some Dom are unwilling to make. Second, even despite Tahaddi's best efforts to provide free education, the small fee of public transportation was sufficient of a burden on the family's economic situation to prevent him from attending school returning the issue of access to government education to one of financial restrictions. Unlike most Dom, Mazen's family is one of the few that earns a steady income. Third, for many Dom youth leaving the boundaries of Hay el Gharbe is riddled with the fear of public discrimination by non-Dom both. Moreover, it is not unusual to hear reports of institutional discrimination at the level of school administration. Finally, with most youth already out of school, attending class on a daily basis and leaving the neighborhood is not a habit easily acquired.

In addition to the above mentioned obstacles, health related issues also proved to be problematic. The Tahaddi social worker was quickly called to meet the director of the girl's vocation school, at which a few Dom girls were taking classes in hair dressing and makeup, to discuss what the school considered to be basic hygiene requirements. The director of the school issued a warning that the girls would no longer be able to attend if head lice and other requirements regarding hygiene were not met.

In the face of the many factors that contribute to difficulty in accessing education, statistics show that Dom are increasingly accessing education by comparison to earlier years. The TDH study finds a significant shift in access to education post naturalization of many Dom in 1994. Of Dom over the age of sixteen living in Beirut born before 1994, 74.2% reported never setting foot in a classroom. The statistic drastically changes after naturalization with 48.1% of Dom born after 1994 claiming to have attended school (Terre des hommes 2010, 24) The TDH study attributes the changes in classroom attendance between Dom born before and after 1994 to access to citizenship. As such the report concludes that, "the impact of naturalization can clearly be seen when rates of school attendance are compared between generations, using 1994 as a benchmark." This assertion does not question into which classrooms are the Dom stepping foot. Of the many youth included in this study not a single individual had been or were currently enrolled in a government school. Moreover, despite the fact that many Dom by legal standing are not able to

enroll in government school this was never mentioned as a factor in failing to access government school. This will be discussed extensively in 6.1. SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES.

Many Dom face an additional barrier to education being that of citizenship status. Walid, the eldest son of the Al Salah family is a *maktum al qayd*, like many Dom is not a citizen of any country and holds a legal status known as *maqtum el qayd*. Like many Dom of *maktum el qayd* status, Walid is not registered at *wazarat el sho'on* and therefore does not have a social security number. Without a social security number it is not possible to register at government schools and therefore the only option is to attend informal education centers such as Tahaddi. Walid, is one of the few to have graduated from Tahaddi and is enrolled in a vocational training school. The story of Walid's enrollment process sheds light on the difficulties faced by stateless Dom in accessing to education:

Walid, tall and with a fuzzy mustache slowly growing across his mouth often talks of the future. He speaks about himself as better than the other Dom boys who he describes as lazy and "*bila ikhla*". For Walid a better life lies outside, both Lebanon and his immediate neighborhood. At any chance, he takes the opportunity to leave Hay el Gharbe. On most days he wears a black fútbol uniform for a local youth team with which he practices a few times a week. Without enough money to ride a service or van he walks in his soccer cleats forty five minutes to the Qas Qas training area where young men meet to practice sports.

Unlike any of the Dom youth included in this study Walid spoke often of the importance of earning high marks. The al Salah family kept, in the same place as all their government documents, Walid's most prized homework assignments and exam results. Walid has hopes of doing well in the vocational program in order to begin a decent job. After gaining sufficient experience he plans to travel on a residency permit to another country where life will be better.

In pursuit of finding a job to carry him out of Lebanon, Walid agreed to quit his day job to join a mechanical engineering course at the vocational school. The school's tuition fees two thousand dollars for the entire program of which, for Lebanese citizens, half is covered by the government. However, in Walid's case, as a *maktum el qayd*, the government is not responsible to contribute and therefore Tahaddi paid for the entire fee. Despite this, on the first day of classes the school informed him that he would not be able to attend. Without any official documents the school's insurance would not cover any potential situation in which Walid might become injured at the premises.

Out of concern that Walid might not be able to attend school and fear that his former job might be filled by someone else, Walid was pressured by his family to return to work. With this knowledge in mind the social worker spent the day advocating on his behalf and guaranteeing that the school would not be responsible for any possible issues related his attendance. The final decision to allow Walid to attend was pushed to the school's director who reluctantly and only with full understanding of Tahaddi's reputable standing as an organization in Lebanon, allowed Walid to begin attendance.

Walid's case demonstrates how even when financial limitations are no longer, the lack of citizenship status prevents Dom from accessing education at a price they can afford. If it was not for Tahaddi's financial assistance and in Walid's case, ability to assume responsibility for potential insurance issues, Walid would not have the opportunity to access a government school.

Of the many Dom youth met during fieldwork, none reported attending or having attended government schools. However, with the exception of the Sheib family, all children were at some point enrolled at the informal Tahaddi school. Of the youth passed the age of high school graduation only eldest son of the al Salah family had completed the Tahaddi program and at the time no Dom had attended higher education.

#### *TAHADDI SCHOOL*

Mornings in Hay el Gharbe are alive with children running towards the sliding metal gate of the brightly painted Tahaddi school. The school is the largest in the neighborhood and from within its walls the ringing of the bell can be heard from all around. Where government school is not accessible, Tahaddi steps in. The work of the Tahaddi school is singlehandedly responsible for education amongst the Dom community.

The Tahaddi school accommodates to the many challenges mentioned by Dom in accessing education. And in doing so, nearly every Dom family has at some point sent their children to study at the school. A child can attend classes until the age of sixteen upon which a graduation certificate is presented. However, as an informal school a state recognized diploma cannot be provided. Located in the upper *hay*, the school is no more than four or five minutes walking from most Dom homes. Enrollment fees are a fraction of that of government schools and should a family be unable to pay, exceptions are made. The school administration pays no attention to nationality or ethnicity when enrolling a child and the school is known to be free from

discrimination against Dom. Although the school was established with the Dom community in mind, with the influx of refugees to the neighborhood, many of the children are now Syrian non-Dom. Beyond the accessibility of the school in terms of cost and location, many in the Dom community express trust for Tahaddi as the small administration and staff are aware of the hardships facing Dom.

Despite the accessibility of the Tahaddi school, maintaining regular attendance amongst Dom children is a challenge expressed by teachers and administrators at the Tahaddi school. The al Kreita and Sheib families, along with many others, are known for having shown little to no interest in sending children to not only government schools but also the Tahaddi center. Many Dom youth encounter difficulty in the classroom not because of a learning curb, but because they do not seem to “fit” what is acceptable school behavior. For those who manage to enroll it is unlikely that they have the lifestyle or environment necessary to succeed in the classroom.

Hanan is the youngest daughter of the first marriage in the Sheib family. Her hair, a copper-toned orange, is usually tied back in a tight ponytail. A plastic gem she keeps in her mouth as a faux tongue piercing catches sunlight as she speaks loud and theatrical. Her clothes, far from loose fitting, and vibrant personality attract the attention of men as she walks around the neighborhood.

The Sheib house is one of constant comings and goings. Different family members are frequently on the move. As they often visited relatives in the south or the Beqaa valley, the scene of the house changed on a daily basis. Sometimes the first wife of Mahmoud, whom he divorced a few years prior, occupied the house with her daughters and son. At other times Mahmoud returned with his current wife and young children.

Hanan’s presence and her cleaning was one of the only constants in the daily events of the Sheib house. With a low broom she swept away an evening’s worth of hollowed *bizir* and candy wrappers. Despite the children running in and out, her results were impressive and the house was always tidy.

Despite the unsettled home environment and the fact that none of the Sheib children had ever attended school, Hanan enrolled for a daily literacy class on her own initiative. She struggled with learning the alphabet but understandably so, as at the age of sixteen she had never, until then, stepped into a classroom. During class, Hanan often behaved in ways that the instructor found unacceptable. She interrupted the lessons by making jokes or dancing. Her humor was usually what appeared to be a mechanism she employed to distract the class from the difficulties she had with keeping up. After some time the instructor’s patience expired.

After returning from a visit to her family's house outside of Beirut, Hanan came back to class. When entering the classroom the instructor informed her that she was no longer welcome for the reason that she had missed a few sessions. However, days later a young Palestinian woman, after having missed more than a week's work of sessions re-joined the class without the instructors objection. Hanan's unconventional behavior in combination with the regular mobility and thus irregular attendance participated in the failure of her learning how to read or write. The deciding factor however was the teacher's unwillingness to allow for her to complete the program.

The difficulty Hanan faces in attending the Tahaddi school, despite its best efforts to provide accessible education, demonstrates how her socioeconomic limitations prevail. The lifestyle associated with a certain stable socioeconomic status is one that the Dom cannot afford.

Although all Dom families express the importance of education, children usually attend school for a maximum of a few years. Rather than sitting in classrooms, children stay at home to help with chores, to join a mother or father at work or simply to play with others on the street. With most Dom engaged in non-contractual manual labor, living for an extended period of time in the same place is unusual. Although Hay el Gharbe might be considered "home", families will often migrate to wherever work is available. It is common to find an entire family gone from one day to the next having moved to live with a relative after hearing about a work opportunity. Two to three day trips to visit relatives living in the Beqaa or Saida are also common.

Although unlike a government school in its enrollment fees and non-discrimination of Dom the Tahaddi system places an emphasis on counting attendance and measuring school marks. This is illustrated in an interview of Catherine Mourtada during which she discusses what the TDH report identifies as a "lack of structure in lifestyle". She says:

.... It is vital to establish rules. Children and adults need to understand what is acceptable and unacceptable if they want to benefit from certain services. For example, when we first opened the dispensary, it was the first time that services free-of-charge were being offered in the community. People would fight each other to get through the door! We [Al Tahaddi staff] were spending more time trying to know who came first than curing people. So we got rid of the drop-in model and set a system that required people to take an appointment. They would get a number so that they knew they had to wait their turn. Of course, we still accepted emergency cases. But by setting a structure we really improved our own ability to deliver services.



Similarly, at the Tahaddi Education Center we had problems with drop out. In order to solve this, we set some strict rules: if children are repeatedly absent, or if their families travel and take the children with them, we do not allow the child to continue at the school, nor do we allow them to register in the next year. We realize that this is a very tough policy since it is often not [sic] the child will to leave the Center.

Finally, without questioning the dedication and good will of the Tahaddi staff, an unfortunate paradox presents itself. In being provided informal education Dom continue to remain outside the boundary of state services. It is possible that in providing informal services, Dom isolation and a lack of contact with state services is further exacerbated.

#### 4.3. HEALTH & ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

This section aims to highlight a deadly reality of Dom life in Hay el Gharbe. Throughout field work, well-being was a subject brought up in nearly every conversation either through words or in the visible manifestations of illness. For Dom health is affected by the dire environmental conditions in which they live, which as a result of their socioeconomic status most are unable to escape. And, as a result the need to access health services is constant. However, the costs associated with health services and the discriminatory practices of health providers results in a perpetually unwell group of people.

In Hay el Gharbe, home life extends passed front doors and into public space where women prepare meals outside for families that average six persons per household (Terre des hommes 2010, 19).<sup>15</sup> On sunny days, along alleyways Dom families are loud with laughter sharing coffee outside on small open-air verandas. To sit inside, particularly during the summer months, can prove deadly. Poor living conditions contribute to preventable health problems such as upper respiratory diseases and infections.<sup>16</sup> (Terre des hommes 2010, 43) A deep and chronic cough fills the lungs of many Dom in the neighborhood, whatever the age. Health problems from which

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<sup>15</sup> To be precise the Terre des Hommes report found that Dom families in Beirut averages 6.1 persons per household. While nationwide Dom households averaged 5.6 persons (Terre des hommes 2010, 19).

<sup>16</sup> Upper respiratory diseases are common amongst women as they are confined to living and working inside overheated corrugated roof houses.

most Dom suffer are a result of living in an area where open sewer and chemical run-off, heavy air pollution and tight living spaces are the norm.

Limited income means that the Dom diet consists of little meat and fresh vegetables. Families eat a diet heavy in starch, oil and junk food such as potato chips and ice-cream. The combination of environmental conditions, limited resources for a healthy diet and little outreach to healthcare equate to short life spans and chronic illnesses. There are few Dom over the age of fifty in Hay el Gharbe where medical conditions such as a skin rash or an infected cut can kill because such issues often go untreated.

