AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

SELF-FULFILLING POLICY:
THE EXPERT POLITICS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND NGO ADVOCACY AMONG THE DOM IN TURKEY, JORDAN AND LEBANON

by
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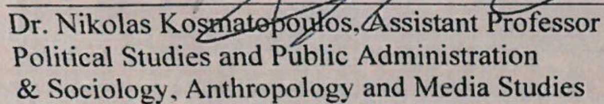

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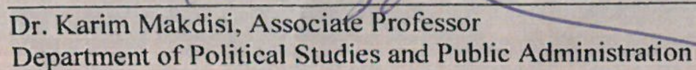

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

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Over the past decade, attention on the Dom has greatly increased policy research institutions, NGOs and the media. The Dom are considered to be an already-disadvantaged community who, with the start of the Syrian civil war, are now also seen as a particularly vulnerable group among Syrian refugees in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. This master's project seeks to explore how the Dom are represented in the policy and advocacy discourse, and to understand the implications of this representation. The project argues that Dom identity in the policy literature is not an objective concept but rather a contextually imagined, constructed and contested identity mostly created through scientific and expert knowledge production. In a top-down process, this identity is loosely applied to various groups who are not bound by language, geography or self-affiliation. Instead, the constructed identity is based on the notion that the Dom all face the same problems of exclusion and discrimination, coupled with a claim that asserts a shared ethnic background. Together these features configure the Dom identity as a homogeneous, fixed and objective concept. This paper illustrates that the construction of the Dom by experts, through policy research, builds upon a long-standing conceptualization of the Gypsies, starting from the early discourse of European Gypsylorists in the 18th century.

It argues that the Dom category in the policy discourse is highly ambiguous and contested, thus giving ground to experts to mediate between the policy subjects and the policy community. It paradoxically limits the political power of those who are ascribed to the Dom category, requiring them to approve external ascription as a self-ascription before they can participate in relevant political discourse. This project also looks at how the policy literature confusingly portrays the Dom both as an ethnic minority and as a disadvantaged group. Within this racial framework for the policy, the Dom are represented as both eternally vulnerable and essentially different from the rest of society. This self-fulfilling cycle, linking vulnerability to intrinsic differences, disallows space for political discussions in which the social mechanisms that create problems for the Dom can be targeted. Instead, this portrayal of the Dom contributes to the perception that the cultural characteristics of the group themselves are responsible for the group's problems, thereby condemning the Dom to the perpetual status of subjects in need of assistance and care.

Keywords: Categorization; identification practices; Gypsylorism; expert knowledge; policy research on the Dom; Dom; Gypsies

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS……………………………………….…… v
ABSTRACT…………………………………………………….……vi
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS………………………………………viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS……………………………….........ix

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION………………………………………………….1

II. IN SEARCH OF THE DOM: SELF-REFLECTIONS AS AN NGO WORKER IN TURKEY, LEBANON AND JORDAN ………………..…………………………………...6

III. ACADEMIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE DOM BY EUROPEAN GYPSYLORISTS IN IN THE 18th CENTURY ……………………………………………16

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOM CATEGORY AND NGO ADVOCACY DISCOURSE UNDER THE EU ROMA POLICY FRAMEWORK IN TURKEY...…..……....27

V. LEGACY OF THE ROMANY RAI: EXPERT CONSTRUCTION OF THE DOM AS ETERNAL OTHERS….…………………...………....…...…….38

A. The Use of Photography: Visual Depictions of the Poverty and Otherness of the Dom…………………………………………..41
B. The (Ab)Use of Culture: the Dom Culture Determined, Ascribed and Blamed………………………………………..………………...45

VI. SAVING THE DOM: POLITICS OF VULNERABILITY…………………………..52

VII. CONCLUSION: POLITICAL BEYOND THE DOM CATEGORY………………………………………………………..56

VIII.BIBLIOGHRAPY………………..………………………..……..…..59

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

1. Pages from the report of "Syrian Dom Migrants: Living at the Bottom On the Road amid Poverty and Discrimination" (2015)…………………..……..…..…43

2. Pages from the report of "Syrian Dom Migrants: Living at the Bottom On the Road amid Poverty and Discrimination" (2015)…………………..……..…..…43

3. The exhibition about the Dom and Abdal who fled Syria and found refuge in Gaziantep, Turkey……………………………………………...…………44

ABBREVIATIONS

CSO: Civil Society Organization
DRC: Dom Research Center
EC: European Council
EIDHR: the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ERRC: European Roma Rights Council
ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council
EU: European Union
GLS: Gypsy Lore Society
INGO: International Non-governmental Organization
IPA: Individual Personal Assistance
JGLS: Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society
NGO: Non-governmental Organization
UKRI: UK Research and Innovation
UN: United Nations

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The mainstream narrative in policy literature describes the Dom as a distinct ethnic minority living across the Middle East, with origins in the Indian subcontinent which link them to Roma in Europe and Lom in the Caucasus. Alongside this racial frame, reports typically assert that the Dom is a disadvantaged and vulnerable group that has been subjected to decades-long discrimination and marginalization due to their ethnic identity. Because of this perception of discrimination and marginalization, much of the mainstream policy literature recommends special interventions to increase opportunities for the Dom in areas such as education, housing, employment and health. The advocacy discourse on the Dom continues to call for action from governments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and donors to reduce the group's disadvantages and vulnerabilities.

In Turkey, the adoption of the European Union (EU)'s policy framework regarding Roma resulted in the recognition of the Dom as part of the Roma community for research and policy purposes. Following the influx of Syrian refugees to neighboring countries during the Syrian Civil War, the Dom were also included on donor agendas as a vulnerable group among refugee populations in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Over the last decade, these new funding streams have brought greater attention to the Dom, resulting in increased research, policy initiatives, and projects targeting the group.

This paper seeks to explore how the Dom are represented in policy discourse and what the political results are derived from this representation. It argues that the homogeneous image of the Dom—mostly constructed through policy research—is problematic. The paper argues that this image is problematic because it allows for the treatment of the Dom as a group of people sharing mostly similar qualities, thereby subjecting them to similar policy outcomes based on this inaccurate assumption (Bakewell, 2008). Not all individuals who are recognized as the Dom by the research self-identify with this label, or with a distinct ethnicity, nor do they find an Indian ancestry which links them to Roma. In addition, the problems that the Dom face are not unique to them, but rather they are problems shared by non-Dom populations living in similar socio-economic conditions.

The impetus for my research comes from my work over the past two years as a project assistant for a research and advocacy project on the rights of the Dom refugees from Syria who are currently residing in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Adding to my personal experience on the topic, my exposure to critical studies on ethnicity, categorization and policy-relevant research led me to understand how Dom identity in policy literature is not an objective concept, but a contextually imagined, constructed and contested identity based on the knowledge produced by the scientific work of linguists, orientalist travelers, anthropologists and, lately, by policy research experts. While the policy literature and the main policy discourse tend to unquestioningly accept the Indian origin and racial narrative of the Dom, there remains no consensus among scholars whether all Gypsies form a non-territorial ethnic diaspora coming from India or whether a common ethnicity exists at all. Within the previous two decades, numerous

scholars took an anti-essentialist and constructivist approach to the Gypsy legacy. However, the dominant theme in Gypsy/Romani studies is the family-tree approach which represents the Dom as the Oriental relatives/ancestors of European Roma.
This paper also illustrates how the Dom were classified as a political category in order to be approached and represented by experts through the policy research and advocacy discourse. It also analyzes the effects of this categorization on those who are assigned to the Dom category. In his book *Those Who Count: Expert Practices of Roma Classification*, Mihai Surdu (2016) examines how the Roma in Europe, as political and epistemic objects, are made to appear homogenous by categorization through academic and policy research in order to be represented and approached. Surdu's account on this categorization allowed me to comprehend the policy research on Dom in relation to the Roma policies and politics in Europe, and to conceptualize my discontent about the dominant NGO advocacy discourse on the Dom.

In seeking to understand how certain ways of perceiving Dom is justified and circulated and by which actors, I use a socio-historical approach to analyze the conceptualization of the Gypsies as an ethnic and transnational diaspora by scholars. Through this approach, I contextualize the main body of scientific literature which feeds current discursive and policy approaches to the Dom. This socio-historical analysis demonstrates how the Dom were constructed as epistemic objects by European scholars in the 18th century who sought to trace the origins of the Roma (Pars, 2015). I argue that the expert politics of academic research on the Dom finds its origins in the discursive framework created by the Gypsylorists during the 18th and 19th centuries, in which the "Gypsy" was constructed as a subject of their study.

Through an examination of policy literature, I illustrate how Dom is an ambiguous and contested category that refers to various groups which are not bounded by self-affiliation, language, or geography. I argue that this homogenous-yet-ambiguous depiction of the Dom is based in an erroneous assertion of their ethnic identity as a solid and objective concept, as well as cursory observations of shared problems and similar ways of life. This ambiguity in categorization of the Dom forms a basis for experts in the field to mediate between the policy subjects and the policy community. Since the Dom are portrayed as a vulnerable group who hide their ethnic identity due the discrimination they face in every country, experts appear to know the Dom more than, and in different ways, than those who are perceived as Dom know themselves.

Besides the discourse, the visual depictions of the Dom used in reports and exhibited in conferences emphasize both the poverty and the otherness of the group. Both expert politics and NGO advocacy tend to depict the Dom category primarily through blending their cultural characteristics with their disadvantageous socio-economic conditions, selecting photographs that highlight their poverty and social exclusion. This racial framing in policy discourse and visual depiction contributes to the image of the Dom as essentially different from the rest of society, suggesting that the cultural characteristics of the group are responsible for their creating their problems. This discursive and visual representation of the Dom produces a demand for more targeted policy responses that require additional targeted expert knowledge. On one hand, the vulnerability discourse denies the Dom's agency as political subjects, reformulating them as victims that need to be saved. And on the other hand, this categorization through vulnerability creates a limitation for experts to engage with

policy related to the Dom. It requires that experts approach policy and programming related to the Dom via this external ascription of the Dom as a victim group, thereby denying the space for alternate conceptions of the Dom's categorization. As a looping effect, this dominant frame reinforces the epistemic authority of the experts in the field, and it embeds the problems faced by those categorized as the Dom into their ethnicity and culture. As a result, the latter is treated as though in is inherent to the Dom identity itself.

