

Representing Migration in Museums 'From Below': The Case of DOMiD as a Migration Museum in Germany

Esra Can-Mollaer¹

Abstract

The role and significance of museums in shaping modern society, producing knowledge, and establishing cultural hierarchies have long occupied the research agendas of social theory. With respect to the relations of power and domination they generate, the politics of representation in museums have been extensively discussed in the literature. In this regard, the role of museums in the construction of national narratives and national identities is particularly emphasized. Given the rising significance of migration movements in shaping social transformation and political agendas, it is widely argued that migration has not only triggered challenges to museum narratives that promote singular and cohesive national identities, but has also led to the very representation of migration through migration museums. Critically addressing the shifting roles of museums along the axis of debates around 'new museology', this study explores how DOMiD, 'Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany', founded by a group of migrants from Turkey in 1992 and considered one of the pioneering examples in its field, contests the history of migration through its museum practices. Drawing on this framework, this article examines the extent to which DOMiD's museum practices and its museum representations of migration are conceived through a 'from below' approach (Clifford, 1997; Sandell, 2007) and the extent to which they bear the potentials of the notion of 'contact zone' (Clifford, 1997).

Keywords: Museum, nation-state, migration museums, new museology, contact zone.

Müzelerde Göçün 'Aşağıdan' Temsili: Almanya'da Bir Göç Müzesi Olarak DOMiD Örneği

Öz

Müzelerin modern toplumun inşasında, bilginin ve kültürel hiyerarşilerin üretiminde oynadığı rol sosyal teorinin araştırma gündemlerini uzun süredir meşgul etmektedir. Tarihsel olarak siyasi ve ekonomik unsurların etkisiyle biçimlenen toplumsal kurumlar olarak müzelerin anlatı ve temsil politikaları, sömürgecilik mirasıyla irtibatı gibi ürettiği türlü iktidar ve tahakküm ilişkileri açısından literatürde etraflıca ele alınmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, müzelerin ulusal tarih anlatıları ile ulusal kimliklerin inşasındaki rolüne özel bir vurgu yapılmaktadır. Toplumsal dönüşümü ve siyasal gündemleri belirlemede artan önemiyle göç hareketlilikleri, tekil ulusal kimlikler tasavvur eden müze anlatı ve temsillerine yönelik itirazları tetiklenmekle kalmamış aynı zamanda göç konusunun bizzat

¹ Sorumlu yazar/Corresponding author: Esra Can Mollaer, Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, e-mail: esracanmollaer@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0001-6986-3777

Atıf/Citation: Can Mollaer, E. (2023). Müzelerde göçün 'Aşağıdan' temsili: Almanya'da bir göç müzesi olarak DOMiD örneği. *Bursa Uludağ Journal of Economy and Society*, 42(2), 142-156.

göç müzeleri aracılığıyla temsil edilmesinin de yolunu açmış gözükmektedir. Müzelerin dönüşen rolünü eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla ele alan bu çalışma, alanının öncü örneklerinden biri olarak 1992 yılında Türkiye'den Almanya'ya göç etmiş bir grup göçmen tarafından kurulan DOMiD- 'Almanya'da Göç Dokümantasyon Merkezi ve Müzesi''nin müze pratikleri aracılığıyla göç tarihini nasıl temsil ettiğini 'yeni müzecilik' tartışmaları ekseninde ele almaktadır. Bu çerçeveden yararlanarak, DOMiD örneğinden hareketle müze mekanında göç temsil ve anlatılarının 'aşağıdan' (from below) bir yaklaşımla (Clifford, 1997; Sandell, 2007) 'temas bölgesi' (contact zone) (Clifford, 1997) yaratma potansiyeli mercek altına almaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Müze, ulus-devlet, göç müzeleri, yeni müzecilik, temas bölgesi.