Down the street from the Sheib family and up a set of unfinished stairs is the al Salah house. Roughly poured cement leads to a covered veranda where dozens of socks, shirts and underwear hang from a clothing line. A metal door, a sticker of Hassan Nasrallah facing inwards, gives way to a one-bedroom house. Many childhoods' worth of handprints force some color upon the plain walls. Up above is a curated selection of decorations. A painting of a "Gypsy" dancer sways her hips toward the Virgin Mary who hangs framed across the wall on a single nail. All the decorations are proudly owned by Nadia, the mother of the al Salah household. Nadia has given birth to eight children. Walid is the first son and Yassin the last.

"*Bmrud minhun*", somewhere between I am sick of them and they make me sick, she explained. Not much of an embellishment with most of her children playing along with others in the narrow alleyways of the hay. When they bid the day farewell and return home, it is to sleep on shared mattresses and under acrylic mink blankets. So, chronic colds, coughs and infections are almost guaranteed. To say "*Bmrud minhun*", is as well a gesture towards the physical and emotional challenges of motherhood.

Nadia often battles illness and tooth aches. Month long coughing spells and severe fevers characterized her everyday. She often smiled, a smile shaped by gaps from extracted rotten teeth, saying that tomorrow she will go to the doctor. However, she almost never did. Nadia, as a Syrian and wife of a *maktum el qayd*, does not have the privilege of healthcare "*3la i7sab e dawleh*". She rarely goes to public clinics to avoid sitting for hours and having to encounter people in the neighborhood.

Nadia's constant health issues are not uncommon for Dom living in Hay el Gharbe. However, unlike some Dom as a *maktum el qayd*, Nadia's legal status marks the end of the road to full recovery from illnesses. Without Lebanese citizenship and therefore access to government funded medical assistance, finding affordable health care is a challenge. A non-Lebanese must

pay full price at any hospital or private clinic. Regardless of the severity of the health issue, paying such fees is simply unthinkable.

According to the TDH study there is a direct correlation between access to health care and naturalization. The study's findings show that 63.6% of Dom households visit government hospitals, "while 27.2% seek treatment at public clinics and 13% at private doctors." (Terre des hommes 2010, 24) This rate of access to government services is automatically associated with the acquisition of citizenship without providing any statistics for access prior to 1994. As an indicator of increased access to healthcare services as a result of citizenship, the study states that most Dom women with Lebanese ID give birth in government hospitals as costs associated with childbirth are 90-95% government subsidized. (Terre des hommes 2010, 25) The cost associated with child birth if subsidized by the government is approximately 40,000 to 50,000 LBP, a price that is expensive yet manageable. However, despite this statistic provided by the TDH report, observations with Dom in Hay el Gharbe find that this statistic does not represent the very real challenges of the socio-economic status of Dom on their access to a healthier life.

Although Dom might have the right to government hospitals, the costs associated with making full use of such privileges are prohibitive. Most medical procedures and doctor visits at a government hospital are financially impossible. A story from the TDH report helps to illustrate:

"While filling out surveys in the small, isolated Dom community near Ketermaya, Saida, researchers came across 10-month old Khadija. Lying limp against her mother's breast, they were alarmed by Khadija's emaciated appearance and listless expression.

Khadija's parents said that the girl had been ill since birth and at five days old, she had had a colostomy, They explained that the Doctor had told them that when she was eight months, they should return her to the hospital so that she could have another operation, the second of the three that were required to treat her problem. But the family was afraid of bringing her back for the second operation because they had been told that it would cost 3 million LBP (\$2,000), an astronomical amount for a family of 9 who live on the father's earnings of 500,000 LBP (\$333) per month as a casual labourer" (Terre des hommes 2010, 44).

After multiple visits in and out of the hospital Khadija's parents "were constantly preoccupied with how they would be able to pay the hospital fees. Being a Lebanese citizen, 85% of Khadija's hospitalisation costs were covered by the Ministry of

Health. The remaining amount, however, represented a sizeable sum for the family, and more than once the father contacted local NGOs to assist with the costs” (*ibid.*).

Ultimately Khadija passed away in the hospital after succumbing to vomiting and breathing problems (*ibid.*).

Despite lower healthcare treatment as a result of Lebanese citizenship, the remaining fees are unrealistic for most Dom families. Should Dom be able to pay for hospital and doctors fees, other financial obstacles lay in the way. For example, Dom shared stories of doctors prescribing expensive brand name medication that could not be afforded a truth that in some circumstances makes the initial surgery or consultation pointless.

It is often the environmental dangers of chemical run off, close living quarters, lack of services and extreme temperatures that make the residents of Hay el Gharbe particularly susceptible to diseases. However, without the ability to afford health services or the financial capacity to move to safer neighborhoods a vicious cycle results in suffering and short life spans amongst Dom. These factors are usually ignored by health care practitioners who are not trained to understand the realities of life in abject poverty. After the death of Khadija, the TDH team interviewed the doctor charged with her care at the Saida government hospital. In response to questions about her death, the doctor was quoted as saying, “Her mother is stupid, so stupid! She has no idea how to take care of a child. [...] The Nawar have no awareness, they are not educated, health is not important to them. They are known for this: a Nawar is a Nawar.”

In addition to institutional discrimination and financial obstacles, Dom are also confronted with the intimidating feat of managing government bureaucracy. Accessing government medical services requires a confrontation with Dom inability to read and write as well their unfamiliarity with the complexities of dealing with government bureaucracy. At the most basic level, procedures like taking a number to wait in line or knowing which office to enter in order to prepare medical papers:

Fatima, the mother of the al Malek household, is a Lebanese citizen. In the main room of the three-bedroom house the whole family, sisters and brothers, sat round a pile of papers. The papers stapled together were filled and covered with doctor’s notes, hospital stamps, numbers charts and tables. Having just had heart surgery at the government hospital, the doctor informed her that she would need to return for a

second operation. Already having paid for part of the first surgery the al Malek family expressed deep concern about the prices of the second surgery.

According to Dima the hospital policy demands that families leave a deposit before admitting a patient for surgery. The doctor's notes detailing the breakdown of the hospital bills were unclear and confusing. Despite the fact that Dima is able to read and write she was not able to understand the billing and technical verbiage from the hospital. Dima is the only literate member of the al Malek family living at home and so at a young age has taken on responsibilities that most young Dom have not. The hospital documents outlined information about heart stents and grafting, an endeavor that became understood only through Google translate and image on a mobile phone.<sup>17</sup>

The al Malek family, unlike most Dom families, has extensive experience dealing with paperwork and the complexities of dealing with a government system. Because the Father is Egyptian, every three years family members must register as residents of Lebanon. According to Dima her mother's heart surgery was urgent because without the follow-up procedure her life might be at risk. Despite the urgency, it took a critical amount of time to understand the paperwork in order to begin an attempt to collect the money for the hospital deposit. By the end of fieldwork the al Malek family was still unable to collect amount needed for the Khadija's surgery.

The story of the al Malek's struggle with understanding the details of a critical and life-saving surgery and the difficulty in gathering the needed money beyond the government's subsidy demonstrates that even when having the courage to deal with the hospital system, the willingness to go to the hospital itself, and the ability to read the paperwork provided by the hospital, many Dom are not armed with the necessary financial and social tools necessary to government healthcare.

In the area two main clinics, Basma and Zeitouna and Tahaddi, provide consultations and medication at little to no cost. Dom are able to access the Tahaddi clinic for doctor's visit free of charge so as long as they reside in the neighborhood. Certain medical procedures such as the

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<sup>17</sup> Only one Dom family I knew had access to Internet. Having paid a fee the Al Salah family was given the password to the neighbors Internet router.

insertion of an IUD or circumcisions are provided at the clinic. Dom visit the clinic for basic medical services and certain medications are available at more affordable prices.

For some Dom the clinics are considered to be too far or too much of a hassle to visit. With the demographics of the neighborhood changing over the last years, the Tahaddi clinic reception area is regularly filled with women and children waiting their turn. Dom expressed their frustration with the large number of Syrians entitled to Tahaddi services. The sentiment that Tahaddi is no longer a place for the Dom was expressed through complaints that social services, medical appointments and the already limited number of places at the education center were being given to Syrians. To the Dom, the new Syrian arrivals are unfairly given preference by Tahaddi for social services.<sup>18</sup> Many Dom complained about the lack of Tahaddi services reserved for them and competition with Syrians for medical services.

During fieldwork a large food voucher program brought hundreds of Syrian refugees to Tahaddi's door each month. During this period the number of women waiting outside made getting to the door to enter the building a physical endeavor. For some Dom women, considered by non-Dom as inferior, avoiding competition or even contact with others is a choice that most make. Even at the cost of health.

The Tahaddi clinic prides itself on training a non-discriminatory staff and providing a safe space for Dom. Many Dom visit the clinic on a regular basis, however access to these services are also precarious. The director of the Tahaddi clinic shared out in years before Dom visited the clinic more frequently however, with the recent change of location fewer Dom make the trip to see the doctor. This decrease in Dom attendance is due in large part to the proximity of the clinic to his whose power over the neighborhood will be discussed at a later point in the study. The fact that Dom are less likely to access health services despite the convenience and affordability demonstrates how a seemingly a insignificant move of a couple hundred meters by the Tahaddi clinic and the forced contact with the him or those associated with him can dissuade Dom from accessing the clinic, even at the expense of health.

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<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Dom are aware of the services entitled to Syrians to which they do not have access. Syrians registered with the United Nations, according to Dom are given medical support at clinics designed just for them and at government clinics.

#### 4.4. INCOME & INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES

In this section, I will discuss Dom labor in the form of community daily jobs, Dom traditional work and the delicate question of women's work.

Unemployment rates amongst the Dom are noticeable from a quick walk around the neighborhood. People of working age are at home during most hours of the day watching television or chatting with neighbors and relatives. According to the TDH study 56% of Dom above the age of fourteen reported working. (Terre des hommes 2010, 27) Of the four families in this study each had at least one income earner upon which families managed to pay for daily expenses.

Nadim, father of the al Salah family, has worked for more than ten years for the Beirut Municipality as a street cleaner. He leaves for work every morning at six and returns six hours later. He does not have a single day of the week off. Despite his work for a government employer he is a daily laborer without a contract. According to Nadim his position as a daily laborer is not related to his legal status, but symptomatic of the general employment culture regarding the hire of manual labor at the Municipality. Without a contract, Nadim's position is at constant risk of replacement. At no point could he expect basic benefits associated with a ten-year commitment to one job. The idea of days off, either paid or unpaid, or sick leave are unthinkable. Moreover, Nadim's status as *maktum el qayd* would not permit for him to register for benefits such as health insurance or life insurance, however the municipality is unwilling to offer such benefits to its manual laborers. Unlike most Dom, Nadim has worked regularly for one institution, but his labor is exchange for a low and unsteady salary. On Nadim's single salary his family of eight can afford nothing more than the basics.<sup>19</sup> Meals are usually *foul*, broad beans in oil, with bread or *indoumi*, packaged instant noodles.

Many Dom men work at the Beirut Hippodrome grooming and feeding the racehorses. Dom have worked at the horse tracks since before most can remember. Mahmoud, explained that his

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<sup>19</sup> At some point Walid, the eldest son of the family was earning small daily wages at a car mechanic shop in the Dana. However, he quit his job to pursue a certificate at the vocational school. The family, however hesitantly, accepted to do without the extra income in hopes that he will find a higher paying job upon graduation.

job ensures that the horses are in good condition for the European jockeys to race. He described the people who attend the Saturday races as wealthy, but added that “poor people” go to spend their money as well. Men with jobs at the Hippodrome work two shifts of 4 am to 11 am and 1 pm to 5 pm. Most men return home to rest between shifts. Although a stable job, work at the Hippodrome is daily non-contractual labor.

Dom men also shared their experience with odd jobs such as helping to fix something in someone’s house or occasionally driving a taxi. Unlike their Syrian neighbors Dom men in this study did not work in construction or other forms of manual labor. The father of the al Malek family, an Egyptian non-Dom, works in a CD shop and is the only income earner of the family.