The policy discourse that produces a contextual understanding of the Dom holds an epistemic authority on the topic, and is supported by the circle of policy-experts and by members of the scientific community. Although the Roma policies and politics in Europe have been critically approached both by Roma activists and scholars in the past decades, the developing discourse on the Dom in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon has not been examined from a constructivist position. Thus, this paper aims to analyze the expert politics of academic research and advocacy discourse on the Dom as an important step toward challenging the epistemic authority of experts: "all those who speak *for* others and *above* others" (Foucault and Trombadori, 1991: 159).

CHAPTER II

IN SEARCH OF THE DOM: SELF-REFLECTIONS AS AN NGO WORKER IN TURKEY, LEBANON AND JORDAN

In 2016, I was involved in a project that was funded by the European Commission (EC) under the program of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and implemented by a local organization in Gaziantep, Turkey. The population targeted by the project was described as "the Dom refugees and other related minorities from Syria seeking asylum in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey." Later on, however, the titles of the reports, meetings, and press materials began to address the target group as merely "The Dom refugees". Our official project documents defined the Dom as one of the three main groups of Gypsies:

> "It seems that they originate from northwestern India and migrated to the Middle East between the 3rd and 10th centuries AD. During the last century they settled particularly in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and in the Palestinian Territories. They have been subject to decades-long discrimination and marginalization due to their ethnic identity and lifestyle, both in Syria and across the rest of the region. Dom people face double discrimination due to their ethnic identity and their refugee status. During the conflict, they have been victims of prejudices and discrimination from Syrians and Islamist groups and, after they fled, from people in neighboring countries where they sought refuge; therefore, they tend to conceal their identities and their ethnicity. This situation coupled with the lack of ethnically disaggregated statistics on Syrian refugees make it difficult to compile official statistics on their current presence in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. International and local NGOs are attempting to map the groups and they have estimated that the largest Dom community is in Turkey (500,000 people), followed by Jordan (70,000) and Lebanon (7,200) and that in the Middle East as a whole the Dom population is over 2 million people. Disaggregated data, by sex and age, are lacking."

When I first started to work on the project, I eagerly researched the Dom, seeking to understand who our target group. I was responsible for arranging individual and focus group interviews in Lebanon and Jordan, with the goal of writing a current situation analysis and needs assessment. First, I had to find where the Dom refugees from Syria were living. I travelled to the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon, where the majority of informal refugee camps are concentrated. Wandering among the dozens of refugee tent settlements, I struggled to find anyone that could tell me where the Dom people live. Then, after realizing that no one knows the term Dom, I started to use terms like Ghajar (mainly used for musician Gypsies or Roma) and Nawar (which literally means Gypsy in Arabic, and holds a bad connotation). Finally, I found my first positive answer. I inquired of a woman in front of a camp if she and her family were coming from Seyda Zeynab (an area in Damacus that I had been told was mainly inhabited by Gypsies), if she and her family "Yes," she responded with a smile, "we are the Nawar of Sayeda Zeynab".

Since then, I have talked with more than one hundred individuals in Lebanon and in Jordan in numerous settlements and houses over a period of almost two years. I often learned about their locations from NGO reports on the Dom, then by asking inhabitants where Nawar live when I arrived to the neighborhood. There was not a single individual that I spoke with who used the term Dom for self-affiliation, nor was there one who found relevance or identity in an Indian origin. Instead, terms such as "Nawar, Ghurbat, Turkmen, Abdal, or Bani Murra" were used, both by themselves and by others refering to them. Since no one was calling themselves Dom, I attempted to find traits that might assist in the identification of the target group. I asked if they or

their elders speak Domari (and while some called the language Asfouri or Nawari, no one specifically mentioned Domari to me). I asked if their grandparents had been woodcraftsman, if they played instruments or worked with iron crafts or practiced dentistry informally. Through my questions, I tried to detect traits typically associated with the Dom, and to ascertain how they perceived themselves and the neighborhoods from which they came. Yet, I realized in the field visits that I had more "knowledge" about the Doms' supposed ethnicity, language, origin and history than the Doms themselves. However, this "knowledge" on the Dom in the Middle East was based on a literature review of anthropological work written by Western scholars on Gypsies and a handful of NGO reports from Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. In each field visit, I found certain characteristics corresponding to the 'image' of the Dom in my mind, and other characteristics that were not matching what I had learned about them.

In Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, the field study took place where Dom live: slums in cities, tent settlements close to agricultural lands, or other informal refugee settlements. In tent settlements and informal refugee camps, where basic services are especially lacking and where NGOs are the main service providers, the fieldwork was influenced by various power dynamics between the project team and the community. In our project paper, all Gypsy groups with various appellations in the Middle East were considered as sub-groups under the Dom identity umbrella, due to their "peripatetic" lifestyle. The latter term was a vague determinant to use in the field, since the traditional professions ascribed to the Dom were dying under the industrialization of the region. Speaking Domari language is one of the important characteristics attributed to the Dom in the project paper as this represented a distinct linguistic group with an Indian origin.

However, not all people identified as the Dom are using this internal language—or, at least not in front of us—and all the persons we interviewed were native speakers of Arabic, Turkish or Kurdish.

The project had four objectives: advocacy, preventing violations, reinforcing capacity and supporting Dom children. The first phase of the advocacy activities was to conduct a comprehensive study for six months on the situation of the Dom refugees in the three host countries. The study included desk research of national legislations, mapping and interviews with the Dom people, local stakeholders and institutional representatives. The interviews were generally semi-structured group interviews, often with a group of residents of a settlement gathered in a tent, and, in few occasions, in houses. The interviews, conducted by an expert, consisted mainly of open-ended questions. My role was to assist this expert in the field within Jordan and Lebanon. The methodology was described by the expert as a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. Sampling was initially chosen at random, and additional participants were secured through the "snowball technique" as participants referred us to their relatives living in other areas.

With the objectives of reinforcing capacity and supporting Dom children, we recruited education mentors to support the integration of Dom refugee children into public schools and "intercultural" mentors to organize cultural activities with children and parents. Under the framework of our main project, five short-term projects led by local organizations were sub-granted. These smaller projects consisted of psycho-social support activities with children and women and vocational trainings for women. In addition to assisting with the coordination of the field research, I also assisted the

organization with conferences and roundtable meetings with local and international organizations, the coordination of the activities for the youth and children, the sub-granting process with the local organizations, and in project reporting.

During my two years on the project, I had spent significant time with our target community, due to my role in identifying the Dom on the ground for research. Another part of my work was to talk on the Dom and to present their situation to numerous officials from public institutions and NGOs in the name of advocacy and sensitization of the public on the issue. However, despite the meaningful time I had spent becoming familiar with the people I was charged to represent, I felt uncomfortable in this role as spokesperson. My discontent in the project grew, primarily about the ambiguity of our target group and about our role as 'speaking for others'. And I became especially disenchanted with our work when I realized that the policy-related research and advocacy discourse were never focused on the social mechanisms that create problems for the Dom (and beyond), but rather it focused on the Dom themselves as an object of study.

Under the project, an outreach and information campaign was organized to alert the Dom community about their rights as refugees in each host country, and to provide information about the procedures to access and seek justice. The campaign was initially slated to be in Domari language, with the assumption that language barriers were a leading cause of the lack of knowledge about their rights as refugees. Instead, the campaign was ultimately organized in Arabic upon realizing that not all individuals who were identified as the Dom speak Domari, but rather, spoke native Arabic. Additionally, we discovered that the problem was never about lacking knowledge on rights, but was

instead because the rights of refugees are severely restricted in Jordan and Lebanon. For instance, in Lebanon many were fully aware that hospitals provided service for refugees. Instead, health problems arose from the high cost of prescription medications. A refugee might visit the doctor, but ultimately they could not afford to purchase the prescribed medication—like many refugees, or other Lebanese and Palestinians living in similar economic conditions. Also, in the three targeted countries, freedom of movement is violated by restrictions imposed by local and central authorities. Only roughly half of children from refugee families were enrolled in schools due to many socio-economic and structural reasons. Child labor is commonplace. Most of the refugees working in the three targeted countries are not covered by social security, and they are often working without work permits. They are viewed as cheap laborers who can be easily exploited due the lack of legal protection.

I often motivated myself by thinking that even small changes can begin to improve people's lives, at least as a starting point. However, our two years advocacy failed to mobilize a political discourse, let alone any political action, against the social and economic injustice from which the Dom suffer. What our advocacy did accomplish, however, was to foster the production of more expert knowledge on the Dom. I began to comprehend that real social change was outside of the scope of our project, and it perpetuated a reinforcement of "us," those who have knowledge of the Dom, deeper into the policy discourse.

We published a preliminary report after the field study on the current situation of the Dom refugees in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. It provided the needs assessment and situation analysis for advocacy by identifying the target group for future interventions.

It also identified the primary problems face by the Dom: child labor, lack of accommodation, unemployment, discrimination, malnutrition, access to clean water, hygiene, access to education and early marriage. Beside these issues, the report contained a section that illustrated a brief history of Dom in the three countries, much like previous reports on the Dom. Dom identity, whether it was claimed by the target group or not, was used to collectively refer to people called Nawar, Zott, Ghajar, Bareke, Gaodari, Krismal, Qarabana, Karachi, Abdal, Ashiret, Qurbet, Mitrip, Gewende, Gypsy (Çingene), Dom, Tanjirliyah, Haddadin, Haciye, Arnavut, Halebi, Haramshe and Kaoli. This was primarily due to their similar circumstances and their "interrelated ties". Interrelated ties, as the project consultant explained to me, were understood as the shared social and economic relations and marriages between those supposedly different groups. The report also indicated that Dom are discriminated against because of their different lifestyle and their "ethnicity". Just like most of the policy literature on the Dom, the report homogenized the Dom identity and lumped together numerous groups without considering self-affiliation. It ascribed a relation among these groups, and claimed that they all suffer from ethnic discrimination. Because our needs assessment asserted that unemployment is a primary problem faced by the Dom face, programs for fostering livelihood opportunities were recommended in the three countries. One of the short-term projects that we sub-granted in Lebanon sought to improve the employability of the Dom refugee women through skills trainings. The women that the project targeted were living in informal tent settlements in among other refugees. They were given trainings by a local NGO on matters such as cash flow management and budgeting. The project anticipated securing job

opportunities by the close of the project by connecting the women to local employers. Yet, refugees in Lebanon are not legally allowed to work. Instead, they often work without papers in labor-intensive sectors such as agriculture and construction, at low wages and without legal protection. The work agreements are made, if at all, only orally. Despite these barriers, at the end of the project, some of the women were employed, mainly in agricultural work, and without a working contract. The final report of the sub-grantee organization was careful in their wording of the project results. Instead of "oral agreement", they wrote: "We had a gentlemen's agreement with employers to respect the Dom women through good treatment, respect and paying them their daily fees." Yet, without any legal protection and labor rights, all refugee women, Dom and so-called non-Dom, were at the hands of a man choosing between being a "gentleman" or not. After concluding this short-term project, the sub-grantee organization expressed its interest in developing more projects targeting the Dom and wanted to prepare a report and history on the Dom in Lebanon.