1. Introduction

Museums are not neutral repositories but rather socially constructed institutions shaped by cultural, political, and economic forces reflecting the values, ideologies, and power structures of the societies in which they are situated (Vergo, 1989; Bennett, 1995; Duncan, 1995). The role and significance of museums in the formation of modern society, production of knowledge, and advancement of social and economic transformations have long engaged the research agendas of social theory. Historically serving as sites of power and authority, the ways in which museums have been instrumentalized in the construction of national historical narratives and collective identities, notably national identities, have been closely scrutinized (Karp & Kratz, 2014). Informed by the Foucauldian perspective, there is a large body of critical studies that take museums as mechanisms of power and instruments of governmentality, examining their role in the production of knowledge as the objects and narratives they exhibit are categorized, classified, and curated (Bennett, 1995). On the other hand, drawing on the overlapping historical processes and contexts of capitalist expansion, nation-state building, and colonialism, there are debates on the multifaceted and contested relationship between the practices of representation and power dynamics in museums (Boast, 2011). Within this framework, the studies highlight how museums can be complicit in upholding, legitimizing and perpetuating unequal power relations (MacDonald & Fyfe, 1996).

One of the main axes of debate on museums relate to their involvement in nationalist projects by contributing to the construction of national identities and collective memories (MacDonald, 2012). In this respect, there are a number of studies that inquire into how museums reinforce the dominant narratives of nation-states, sideline specific historical events, social institutions, and perspectives, and even serve to legitimize overlapping sets of socio-economic and political inequalities. As a matter of fact, ever since their inception as public institutions in nineteenth-century Europe, museums have played a crucial role in helping nations construct a shared sense of identity, forming a collective "us" (Clifford, 1997; Boast, 2011). In the process of cultivating collective identities, museums inevitably confront to acknowledge the "others". Unfolding within the complex historical contexts of colonization and decolonization, nation-building and political recognition of minorities, this dynamic of 'othering', as Clifford (1997: 218) contends, still lies at the heart of contemporary cultural politics, bearing both creative and contentious repercussions.

Along with the shifting dynamics of decades-long globalization, characterized by increased interconnectedness and mobility, migration has brought about significant socio-demographic shifts which challenge the conventional understanding of the nation within the meta-narrative of museums (Bal, 2006: 15). In the context of perceived divisions between "us" and "them", migrant communities are cast as the "other" and left out of dominant narratives, with mostly limited and unsettled representations in museums (Poehls, 2011). That being said, the growing significance of migration as a key factor in shaping political agendas, coupled with the socio-political and socio-economic repercussions of mass migration movements, has prompted not only contestations of museum

narratives that represent singular and cohesive national identities but has also resulted in the emergence of migration museums as a means of representing the subject of migration.

Approaching the role of museums from a critical standpoint, this study explores how DOMiD- 'Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany', founded in 1992 by a group of migrants from Turkey as one of the pioneering example of migration museum, contests the history of migration through its museum practices. With a history spanning 60 years, shaped by factors such as the emergence of transnational identities, generational changes, and shifting political and economic landscapes, the migration movements and mobilities between Turkey and Germany continue to evolve, taking on new forms along their historical trajectory. In this regard, an examination of how migration from Turkey to Germany is represented and narrated through museum representations would provide a different insight into the historical trajectory of migration.

In this study, I examine the extent to which DOMiD's museum practices and its museum representations of migration, which I assert exemplify the principles of 'new museology', are conceived through a 'from below' approach (Clifford, 1997; Chakrabarty, 2002; Sandell, 2007) and the extent to which they bear potentials of the notion of 'contact zone' (Clifford, 1997). To that end, I first dissect the major theoretical discussions on the historically shifting roles of the museum, followed by a discussion on paradigm shifts in the approaches to museums. I then elaborate on scholarly debates on the emergence, formation, and significance of migration museums. Finally, viewing through the lens of the 'new museology' approach, which focuses on the evolving roles and practices of museums, I examine the extent to which DOMiD, as an example of a migration museum, adopts a 'from below' approach.

2. Museum: Exhibiting nations, cultures and identities

The practice of representing the past within physical spaces has an extensive history that spans over centuries. Historically, museums play instrumental roles in the formation of homogeneous national imaginaries, the projection of shared values and the framing of citizenship in relation to a set of rights and duties, particularly through the display of supporting material evidence (Bennett, 1995; Macdonald, 2006). In her book titled "Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums", Duncan (1995) argues that starting from the eighteenth century, there was an intentional insertion of material culture artifacts into newly defined spaces, primarily driven by the needs of modern ideological and political institutions. Intended to serve as public spheres, museums were configured as spaces where objects of material culture were displayed to convey certain narratives, values, and ideologies (ibid., 1995; 45).