Many Dom in Hay el Gharbe referred to the work of relatives outside of the city. According to Dom certain traditional forms of labor such as dentistry, basket weaving and the making of *rababa* and *buzuq* still generate income. However Dom expressed how in the city these crafts are no longer appreciated.

In addition to the above mentioned forms of economy certain work exclusive to women were never openly discussed. Dancing is the most lucrative income generating activity amongst Dom women. The profession was often alluded to however only on rare occasions spoken of in words. Similarly the topic of street begging was never mentioned but rather witnessed.

Four children were running circles around the stove, Hanan was throwing up dust from her daily chores and the television was blasting music. Somehow, Nour managed sleep and it was two in the afternoon. Eventually she removed the cover from her face and rolled over on her side. Behind eyelashes still thick from mascara, her brown eyes were an imitation green from contact lenses she had slept in. In a neighborhood where women usually dress in *abayas* worn many times over, Nour seems as though she does not belong. Her hair is always perfectly straightened and henna gives extra volume to her shapely eyebrows. She often wafts around the neighborhood in new colorful jumpsuits.

Finally out of bed, Nour pulled up a plastic chair and sat in silence. Staring ahead as if not a part of the world around her. In response to questions about why she was so tired Nour shook her shoulder to gestured that she had been dancing. In silence she began showed photos of herself on her cellphone. Sitting in restaurants in the expensive Zaytuny Bay, standing outside a Rouche nightclub in a skintight red dress. For minutes she swiped through dozens of photos.



A few days later on another visit Hanan was sitting outside the house. In response to where Nour was grinned, “She’s at work at the office.” The window was closed and the dancing was not to be talked about.

#### 4.5. SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF COMMUNITY

Upon first sight the likeness of faces in parts of Hay el Gharbe is striking. Many Dom are born with a delicate slope of a nose like those mimicked in Lebanese surgery rooms. Darker skin and women with nose piercings physically distinguish Dom from many Lebanese and Syrians living in the neighborhood. The shared physical features are a result of intermarriage within or between families. Second cousins often marry either through arrangement or at their own initiative. With pride, some couples talk about the story of their marriage in the face of family disapproval. “*Khatafah khatifeh*”, common amongst Dom is a runaway marriage of sorts. A couple, usually failing to secure family approval for marriage, absconds and later returns to the neighborhood. As it is known that the couple has consummated their non-marriage, a sheikh is summoned to sanctify the partnership. The reason for family disapproval can be because of the young age of the couple or the choice of partner.

Dom marriages are religiously sanctioned by a *sheikh* by reading the *faatiha*. Upon the completion of *katib el kitaab*, the writing of the girl’s *kitaab*, the marriage is official in the eyes of the religious authorities.

Although marriage between the Dom community is most common, the preservation of a “Dom community” by way of marriage is not the only standard. Although a break from the status quo it is “*3adi*” to marry a *kajjeh*. The word *kajjeh*, one of the few Domari words used in everyday conversation, is used to describe a non-Dom individual. Technically the word *kajjeh* is used to describe a sedentary Arab and therefore draws a distinction between Dom, Bedouins and Arabs. The concept of the *kajjeh* is the most obvious indicator that a Dom “community” exists. There exists a community awareness of which households are of mixed marriage and it is commonly agreed upon that a child born of a *kajjeh* father is no longer considered Dom.

For some many Dom marrying a *kajjeh* is a way of distancing oneself from the poverty of Hay el Gharbe. One mother explained that her daughter hopes to marry a *kajjeh*. “*Wahad kabeer, mish nouri*” she explained while gesturing upwards to physically articulate the improved chances in life her daughter might experience with a *kajjeh* husband. A non-Dom is commonly associated with the state of being “*kabeer*” and by association the chance for the acquisition of an improved style of life. Likewise, a synonymy between being Dom and poor was a recurring way of describing oneself.

Marriages between Dom and *kajjeh* not only cross categories of ethnicity, but also nationality, sect and class. Dom religiously identify and are registered as Sunni. Homes are filled with religious scripts and it is common to find a Quran, along with family documents, hanging out of child’s reach in a bag on the wall. Some fast during Ramadan and few pray on a regular basis. Occasionally families will make small donations to a nearby mosque, usually in the form of a bag of bread. Marriages outside of the sect seem to cause little ruckus. Of the mixed marriages that I was aware of during fieldwork, most mixed weddings were with Shiaa *kajjeh*. The possibility of achieving an improved style of life through marriage to a *kajjeh* seems more important than differences of sect and the future of their children as non-Dom. Amal’s story of her marriage to a Shiaa *kajjeh*, illustrates what women hope to experience by marrying a non-Dom:

Of the many Sheib daughters two married Shiaa men and the youngest daughter, Hanan, wears the necklace of black beads worn mostly by those of the Shiaa sect. The necklace was a gift from her boyfriend from a secret relationship. Unlike most Dom women, Amal’s way of dressing and behavior would allow that she fit in most Beiruti neighborhoods. She lives with her husband in a “wall apartment” in a nearby southern suburb of Beirut and does not visit Hay el Gharbe regularly. Amal shared her story in straight posture from a plastic chair while her family listened sitting on the floor upon a *hasira*. As she spoke she combed her jeweled fingers through her long and recently blow-dried hair. Dressed head to toe in newly purchased clothes she explained that she does not work. Knowing about the purpose of the study Amal explained that Dom customs demand that Dom women work. This is a common stereotype spoken of by the Dom and one generally thought to be true by Lebanese society.

According to Amal, her husband would never permit that she work because to do so would be “*3ab*”. She explained that she met her husband at a café in the seaside area

of Rauche. Although Amal did not go in to details about the way in which she met her husband her sisters had previously alluded to her former work as a dancer in this neighborhood. Memories of her work and life before marrying were not to be shared. Her former life, working in the evenings and returning to the home in Hay el Gharbe is now behind her. Amal explained that she is not like the Dom, whom she referred to as them. In front of her mother she provided explained that unlike her mother who worked for years while the father did not, is a “custom” that she would never allow for herself. Now that she has married, Amal rarely returns to Hay el Gharbe to visit families.

Dom have also married non-Dom Palestinians from the nearby camp.<sup>20</sup> A Palestinian contact in Shatila, who taught literacy classes in the area during the 1970s, spoke of Dom-Palestinian couples. Although it is commonly known the marriage is mixed, it is silently agreed upon not to speak of the spouse’s Dom background. Openly discussing Dom-*kajjeh* marriages would bring attention to an ethnicity that is associated with a general looseness of morality. Although interlocutors never explicitly spoke of discrimination they faced from being Dom it was a constant reality through observation.

Just next to the Sheib house, protected behind the half closed-door lives a woman with two first names. Rawan, is a Sunni Lebanese and one of the few owners of a functioning washing machine. On one warm day neighbors lounged in the sun talking and watching children play up and down the alley. Rawan, seizing a moment when her Dom neighbors went inside, shared a secret. Her real name, she whispered, is Leila. “Kulhun nawar hun” she explained as the explanation for why she has concealed her name. In sharing this information Mona, or Leila, privileged a stranger in knowing who she really is, over neighbors amongst whom she has lived for years. Rawan, or Leila, drew a line between herself and her Dom.

This secret act of discrimination demonstrates how Dom are discriminated against even by those who experience similar class struggles within the same neighborhood. Although Dom and non-Dom might experience similar class struggles a hierarchy within Hay el Gharbe is representative of the extreme discrimination experienced by Dom. Older Dom recall the days when the

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<sup>20</sup> There are Dom who claim to be Palestinian. According to the TDH report 1% of the Dom sample group from historic Palestine. Although having come to Lebanon in 1948, most Dom do not have Palestinian ID and are not recognized by the UNRWA. (Terre des hommes 2010,19)

neighborhood was home to only Dom and Palestinians. However now a population diverse by nationality, sect and personal histories find shelter in the makeshift buildings. With the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011, many refugees moved to the already crowded neighborhood. Despite being long time residents of Hay el Gharbe, and many would argue the most permanent presence in the neighborhood Dom rank lowest in the hierarchy.

In April 2013 conflict with the police over unauthorized construction in Hay el Gharbe sparked violent clashes. During this episode Dom women and children were forced by non-Dom members of the community to stand in front of police in order to prevent the demolition of non-Dom houses. Dom, forced to stand up to the police, faced the danger of being shot and suffocating on teargas. This story illustrates how Dom occupy the most subordinate position in the neighborhood, they are discriminated against by their neighbors who are themselves some of most marginalized communities in Lebanon.

Beyond a particular physical appearance knowledge of a Domari distinguishes them from other groups living in the neighborhood. “It is our language”, Dom would share with pride when asked about the importance of the language or what it means to their community. Occasionally Domari words are thrown into Arabic conversations however Arabic is almost exclusively spoken at home and between neighbors. Although the older men and women might speak Domari the younger generation have not the ability to either speak or understand.<sup>21</sup> In response to questions regarding why the children speak exclusively Arabic, parents explained that Domari has no utility in the majority Arabic speaking society in which they live.

While in the field Domari was most often used to curse or to refer to the presence of an outsider by the word *kajjeh*. Often Dom identified me by using the Domari word *kajjieh* and not the Arabic word “*ajnabiyeh*”. It is worth noting that I was not distinguished as outsider by nationality or religion, but by my place in that particular space as non-Dom.

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<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that language retention amongst the Dom in Beirut is unlike that of other communities. According to Bruno Herin a linguist specializing in Domari Syrian Dom living in Beirut at the time of this study have a much stronger understanding and use of the language.



## CHAPTER 5. THE CITIZEN DOM AND THE DOM CITIZEN

It is uncommon to find a Dom household in which each member of the family is of the same citizenship status. The four families included in this study are representative of the Dom community's general experience of citizenship. In the al Kreita family each member holds Lebanese citizenship. While the mother of the al Salah family is a Syrian citizen, her husband's citizenship status is *maqtum el qayd* and therefore their children hold his status of "silent subscription". Down the street, the members of the Sheib house are of different citizenship statuses. Mahmoud, the father, is a registered Lebanese citizen as are his first wife and children. Hind, Mahmoud's second wife is a Syrian national and their three children are *maqtum el qayd*. In the al Malek family most are Egyptian citizens from their Egyptian father, with the exception of the mother who registered as a Lebanese citizen in 1994 and has not taken Egyptian citizenship.

The original point of inquiry for this study is the relationship between Dom and citizenship. As discussed in the literature review and confirmed by fieldwork many Dom have in fact lost or have not seized the opportunity to citizenship after the presidential decree. Although the unusual event of the loss of citizenship and practices of citizenship were the initial points of departure for this study's research question, other notable realities surfaced over the course of fieldwork. First, Dom, regardless of citizenship status, discussed and understood their relationship with citizenship in a variety of ways. Conceptions and experiences of citizenship for Dom with or without citizenship varied. Moreover, different theories on how to acquire citizenship were presented. Second, non-Dom Lebanese regularly turned to the question of citizenship when first learning about the presence of *nawar* in Lebanon. Therefore this chapter not only discusses fieldwork that addresses the original research questions, but also highlights issues related to citizenship introduced by Dom and non-Dom themselves.

Through a recounting of fieldwork and retelling of short vignettes, this chapter adds to the section "Self-Identification and Understandings of Community" by exploring non-Dom

conceptions of Dom in relationship to citizenship, Dom understandings of and relationships to the concept of citizenship and nationality, Dom myths of citizenship acquisition.

### 5.1. NON-DOM CONCLUSIONS ON DOM AND CITIZENSHIP

Conversations with non-Dom about Dom follow a regular pattern. First, Non-Dom are rarely aware of the title “Dom” used for the group of people known most commonly in Arabic as *nawar*. More often than not, non-Dom express the initial surprise that the *nawar* are worthy as a subject of research and that a significant Dom population in Lebanon exists. Ironically though after failing to acknowledge the group’s existence, non-Dom – formerly unknowledgeable – demonstrate expertness about Dom and their lives. It is common for non-Dom to discuss having witnessed poor Dom living conditions in tents along the side of the road to the south of Lebanon or in the Beqaa.