Our project was written in light of the policy literature on the Dom in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. The main resources cited in the project paper were the previous reports on the Dom published by EU and United Nations (UN) organizations in the targeted countries. The entirety of the documents on the Dom which provides a baseline for our project and the current policy approach introduce the target group with an exotic ethnic origin that traces back to a thousand years ago. It also asserts certain characteristics, customs and occupations to the group, and it portrays them as vulnerable due to the ethnic discrimination they face in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and, previously, in Syria.

Constructivist approaches reject the concept that identity is a stable, objective and independent concept separate from its socio-political context. As Hall and Gay (2006) argue, identity goes beyond the recognition of a unified origin or characteristics. Rather, it is an ongoing process, marked by multiple points of similarities as well as differences: “the fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy” (Hall and Gay, 2006: 277). Some scholars emphasize that the fragmented and multilayered Gypsy identity indicates a socio-historical construct rather than a homogenous ethnicity (Okely, 1983: Mayall, 2004: Lucassen, 1998; Willems, 1997; van Baar, 2011). Anthropologists in some countries, such as Stewart (1997) in Hungary, Gay y Blasco (2001) in Spain, Okely (1983) in England, and Parrs (2015) in Egypt, state that their subjects do not consider their Indian origins and ancestry to be relevant to themselves. According to my experience in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, neither the Indian ancestry nor the ethnic tie between the Dom and Roma in Europe are acknowledged by the Dom or the public in general.

I side with constructivist accounts that consider ethnic and national identities as social construction formed via a dynamic process. To be clear, I do not claim that Dom ethnic identity is less legitimate than any other constructed identities such as Turk, Kurd, French or Arab. But I argue that the way the Dom identity is constructed in the scientific and policy literature has political consequences on those who are categorized as the Dom. The Dom category in policy discourse is highly ambiguous and contentious. On one hand, in a top down process, “the Dom” refers to all Gypsy groups supposedly living in a similar way and facing common problems and discrimination, on the other hand it is claimed to be an “ethnic and linguistic category” which implies a

homogeneous, solid and objective concept that fails to consider the lack of self-affiliation of people who are subjected to the category. The next chapter illustrates that this racial framing of the various groups through categorization finds its origins in the construction of the Gypsies as a field of study in the 18th century Europe, with the Dom being a complementary part of this construction.

CHAPTER III

ACADEMIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE DOM BY EUROPEAN GYPSYLORISTS IN THE 18th CENTURY

Policy research assumes its epistemic authority by finding support from both the circle of policy-experts and by the members of the scientific community. This chapter aims to examine the main body of literature and scientific institutions producing the contextual understanding of the Dom that support the policy-relevant research and interventions. First, the historical context in which the Gypsies were categorized will be examined. Second, the two main actors of the scientific community that are given credit in shaping the policy discourse—The Gypsy Lore Society and the Dom Research Center—will be discussed in relation to their research approaches.

The scientific efforts to discover the "origin" of the Gypsies, which started with the linguistic analyses, only recently include genetic studies. This rationale behind these efforts is explained by Mayall (2004): "This concern, if not obsession, with origins reflects the central ideological importance of ideas of nation, nationalism and national identity: in particular, the belief that all peoples have to have a homeland and to share the appearance, characteristics and culture of other people from that same land" (Mayall, 2004: 11). Gypsies have been racialized, attributed specific origins, and ascribed meaning in the context of the European nation-state's construction by non-Gypsy elites. They were transformed from an administrative category to an ethnic group by labelling, categorization and stigmatization through the classification work of state authorities, writers, experts and scientists. The categorization of Gypsies as an ethnic

group and transnational diaspora originated in Europe with the practice of police profiling and labelling (Surdu and Kovats, 2015). Lucassen (1998) examines that the state formation and professionalization of police, specifically with the rise of criminology in Germany starting in the 18th century, was the point when various and heterogeneous groups of people, especially travelers and wanderers who did not have fixed residency, were labeled as Gypsies (Ziegeuner). Police journals were an important element of police professionalization, and had a significant role in the rise of this labeling. Surdu (2016) elaborates on the link between group categorization, policing and academia: “If at the beginning the police produced its own lists and classifications, with time its professionalization implied the academization of the field by co-opting and seeking collaboration with scientists in offering explanations and solutions for deviance in a society with a rapid process of urbanization and modernization” (Surdu, 2016: 73). During the Ottoman Empire, the classification of peripatetic nomads and travelers was conducted via the Ottoman tax system. When Çelik (2013) examines the legal, social and economic status of the Gypsies in the Empire, she asserts that the way the Gypsies were categorized, governed and employed in the state apparatus was similar to the other nomadic or seminomadic groups. She argues that the Ottoman policy vis-à-vis Gypsies in the Balkans and Anatolia in the 16th century was not uniform, and state authorities did not have a singular and monolithic view of Gypsies. She writes:

> “The authorities’ conception of who or what a Gypsy was for most of the early modern period seem to have been determined much more by the socially and economically hybrid mode of living with occupations temporary and at times morally ‘low’ in nature than any narrowly interpreted linear understanding of common ancestry, language, religion or shared past experiences. Indeed, an argument can be made that the sheer abundance of terms used in the Ottoman/ Turkish lexicon to denote a ‘Gypsy’ or ‘Gypsy-like communities’ suggests that

> the Ottomans did not have a clear-cut definition for who was considered 'Gypsy' and who was not" (Çelik, 2013: 282).

Later, however, in the 19th century Ottoman context, nomadism was perceived as a threat to sedentary life was civilized. Nomadic communities were therefore repressed and forced to settle in the late 19th century by the Ottomans, and then by the Turkish Republic later in the 20th century (Yılgür, 2015). Çelik also shows how the Gypsies were subjected to "re-educating", especially with the idea of creating better Muslims. This "re-education" to the true path of Islam was conducted by Ottoman-appointed imams (Çelik, 2013: 165).

One can trace and compare in the literature the extent to which the authorities in every continent were, if ever, dealing with nomads and semi-nomads before the modern state formation and after. As Okely asserts: "In every continent there are people classed as, or similar to Gypsies. In every continent, non-Gypsies have notions about them and encounters with them" (1983:38). However, racialization of "the Gypsies" was a European phenomenon. In the context of the development of race as a scientific category in the 18th century (Hudson, 1996; Parrs, 2015; Acton, 2016), the most "remarkable" scientific contribution to the construction of Gypsy identity came from a German historian, Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann. In his book *Dissertation on the Gipsies* (1787), Grellmann famously claimed that Gypsies, coming from the lowest caste in India, have circulated around the world for centuries. His theory was based on the linguistic similarities between Sanskrit and Romani. Grellmann supplied an extensive ethnography on the supposed similarities between Indians and Gypsies such as customs, skin color, appearance, and lifestyle. Grellmann's theory, as Willems

explains it, claimed “a common ethnic base to Gypsy groups living scattered from each other by characterizing them extensively as a group with a static culture and way of life” (Willems, 1997: 295). Grellmann’s theory thus provided a foundation for the construction of the Gypsies as the “Oriental Others” within Europe: “The Gypsies are an Eastern people and have Eastern notions. It is inherent in uncivilized people, particularly those of Oriental countries, to be strongly attached to their own habits” (Lee cites Grellman, 2000:135).

Another influential figure who contributed to the exotic oriental image of the Gypsies was George Borrow in 19th century. He introduced two crucial concepts of classical Gypsy studies as *the True Gypsies* and *Romani Rai* (Mayall, 2003), both of which are still embedded in the current policy discourse on the Dom as I will discuss in this chapter and illustrate its effects in following chapters. A True Gypsy was portrayed an authentic, uncontaminated, racially *pure* Gypsy who kept the Indian codes of culture, nomadic lifestyle and “traditional” occupations. This essentialist image of a Gypsy was safely constructed as in a mythical past rather than in the present era. Therefore, most of the Gypsies in the present who were only seen as ‘Gypsy-like’ are considered to be degenerated and inauthentic (Yılgür, 2011). Gypsy Rai, or Romani Rai, was an ambiguous figure, a mediator and a non-Gypsy who has a privileged power/knowledge relationship with the world of True Gypsies. As Borrow self-ascribed himself with this status, later on it was mimicked by his followers.

Borrow’s and Grellmann’s works were not unique, but they served to be crucially influential to many scholars that followed. Later, some of these scholars formed the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) in 1888 in Great Britain (which later moved to

the US in 1989). Gypsylorists, in a restricted sense, refer to the members of the GLS, who approach the Gypsies as their objects of study. Members and non-members publish their work in the GLS's scientific journal, the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society (JGLS). The members of GLS claim a privileged epistemic position in producing knowledge on the Gypsies. "Romani Rai" is a desired status to achieve among the members, because Romani Rai are perceived to hold privileged access to "authentic" knowledge, and therefore are thought to be more effective and respected Gypsylorists (Lee, 2000).

Following the discovery of the Gypsies' Indian origins, the Gypsylorists have focused on determining the time and the routes of departure from India, and on revealing the Indian traces in Romani culture and language. They studied the eastern Gypsies as the "authentic Gypsies". The term Dom and Domari began to appear in the academic literature in the late 19th century, in the accounts of European Orientalists, travelers, and especially linguists and historians who were in search of the routes that the Roma followed from India to Europe. The Indic elements that were found in the speech of Syrian Gypsies (Dom) and later on Armenian Gypsies (Lom), were the basis of the Indian origin thesis. The Indian word *dom* was suggested to be the origin of the word Roma. More precise determinations on the routes and timing were made in the late 20th century (Hancock,1993; Kenrick, 1976, 1993; Fraser, 1991; Marushiakova and Popov 1997; 2001).