Coupled with its role in both the making of citizenship and the 'public' employed by the state to educate its citizens, the museum has also historically functioned as an educational tool for different social classes as part of the projection defined as 'civilizing culture' (Bennett, 1995). In this regard, Duncan (1995) elaborates on how the transformation of the Louvre from a place to a museum was tied to the creation of a secular, national 'public' in post-revolutionary France. Bourdieu et al. (2004: 431-435), on the other hand, highlight the role of museums in the reproduction of cultural capital and social distinction. In that respect, museums, which developed through the accumulation of symbolic capital associated with the bourgeoisie, served as spaces where the distinction between "high culture" and "low culture" practices and tendencies was institutionalized and solidified (Lavine & Karp, 1991).

As Macdonald (2006: 14) puts it, every museum is both "a statement of position" and also "a theory in itself". The very selection, exhibition, and interpretation of objects in museums reflect the underlying comprehensions, perceptions, and ultimately ideologies, as the deliberate choices made by museums, such as the inclusion or exclusion of artifacts in their collections, the manner in which objects are

displayed, and the narratives they strive to convey, are all carefully curated (ibid., 9). Knowledge production operated here therefore determines not only how a museum positions itself, but also the messages it seeks to communicate to its audience. Building upon this framework, MacDonald (2006) suggests that museums must be conceived as theoretical and ideological constructs that embody particular perspectives on culture, history, and society.

The expansion of public museums in the 19th-century was part of a broader effort to disseminate and configure "culture" in a hierarchical manner, led by those in positions of political and economic authority in the Western world (Bennett, 1995). In this regard, museums are commonly perceived as reflecting established power dynamics and helping to perpetuate social and political disparities by excluding, omitting, or marginalizing certain societal groups and perspectives in the narratives they present (Bennett, 1995; Duncan, 1995; MacDonald, 2006). On that account, acknowledging contested histories, particularly those related to colonialism, slavery, and cultural heritage, discussions surrounding (re)interpretations of history and the matter of representation within museum contexts have been highly contentious. From a similar vein, Anderson (2006: 182) claims that functioning as institutions of political power like the education system and mass communication, museums enable the dissemination of nationalist ideology in the construction of the nation-state, which ultimately serve the construction process of national identity. In museums, historical narrative, interpreted through remembering and forgetting in ways that convey nostalgic sentiments and nationalist ideals, serves the formation of the public perception of history and the establishment of a collective narrative of the past (Evans, 1999).

Coined by Nora (1989), the concept of "*lieux de mémoire*" (sites of memory) describes sites, both physical and symbolic, where collective memory is crystallized and preserved. By maintaining and exhibiting objects and narratives that evoke a sense of shared history and cultural heritage, museums, as *lieux de mémoire* functioning as repositories of a nation's memory, play a crucial role in the construction, representation, and consolidation of a national identity (ibid.). Pointing out the fragmentation of memory in modern societies, caused by rapid social, cultural, and technological transformations, Nora (1989) also contends that museums perform a significant role as institutions that collect, gather, and organize these fragmented memories, providing a sense of continuity and coherence. In a similar vein, Harvey (2000: 214) also asserts that upheavals caused by the World Wars resulted in rupture in societies, leading to shattering of the social fabric and an irreversible break from the past. This rupture has engendered a societal need for spaces of memory, and museums have gained prominence as mediums for reconnecting with images of a lost past (ibid.; 210).