Without fail, during fieldwork, non-Dom assess the moral value of Dom by listing essential Dom characteristics. Non-Dom are essentialized as being non-religious “*bila deen*”, without dignity “*bila akhla*” and more than any other characteristic, extremely poor. It is well known that Dom live in extreme poverty, a reality that most believe to be one of choice. Life in extreme poverty, according to non-Dom, is a result of two essential Dom characteristics: dirtiness and laziness. This prescription of moral ills by non-Dom renders the Dom at fault for their own poor living conditions. An unusual anecdote:

In June 2015 during the Beirut Design Week a project called TimeBox was installed in multiple locations around the city. TimeBox is a small binocular-like installation through which pedestrians are able to look into Beirut’s past. By looking into the stereoscope one sees the actual street interrupted by an image of Beirut’s early days. A translucent old photograph is printed on the lenses allowing one to see the old and new simultaneously. See Photo 1.

One of the installations located in the downtown area shows a group of Dom entertainers. A Dom woman is photographed halfway through the swing of her hips while a man plays the *buzuq* a traditional Dom instrument and another woman drums the *dirbake*. Not long ago a group of street entertainers might not have been an unusual sight, however in Beirut today, such a scene would be cause for attention.

In many old photos of Dom, in which they are usually labeled as *nawar*, women are seen dancing on the street. This activity is one that set them apart from other nomadic

groups such as the Bedouins. Historically uninvolved in manual labor it is agreed by scholars and confirmed by Dom that dancing is historically a form of Dom labor.



Photo 1 "Bedouin Street Dancers" TimeBox

The photograph is mislabeled “Bedouin Street Dancers”, a mistake that sparked an angry response from a bystander during one of the walking tours. A group gathered around the TimeBox installation of the Dom dancers. While each person took in the scene a man working in a nearby building came out to make his opinion heard. The man stormed towards the tour group, yelling that those represented in the photo are not Bedouin but rather “nawar”. He expressed that his elders had explained to him the difference between a Bedouin and a *nawar*. To him the nawar are not to be confused with the Bedouin, as the nawar are not a respectable group of people.

Concluding his rant, the man stated, “The person that placed this installment here is a *nawar*!”

Somewhat shocked at the display of aggression and not understanding the source of intense disagreement for the photograph caption the group moved on to the next installation. A week later the designer of TimeBox returned to the site and found the installation vandalized. Hanging from the contraption was a black plastic bag filled with trash.



Having categorized Dom as morally questionable, the majority of non-Dom quickly inquire about the citizenship of Dom. Questions are usually asked with the pre-assumption that a Dom cannot possibly be a Lebanese and therefore, a question much like the following is presented: “What citizenship do they have?” This question is charged with the conviction that a group such as the Dom cannot be Lebanese citizens. However, this dissonance between Lebanese and Dom is not sufficient to end the conversation about citizenship, non-Dom feel the necessity to associate Dom with a particular country other than Lebanon. Although not fit for Lebanese citizenship, Dom are not without the responsibility of being citizen. Upon learning that many Dom are in fact Lebanese, having acquired Lebanese citizenship from Presidential Decree 5247, the common response is that citizens from this period of time are no more than political dupes and therefore, not truly Lebanese.

Legalized statelessness, made possible by the Lebanese government through the statuses of *qayd el dars* and *maktum el qayd*, are categories unbeknownst to most non-Dom Lebanese. Generally non-Dom Lebanese are unaware of Dom legal status, be it stateless or citizen. However, amongst some in the non-Dom Palestinian community the citizenship status of Dom is well known:

In the mid-80s, as a part of her duties with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Um Ahmad volunteered in a small school near Hay el Gharbe. As a teacher, many of her students were young married Dom women. Um Ahmad, decades later recalled her memories of the Dom community. Although having spent a significant amount of time with Dom women in the classroom, Um Ahmad had little to share about Dom and their lives. She remembered how Dom women marry at a young age, that the community is generally uneducated in the classroom and are known for involvement in sex work. Um Ahmad shared the usual moral judgments about Dom as lacking religion, “*Ma a’nd hum deen*”, she said.

Um Ahmad, unlike most non-Dom Lebanese has had contact with Dom, however the knowledge she shared about their lives and the moral judgments she made about their existence was similar to that of other non-Dom. On the topic of citizenship, however, Um Ahmad’s ideas differed significantly from most conversations about the Dom community. During her time as an active part of the school staff, Um Ahmad regularly handled walk-in class registrations by Dom who did not identify publicly as such. Many claimed to be Palestinian, however prior to 1994, Dom were recognizable by their status as *qayd el dars*. According to Um Ahmad it was commonly known in Shatila that the holder of a *qayd el dars* document was Dom. The acquisition of citizenship 1994 is another fact well known amongst those living in and around the camp.

Within the camp and in Hay el Gharbe, the citizenship of Dom matters little. In the eyes of non-Dom, be she Syrian, Palestinian or Lebanese a Dom is first and foremost, *nawar*.

## 5.2. CONCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP

Despite the fact that to a *kajjeh* a Dom is not a legitimate Lebanese citizen – either by categorizing Dom first as *nawar* before Lebanese and therefore invalidating their legal status or by failing to acknowledge the presidential decree as a legitimate citizenship act – to a Dom being a Lebanese citizen is unquestionably true. Interactions with Dom often turned to the question of citizenship either directly or indirectly. The holding of Lebanese documents seemed to be a point of pride amongst Dom, even if documents were not citizenship papers, but rather proof of statelessness. In early interactions with families, *hawiyas* or official paper work were taken out from backrooms and displayed along with glamour shots from nearby photography studios. Without being prompted Dom displayed IDs and registration numbers. Moreover, many Dom displayed an intense curiosity for the legal documents held by others. Dom are aware of the citizenship status held by their relatives and neighbors. Legal documents are usually stored hanging on the wall in a plastic bag or in a purse stuffed in a cabinet drawer. Families with members holding Lebanese citizenship often raised the subject without being prompted, pulling out documents as proof. In other cases, more so with stateless Dom, citizenship arose as a result of conversations about healthcare and travel. This will be discussed further in section 5.4.

*MAKTUM EL QAYD LUBNANI*

While Dom were proud to show legal documents, on many occasions they were not able to understand what was written on IDs or to identify paperwork if not by the corresponding person's attached passport sized photo. Without the ability to read or write, most Dom are unaware of what is written on official documentation and understandably have difficulty when required to fill out related paperwork. A short vignette to illustrate:

The al Kreita house sees the constant flow of people in and out of the open door way. At the start of literacy classes for young adults at Tahaddi, Hanan and Dina, were excited to begin completing their first homework assignment. The girls attempted to fill out the required blanks at the top of the page. First name, age and then citizenship. Just learning how read and write, Hana and Dina requested the help of Dima their neighbor and cousin. Dima carefully filled out each worksheet and without question

wrote Lebanese in the blank for citizenship. Dima explained that unlike her cousins she is Egyptian, prompting the girls to pull out the entire family's government IDs. The home, lit by a light bulb hanging from the ceiling and small bullet like rips in the corrugated metal walls, does not have a single closet or drawer available to store valuable items like legal documents. From the back room dangerously close to the gas burner, Huda pulled out a purse containing the family's government paperwork. The girls proudly pointed to their photos on plastic IDs. Curious to know their exact age and unable to read their date of birth, the girls asked for help.

The rest of the family gathered sitting on foam mattresses preparing green beans for dinner. Having listened to Hanan and Dina's official ages each family member requested to know the date of birth registered on their documents. Um el Loz, the mother, was surprised that up until that moment she was mistaken about her age. Teasing about getting old ensued. Other contents of the purse were passed from person to person. In one photo, Um el Loz as a young woman holding baby Dina, in a much less crowded Hay el Gharbe. The documents were carefully placed back on the wall near the cooking area and the girls returned to their homework, meticulously copying the first three letters of the alphabet.

All Dom, either citizen or *maktum el qayd*, possessed legal documents proving their existence in Lebanon. Not a single adult person during fieldwork was able to read what was written on legal documents and only two children of the four families included in this study have the ability understand what is written on official documents.

On the afternoon in the al Kreita home with the family IDs spread out on the floor, an attempt to understand the way in which the family acquired citizenship was dismissed. Although Dom acknowledged that many acquired citizenship in 1994, it was never mentioned at will by Dom that citizenship was acquired as a result of a presidential decree. The specific moment in time that marks Dom as new Lebanese citizens was not brought up spontaneously and instead an emphasis on having always been Lebanese was made. Moreover, the belief, often mentioned by non-Dom, that Presidential Decree 5247 was issued in an attempt to change the sectarian balance of Lebanon, was never mentioned in conversations about citizenship. Stories about belonging and love for Lebanon colored conversations related to citizenship. During a conversation with one Dom man, the question about the possible association between the 1994 citizenship act and his citizenship status was avoided by a long account of the natural beauties of Lebanon and an expression of love for his country. Even during discussions with non-Lebanese Dom about the

difficulties of accessing healthcare and the realities of citizenship rights, negative sentiments towards the Lebanese government and citizenship were never expressed.

Dom tended to steer conversations in the direction of validating belonging to Lebanon. Even for stateless Dom, documents proving the status of *maktum el qayd* are shown with pride as a government issued document is in itself an official recognition by the state of legal existence and proof of belonging. Questions about when or how citizenship was acquired seemingly challenged Dom right to Lebanese citizenship. Understandably so, when considering non-Dom sentiments about the legitimacy of those who acquired citizenship in 1994. Dom, different than the majority of Lebanese in the time of acquiring official documents, make a concerted effort not be perceived as ‘new citizens’. All Dom expressed feelings of belonging to Lebanon. A conversation with an older Dom woman further illustrates:

A bedroom without windows sits below the al Salah house. Angled in a corner is a cupboard decorated by an old television and photos piled high. Relatives stare from old studio portraits in glass frames. Samia sits cross-legged on the floor in a colored nightgown. Her wrists resting on her knees, arms tired from the heart surgery she had undergone only three days before. At fifty years old, her silver roots give away a synthetic blond truth.

She pours coffee and reaches for a lighter. In front of her a collection of half smoked cigarettes crooked in an ashtray. “Everything is prohibited. I’m not allowed to drink coffee or smoke,” but at this age she wants to enjoy the small pleasures of life. Samia is one of the oldest Dom in the neighborhood and registered as *maktum el qayd*.

Samia has lived in Hay el Gharbe since birth. According to her the neighborhood was once a place of community. Where people knew each other, cooked for one another and came together in times of need. In years before she described a community feeling. Now, it has changed, “*kil wahad 3a hsebo*”, each to oneself. She explained how today, even though people know she is sick, few come to her care. In years before, neighbors would have checked on her, brought her food and good company. With nostalgia, she recollects a time when Hay el Gharbe was a neighborhood of only Dom homes. Now it is filled with strangers, Bangladeshis, Filipinos and “bad people”. Not the Palestinians, who for Samia have been in the neighborhood since before she can remember.

Samia only left Hay el Gharbe during the Lebanese civil war. She pointed to an old photograph of her brother and his daughter on the wall. It was at his house in Scheheim that she stayed when it was too dangerous to remain in the neighborhood. Samia explained that some Dom living in Hay el Gharbe were born in Syria and Iraq

and that in times of trouble many traveled outside of the country. However, she made sure to clarify that the neighborhood despite comings and goings of people and families, was and still is for the Dom. Samia concluded by stating, “*ihna awlad al balad*”.

Samia’s vignette demonstrates how many Dom consider themselves as a long lasting part of society in Lebanon and therefore rightfully belonging to the place in which they live. An additional factor to be considered with the vignette above is that Samia and her family are registered with the state as *maktum el qayd* and do not hold Lebanese citizenship. This fact adds a new dimension to understanding Dom interactions with citizenship. Samia’s words demonstrate how feelings of belonging and being Lebanese are unrelated to citizenship status. For Samia, and many other Dom, Dom without citizenship, express feeling Lebanese because of their long history in the country, regardless of the possession of Lebanese citizenship.

Dima al Malek, although born and raised in Lebanon and never having traveled outside the country self-identifies as Egyptian. Born to a Dom mother with Lebanese citizenship and an Egyptian father, Dima is a citizen of Egypt and expresses feeling Egyptian. She explained that her Egyptian passport, acquired through her father, is the reason for her self-identification with a particular country. It is worth noting that, Dima is not able to take Lebanese citizenship from her mother. Therefore the only way in which Dima is legitimate in relation to the state, is to self-identify as Egyptian. According to Lebanese citizenship law Dima is Egyptian and therefore not a member of the Lebanese community, in her case legitimate belonging comes from her father’s citizenship status.