As a counter-theory of Indianism, Okely (1983) masterfully opposes the idea of considering language (Romani/Domari) as something only genetically transferred and carried as an indicator of an ethnicity. He claims that Romani is a language formed

between nomads, merchants and other traveler groups. He rejects the argument of "Indian homeland'" as a mythic narrative by asserting that "the Gypsy group cannot be presented as once self-contained within Europe and then suddenly impinged upon by outside forces, since persons called 'Gypsies' emerged in Europe at the end of feudalism and flourished with industrialization and within capitalism" (Okely 1983: 30). Therefore, an Indian origin was assigned to all Roma (and later on to the Dom and Lom) as a means of collectively exoticizing various groups of people who were not part of the wage system in the transition from feudalism to capitalism (Surdu and Kovats 2015). Okely's account is important because she asserts that the dominant non-Gypsy elite who wrote historiographies of the Gypsies should themselves be given attention to better understand the categorization process of the Gypsies.

To explore today's construction of the Dom, an analogy can be drawn between Orientalism (Said 1978) and Gypsylorism. Ken Lee examines this in his article "Gypsylorism and Orientalism," writing that Gypsylorism developed in relation to the Gypsies in ways that paralleled Orientalism. Both Orientalism and Gypsylorism began in 18th century Europe as fields of study which constructed their own discursive framework to examine their subjects. Lee writes: "whilst Orientalism is the discursive construction of the exotic Other outside Europe, Gypsylorism is the construction of the exotic Other within Europe— Romanies are the Orientals within" (Lee, 2000: 132). In this wider sense, Gypsylorism started before GLS and continued after its foundation, by members and non-members alike. However, the role of GLS in the construction of "the Gypsies" is very important because of the discursive power of GLS and its publication that extends beyond its membership. GLS currently publishes *Romani Studies*

(continuing JGLS) and organizes annual conferences in which both scholars and non-scholars, such as activists and experts, give seminars and speeches on issues related to Roma/Gypsies and, lately, to the Dom. Surdu (2016) explains the knowledge producer's epistemic authority as the following:

> "The consensus on the truth claims is built not only on content, but also on the *auctoritas* and on the opportunities to maintain and reinforce it. Science and technology studies (STS) show that for a truth claim to circulate and produce effects, it is necessary for problematizations advanced by scholars to find allies and support from other members of the scientific community, and also outside of it, in the practical field of governance." (Surdu, 2016: 8)

GLS's epistemic authority has long been supported by the policy community as they use the group's network and knowledge in shaping Roma policies and politics in Europe. With the extension of the EU's Roma policy research and politics to Turkey after the EU enlargement process in the 2000, the annual meeting of GLS in 2012 was organized in Istanbul, with the participation of high-ranking public officials and speakers such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (then Prime Minister of Turkey), the Minister of Internal Affairs, and the Mayor of Istanbul. The 2012 GLS conference in Istanbul is important not only because historically it is the most "Eastern" place chosen for the annual meeting, but also because it shows how GLS's epistemic authority supports the policy research on Roma and on Dom. Most of the scholars who were involved in the policy research and who have been cited in the policy literature on the Dom are also speakers at GLS conferences, with some of them holdings administrative positions in the organization. With that being said, GLS and the community of scholars who partake in its meetings and who contribute to its publications can be seen as the discourse makers for the policy approach towards the Dom. While there is a rapidly expanding

field of Critical Romani Studies, there is no grassroots organization, Dom activism, or scholars who call themselves Dom that are partaking in these academic discussions. The early work of the GLS, from its establishment to the aftermath of the WWII, has been described as highly racist. Scholars have shown how the work of the GLS, by promoting the concept of 'The True Gypsies," contributed to the persecution of Roma/Gypsies/Travelers before and during WWII (Acton 1974; Williems, 1997; Lee, 2000). During a recent debate, the GLS was called upon by some of its board members, including Thomas Acton, to make a symbolic apology and acknowledge its historic racism. However, in 2016, after a long debate among the board members, GLS asserted that "It looks back with pride at more than a century of GLS scholarship" while acknowledging that

> "the Society and its publications have not been immune over the past century to occasional statements and attitudes that may be interpreted as overtly patronizing, disenfranchising, or otherwise biased toward the people whose culture was at the center of the Society's attention. [and that it] Equally regrets that such statements made decades ago continue to be used by some to try to discredit the Society's work and its efforts to promote engagement with Romani culture today. It considers the undifferentiated denunciatory use of the term 'Gypsylorist' to be counterproductive to a fair and open discussion" (Selling, 2018: 56).

As Selling argues, this was not an apology but the denial of the agency of the GLS as producer and distributor of racist ideology.

After the rejection from the board, Acton wrote a detailed account of scientific racism produced by the GLS in its publications. Action describes one of the most remarkable examples of this racism from the JGLS publication of Herman Arnold's (1961) article on "The Gypsy Gene":

> "'The Gypsy Gene', which purported to explain that true Gypsies were genetically nomadic, and that all settled or semi-settled Gypsies were intermarried with non-Gypsies, the degree of settlement corresponding to the degree of inter-marriage. Arnold was later exposed by the Zentralrat Deutscher Roma und Sinti who brought forward the testimony of survivors that he was a collaborator in the genealogical identification of Zigeuner which led to their internment in the concentration camps (Hohmann1996, 90; Wippermann 1997, 200)." (Acton, 2016: 1194)

Arnold's collaboration with Nazi officers in identification of the Gypsies, while an extreme example, shows us how the Gypsies transformed from an administrative category into epistemic objects and policy targets by categorization and stigmatization through the classification work of state authorities, writers and scientists. Scientific knowledge on the Gypsies were built in a way that would be credited and used by the members of policy community.

Besides the scientific contributions of the GLS to the categorization of the Dom, the second main organization that produces literature on the Dom is the Dom Research Center (DRC). The Center follows the family-tree approach and supplies knowledge on the past and present situation of the Dom that is widely cited in policy literature and in scholarly publications. The DRC's founder Allen Williams' article "the Dom of the Middle East" (2000) is an oft-cited, pivotal work in Dom reports. William's article describes Gypsies as a distinctive ethnic group whose various languages and dialects share a common Indian origin, asserting that Gypsies are called Dom in the Middle East & North Africa, among other names that designate Gypsies such as Barake, Nawar, Kaloro, Koli, Ghorbati, Jat/Zott, and Zargari. He claims that the Dom can be seen in Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Gaza, the West Bank and Turkey, but that accurate population counts are difficult to secure, and that population surveys are

needed in said countries. However, he asserts that the “exact counts are also complicated when Dom people ‘hide’ their ethnic identity by declaring themselves to be nationals (i.e., Lebanese, Iranians, etc.) rather than Dom” (Williams, 2000: 16). Williams also asserts that the majority of the Dom are only nominal Muslims, and that there are few Christians among the Dom. He also writes that the Dom are being discriminated against across the Middle East because of their ethnicity.

Allen’s article is published in *The International Journal of the Frontier Missions*, which is the publication of the International Society for Frontier Missiology, an organization that aims at spreading Christian faith. The missionary interest of the Gypsies is not a new phenomenon: it was initiated by Grellmann (1787) who emphasized the need for the Christian salvation of the Gypsies (Lee, 2000:135). As we have already seen, the Gypsies were previously subjected to a similar mission under the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century when they were education on the principles of Islam.

The DRC is also strongly affiliated with the Baptist Fellowship Cooperative of Texas, USA and it is referred to on some occasions as a Baptist ministry that is dedicated to the Dom in the Middle East. DRC defines itself and its publication, the *KURI Journal* as “an accessible forum for discussion and publication of materials related to the Dom. At times the discussion will broaden to include other areas where the Dom are found or where the investigation of their history leads. While the DRC Website provides data that allows one to survey the larger arena of Dom research, the journal houses information produced and/or provided by the Dom Research Center.” The DRC’s website offers a timeline of the Dom migration from India, recent

photographs and early illustrations of the Dom, articles or field notes from scholars or non-scholars who are involved in policy research, and information on NGOs and projects targeting the Romaor Dom. These texts, which are credited in reports, academic publications and in the policy discourse, are supplying the contemporary social profile of the Dom living in the Middle East to the policy literature.

The DRC is not only producing knowledge but also intervening as a political actor. It played a significant role in the establishment of the Domari Society of Jerusalem in 2000, an NGO registered in Israel, and has continued to be a primary financial supporter of the NGO. The DRC's work can be as a predecessor to the GLS, in which the DRC's non-Gypsy elites produced ethnographies and comparative linguistic analysis that constructed the basis of the Gypsies as epistemic objects. The DRC produces a hybrid form of knowledge based on the academic and expert contributions that supports the construction of the Dom category used in policy research.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOM CATEGORY AND NGO ADVOCACY DISCOURSE UNDER THE EU ROMA POLICY FRAMEWORK IN TURKEY

The policy-relevant research on the Dom is a recent phenomenon, brought about by EU funding in the late 2000's under the EU's Roma policy framework and the development of Romani politics. Within the context of Turkey's candidacy to the EU, attention towards the Dom grew in the policy community with the emergence of policy-relevant research on the Gypsies in Turkey. Policy-relevant research on the Dom began with research on the Roma in the 2000s, during the EU's expansion in to Eastern Europe. A national strategy for the social inclusion of the Roma as a minority group was among the criteria requested for EU candidacy and pre-candidacy.

As it was shown in the previous section, the Dom were first constructed as epistemic objects by the Gypsylorists in relation to Roma in Europe. With the expansion of the EU's policy research, the Dom thus transformed into a policy category. The construction of the Dom has been occurring in a top-down process via the scientific and expert discourses in policy literature. This construction shares characteristics of the expert-political construction of the Roma identity in Europe, which Surdu and Kovats determine to be constructed "mainly from above and from out-side by political and expert communities and thereafter applied or adopted by people subjected to public labelling and policy interventions" (Surdu and Kovats, 2015:7). The top-down identity building of the Dom was mainly initiated by the European Rome Rights Center

(ERRC), EU institutions, Roma experts, activists and NGOs. It was only later on that some Dom organizations were formed with the help of the EU-funded projects and programs.