Following the 1980s, museums have undergone substantial changes in their organizational structure and operational dynamics (Urry, 1990). These changes were primarily driven by the forces of globalization, cultural politics of multiculturalism, neoliberal market dynamics, and the increasing integration of everyday lives into museums (Urry, 1990; Frey & Meier, 2006). Additionally, during this era, there was a notable shift that posed challenges to the economic and cultural dominance held by nation-states (Frey & Meier, 2006). In response to these shifts, museums initiated a process of redefining their core functions and operations by prioritizing public service, adopting measures to evaluate their performance, and catering to the preferences of their visitors (Pearce, 1991). The shift towards a market-driven economy has fueled the broader commodification of museums, leading to significant acceleration in these changes (Urry, 1990). Under the growing influence of market forces, museums have increasingly prioritized commercial considerations in their operations. Consequently, the intersection of this consumer-oriented trend with the profit-driven demands of investors has further heightened the prominence of commodification culture(s) within museums (Urry, 1990; Pearce, 1991).

3. Paradigmatic shifts in understanding museums

Within the last three decades, there has been a notable change in the perception and function of museums in modern society, encompassing both theoretical and practical aspects. The prevalent scholarly approach treats museums as instruments of the state, serving as disciplinary tools for representing the national identity. Adhering to this approach, scholars such as Anderson (2006), Bennett (1995), and Duncan (1995) argue that by presenting a linear, secular storyline of the nation, museums play a crucial role in reinforcing dominant ideologies and narratives associated with the nation-state. This perspective places emphasis on the power relationships that are inherent in operations of museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). For instance, Henning (2006: 302) argues that museums establish "hierarchies of knowledge" by engaging in complex processes of power-knowledge production, such as exhibiting objects as objective evidence to substantiate truth claims. In this regard, the definition put forth by Walsh (1992: 2) characterizing the museum as an "institutionalized rationalization of the past" succinctly captures the major conceptual understanding embraced by this approach.

Underlining the performative qualities of museums, on the other hand, there are perspectives that take museums as inclusive spaces open to democratic negotiations (Gouriévidis, 2014). Hooper-Greenhill (2020) listed scholars such as Clifford (1997), Chakrabarty (2002), and Sandell (2007) to underscore the significance of considering diverse voices, perspectives, and contexts in museum practices. Whilst acknowledging that museums are not neutral repositories of artifacts, this perspective claims that museums are dynamic settings where constructed meanings are open to negotiations. This line of approach adopts a 'from below' perspective that seeks to go beyond viewing museums solely as didactic instruments of the state (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). Instead, this perspective highlights the agency, participation, and involvement of diverse actors, including the state, the market, civil society, and the media (MacDonald, 2006: 2). These actors bring their own interests, perspectives, and values to the museum space, shaping both the museum itself and the encounters and interaction between visitors and the museum. Drawing on Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone", James Clifford explores the idea that museums could be taken as a contact zone where "an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship—a power-charged set of exchanges" (1997: 194) unfolds. Pratt (1992) uses the concept of contact zone in colonial contexts, referring to encounters that serve as a facilitator for connections and interactions between people divided by conditions of power asymmetry. Applying the concept of 'contact zones' to museums, Clifford defines them as "places of hybrid possibility and political negotiation, sites of exclusion and struggle" (1997: 214) and discusses the potential of museums as sites of cultural encounter and exchange.

Theoretical approaches to museums from different perspectives have shown that museums have been sites of contestation due to their role in the construction of collective identities, in the legitimization and perpetuation of a set of inequalities through museal representations, in the reproduction of cultural capital and social distinction, and in the economic and urban development, particularly under neoliberalism (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). Nevertheless, these aforementioned approaches have faced criticism due to their theoretical constraints. Accordingly, the first approach has been criticized for oversimplifying museums by portraying them merely as tools employed by the state to construct and consolidate unified national histories (MacDonald, 2006). On the other hand, the second approach, which acknowledges museums as institutions open to external negotiations with diverse actors and subject to internal negotiations, runs the risk of underestimating the influence of neoliberal constraints (Frey & Meier, 2006). Actually, museums are increasingly shaped by the rationalities imposed by the evolving dynamics of the neoliberal political and economic landscape.