Many Dom displayed a balancing act between belonging, legitimacy and practicality in relation to citizenship. For Dima identifying as Egyptian, despite being born and raised in Lebanon, is a matter of legitimacy in order to be legally recognized by the state and a matter of practicality as despite being born and raised in Lebanon she is unable to acquire Lebanese citizenship, leaving Egyptian citizenship as the only option.

In another example, Nadia of the al Salah family was born and raised in Syria. Although holding Syrian citizenship, she considers herself and her children to be Lebanese. Nadia expressed two reasons for her citizenship identification, first through her extended stay and work in Lebanon

and second by marriage to a Lebanese. Her husband Nadim, Lebanese according to Nadia, is registered as *maktum el qayd* and was born in Iraq.<sup>22</sup> The in-existent distinction, between the categories of stateless and Lebanese by Nadia is discussed later. As a *maktum el qayd*, Nadim can only pass his status of statelessness to his wife and children. Therefore Nadia's self-identification as Lebanese could be one of practicality in the desire to have a family that is considered legal to the state and therefore able to access the very necessary benefits of healthcare and education and legitimacy for her husband and family's recognized status in Lebanon. It is important to note that Nadia's Syrian citizenship is of little practical use to her or her children. With the war in Syria her own ability to access healthcare and other services by crossing the border is limited. Moreover, as a woman her citizenship status is not transferable to her children.

### 5.3. DERELICT CITIZENSHIP

As addressed by Um Ahmad, prior to 1994, most Dom were *qayd el dars*, meaning subscription under study for citizenship. Upon the passing of the naturalization act on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1994, many Dom went from the status of "under study" to that of Lebanese citizen (Terre des hommes 2010, 18). The TDH report states that about 21% of Dom are without citizenship, of which 5.7% are *qayd el dars*, 5% are "undefined" and 15% are non-ID holders (Terre des hommes 2010, 40). According to the report, *qayd el dars* is a status referring to those who have applied to citizenship and are as the word suggests, "under study". The report does not clearly identify how many Dom are in the category of *maktum el qayd*, a fourth category of ID holder. The report does however define the meaning of the status as the result of a Lebanese family's failure to register with the state for generations (Terre des hommes 2010, 90).

This study cannot speak to the validity of TDH's definition of *maktum el qayd*, in part because limited research is available on the subject, however the status of *maktum el qayd* is that of state recognized statelessness. The rights and conceptions of *maktum el qayd* is discussed in more detail in the section 5.4. *MAKTUM EL QAYD LUBNANI*. This section aims to outline the processes towards becoming *maktum el qayd* as explained by Dom themselves.

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<sup>22</sup> Nadim does not hold Iraqi citizenship.

As observed through fieldwork, a growing number of Dom are becoming classified by the Lebanese state as *maktum el qayd*. According to Dom in Hay el Gharbe, the status of *maktum el qayd* does not seem to be, as TDH defines it, a result of generations of neglect in registration.

Issues related to the registration of marriages and children's birth seem to be the primary reason for which Dom are quickly becoming *maktum el qayd*. In accordance with Lebanese law, marriages must be registered with the state. Although Dom officially marry through an Islamic religious ceremony, many reported failing to meet the civil requirements of registering a marriage. Registration with the *ma7kameh* is often too costly and therefore the personal status or *a7waal ish shakhsiyyeh* is not registered to the State. As a result children born out of wedlock are at risk being born without citizenship.

For mothers holding the category of *maktum el qayd* or a foreign passport registering their child, despite being born in Lebanon, is impossible. For stateless Dom or those holding a foreign passport, failing to register their marriage and therefore unable to legally demonstrate marriage to a Lebanese can easily lead to a child's loss or rather inability to acquire citizenship. If a child is born out of wedlock to a Lebanese Dom father, he should claim the child as rightfully his. However, according to Dom this process must be finalized within six months of a child's birth. If not, the window for passing citizenship is closed and a father must pass a paternity test. Upon passing a paternity test the child can claim the father's citizenship status. This process was explained as being timely and more importantly unaffordable.

It could be said that a possible solution to this problem is to pass the citizenship of the man to the non-Lebanese woman as is permitted by Lebanese law. However, Dom reported a new unwritten Lebanese policy, whereby a Lebanese man married to a foreign woman is unable to pass citizenship to his wife until a child is born of that marriage. Once a child is born, the process and costs associated with registering and acquiring citizenship for both mother and newborn are unaffordable and the process confusing. Hind, married to a Lebanese, expressed that although she is Syrian and her husband Lebanese, their children are neither because of the restrictions set by the General Security directives.

The increase in *maktum el qayd* is also due in part to the marriage of Lebanese female Dom to *maktum el qayd* men. As Lebanese citizenship law dictates that the father passes citizenship status to his children and therefore new generations of stateless Dom are born. Field work shows that Dom are increasingly falling into the category of *maktum el qayd*.

Although complications such as marriage to a foreign wife or to a stateless spouse contributes to new generations of *maktum el qayd* observations in the field suggest that more often than not younger generations of *maktum el qayd* have either acquired the status through parents born outside of the country or by the failure –whatever the reason—to register with the state.

It should be noted that although never suggested as a deterring factor is pursuing the process towards citizenship Dom illiteracy is likely to play an important role as doing so requires a significant amount of paperwork.

#### 5.4. *MAKTUM EL QAYD LUBNANI*

This section describes Dom feelings about the status of *maktum el qayd* and its relationship to being Lebanese. The meaning of this term can be roughly translated as “silent” or “invisible” subscription.

As previously mentioned, although Nadia’s husband is *maktum el qayd*, and therefore according to the government “stateless”, she believes that through marriage she is rightfully Lebanese and entitled to Lebanese citizenship, as would be the case with any non-Lebanese woman married to a Lebanese man. For Nadia, Nadim’s status as stateless is not contradictory to being Lebanese, a sentiment shared by many other Dom. This feeling is made clear in her refusal to self-identify or to identify her family as the single category of *maktum el qayd*. Rather, Nadia uses of the compound term *maktumeen lubnaneen*. A conversation with Nadia:

From watching the news on the family’s flat screen television, a change from the usual Bollywood films, Nadia learned of an upcoming citizenship march. The week after the march, upon reminder, Nadia did not seem to recall the existence of the event. What was previously a point of conversation was barely remembered and follow up questions about the march seemed not to be a subject worthy of discussion.

In response to questions about the march, Nadia began to explain. She clarified that the march was not for the *maktumeen*, but for the children of women married to non-



Lebanese men prohibited from becoming Lebanese citizens. According to her, certain groups are prioritized when it comes to acquiring Lebanese citizenship. The order is as follows: children born to non-Lebanese fathers, *qayd el dars* (under study) and lastly the *maktumeen lubnaneen*.

When asked to explain the difference between a Lebanese citizen and *maktum el qayd*, Nadia repeated that she and her family are *maktumeen lubnaneen*. She explained that *maktumeen* are equal to Lebanese as they are able to acquire a travel document “*issa bissa*”<sup>23</sup>, own property, attend school and work. The ability to participate in society as a Lebanese citizen does, through working, owning property, etcetera prove her joint classification of *maktumeen lubnaneen*.

While Nadia was adamant in the fact that there is not difference between a Lebanese and a *maktum el qayd*, she felt it important to show the family’s official documents. A red suitcase taken from the back closet revealed a collection of thin slips of paper folded into squares. On each slip a passport sized photo of eight children plus husband and wife. She carefully unfolded the delicate paper emphasizing that all the documents are officially stamped, “*kulhun mazbouteen*”.

Before putting away the documents, Nadia pointed out registration numbers that represent her family’s “turn in line” for citizenship. Although formerly stating that there is no difference between *maktum el qayd* and Lebanese, it was absolutely essential that it be understood how much effort she had taken to complete all the necessary steps towards achieving full citizenship. Finally she shared the belief that only through acquiring full citizenship will her children overcome poverty.

Nadia’s belief that there is a prioritization for citizenship acquisition, in which *maktumeen* are last, demonstrates an understanding of the state’s position towards a group of people who are deemed in legal verbiage as “invisible”. On a day to day basis Nadia identifies herself and her family as Lebanese and ignores the term *maktum el qayd*. However in the context of this conversation, in which the main subject was the legal status of her family, Nadia insisted on the compound term *maktum el qayd Lubnaneen*. The use of the compound term can be seen as a refusal of the category to which Nadia and her family are subjected. For Nadia and many other Dom, being Lebanese is not contingent upon Lebanese citizenship. Beyond feeling Lebanese through marriage, love for the country, the amount of time spent living within its boundaries,

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<sup>23</sup> *Laissez passer*

etc., Nadia's conversation highlights how being a citizen and being stateless, are in practicality of little difference.

Nadia's explanation of the rights of the *maktumeen al qayd* such as owning property, working and attending government school is legally inaccurate, however not far from the truth in practice. For example, legally as a *maktum el qayd*, Nadim is not permitted to own property. However, in the informal neighborhood of Hay el Gharbe, the al Salah house was purchased from another family years ago. Paperwork, although not valid according to the state, is recognized as proof of ownership to those living in the *hay*. In spite of paperwork, should the Lebanese government choose to clear the neighborhood of its inhabitants, as it did in the formerly Dom populated informal settlement of Khalde, the al Salah's claim to ownership is of no legal standing.

A second example further illustrates how the statuses of citizenship and *maktum el qayd* change little in the lives of Dom. Nadim, is one of the few Dom to hold a steady civil service job. Although as a non-Lebanese citizen he is not permitted to work without a sponsor (*kefil*), Nadim has worked for the Beirut municipality for more than ten years. Although one of the distinctions between citizen and non-citizen is the right to work, many Dom are still working. And, in Nadim's case for a governmental institution. Regardless of his having held a steady job for ten plus years, Nadim works without a contract and therefore does not experience any of the privileges commonly associated with salaried work. According to Nadia however, many citizens working in Lebanon on a contract are not entitled to social security and job security is not guaranteed in any legal way. None of the Dom included in this study, citizen or not, worked on a contractual basis. Again, Nadia's statement that no distinction between being *maktum el qayd* and Lebanese citizen holds fast when examining the everyday lives of Dom.

The notion that no difference exists between a *maktum el qayd* and a Lebanese is challenged by Nadia's final statement that citizenship is the only way out of poverty. Although at first refusing to distinguish between the two, Nadia finally shared the idea that being *maktum el qayd* means a life of poverty and she holds faith that upon acquiring citizenship her family will overcome their economic difficulties. Finally, Nadia's decision to share official paperwork and citizenship registration numbers demonstrates an awareness that the process towards citizenship validates

her family's existence. Unlike the al Salah family, members of the Sheib family do not share the same citizenship status.

Mahmoud Sheib, his wife Hind and the next-door neighbor Sabah were sitting in the alley on plastic chairs discussing a possible visit to the *mukhtar*. Mahmoud, silver haired and nearly toothless, was debating if he should make the short trip to the *mukhtar*'s office in order to request the *ikhraj ed* of his three children with Hind. The three youngest children of the Sheib family are *maktum el qayd* despite their father's status as a Lebanese citizen. Mahmoud explained that the first step towards acquiring Lebanese citizenship for his children is to register the *ikhraj ed* with the government.

Sabah, mother of two children with Lebanese citizenship, argued with Mahmoud who seemed unconvinced about the urgency of visiting the *mukhtar*. After some time, Mahmoud walked away, hand in hand with his youngest son. Shortly after, father and son returned not from the *mukhtar*, but with a steaming bag of bread from the bakery. Mahmoud disregarded surprise that he had not gone to request the paperwork. He explained that his children are already Lebanese regardless of their lack of official paperwork. Mahmoud dismissed the concerns of his wife and neighbor, and prepared the family *labneh* and *zaatar* sandwiches.