The ERRC's 2006-2007 field study in Turkey, which assessed the socioeconomic situation of the Roma in Turkey, was also an important step for the categorization of the Dom (ERRC, 2008). The report of "We Are Here! Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle for Rights of Roma in Turkey" (ERRC, 2008) identified the three main groups of Gypsies in Turkey as Roma, Dom and Lom. To designate the three groups, the terms Roma, as an umbrella name for all groups, "Turkish Gypsies," and "Other Travelers" were used interchangeably in each chapter written by various authors. The report also estimated that there are 4.5 to 5 million Roma, Dom, Lom and small groups of travelers in Turkey. Besides the recognition and estimation of the Dom community, the study also had another role in the construction of the Dom as a political object, as two of the researchers, Acton and Marsh (2007), noted at the Annual Conference of the GLS in Manchester: "The emergence this year of the first Dom Association of Diyarbakir was a direct consequence of the ESRC and ERRC research visits. The renegotiation of Dom identity as a phenomenon within the spectrum of Gypsy politics in Turkey is something that has yet to happen" (Acton and Marsh, 2007:7).

Additional Dom organizations were established in Gaziantep, Hatay and Diyarbakir, with the support of the ERRC in 2008. The number of Roma organizations in Turkey boomed in 2008 and 2009, and the First Roma Summit was organized in 2009, with 5 federations and 8 associations from 36 cities (Dişli, 2016). The Summit is

considered as an important step for the recognition of the Roma and its problems in Turkey, especially by Erdogan, then the Prime Minister of Turkey. Erdogan spoke at the Summit, offering a symbolic apology for the discrimination that the Roma face.
The 2009 Roma Summit led to some false hopes in the Dom that they might establish many more organizations. The leader of the Dom Association of Diyarbakir explains his disappointment about the support they were expecting after the Roma Summit in an interview by Ana Oprisan. Oprison works for the Council of Europe as a project manager for social inclusion of Roma at a local level and pursues her PhD studies on Roma. As she indicates in her article "Forgotten in the Crisis: The Dom People of Syria and Turkey on the Streets of Diyarbakir An Account of Survival" (2013) on *KURI Journal:*

> "[The leader of the Dom Association of Diyarbakir] was encouraged almost seven years ago to establish his association and then to insert Roma in the title of his organisation, hoping that interest followed by support might come from the Turkish authorities, European agencies or foreign activists working on Roma inclusion. The billboard that used to sit at the entrance of the now-inexistent office of the association lies on the porch of Mehmet Bey's house in Yeniköy neighbourhood of Bağlar, mixing up the Turkish words for Roma and Romanians: "Diyarbakır Domlar ve Romenler Gençlik Spor Kulübü Kültür Derneği" (Diyarbakır Dom and Romanians Youth Sports Club Cultural Association). Apparently, what he innocently hoped for did not happened: 'I am going to change this name. I didn't know no better'. Back then he hoped that, if they accept to be called also Roma, from the perspective that they might be 'related', the promises of the Turkish Prime Minister in 2010 would be extended for their needs as well." (Oprisan, 2013)

Gül Özateşler, one of the researchers in the ERRC team in 2006 and 2007, examines the ethnic identification of the Dom in Diyarbakir based on the interviews she conducted under ERRC field research. She asserts that, as a result of the ERRC research visits, the Diyarbakir municipality recognized the problems of the Dom and supported

them "through the newly founded Association and cultural activities (such as the Diyarbakır festival of this year, where the Dom musicians opened the proceedings). Nevertheless, the municipal police (*zabıta)* still collect Dom beggars, take them to the outskirts of the city, confiscate any money in their possession and leave them to make the long walk home. It has also been reported to us that in the past there have been incidents of arbitrary arrest, detention and mistreatment of Dom by the city police" (Özateşler, 2013:283). This illustrates well that neither the recognition of the Dom as part of Roma nor the establishment of the Dom Associations brought any betterment in terms of the recognition of the socio-economic conditions and the social and political mechanisms creating them, not only for Dom but also for non-Dom in Diyarbakir. Özateşler indicates that the poverty of Dom plays a large part in their exclusion and access to certain services. A Dom woman who leads one of the Dom organizations in Turkey that was established after the ERRC's field visits in 2006 and 2007, explained to me how her perception of the Dom identity transformed over the years: "we know our name, Dom, and we have been speaking this language we heard from our grandparents, Domari, but we didn't know what we were, and that we were coming from India. We were a forgotten and neglected society. Now we are learning about our history."

The ERRC report in 2008 recognizes the diversity of Gypsy groups in Turkey, but the term "Roma" remained an umbrella term for all groups in its following reports. In 2010, the ERRC published another report about Roma in Turkey that presented Lom and Dom as Roma groups. The report states that "the diversity of Roma groups in Turkey stems from the presence of Rom, Dom and Lom groups. The majority of Roma live in Western Anatolia and Thrace while the Dom and Lom groups mostly live in

South Eastern and Eastern Turkey. In the absence of accurate data, estimates range from there being half a million to 5 million Roma in all" (ERRC, 2010).

In a meeting I attended with staff from a few Jordanian NGOs, a representative from the EU Delegation to Jordan spoke to us about the delegation's effort to bring the problems of Dom into the consideration of the Jordanian Government. What he said in the meeting illustrates the discourse on the Dom in the realm of policy-making: "the Dom do not only exist in the Middle East. There are 8 million of Dom in Europe". This supposed ethnic tie between Dom and Roma has been consistently acknowledged in the policy literature. However, conversations during my field visits in Lebanon and Jordan reflect that those who were categorized as Dom in policy research do not find this supposed ethnic tie relevant to themselves. Özateşler also asserts that the Dom people in Diyarbakir "avoid notions of ethnic identification, moreover they do not presently see themselves as part of a wider Gypsy diaspora" (Özateşler, 2013: 285). Acton and Marsh's speech in the Annual Conference of the GLS (2007) addressed the need for reconsidering the use of the term Roma as an umbrella category for all Gypsies, but not necessarily because the Dom to not acknowledge the term themselves.

> "The importance of the extension of European-style Romani Studies to Turkey is that this model just will not do. In many ways we can see enormous similarities between Turkey and the other countries of the Balkans, but the conception of Roma identity as being hegemonic in the construction of Gypsy politics in Turkey falls at the first fence. The Dom and the Lom cannot be reduced to footnotes to the political identity of the Roma; in all probability, on linguistic (c.f. Hancock 2004) and possible historical indications and inferences that can be drawn from mediaeval chronicles such as that of Matthew of Edessa (1144/1162/1993) the Dom were in Anatolia before a Romani-speaking community existed in any form. (Acton and Marsh, 2007: 2)

The top-down recognition of the Dom as a sup-group of Rome is not well perceived among the Roma and Dom NGOs in Turkey either. A Dom woman who leads one of these Dom organizations expressed her disappointment about the Roma organizations being reluctant to include them in programs: “We said ok to be Roma. But we are still not accepted by Roma.” In addition to the competition between organizations for accessing economic resources, there are perceived identity boundaries between the groups that have been overlooked by the policy community in order to homogenize the Roma category. As Önen’s research and a 2008 ERRC report display, Roma mostly affiliate themselves with Turkishness, while the Dom in the eastern cities speak Kurdish and are often recognized as Kurdish Gypsies by Roma and other communities (Önen, 2011, ERRC 2008).

One of the international advocacy meetings my NGO organized took place in the European Parliament in Brussels in 2018. The participants were mainly from the EU Roma related policy institutions, as well as some of the panelists. While the meeting title and program indicated that the event would focus solely on Dom refugees, participants and panelists from EU Roma related policy institutions kept using the term Roma during the discussions. For instance, the Member of European Parliament who hosted the meeting gave the floor to our project experts after the opening speech by stating: “We are concerned with the problems of the Roma out of Europe.” Toward the end of the meeting, one of the panelists, a representative from an EU Roma institution, was asked if the Dom accept to be called as Roma. Her answer was “Roma is an umbrella term that we use on the policy level. Then we assert in the footnotes all those

sub-groups we consider under this term. But Roma is the general name we use for everyone."

The 2010 ERRC report examines the problems of Roma in Turkey, such as housing, education, unemployment, health conditions and social exclusion. The report describes the Dom as a subsection of the Roma category, and it concludes with policy recommendations for better social inclusion of Roma in Turkey:

> "There are national and European financial instruments available for funding interventions aimed at Roma social inclusion, despite the fact that at present Roma are not explicitly mentioned in any of them. Specifically, Roma as vulnerable persons are part of the target group of IPA [Individual Personal Assistance] pre-accession assistance. The Human Resources Development Operational Programme under IPA component IV foresees promoting the inclusion of disadvantaged persons into the labour market by facilitating their access to the labour market and to social protection, and by eliminating the barriers in accessing the labour market. There are therefore good opportunities for Roma communities to benefit from this programme and to promote their social inclusion." (ERRC, 2010: 67)

As indicated in the above paragraph, "vulnerability" and "disadvantage" are ascribed to Roma as a whole (and, contentiously, to Dom and Lom as "subgroups") in order to make clear their eligibility for the funded interventions mentioned. Thus, the Dom in the report were gradually absorbed by the term Roma, then were placed under the category of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities—in order to fit the relevant policy programs and available funds. This EU program mentioned in the quote targeted Roma in Turkey, and Dom as a sub category, under a grant titled "Improving Social Integration and Employability of Disadvantaged Persons". The grant was dedicated to "vulnerable or socially excluded groups such as persons at risk of poverty, disabled persons, Roma citizens, internally displaced persons and ex-convicts." Several projects

under this fund targeted the Dom, and Roma, as well as “people who live like Roma”. The latter classification will be examined later in this section, and the content of the projects will be examined in the next section focusing on cultural essentialism.

After 2011, the ERRC conducted a field study in the southern and south-eastern parts of Turkey to assess the situation of the Dom refugees from Syria. Besides setting up the main narrative of the Dom as a one of the most vulnerable group among refugees, the reports contained sections dedicated to describing the origin of the Dom, their language, traditional professions, customs, sub-groups and sects. Other reports about Dom conducted in Lebanon and Jordan, funded by the EC, UNICEF and INGOs, include similar narratives that describes the group as a marginalized and vulnerable ethnic minority. Along same trend, the Dom fleeing from Syria to Turkey were given attention as a “vulnerable group” among other refugees after an influx of funds and policies dedicated to Syrian refugees in Turkey.