4. Migration museums: An old theme at its new place

Closely linked to the formation of nation-states, museums have historically played a role in constructing coherent collective identities (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020; Bennett, 1995). Unfolding at an unprecedented scale and speed, the migration in the recent decades has led profound changes, one of the most pressing of which relates to identity politics. The growing phenomenon of migration has presented museums with urgent challenges concerning the inclusion of migration into representations, which require thoughtful consideration of narrative construction (Macdonald, 2006; Karp et al., 2006). Despite the challenges of representation, there has been a notable increase in the number of migration museums, giving rise to a distinct category of museums (Baur, 2017).

The establishment of migration museums is informed by each country's specific migration history, trajectory and experiences; similarly, the content, exhibitions and narratives of migration museums are molded by these specific national contexts. In this respect, the colonial past, migration policies, labor migration, and the mobility of refugees and asylum seekers are significant determinants of the content of migration narratives. Migration museums in countries with a colonial past, such as Australia, Portugal, and France, are constructed around themes of colonization, forced migrations, and imperial legacies (Gouriévidis, 2014). On the other hand, in immigration countries like the United States and Canada, migration museums tend to focus on the experiences of migrants and their contributions to the nation's development. European countries that receive migrants through labor migration or as refugees and asylum seekers, such as Germany, Switzerland and others, address integration, multiculturalism and the challenges faced by migrant communities (ibid.).

The 1972 UNESCO meeting held in Chile, focusing on "The Role of Museums in Development in the Contemporary World," acknowledged the potential of museums as powerful instruments for fostering social integration and promoting cohesion. In the face of the rapidly changing transnational landscape, museums are seen as playing a crucial role in addressing, documenting, and representing the complex facets of socio-demographic transformations arising from migration. Macdonald (2012) asserts that there is a pressing need for museums to adjust their exhibition practices and approaches to better engage with the evolving realities of transnational movements and the increased global mobility of individuals. Indeed, migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires nuanced approaches when it comes to representation and narratives within museums. The crucial issue at the core of the relationship between museums and migration is the concept of inclusivity (Gouriévidis, 2014). Museums sought to create inclusive spaces that embrace and represent the diverse experiences, stories, and perspectives of migrants. It involves recognizing the importance of giving voice to marginalized narratives, challenging stereotypes, and promoting dialogue and understanding among different communities (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). The discourses surrounding inclusivity in museums highlight a number of key aspects, including the significance of historically representing migrant minorities, redefining concepts of identity and citizenship, fostering dialogue between migrants and society, and promoting equal access and participation of migrants in cultural life (ibid.).

Poehls (2011: 3-4) outlines how the theme of migration poses challenges to the conventional operations of museums. According to what she argues, migration (i) blurs the notion of the nation-state, which used to be a constituent point of reference for the museums. This occurs in the context when the nation-state remains a significant category despite extensive transnational social spheres and international connections, where the impacts of the nation-state are less dominant in everyday life. She asserts that the exhibition of migration disrupts the narratives of museums by highlighting the complexities and fluidity of identities and affiliations beyond national boundaries (ibid.). The other challenge relates to (ii) how to narrate migration, which migration stories and experiences to select, and how to exhibit practices of mobility through objects, that is, the representation of migration in

museums. In relation to the first two aspects, Poehls posits the third aspect as follows: "... not only the nation as *the* historical paradigm of the museum is challenged but also the *place* and *space* that a certain museum and its displays relate to, be it the city, the region, the nation or Europe" (ibid.: 4).

Departing from MacDonald's (2006) conceptualization of museums which "every museum is a statement of position", it can be argued that the emergent representations of migrations in museums reflect both shifting social and institutional understanding of migration and the growing interest in migration. In elaborating the place of migration in the museal field, Poehls (2011: 6) employs Bhabha's notion of "margins". Bhabha's notion of 'margins' refers to the spaces, individuals, and groups that exist at the periphery or edges of dominant social, cultural, and political systems (2000: 7). Contending that the margins are not simply passive or static spaces, but rather dynamic sites of contestation, negotiation, and resistance, Bhabha defines "margins" as spaces of cultural hybridity, where different cultures and identities intersect and generate new forms of meaning and representation (ibid.). In this respect, by marking the place of migration on museum agendas as "margins", Poehls (2011: 6) argues that museum representations of migration require experimental and negotiation-based approaches in terms of both aesthetics and narratives, and that migration appears to dominate future museum practices.