For Mahmoud Sheib, state recognition of his children's citizenship is guaranteed by his being a Lebanese man. The ability of the youngest three children to acquire full citizenship in the future is surrounded by no doubt. Much like Nadia's beliefs, although circumstantially different, the vignette with Mahmoud Sheib, illustrates how full citizenship is but only one criterion to being Lebanese.

Upon sensing the frustration of family and neighbors with his disregard for the urgency of going to the *mukhtar*, Mahmoud further clarified his actions or lack thereof as discussed in the following section.

## 5.5. MYTHS TO CITIZENSHIP

Many Dom offer theories on how or when the acquisition of citizenship will or can take place. To return to the vignette about the Sheib family, in response to frustrations about his choice to visit the bakery instead of the *mukhtar*, Mahmoud explained that urgency is futile considering the Lebanese state of affairs. Justifying his inaction Mahmoud began to describe the Lebanese political scene. Without a president, citizenship cannot be awarded and all citizenship issues

remain on hold until a new head of state is elected. Further, as a president is not likely to be elected in the near future, there is no need to rush into processing his children's citizenship applications. Once a president is elected, citizenship will be quickly granted to any individual rightfully entitled to citizenship. Mahmoud did not show any urgency in registering his children, as he is certain that a father's citizenship automatically passes to his children. The idea that a man's citizenship is automatically passed to his children, is in certain circumstances factual, however in the case of the Sheib family, Mahmoud's children are considered as born out of wedlock. Due to the fact that the marriage between Hind and Mahmoud was not registered to the Lebanese state and citizenship papers were not registered immediately after birth, a series of costly paternity tests will be required before citizenship can be passed. An in-depth discussion of the non-acquisition of citizenship of Dom children will be addressed in section 5.3. DERELICT CITIZENSHIP

Mahmoud Sheib was not the only Dom to share stories regarding how citizenship can be acquired. Nadia explained that citizenship issues are pending the end of the Syrian crisis. According to Nadia, citizenship is not a priority with the state's overwhelming responsibility to bear up a million plus refugees and the possibility of the spill over of war. Only until the crisis in Syria is over and enough time has passed will the *maktumeen* be able to access citizenship. On a separate occasion Nadia shared the idea that at the price of 10,000 US dollars citizenship is for purchase. Nadia explained that her husband, born in Iraq, is not a Lebanese citizen because he was unable to pay a registration fee of \$10,000.

Many Dom share the belief that a large sum of money, usually \$6,000 or \$10,000, allows for the purchase of citizenship. Although some Dom believe that money alone can provide access to citizenship others believe that through connections or *wasta*, citizenship can be easily acquired. The door to full citizenship can be opened by access to a lawyer or by connections to somebody in power. No Dom was able to provide examples of relatives or friends that have recently acquired citizenship by the above-mentioned methods. Moreover, the recurrence of an event similar to the presidential act was never mentioned as a possibility for gaining citizenship.

Not a single Dom shared the belief that access to citizenship is not possible. However Dom did express uncertainty as to why and how the topic of citizenship is related to their lives in relation to this study. On a spring afternoon after the long and jumbled conversation mentioned above about citizenship, Nadia closed the subject by concluding that citizenship issues are confusing and not necessary to understanding Dom lives in Hay el Gharbe.

## CHAPTER 6. THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

“Citizenship is both an instrument and an object of closure.” (Brubaker 1992, 34) By this it is meant that citizenship excludes non-citizens by defining the boundaries of state territory, meanwhile serving as the certificate for accessing certain privileges. From the perspective of formal citizenship, Dom are unquestionably citizens as it was with the passing of Presidential Decree No. 5247 in 1994 that Dom became naturalized Lebanese citizens. The naturalization experienced by Dom is what Brubaker defines as, “anomalous and infrequent, a privilege bestowed by the state on certain deserving individuals” (Brubaker 1992, 33).<sup>24</sup> As new Lebanese citizens, Dom left the “world of insecurity” for one of legal legitimacy (Turner 2008, 51).

For more than twenty years many individuals in the Dom community of Hay el Gharbe are Lebanese. Legal documents stored away in a suitcase or hanging in a plastic bag on the wall provide Dom with the opportunity to share the same legal status with other Lebanese. If we limit our understanding to citizenship as a *legal* status, Dom are assumed to have the same opportunity as their fellow citizens in accessing state services. The TDH report, the only extensive non-academic research about the Dom conducted in Lebanon and the entire Middle East, clearly endorses this restricted understanding of citizenship as a status that allows for access to the resources of the state and therefore an improved way of life.

“The acquisition of Lebanese nationality has significantly affected the Dom way of life. As discussed above, they have exchanged their traditional itinerant lifestyle in favor of sedentarisation. Meanwhile, having Lebanese nationality has had a positive impact on the Dom’s ability to access government services, which is particularly visible when comparing the lives of the younger generations, those born after 1994, to those of their parents and grandparents.” (Terre des hommes 2010, 23)

Both of these changes, assumed to be brought about through the acquisition of citizenship, and the positive value to which they are assigned are highly debatable. In fact, this study finds that for Dom in Hay el Gharbe, sedentarisation has meant a life in a neighborhood where citizenship rights cannot be exercised and where state services have been suspended. This study argues that

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<sup>24</sup> Unless clarified otherwise Dom referred to in this section are those of Lebanese citizenship. The use of the word Lebanese is also in reference to those holding citizenship. For those non-citizen Dom, reference to the status *maktum el qayd* will be made.

citizenship does not automatically allow for improved access to government services. The THD study fails to acknowledge the distinction between *formal* and *substantive* citizenship. It hastily assumes that a positive relationship exists between citizenship and improved access to rights, however scholars in the field of Citizenship studies are unlikely agree. It is generally accepted amongst scholars that formal citizenship is an insufficient condition for the enjoyment of equal access to rights and as such debates have long attempted to understand how to bridge that gap between the former and the latter.

In the context of the existing literature, reviewed in Chapter 2, this study aims not to reinvent the wheel by debating whether or not citizenship is sufficient in enjoying equal access to rights but rather, through the case of the Dom, it attempts to identify the reasons for which formal citizenship are not a sufficient condition for substantive rights being the acquisition of socio-economic and civic rights. Scholars have debated why certain strands of citizenship are not full enjoyed. For example, Davis' focuses on how and why it is possible to enjoy civil and judicial *jinsiyya rights* but not social and economic rights *muwatana* rights. Or, Glen's argument that social rights are not sufficient in enjoying Marshal's other two strands of citizenship, being civil and political. Unlike other studies that try to understand how one or two set of rights attached to citizenship are not accessible, this study focuses on how it is possible to enjoy virtually no citizenship rights be they civil, political, social, economic and judicial. Empirical research presented in Chapter Four tends to show that Dom did not enjoy fully none of these rights. More, Chapter Five demonstrated that Dom did not acquire a citizen *habitus*, defined by Isin as ways of thought and conduct that are internalized over a relatively long period of time" through their two decades of being Lebanese (Isin 2008, 18).

In similar cases explicit government policy is identified as the reason for the lack of access to certain privileges. In Davis' study on citizenship in the Middle East, he sheds light on the Israeli policy of excluding Palestinian citizens of Israel from their rights (the same for Jordan, after the 1988 decision to "untie" both banks of Jordan, the *Fakk al-Irtibat*). Also, Hanafi and Long's work finds that an explicit policy of the Lebanese state aims to deny Palestinians from civil and socio-economic rights (Hanafi & Long 2010). Unlike other marginalized populations, Dom do

not seem to be the target population of a discriminatory policy, further begging an investigation for their lack of access.

This study contends that, in the case of the Dom in Hay el Gharbe, two factors contribute to their experienced precariousness more twenty years after citizenship. First, this study addresses the severe socioeconomic inequality experienced by Dom that dramatically reduces their ability to enjoy citizenship. Second, it tackles the consequences of living in a “space of exception” (Hanafi & Long 2010). Although this study focuses on what might be considered to be external contributions, socioeconomic status and “space of exception”, to the experience of the Dom citizen, it does not intend to argue that other factors are inexistent. This study will not explore the possibility that Dom, to whatever degree, play a role in determining their status in Lebanon today. It could be argued that Dom embody a way of existing in this world, a way that does not ‘fit’ the role of the ‘good citizen’, for which the consequence – willing or unwillingly faced- is a life of extreme disadvantage both legally and socioeconomically.

## 6.1. SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

This section asserts that as a result of their socioeconomic situation, Dom citizens are unable to access rights associated with citizenship. If through naturalization the limited resources of the state become accessible, citizenship to Dom in Hay el Gharbe means little if not nothing. Dom socioeconomic status plays the most decisive role in limiting their ability to access the privileges of citizenship as is most evident in their experience of healthcare and education. These two examples, to be discussed in detail below, clearly demonstrate that Dom rights are virtually inaccessible as a result of their socioeconomic status. Citizenship, in the Dom case, did not ease their social exclusion.

The impact of Dom socioeconomic status on their ability to access rights is evident through an analysis of their experience with healthcare. In Lebanon, a citizen that is not employed and enrolled in NSSF or social security, is entitled to subsidized medical care for in-patient health related visits and procedures at public clinics. The financing of in-patient visits by the Ministry of Public Health or the *wizara* is determined on a case by case basis. Out-patient services are a minimum cost of 15,000 LBP at public clinic. The case of Khadija, Dima’s mother presented in



Chapter Four demonstrates how as a Lebanese citizen, despite government financial support, Dima's family was still unable to pay for a lifesaving procedure. It should be noted that Dima's family lived in some of the best housing conditions in Hay el Gharbe as compared to other Dom and the family relied on a steady source of income. For other Dom in the neighborhood, most without a family breadwinner, paying for a doctor's appointment, let alone thinking about the costs of a life saving procedure, is out of the question. Without the necessary financial resources to pay for the most basic of government health services most Dom do not even consider government provided health care as a resource. The high rate of visit by Dom citizens to the Tahaddi dispensary further serves to prove this point.

It should not be presumed that the costs of accessing healthcare are exclusive to the price of doctors, appointments and surgeries. Upon zooming out it becomes apparent that the auxiliary costs such as transportation, medicine and even time away from work are important barriers in receiving health services.

This study finds that more than the traditional interpretation of barriers to health care being high premium costs or prohibitive doctors fees, the neglected costs such as the price of a box of Panadol is crucial enough of a deterrent when dealing with an over-marginalized population. The hidden costs of health care are well illustrated in a conversation with the director of the Tahaddi clinic. The director expressed that AUB visiting doctors, recruited in full knowledge of the socioeconomic woes of Dom continue to prescribe unaffordable medication. Doing so was not malicious or out of an interest in promoting a particular company brand, but rather a matter of medical education, one in which marginalized populations are not taken into consideration. Although visiting doctors are advised by the permanent Tahaddi staff on more affordable brands, the fact that their presence is a part of the AUB university hospital's philanthropic work, demonstrates how it is likely (and reportedly) replicated in uncontrolled degrees at government and private clinics.

Healthcare costs as simple as those printed on a hospital medical bill cannot be the primary mode of investigation when attempting to understand the barriers to citizenship rights. Rather, this study suggests a methodological distinction must be made when considering the citizenship

practices of marginalized populations. As such a holistic approach in which a close examination of the neglected costs associated with accessing rights before beginning to discuss the rights at all must be taken. This study argues that Dom socioeconomic marginalization demands a look ‘beyond’ or rather ‘before’ the costs commonly associated with healthcare towards what might appear insignificant. However, fieldwork shows that to what some might seem insignificant, to Dom can become a definitive barrier to accessing rights. Simply, in such dire circumstances the cost of a box of medicine might be enough to prevent one from accessing health care services in its totality.

It should be noted the TDH report finds that discrimination plays a significant role in accessing health care (Terre des hommes 2010, 50).<sup>25</sup> It is not the intention of this research to dismiss the importance of the impact of discrimination and isolation of Dom on access to healthcare. However, it argues that discrimination is but one and not the main reason for Dom avoidance of health services. It is the neglected cost associated with healthcare that this study finds more relevant in the lives of the Dom in accessing government hospitals. And, only through a close proximity to marginalized communities, as opposed to focus group discussions or household surveys, that the impact of the minute expenses that make up global costs of healthcare become apparent. Then one understands that naturalization (i.e. being provided full-access to state services) changed virtually nothing with respect to Dom living conditions as this population was not able to jump the additional barrier. If citizenship is the “full membership in (what I shall call) the societal community”, then the Dom case helps to illustrate that a remaining membership fee can *de facto* play the role of a selective policy (Parsons 1965, 1009).