The policy discourse and general environment from which institutions and organizations set up their framework limits the possibility of policy options and approaches, as the discourse offers a limited conceptualization of the problems to be addressed. Bakewell (2008) explains this phenomenon, arguing that researchers in the policy-relevant research projects tend “to take the categories, concepts and priorities of policy makers and practitioners as their initial frame of reference for identifying their areas of study and formulating research questions” (Bakewell, 2008:1). Because refugees are given significant attention in policy discourse as vulnerable peoples, researchers tend to gravitate toward refugee studies as a research priority. However, Bakewell explains that researchers confuse their categories of analysis with the policy

categories that have been mainly defined by the international actors such as INGOs, UN or EU humanitarian aid programs. For instance, the “disadvantaged” category that might be used as a category of analysis is used instead as a policy category, or used as a technical category within refugee aid operations. Their research, therefore, is often limited by the policy categories in order to produce policy-relevant research that matches the pre-established discourse. Even if researchers avoid using policy categories as a point of departure for gathering data, they ultimately need to return to policy definitions for analysis of the data in order to present their findings to policy makers. In this sense, the search for policy relevance can be read as seeking “a proxy for practical relevance” within Bakewell’s terms.

Further, the body of policy literature on the Dom is generally not produced by an individual author, but rather a large team of researchers, experts, consultants and project management staff. These reports are published under the name of the overseeing organization, but confusingly add a small declaimer that eschews the organization of responsibility for the content and opinions presented in the report. While the collective production under the organizational shadow presents an air of authority and objectivity behind the publication, it reduces individual authorship, responsibility and critical discussion over the produced knowledge (Surdu, 2016:2). Another problem that arises in knowledge production is the vague role of the expert in policy research. An expert is “neither a researcher, nor a political representative, nor an activist, nor an administrator in charge of the protocol of the experiment but playing a bit of all those roles at once without being able to fulfill any one of them satisfactorily” (Surdu cites Latour, 2016:154). Whether or not the project experts are scholars, their reports in this field are

not subjected to peer review or a scientific committee. The research teams that are hired by the NGOs tend to work with a short-term consultancy contract and therefore are not subject to review in the long term after the policy interventions have taken place.

Moreover, the policy research institutions and NGOs have competitive political and economic interests in representing the Dom as a possible target group to secure additional funding for programs and projects. Therefore, a mixture of academic and non-academic publications will often be used in the reports to purposely support the homogeneous image of the Dom as a policy category. For instance, the reports that have been published in the past few years commonly use a figure from Meyer's (2004) study on the peripatetic groups in Syria that attempts to establish a homogenizing link among Gypsy groups (Meyer, 2004: 74). This description, from *Various Components of the Nawar People,* illustrates the different names of these groups such as Nawar, Turkmen, Dom, Abdal, Alban, Kaoli alongside their sects, language and professions. Although the reports use the term Dom to designate all, often by citing Williem (2000), and assert the figure as a supportive element, Meyer's study recognizes the multi-layered characteristic of Gypsy groups and that the Dom, speaking Domari, only constitutes a small part of the Gypsies. Meyer connects them by their economic activities and traditionally mobile lifestyle—which are both subjected to change in the past decades due to urbanization and industrialization. He stresses the fact that he understands ethnic identity "as [a] spatio-temporally variable concept whereby ethnic groups are endogamous groups whose self-image is constructed from traditions selected from the past" (Meyer, 2004:72).

As I illustrated in this chapter, the Dom category in the current policy discourse is a contentious category. The Dom are confusingly portrayed both as an ethnic minority and a disadvantaged group, initially by the EU Roma policies, and later on by the funds targeting them as the vulnerable refugees. The next chapter examines how the Dom knowledge produced by reports and meetings, such as knowledge on the origins and customs of the group or their current situation and vulnerabilities, grant certain actors an epistemic power and self-claimed proxy in relation to their objects of study.

CHAPTER V

LEGACY OF THE ROMANY RAI: EXPERT CONSTRUCTION OF THE DOM AS ETERNAL OTHERS

Previous chapters illustrate that the Dom category in the policy discourse is not an objective concept, but a contentious and vague identity based on knowledge mainly produced by expert narratives. The Dom as epistemic objects and policy targets, initially categorized by Gypsylorists in order to be approached and studied, have been further solidified as a political category by the experts in order to be represented and targeted by the policies. The ambiguous characteristics of the category requires experts in the field to classify who are *the Dom* in order to clarify who will be subjected to policy interventions. With the existing policy literature, in which *the Dom* is constructed as a policy target, self-affiliated spokespersons, social workers or experts in the field appear to know who *the Dom* are better than those who are actually perceived to be Dom.

The policy literature asserts that the Dom choose different appellations for themselves, like Bani Murra, Arab, Turkmen, Turk or Kurd, because they are afraid of revealing their ethnic identity or because they are "assimilated" into the dominant society or nation-state politics. To reveal this "hidden" or "assimilated" identity, which they were supposedly afraid of, the expert's role is to reveal the ethnic and cultural codes which identify the group to be subjected to policy interventions. The expert, as explained by Latour, is a mediator that must "transform, translate, distort, and modify

the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry" (Disch cites Latour 2008: 91). Surdu draws similarities between policing and policy science with regards to crafting Gypsies as an object of their activity (Surdu, 2016). He shows that both policy and policy institutions seeking social intervention see Gypsies "as a homogeneous group that should be targeted with the goal of changing their behavior and conform them with the state's logic of economic productivity" (77). He describes the researcher's role in policy research "in a similar way as a policeman, [who] is oriented towards people who share certain characteristics that correspond to his pre-determined definition of Gypsy/Roma individual: poverty, darker skin appearance, and living in a ghetto type of community with basic infrastructure" (79). Therefore, experts in policy research identify the policy target through their own reflected imagination of subjects.

Once the epistemic authority of the expert is established, it must be maintained by reinforcement. Experts working in policy-relevant research on the Dom are motivated keep their epistemic authority on the subject. The Dom are collectively portrayed in policy literature as "the others" by mobilizing an ethnic perspective, asserting an exotic Indian origin, and using visual depictions to support the "otherness". The otherness of *the Dom* is crucial for the experts' mediating role between the policy community and the subjects of the policy. The concept of Romani Rai is useful here to describe the mediatory role of the expert, as Lee explains: "since Borrow's day, what Romani Rai has often meant in practice is that self-appointed 'gaje' [non-Gypsy] experts and scholars created and projected discourses, narratives and representation of Romanies that served their own ends. That is, they were the equivalent of the Oriental scholars who created the subject of 'The Orient' and 'The Oriental'" (Lee, 2000: 140).

It is noted in our project paper that "given Dom people have difficulties trusting people due to the discrimination against them, interviews with them will be conducted following informal research methods and unstructured interviews." Difficulties trusting people is another important raison d'être for utilizing experts as mediators in the programs and projects. All reports and expert discourse emphasize the difficulty of working with the Dom and their lack of trust and confidence in outsiders. I believe it is important to recall that Gypsylorism is a system of discourse that constructs its own subject of study and legitimizes a certain way of studying it. While Romani Rai was fictional image of a non-Gypsy who is granted privileged access to the closed world of the True Gypsies, it was served to maintain selected authority over knowledge of Gypsies, and to secure the idea of racially pure Gypsies. In a similar construction of fiction, the experts' claim that the Dom are not easy to reach can be seen as an attempt to reinforce their authority on their subject. The Dom, as a vulnerable community, only "known" by a narrow group of experts and organizations, is a lucrative niche for individuals and NGOs to be "specialized" in. I experienced an example of this in one of my meetings with an executive manager in an organization in Lebanon that contributed to a report on the Dom. My objective was to discuss how our project could be relevant to their work. During the meeting, I was told by the head of the NGO that the Dom will not welcome me unless I go to the settlement with their team. Yet, I went alone, and I was welcomed in every tent settlement without being an expert or Romani Rai or having a "trusted" escort. However, it is logical to presume that heavily-researched peoples understandably can grow tired of journalists and researchers asking questions or taking pictures, especially when living under harsh conditions in tent settlements.

A. The Use of Photography: Visual Depictions of the Poverty and Otherness of the Dom

The visual representation of the Dom in expert publications is another important element that supports epistemic authority on the topic. These photographs serve as an indicator to the audience (donors, policymakers or other organizations) that a particular organization has been specialized in the "Dom issue" and has an expertise on the topic (Surdu, 2016: 230). In most of the meetings, the experts who worked in the field choose to utilize photo-clips in their presentations, to display their understanding of "which living-conditions we are talking about," as they often state. Photograph exhibitions are often included in meetings held on the Dom or Roma. In our project meetings with other organizations, the colorful pictures of Dom women and children that were captured during field visits. They were distributed with accompanying text that describes the issue depicted in the pictures, such as "child labor" in the verso of a picture of a kid in a workshop, "lack of access to clean water" in the verso of a picture of a *Dom* woman carrying a heavy water bottle, and "the problems of children" in the verso of a picture of a kid on the top of a garbage dump. It is often claimed that using photographs in reports and exhibitions used for draws "attention to the problems that the Dom face". Fassin (2011) explains this representation of the suffering as a spectacle that justifies intervention: "while the spectacle of suffering has disappeared completely from the public places where the physical punishment inflicted on criminals was previously exhibited, the representation of suffering through images and narratives has become increasingly commonplace in the public sphere, not only in the media, whose propensity

for exposing intimate details of pain is well known, but also in the political arena, where it furnishes an effective justification for action" (Fassin, 2011: 250).

Even though NGOs working in the field have good intentions or genuine objectives to improve the living conditions of the target group, they have to cope with external pressures such as depending on funding and governmental agencies that can alter their course of action. As Timmer (2010) explains, NGOs in Hungary adopt a strategy of portraying Roma as needy subjects to maintain their funding: "To convince the general public that their work is needed and useful, NGOs must employ a number of strategies that posit the Roma as "deserving of aid." To do this, humanitarian organizations employ a number of discursive strategies to promote themselves and to draw awareness to the 'Roma problem.' The most common of these is the use of narratives of extreme poverty and discrimination" (Timmer 2010: 268).

The use of photography in reports is not unique to the Dom. This visual material is often requested by donors as a means of documenting the fund-recipient organization's activities. However, in the reports on the Dom, the pictures tend to "justify" the otherness and vulnerability attributed to the target group since individuals are portrayed in pictures in ways that accentuate ideas of the Dom as "different", "marginal" and "poor". These photographs often serve to romanticize, stereotype and exoticize the Dom, and therefore reinforce the Dom category by selecting pictures of women and children whose appearance seem more "traditional": such as, dyed hair, make up, tattoos or jewelry, while the men tend to appear "indifferent". This is especially prominent in the frequently-used photographs of Abdals/Turkmens, since women and children generally wear colorful dresses and use jewelry. However, one

project consultant who worked in preparation of many reports acknowledged that "maybe we shouldn't have used those colorful pictures of Dom women and children in the previous reports, it may romanticize them in this manner. We should rather use pictures showing their socio-economic conditions and problems." One recent report on the Dom refugees was even accompanied by a separate photography book. One of the responsible parties for this approach explained the rationale to me as a "marketing" decision: "Look, the other report [from another project] didn't even get any attention, our report is sent everywhere. We prepare our reports with a nice design with pictures, we do well the marketing".

Figure 1 and 2: The two pages from the report "Syrian Dom Migrants: Living at the Bottom On the Road amid Poverty and Discrimination", published by the Development Workshop in 2015

Figure 3: The exhibition about the Dom and Abdal who fled Syria and found refuge in Gaziantep, Turkey, was presented in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France in March 2017. The photoghraphs are taken by Doruk Seymen. Source: Oprisan, A. (2017, March 25). [Tweet]. Retrieved January 15, 2019, from https://twitter.com/AnaOprisan_CoE/status/845589498750812160

Besides organizational and expert interest in representing the Dom as "others" through visual depictions, the employees who work in the organizations such as NGOs and policy initiatives, often with funding-based working contracts, possess a working mechanism established in the bureaucratic aspect of NGOs. Achieving project targets and deliverables within given budgets and a determined timeframe are essential for the employees to accomplish tasks or to be promoted onto another project or position. For example, as part of the activities that fell under the project's objective of advocacy for rights, we needed to connect with other local and international NGOs and public agencies about our target group, the Dom, and sensitize them to the "issue". As project

assistant, I was in charge of organizing some of these meetings. For one of the meetings, with other NGOs working with refugees, I selected the picture to be displayed on the meeting's invitation flyer. There were two pictures of children, photographed during one of our field visits by the project consultant, which I was selecting from. I chose a one particular picture over the other, because the subject of the photograph had a "different" look with reddish hair. I found myself thinking that his "different" appearance will make the invitees more inclined to understand this is not merely another meeting about the refugees that they already work with.

B. The (Ab)Use of Culture: the Dom Culture Determined, Ascribed and Blamed

As part of our project, we organized a meeting with the representatives of public institutions and local CSOs from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. A representative from the Ministry of Social Development in Jordan gave a presentation on their strategy for improving the living conditions of the Dom. Prior to the meeting, I explained to the presenter that we do not expect him to describe the Dom in his presentation but only the policy approach of the Ministry; for instance, about the tent settlements of the Dom in Jordan which are forcefully being removed by the municipalities. However, his presentation repeated the names used to designate the Dom in Jordan, some of the areas they live in, and the estimation about their population. He then went on to assert that "there are three main characteristics of the Dom culture". First, he claimed, "The man is the dominant figure in the Dom family structure." Second, he indicated that the Dom men do not work as part of their culture and, finally, that Dom life is highly nomadic. He then argued that the Dom should be educated with the goal of passage to sedentary

life so that they can be better targeted by social development programs in Jordan. While the first characteristic he attributed to the Dom could be applied to the rest of the Jordanian society in general, the last two set a clear example of the categorization of the Dom as a distinct ethnic group opens up for a very essential and static understanding of culture. This type of assertion by the presenter also shows the critical role of the spokespersons' in "elevating minor cultural differences to an essential status" (Surdu and Kovats, 2015:7). Here, a particular way of living, which is shaped by socio-economic conditions, gains an essential status when the Dom are taken as a unit of analysis. The nomadic lifestyle of the Dom, seen as an inherent part of their nature, was therefore seen as the reason for the socio-economic backwardness.

As a self-ascribed spokesperson on the Dom due to my role within my organization, I was asked numerous times about their culture. Some of the questions were the following: "Only children and women work in the Dom families, and men stay at home. Is this their culture?"; or "Dom women work in prostitution, or they work as dancers in night clubs. Is this seen as normal in their culture?".

In other advocacy and strategy development meetings we organized with NGOs and partners in the project, the "culture" discourse appeared to be derived from the categorization of Dom as an ethnic group, distinct from the rest of society. The Dom culture was thus perceived, or blamed, as being responsible for the group's exclusion and poverty. The meetings we held with local NGOs and experts on the education of Dom children almost always concluded with the same recommendations for integrating Dom children into the public education system: "Awareness raising for teachers, school representatives about the Dom culture." However, not a single person articulated what

these “cultural differences” were that teachers must know about. When we discussed strategies with employees from other NGOs, many of them indicated that they do not want to intervene in the Dom culture, or force them to change, and they would suggest that maybe they want to live that way. Culture was mentioned many times in these meetings, referring to a way of living but not to a particular behavior, attitude or custom.

Experts and NGO experts tend to blame culture to explain the lack of willingness of the Dom to participate in their work. Under the project framework, a couple of local NGOs were sub-granted for organizing activities to support Dom women and children. One of the reports from a sub-grantee describes how the project team organized psycho-social support sessions for the Dom women. Some women attended, and while few of them requested more sessions, some women did not want to join at all because of “cultural barriers”, as the activity report stated. Cultural barriers were used as an excuse to explain why the target participation numbers were not reached by the project team.

Certain traditional professions ascribed to the Dom in the policy literature are informal dentistry, ironsmithing, tin-smithing, basket making, entertainment, dancing and playing music. As it was mentioned in the second section of this paper, Gypsylorists also described certain occupations as an inherent part of “the True Gypsy” identity. As mentioned in previous chapter, some projects in Turkey targeted the category of “people who live like Roma” were funded under the grant of “Improving Social Integration and Employability of Disadvantaged Persons”. This category refers to a group who call themselves as Turkmen, also called as Abdal in academic literature.

We came across the group in Lebanon, and mostly in Jordan, and they were native in Turkish and Arabic. However, the policy literature mentions this group either as "people who live like Roma" to make them fit under available funds in Turkey, or as "other travelers." In our project paper, they were considered under "other related minorities". But later on, the distinction disappeared, and they were referred to as Dom among all other groups with different (self) appellations in the reports and flyers that we published. The reason for considering Turkmen/Abdals as "people who live like Roma" is not clear since no description of this exists in the policy literature. Unlike most of Roma today in Turkey, Abdals are claimed to be highly nomadic. This paradoxical framing finds its origins with the essentialist distinction of the early Gypsylorist between "the True Gypsies" and "Gypsy-like" groups.

The livelihood projects targeting the Dom in Diyarbakir, Turkey and "people who live like Roma" in Hatay, Turkey which were funded under the grant "Improving Social Integration and Employability of Disadvantaged Persons", exemplifies this static understanding of culture: the project in Diyarbakir was called "the Dom: The Lost People of the Mesopotamia". It aimed at giving vocational trainings over the course of a year to Dom women with the goal of increasing livelihood opportunities. The trainings were mostly aimed at developing basket making, as this was considered one of the traditional handicrafts with which Dom women are talented. At the end of the project, a representative from one of the local project partners explained the objectives of the project in an interview titled as "The Lost People of the Mesopotamia are Found" (Milliyet, 2017) and stated: "We are concluding the project after today's closing ceremony which is organized in the Dom neighborhood with the Dom musicians, so

they can reflect their culture". A Dom woman complained to me about these projects, "as if we can't do anything else than music and baskets".

One of the projects for "people who live like Roma" in Hatay aimed at training the target group in playing instruments and "traditional" soap-making. The justification for the approach is explained as "transforming the ethnic/characteristic features of the target group into opportunities so that they can gain the respect that they deserve in the society" (Aydınlığa Giden Lokomotif, n.d). The explanation goes further and indicates that "people who live like Roma" cannot benefit properly from their inherent talents and potential, such as in playing music, because they are not transforming these resources into income-generating activities through professionalization. For this reason, the explanation posits, they cannot fulfill their basic needs, they live in need of assistance, and they are not well integrated with the rest of society. Further, because of the lack of integration, their children are not successful in education system and they tend to commit crimes. This essentialist narrative finds its origin in the distinction between the *True Gypsies* and the Gypsy-like which was first posed by the Gypsylorists, which later became a justification for repression and persecution of Roma. This train of thought leads to the conclusion that the more Gypsies get away from the romantic image of the True Gypsy (those who lives in tents, play music, dance, or make baskets, soaps, tell fortunes etc.), the more they are perceived as degenerated, and as a "social problem".

The homogeneous image of the Dom, produced through policy research, takes cultural categories as a method of analysis: heterogeneity and multiplicity are often seen as accidents or exceptions (Bowker and Star, 2010:300). Therefore, it removes the grounds for individuals to be participate in their own identity construction unless they

adequately fit the perceived categorical traits. An employee in my NGO complained to me about a different NGO that took funds to work with the Dom children in a particular neighborhood. Yet, they were not doing so because "the kids were all speaking in Kurdish, they were Kurds". Although the advocacy discourse on the Dom calls for inclusion, the labelling practices in policy research paradoxically includes "stereotyping which involves disaggregation, standardization and the formulation of clear-cut categories" (Zetter, 1991: 44). Similar to the competition among NGOs and researchers to access economic resources or social and political prestige, competition also occurs within the Dom community to gain access to benefits from intervention programming. A Dom woman working in an NGO indicated to me that she was accused by another Dom woman of not being a "real" Dom because she spoke Kurdish, not Domari.