In a system where privileges are given a value beyond what the state provides, it will always be possible for “two individuals or two constituencies to be of the same nationality yet unequal citizens of the same state.” (Uri Davis 1997, 5). Beyond the financial limitations to accessing the medical system, Dom inability to read and write, plays an important role in fully enjoying health

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<sup>25</sup> “Dom women who hold Lebanese citizenship can also be entitled to receive subsidized hospitalization during childbirth, in which case the Ministry of Health would cover between 90% and 95% of costs. This coincides with reports from women in the Dom community who reported they paid 40,000-50,000 LBP.”(Terre des hommes 2010, 50)

care. Entering a hospital without the ability to read signs or visiting a pharmacy without understanding a doctor's prescription further highlights their unequal status.

Statistics about Dom education seem to provide the strongest evidence that their naturalization has allowed for improved access to government services. Observations show that Dom are increasingly entering the classroom. In the Bekaa valley and Saida, the average increase in school enrolment is approximately twelve percent and in Beirut more than twenty five percent. Over more than twenty years this increase does not seem significant. This study seeks to point out that such data although interesting, at least in Beirut, cannot be so hastily correlated with citizenship status. Existing data does not question whether or not those classrooms are in government schools or in informal education centers.<sup>26</sup>

First, in Lebanon six NGOs are currently working with Dom in the field of education. More specifically for this study with Dom in Hay el Gharbe enjoy the services of the Tahaddi school. Interestingly, it was precisely at the time of naturalization in the mid-90s that Tahaddi began to provide its services. Fieldwork shows that it is not in part with non-governmental education this unveil the fallacy presented by TDH that Dom are granted and accessing the right to government school, a citizenship privilege. But rather that the opportunity to citizenship comes from the work of non-state actors. Once again showing that although citizenship might provide the opportunity to access, this right of entry is not sufficient in guaranteeing the attainment of education. The only Dom sample by the TDH study is the Dom in Hay el Gharbe.

Although other factors contribute to difficulty in accessing education, ultimately the financial costs associated with enrolling a child in school is for many families impossible.

As Lebanese citizens Dom are granted access to government schools and therefore state curriculum, teachers and administration. Although citizens are granted access to government schools enrollment is not free and according to Dom is approximately 250,000 LBP per child. As discussed in Chapter Four, where the cost of enrolling a single child in a school year is equivalent to a family of more than six's monthly income, the likelihood of paying such fees is

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<sup>26</sup> A look at the household survey used by TDH does not distinguish government from education centers run by local and international organizations (Terre des hommes 2010, 90).

next to nothing. In the average Dom home of four children, assuming that all were to attend government school enrollment fees, not to mention uniforms, transportation, supplies and food, would be the equivalent to more than thirty three percent of the family's yearly income. Moreover, the monthly salary of Dom family's is likely to be in part if not completely a contribution of one of the children.<sup>27</sup> The above mentioned factors all suggest that Dom socioeconomic status does not allow for one to begin to think about paying the costs associated with accessing the state school system.

Again, it is important to note that certainly other factors such as discrimination when accessing education plays an important role in Dom access to their entitled rights. However, although acknowledging the reality of discrimination this study claims that first and foremost it is the hidden costs of accessing education that plays the most significant role. Again this study suggests that a close examination of the costs of access must be made when studying citizenship amongst marginalized populations.

Another example lending to the argument that socioeconomic barriers prevent Dom in enjoying their rights is that of labor. One of the driving forces behind advocacy for citizenship, amongst many Palestinians in Lebanon for civil rights, is the uncontrolled ability to enter the job market and the chance for upward mobility. Although it is true that unlike non-Lebanese (foreigners, aliens, refugees, migrants that must apply for a work permit) the job market, Dom have no legal restrictions on work since their naturalization, however their socioeconomic status prevents them from accessing the entire job market. More precisely, fieldwork shows that Dom operate in a segment of the market that is unregulated and where there exists no distinction between them as citizen and a stateless or migrant laborer. Once again, the naturalization did not impact this segment of their lives. As a result, many Dom engage in sectors of the job market outside of what is considered to be legally and socially acceptable. A quote by a municipality employee helps to illustrate both the type of work commonly engaged in by Dom and the expectations they face from majority society, "Why do the women beg? Why don't they just get a job?"

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<sup>27</sup> "19.4% of the under-18 Dom population in the sample are working." (Terre des hommes 2010, 54)

First, often Dom work, despite citizenship, is illegal according to the state and outside the formal job market such as begging and dancing. Dom continue to work in unsanctioned sectors for two reasons. First, and contrary to the Palestinian population mentioned above, Dom in Hay el Gharbe are not qualified by what might be considered as professional work skills. At the time of field work not a single Dom had a state recognized school certificate and all adults were illiterate. Unable to join the “skilled” labor force, Dom participate in the illegal job market. Second, begging and dancing, by comparison to potential jobs allowed by the legal job market prove to be more profitable. For Dom in Hay el Gharbe, one exception can be considered when understanding Dom access to citizenship rights. The wealthiest Dom families and those that owned property outside of Hay el Gharbe that through citizenship were afforded the right to travel in and out of the country on a Lebanese passport. Dom women reported to have traveled to the Gulf States to dance and beg for significantly higher earnings than in Lebanon. Citizenship allows for travel both in and out of Lebanon and for many Gulf countries free visas at the airport.<sup>28</sup>

With the necessary resources to enter labor sector, outside of the manual labor sector, citizenship might have served to improve the socioeconomic standing of Dom. With few exceptions, citizenship does not provide the needed finances or education to accessing the associated privileges, neither does it guarantee equal access to the job market.

Hitherto, this study has focused on what state resources are made accessible, however out of reach for Dom, through citizenship. It is useful to approach citizenship from one of the most basic rights, being the state of existing as a citizen or the continuation of the status of citizen. For Brubaker, the distinction between resident and citizen is a legal existence within the boundaries of the nation-state guaranteed by the latter. At the very least one should be able, without restriction, to continue the legacy of citizen within the family. Chapter Five of this study suggests that even the ability to pass citizenship to one’s immediate family, spouse and child, is affected by the socioeconomic realities of Dom everyday life. Where most without citizenship and the associated rights might ask, “Can I afford not to be a citizen?” A Dom is likely to ask a

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<sup>28</sup> It is rumored that Dom in Syria, despite having citizenship, were from traveling on their passports for the bad reputation they gave Syrians when traveling to the Gulf. Moreover, Dom women who travel to the Gulf to dance are hired on a “contract” and are not paying for their own airfare.

very different and unusual question, “Can I afford to be a citizen?” The case of Dom shows that there are hidden costs to maintaining and passing citizenship to loved ones.

To what many newly weds might seem a necessary and insignificant fee, to many Dom the cost of registering a marriage is out of reach. Relatedly, as was demonstrated in the Section 5.3, requesting the *ikhraj ed* for a child in order to prove their existence prior to begin the process of registering for citizenship is unaffordable. According to one Dom father the *mukhtar* fee for acquiring documentation for his children prevented him from beginning the re-application process for his children’s derelict citizenship.

It should be noted that this study acknowledges that Dom are active participants in failing to register their marriage or children, however the limitations to accessing the rights above rights and the section to be detailed below about Dom life in the state of exception demonstrated that Dom have made perhaps made a calculated risk assessment regarding the benefits of citizenship and the costs necessary in maintaining legal status. This point should explored in further research.

This section provides evidence, through Dom experience of health care, education, labor and maintenance of citizenship, for the position that socioeconomic barriers can act as total roadblocks to accessing citizenship rights amongst marginalized populations. Moreover, a methodological approach to studying citizenship amongst marginalized citizenship is suggested, in which the hidden costs of citizenship are examined. The following section presents an alternative and additional factor in Dom inability to access citizenship privileges. It is possible to argue that despite the financial obstacles faced by Dom and additional contributing factor is the lack state presence in the neighborhood in which they live. Examples being the proximity of a government school or the reach of state security services. Although these factors play a role in the way in which Dom experience citizenship, field work indicates that it is the state decision (or lack therefore) to allow for neighborhoods like Hay el Gharbe that limits the citizenship practices of Dom.

## 6.2. HAY EL GHARBE A STATE OF EXCEPTION

As is illustrated in the chapters and sections above, socioeconomic status plays a critical role in the everyday lives of Dom. Although continued research is required to further understand the reasons for Dom settling in Hay el Gharbe, through observations and conversations it is evident that for Dom, living in the informal settlement is one of the few financially feasible options for renting or buying property in an urban setting.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the discrimination faced by Dom tends towards a preference for a life on the periphery, in areas where there exists little contact with non-Dom and state institutions.

This section through a discussion of housing, utilities and services argues that Dom in Hay el Gharbe live in a ‘state of exception’ where practices of citizenship are limited. And, in the state of exception, specific governmentalities are generated that further distance Dom from their rights as citizens while simultaneously mimicking acts of citizenship.

Giorgio Agamben’s figure of *homo sacer*, “the state of exception” and the space of “the camp” are given significant attention in the fields of migration, refugee and citizenship studies (Engin 2008, 199). Agamben’s state of exception is that in which there exists “a temporal suspension of the state of law”. As such “the camp” is “the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule.” (Agamben 2000, p. 39 quoted in Engin 2008, 199) Finally, the figure of *homo sacer* is one who was “placed outside both sacred and political domains in such a way that, if he was killed, such a death was capable of counting as neither murder or sacrifice.” (Engin 199) Without any political importance *homo sacer* exists only in ‘bare life’. (Hanafi & Long 2010, 14) The definitions above serve only to introduce the concepts often used when discussing Agamben in the field of citizenship studies. It is not the intention of this study to compare the lives of Dom to that of the ‘bare life’.

More specific to the Lebanese case, Hanafi and Long refer to Agamben’s *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) and *The State of Exception* (2005) to argue that the Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon embodies the characteristics of ‘the state of exception’

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<sup>29</sup> Prior to settling in Hay el Gharbe many Dom lived in a seaside informal settlement where living was either free or at a low cost. Moreover, other Dom communities live on the periphery of refugee camps or in tents on land upon which rent is not paid.

(*ibid.*). In the article entitled, “Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestine Refugee Camps of Lebanon”, it is argued that the refugee camps of Lebanon are “exceptional” to the state’s “monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force.” (*ibid.*) And, in the absence of the state, new governmentalities have arisen “which ensure the day-to-day functioning of the camps.” (*ibid.*, 19) The Palestinian camp is defined by Hanafi and Long as “a ‘zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and judicial protection no longer make any sense.” (*ibid.*) Dom living in Hay el Gharbe experience all of the above definitions. Unlike the state of exception defined by Hanafi and Long where certain state services are suspended, Hay el Gharbe experiences a near total absence of state services and as such Dom live not only in a state of exception, but also a state of abandon.

As residents of an informal settlement Dom do not have customary access to what can be generally understood as state services such as water, electricity, trash collection and street repairs amongst others. By customary it is not meant that residents of Hay el Gharbe experience electricity cuts more frequently or further water shortages by comparison to other areas in Beirut. But rather that the processes of receiving such services are unlike that practiced by much of the city’s residents. A ‘customary’ experience of a state service might go as follows: one’s home is directly supplied by electricity and in return one pays the state for energy consumption. While it is true that Dom utilize water and electricity supplied by the state, the opposite, being that the state supplies water and electricity for Dom to utilize, cannot be said. The absence of basic services such as electricity and water in an urban setting, mere meters from areas supplied by such services, demonstrates the state failure to provide even the most basic services to those living in Hay el Gharbe. The word failure is pernicious though as rather than an oversight on behalf of the government, the periphery of the camp is purposefully disregarded as those living within—Dom, marginalized non-Dom Lebanese, Syrians and migrant workers—are considered to be equally undesirable as their Palestinian neighbors.

The unusual relationship between services and the residents of Hay el Gharbe is possible as a result of a system of middlemen, security tax and clientelism. A life without electricity and water is almost unthinkable in the extreme temperatures and crowded living spaces of Hay el Gharbe.