The reports that focus solely on the Dom refugees indicate that they face double discrimination because of being Dom and being refugees among other refugee groups (ERRC, 2015). This was the justification for choosing the target group in the project proposal, and the point of double discrimination was repeated throughout the reports and the documents. As previously discussed, policy discourse frequently asserts that the Dom are discriminated against due to their ethnic identity and lifestyle. Yet in my observation, the Dom's Indian origin or other ethnic attributes discussed in academia and policy literature appear to be not known or acknowledged by the public or those who are assessed as Dom in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. I do not deny that the Dom are discriminated against. In fact, I have come across many people in a wide variety of positions—from civil servants in local NGOs on the field to high ranking officials in transnational organizations—who have explained to me on numerous

occasions why "those who are Nawar do not get aid like other refugees" simply because "they are Nawar, not refugees, so this is their lifestyle to live in tents."

Not only are those who are called Gypsies face discrimination as refugees, but also as citizens in countries where they formally reside. The term Gypsy is used in Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic—among many other languages—to refer to a type of behavior ascribed to certain groups of people, such as thieves or people who "lack manners". This discrimination is more related to social stigmas and stereotypes that "appears to be constructed on their different social practices, not on allegations of actual foreign origins" (Parrs, 2016: 56). However, not all the problems faced by the people under the Dom category were related to discrimination, as many were largely due the social and economic conditions within which they live. The discrimination itself derives from the poverty that they face. Overemphasizing the discrimination and otherness of the Dom as an inherent part of their ethnicity draws the image of the Dom that they are *irreconcilably different* than the so-called non-Dom. (Trubeta 2013: 16). As ethnicity becomes an inherent part of Dom identity, and is posited as a solid objective concept (in other words, as their "nature"), the ethnic discrimination faced by Dom for decades becomes an intrinsic part of this *nature.* In short, the Dom is an eternally discriminated and vulnerable group, they need special treatment and care, they need to be saved but not healed.

CHAPTER VI

SAVING THE DOM: POLITICS OF VULNERABILITY

The Dom are approached as an epistemic and political object by a variety of actors such as the ERRC, the EU Roma organizations, the GLS, the DRC, experts, and NGOs for various reasons examined in the previous chapters. Once the Dom category is established under the bureaucratic labels of “vulnerable” and “disadvantaged”, a set of problems become associated with those who fall into the category. The Dom becomes a client group for policy, with a set of assumed needs. Being Dom is equated to being vulnerable and disadvantaged. The problems associated with the Dom are thus presented as the result of those “disadvantages”, where in the case of the Dom, these disadvantages are linked to their ethnicity and lifestyle. As a result of the categorization that places problems in a racial framework, the cultural characteristics of the Dom are determined and ascribed by experts, then pinpointed as the source of the Dom’s social and economic problems. This both condemns the Dom identity to be understood through ethnicity and lifestyle, while simultaneously problematizing the same identity traits as the reason for their disadvantage.

The process of “problematization” (Foucault, 1994) helps us understand how we conceptually extract and construct problems from the world, giving them epistemic form and authority as knowable, observable, actionable situations or objects. But this process of problematization eliminates alternate conceptions of the perceived problem. Since the Dom are problematized as a vulnerable and disadvantaged group by the policy

discourse, their disadvantages and vulnerabilities that are also embedded into their ethnicity and culture as a static concept. However, the problems associated with the Dom such as lack of housing, unemployment, lack of education, lack of access to health services, early marriage, poverty, discrimination and social exclusion are also problems arising from social inequality in general, which exists for a large part of society.

Fassin's concept of humanitarian government (2011) refers to the deployment moral sentiments as an essential force of contemporary politics. The attention paid to the most vulnerable, unfortunate and disadvantaged peoples by the policy community—rather than the structures which perpetuate inequality itself—is a particular way of problematizing our societies. Fassin argues that this problematization of the social world mobilizes compassion rather than justice. Humanitarian government plays a dual role on the global scale. While it dedicates programs of "protection" and "assistance" to the "vulnerable" refugee groups, thousands of asylum seekers die in the Mediterranean Sea due to the closed-border policies of the EU, while hundreds of these asylum-seekers stay in detention centers in inhumane conditions in Greece and in Turkey. In 2018, the report of the EU Technical Assistance to the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey assessed that among the refugees with protection risks such as children, women and elders, other categories include:

> "seasonally mobile workers in particular in the agricultural sector, Dom, Yezidis, LGBTI people, sex workers and vulnerable men (unaccompanied men, single men heading households, men survivors of SGBV, who may resort to negative coping strategies). Even if incomplete, information is now available about these groups, the risks they face and their needs which require particular mechanisms outside existing generic efforts. Although there is no legal barrier preventing access of these vulnerable groups to assistance, existing public protection framework and assistance schemes are inadequate to meet their specific protection

needs and likely to remain so in the medium and long-term." (European Commission, 2018: 6)"

Hereby, the problems of these vulnerable individuals are addressed within the existing protection framework and assistance schemes rather than looking to the structural violence, the lack of labour rights, and the social inequality that should also be a part of the discussions. Humanitarianism is a force which devotes attention to the most vulnerable, whose voice is the least capable of threatening its power. As Fassin's words put it well: "Humanitarianism has this remarkable capacity: it fugaciously and illusorily bridges the contradictions of our world and makes the intolerableness of its injustices somewhat bearable" (Fassin, 2012: xii).

The attention and compassion given to the Dom then appear to be "exceptional" compared to the consideration granted to other suffering people. My aim is not at all to claim that there should be no attention or care directed toward the Dom; rather, I hope to open another way of conceptualizing what sort of support approaches are being used toward the Dom. Instead of an outlook that suggests a moral duty to save this racialized group of individuals considered to be "exceptional," I am suggesting avoiding making cases appear intrinsically "exceptional" regarding issues of inequality, suffering and injustice. In her book Casualties of Care, Ticktin explores the politics of exceptions and she argues that these exceptions do not serve to alleviate the forms of violence or suffering that they purport to address, but merely racialize the issue (Ticktin, 2015).

Along with the previous reports, our project paper and our report indicated that the Dom did not take sides in the Syrian War and remained neutral while facing

violence from all sides of the conflict. On the flyer of our advocacy meeting in Brussels, it was written that:

> "The Dom community in Syria has been especially targeted by the warring parties in Syria, even though they have not taken any side in the war. On the one hand, radical jihadist groups have expelled the Dom communities from their houses, seized their properties and committed violence against them, including massacres, blaming that 'they are not Muslim enough'; on the other hand, the Assad regime has continued to ignore the existence of the Dom community within Syria."

This image of the Dom was also drawn in the initial reports on the Dom residing in the Eastern cities in Turkey, where the state authorities and Kurdish militias are engulfed in a decades-long conflict. The expert narratives often assert that the Dom are not part of any political groups or parties in the countries in which they live, that they remained neutral in the war in Syria and they found themselves in the crossfire. Thereafter, the narrative continues, they took shelter in neighboring countries and they now face double discrimination as refugees and as Dom. In Turkey, the Dom were the subjected to evacuations from the Eastern cities due to the conflict, but not participants in it. In Iraq, they were being persecuted, and so they fled. The Dom are homogeneously portrayed in the reports as passive victims who are not politically motivated. They appear as "subjects to be saved, not primarily political subjects" and thus their suffering makes them "deserving" of aid (Ticktin, 2011:189). In this way, the Dom are portrayed as essential others, and therefore eternally vulnerable and in need of assistance. Attention is increasingly given to their suffering and misfortune as it is described and visualized through media and policy literature. However, the politics of suffering is a politics of morally driven actions for the Dom as victims. Given that the policy discourse does not target the social mechanisms behind their suffering, and the victim

categorization limits the Dom's political involvement, it opens the playing field for experts and cultural essentialism that reinforces vulnerabilities and results in a policies that perpetuates the otherness and victimhood.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: POLITICAL BEYOND THE DOM CATEGORY

The Dom category in the policy literature is a highly ambiguous and contested category, and allows experts to identify, interpret, and mediate between those who are categorized and Dom and the policy community. However, the socio-historical approach to the construction of the Dom category shows us that it this category is a contextually imagined identity based on the knowledge produced by the scientific work of the Gypsylorists, and later by the experts' discourse. The driving forces behind this construction are both the political and economic interests that arise from holding a privileged position of approaching and representing the Dom. Scientists claim epistemic authority on producing knowledge and are thus given credit and often secure positions in policy research. Experts or political entrepreneurs assume their role in representing the Dom by reinforcing the need for mediation between the Dom and outsiders. Because of this categorization arising from policy discourse, the Dom must therefore internalize the external ascriptions as self-ascriptions in order to be produced as political subjects through their assigned Dom identity. Yet, accepting this given Dom identity entails accepting oneself as an ethnic minority who faces discrimination everywhere due to one's ethnicity and culture. Thus, problems, ethnicity, and culture intertwine and become intrinsic and static attributes of the Dom identity. This is an issue because the problems ascribed to the Dom are often a result of social and economic injustice and inequality that also exist for the large part of society. Yet, this conceptualization of the

policy problem rarely occurs because the policy discourse and organizational environment create a framework based on existing policy options. To re-conceptualize a problem, or a policy category, means that the outcome may be irrelevant to policy research. However, as Bakewell notes: “research which is designed without regard to policy relevance may offer a more powerful critique and ironically help to bring about more profound changes than many studies that focus on policy issues from the outset” (Bakewell, 2008: 433).

The advocacy discourse of supporting the most vulnerable, whose voice is least to be heard, is appealing in Fassin’s terms as “the mobilization of empathy rather than the recognition of rights” (Fassin, 2012: x). Focusing on the problems of the Dom, especially when the Dom are not political objects of the discussion but the subjects in need of “care”, depoliticizes the situation. The political must be a shared act which “involves rethinking and rearticulating what political action means for everyone, not just for those who are understood as unable to act, as needing help or care” (Ticktin, 2012: 224). Yet the advocacy discourse of supporting the most vulnerable, whose voice is least to be heard, appeals to a moral duty rather than a political logic. The Dom, doubly trapped in an imposed, top-down identity in policy discourse, are subjected to rely on the powerful funders and other outsiders that “mediate” for them to translate their political demands and advocate on their behalf. Yet, as I have shown, this discourse tends to circumvent the political, and paradoxically create barriers to political participation for the Dom. The politics of the vulnerable does not result in political actions to demand rights. Therefore, I believe that we must think beyond care and move beyond categories.

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