Putting aside the living conditions that demand access to water and electricity, many countries and international organizations have by now declared access to water a fundamental human right. In the neighborhood this human right is not afforded to Dom. New governmentalities in the neighborhood fill the gap in basic services.<sup>30</sup> The narrow streets of Hay el Gharbe not only serve as walking paths, but also lines demarcating areas of control. Depending on where a home is situated, either in a zone controlled by a political party or that of the neighborhood *mafioso*, Dom experience services and security differently. Living in areas controlled by and therefore in allegiance with Lebanese political parties guarantees access to state supplied security, electricity and water. The lines of separation between his controlled areas and political parties are thin, usually one street to the next.

The acquisition and redistribution of state services through set prices for water and electricity and an unspoken knowledge of a system of taxes, illustrate how state contribution to the essentials of everyday life is suspended and as a result new governmentalities arise. With Dom paying taxes and service fees to alternative authorities, they are distanced from the practices of the good citizen as they are implicated in an illicit system. Beyond the illicit nature of the system in which Dom are forced to participate, the fact that services are provided by non-state actors within the neighborhood means that Dom need only rarely make contact with the state in order to demand services or even more simply pay bills. For Dom, living in a state of exception, where state services are tangentially available and acts such as paying utilities and taxes are mimicked, further isolates and discourages contact with the state.

Neighborhood authorities in Hay el Gharbe provide not only basic services such as water and electricity, but also security and shelter. As discussed in section 4.1. HOUSING AND SERVICES, building in Hay el Gharbe occurs without government issued permits and as a result all construction occurs outside of the law. The suspension of Lebanese law with regards to building is further evidence of the state of exception within the neighborhood. Despite the absence of state control over construction, building is regulated through non-state permits. In parts of the

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<sup>30</sup> This study adopts the definition of governmentality as a notion that allows for a discussion of “alternatives to conventional modes of governance” (Hanafi & Long 2010, 19).

neighborhood, the exclusive control of the building market is maintained through a system of unofficial permits and permissions.

It was reported that should one dare to build outside of the neighborhood permit system, the consequences could be violence or even worse, a phone call to government authorities to report unsanctioned construction. The threat of state intervention in the neighborhood serves as an effective tool in maintaining a monopoly over construction. Not only do neighborhood governmentalities arise and operate within a state of exception as a result of the absence of government authority, but also they are, in part, able to do so by utilizing the very authority they replace as a tool in maintaining control. In this case, state is not only absent, allowing for unauthorized construction and the extortion of its citizens, but also, the role of the state itself—of maintaining security and control—is strangely repurposed to protect non-state actors. Clearly, Hay el Gharbe becomes a ‘zone of indistinction’ where “the very concepts of subjective right and judicial protection no longer make any sense.” (Hanafi & Long 2010, 14)

The case of Dom in Hay el Gharbe is much like the neighboring Palestinian refugee. Both live in the state of exception, although the latter lives in the camp and the former on its periphery. Yet, one critical exception exists between the case of the Palestinian refugee and Dom, being that the case of Dom demonstrates that it is possible to live within the state of exception meanwhile existing as citizen.

As mentioned previously, many Dom claim ownership to apartments built in years passed. Housing documents demonstrating ownership although acknowledged within Hay el Gharbe are not recognized outside of the boundaries of the neighborhood. Documents claiming ownership, are informal and are not legally binding. In an informal settlement on government property, residents operate within an informal system of renting and buying property in much the same way one might in a formal neighborhood. It was mentioned several times that he also controls the vast majority of property and housing sales in the neighborhood, however further research is required to be able to include this as further evidence of governmentalities. While the informal buying and selling of property serves to demonstrate the systems that arise in the absence of the state, these processes also open a discussion about importance of citizenship status within Hay el

Gharbe. Fieldwork showed that citizenship status amongst the Dom did not seem to affect the ability to own property or where a family lived (affecting the way in which they experience security and access services). The al Salah family, the only completely non-Lebanese Dom family lived in the lower part of Hay el Gharbe where everyday life appeared to be less threatened by his authority. Meanwhile, the three Lebanese families included in this study, based on the location of their home are constantly living in the shadows of his two towers and in what appears to be a more precarious situation. In Hay el Gharbe, where everyday life is largely under control of a handful powerful men nationality or citizenship status does not matter.

The neighborhood governmentalities are enforced through coercion that goes unregulated by the state, of little surprise as their existence comes about in the absence of state security. In Hay el Gharbe state security is virtually inexistent leaving residents of the neighborhood unprotected against many forms of violence and injustice. The reasons for which he is able to collect a security tax are twofold. First, in the absence of another security apparatus he has a competitive advantage in the neighborhood's security sector regardless of legality. And, second, police forces rarely enter the neighborhood and are therefore unlikely to guarantee the safety of the individual who dares to oppose his security tax. The governmentalities that arise within the neighborhood are permitted to continue unregulated until overstepping the boundaries of the Hay el Gharbe and threatening the security of the state. On May 5, 2015 security forces entered the neighborhood, a rare site, and arrested him after multiple warrants were issued over possession of weapons, throwing hand grenades and involvement in shootings and robberies. The arrests came at a time when multiple attacks on Lebanese army posts were occurring and his involvement was suspected. This illustrates how, much like the camps, the violence and lawlessness that occurs in Hay el Gharbe is fine as long as it happens to the country's perceived undesirables.

While not within the same stream of violence and coercion associated with access to services mentioned above, in the state of exception where government services are not extended and rule of law suspended, it should be noted that new governmentalities are not only that of political parties and the neighborhood *mafioso*, but also within the mission of philanthropic work of Tahaddi. In the absence of state education and health services within the neighborhood, Tahaddi steps in to fill the gap. Without questioning the dedication and good will of the Tahaddi staff, an

unfortunate paradox presents itself. In being provided informal education Dom continue to remain outside the boundary of state services. Many Dom act, albeit rarely for the entire school career, as good citizens by participating in education and as such participate as citizens. However, the system in which Dom participate in informal and outside of state sanctioned education, therefore although Tahaddi's school allows for Dom to access education and participate as good citizen, it is also true that such informal services further isolation and a lack of contact with state services.

If research in Shatila (Hanafi & Long 2010) shows that the Palestinian refugee can be understood to live the bare life within a state of exception, this study finds that it is not only the refugee in Lebanon who lives the bare life and not only the camp that is exceptional, but also parts of its periphery and those living within. Unlike the Shatila refugee camp, the creation of an explicit government policy towards the Palestinian population, Hay el Gharbe, titled as such based on its relation to the refugee camp, is a secondary consequence of state policy. And, one that is allowed to remain as such. The state of exception, where "Lebanese law for all practical purposes, in that it is only rarely and arbitrarily enforced, has been suspended", also exists on the margins of the camp in Hay el Gharbe (*ibid.*, 14).

It is argued here that residents of Hay el Gharbe live in a "zone of indistinction" where Dom ability to practice citizenship is suspended. (Agamben 1998, 70 as quoted in Hanafi & Long 2010, 14) This zone of indistinction unlike that described by Hanafi and Long results not only from an explicit policy in which certain state services are suspended but also state disregard for the camps periphery and those living within. Where the state actively turns a blind eye to the neighborhood those living in Hay el Gharbe are left to fend for themselves. Dom in Hay el Gharbe live not only in state of exception, but also a state of abandon. Unlike the camp where there exists a purposeful suspension of specific state institutions, the periphery of the camp goes completely unregulated.

Agamben's influential work has been used to understand "refugees and other forms of unwanted and/or unauthorized migrants" (Engin 2008, 168). Unlike other research that engages Agamben's concepts, many Dom are neither migrant nor refugee, but rather citizen. In the case of Dom "the

state of exception” is experienced not by refugees without a state to call theirs, but rather individuals living in the country to which they legally claim citizenship.

## CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

Through detailed recollection of fieldwork this study finds that two main factors contribute to the experience of citizenship amongst the Dom living in Hay el Gharbe: socioeconomic status and life in a “state of exception”.

Fieldwork and previous research suggest that Dom live on the periphery of the margins of Lebanese society (Terre des hommes 2010, Bochi 2007). Although naturalized in 1994, Dom are not substantive citizens as they rarely access healthcare, government education, the formal job market or the judicial system. Not only did citizenship fail to secure Dom with equal access to the resources of the status, it also failed to ease their social exclusion. In Lebanon, amongst a marginalized population such as Dom, citizenship is insufficient in access to equal rights and upward mobility.

This study argues that the precarious socioeconomic status of Dom acts as the main challenge in their ability to access the rights associated with their recently acquired citizenship as well as maintaining the status altogether. An examination of Dom access to health care and education shows the hidden costs of citizenship. The price of taxi fare, to what some might consider as a trivial justification for failing to access healthcare or education, is to many Dom enough to close the door completely to potentially life changing services. And, if transportation was not an issue, the fact that any cost is associated with healthcare is sufficient enough to deter access at all. This study emphasizes careful attention to the ‘hidden costs’ associated with citizenship amongst marginalized populations.

In the case of extreme poverty ‘hidden costs’ not only close the door to accessing the services of the state, but as is seen in the case of Dom can prevent future generations from inheriting citizenship. For Dom, the ‘hidden costs’ of citizenship may be only a short-term concern, as with the costs of inheriting citizenship too much to bare, it is likely that future generations will be born into a status of statelessness. It seems reasonable then to conclude that, considering the current and future socioeconomic prospects of Dom Hay el Gharbe, Dom will at increasing rates become stateless. Moreover, with the current law in Lebanon prohibiting women from passing citizenship to children and for Syrian Dom no longer able to migrate to Syria as a result of the

on-going war, it becomes more likely that statelessness will become an increasingly common amongst the formerly citizen Dom community. Further research is required to better understand the status of *maktum el qayd* both legally as a status designated by the state and historically amongst the Dom.

In a system where healthcare, education or even inheriting citizenship is assigned a price and as such considered a commodity, substantive citizenship is not a matter of practices contingent upon formal citizenship. Rather, citizenship both substantive and formal hinge upon one's ability to pay. Should citizenship be available to sell in the market?

Although this study argues that currently citizenship is of little practical use to Dom in Hay el Gharbe, as a stigmatized population and with the uncertain stability of the country, a future without legal status could leave Dom even more vulnerable to changes (right to work, deportation, freedom movement/travel). Dom are amongst 8% of the Lebanese population living below the lower poverty line and therefore this study recommends further research on the experiences of citizenship amongst other severely marginalized populations (Terre des hommes 2010, 38). Do other marginalized populations experience challenges in accessing state services? And, if so do these groups experience derelict citizenship?

Multi-country research is recommended to illuminate the experience of Dom beyond Lebanon and citizenship amongst marginalized communities regionally. Preliminarily research amongst the Dom in Amman and occupied Jerusalem suggests that Dom self-identification, socioeconomic status and experiences of citizenship vary significantly across the region. Further understandings of Dom and citizenship might shed light on the citizenship policy and marginalized populations regionally. For example, Dom living in Jerusalem are considered by the state to be Palestinian and are holders of blue Israeli ID. However, preliminary research shows that amongst Palestinians in common sentiment is that Dom are not Palestinian. Moreover, the *mukhtar* of the Dom community is controversially reported to have offered participation in the "Israeli Defense Forces" in return for Israeli citizenship.

In addition to the socioeconomic limitations to equally accessing the privileges associated with citizenship this study posits that Dom practices of citizenship are severely limited by a life in the

state of exception. Considering the socioeconomic status and discrimination faced by Dom, many find themselves living in areas with affordable living costs and where little contact with non-Dom is necessary. Hay el Gharbe is but one example of such neighborhoods chosen by Dom as their place of residents. Across the country Dom have settled on the periphery of Palestinian refugee camps such as Ein el Hilweh and Borj el Chimali, and in the case of this study Shatila camp.

Dom in Hay el Gharbe live in a ‘state of exception’ where new governmentalities arise in the form of political parties, neighborhood *mafiosos* and NGOs. Within the neighborhood where there is a near total absence of the state, although mimicking certain practices of citizenship such as paying taxes and political participation, Dom are in reality unable to act as citizen. The absence of the state fails to provide any service, including security leaving residents of the neighborhood vulnerable to the whims of a powerful few.



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