The narratives constructed in the exhibition and interpretation of material culture in museum spaces have historically been constructed around boundaries that exclude 'others' (Gouriévidis, 2014). Undoubtedly, museum representations based on 'othering' is inextricable from the emergence, formation, and reshaping of the nation-states, even if it varies according to different national trajectories. Resulting in hierarchical categorizations, this knowledge production grounded on 'othering' also relates to the processes of de/colonialism and their subsequent re-evaluation (ibid., 4). Museums, serving as mobilizing tools for emerging or rising nationalisms, initially incorporated regional differences within nation-states into national narratives. Within the last three decades, migration-related cultural diversity has begun to be recognized and articulated into national narratives. However, as scholarly studies point out, positioned as the 'other' within a demarcation between 'us' and 'them', migrants have still been represented as an undifferentiated collective (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). One of the predicaments of these representations lies in the fact that the prevailing social imaginary of migrants associates them with precarity in terms of both economic and social status (Poehls, 2011).

The role of museums as 'engines of social transformation' (Bennett 2006b: 57) in fostering a more equitable and inclusive society has been recognized by governments, supranational institutions and civil society organizations alike. Instilled with the notion of social responsibility (Sandell, 2002), this role has been considered to be in line with the scope of activities of museums, which have historically and traditionally been used as pedagogical tools and sites of meaning-making. On the other hand, in the representation of migration history and migrant groups, museums are inescapably involved in "issues of power, inequality and access to resources" (Small, 2011: 119).

The socio-political repercussions of the accumulated and ongoing mass migration context, as well as the urban transformation processes imposed by capitalist growth and reproduction, are effective drivers in the emergence of migration museums. Museums, which once existed and functioned as elite institutions of the nation-state, have evolved to operate within a framework of shared sponsorship involving central and local governments, institutional funds from supranational funds and private donations (Pelsmaekers & Van Hout, 2020: 3). Moreover, museums are integrated into and dependent on the dynamics of cultural tourism and urban regeneration agendas (Gouriévidis, 2014), requiring them to adopt a more inclusive approach and become appealing to a broader audience. In this respect, the representation of migration in museums has become the subject of the exhibitions of museums established at both city and district scales as urban tourist attractions.

In the context of migration museums, critically examining and eliminating the hierarchies and power inequalities that often persist in discourses and representations of migration and migrants requires negotiations with the participation and inputs of migrant communities themselves and different stakeholders such as rights-based NGOs (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). In this respect, one of the important questions in relation to the potential challenges and limitations of migration museums relates to the implementation of multiculturalism as a state policy. Multiculturalism as a state policy has been criticized for its tendency to homogenize group boundaries, depoliticize culture, and reproduce the centrality of the dominant or majority culture by embracing different cultures via the notion of tolerance (Lavine & Karp, 1991). In this respect, the operationalization of the multiculturalism as a framework for migration museums is criticized as it risks contributing to the reproduction of common narratives about migrants and essentialist, homogenizing representations of migrant communities, perpetuating power imbalances and reinforcing hierarchies between cultures (ibid.).

Migration museums, established to contribute to migrant communities' struggles for recognition, run the risk of unintentionally reinforcing narratives and representations based on historically accumulated asymmetrical power relations (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). One of these risks is to fall into the trap of reproducing representations and narratives that flatten the stories and experiences of migrants by neglecting the intersecting aspects of identity, including gender, class, ethnicity, and other social categories. On the other hand, the prevalent nostalgic representation of migration through objects and artifacts curated by museum professionals carries the risk of masking the underlying power imbalances in the diverse socio-economic and socio-political relationships during and after the migration process. It also perpetuates the idea of a dominant culture that only tolerates certain cultures within certain boundaries.

5. DOMiD: A migration museums 'from below'

Migration from Turkey to Germany, which spans over six decades, began with the signing of the "Turkish Labor Agreement" between the two countries on October 31, 1961. Following the first wave of labor migration, there was a subsequent phase of family reunifications. Upon arrival in German cities, migrants were referred to as "guest workers", denoting their temporary status. Initially structured around the rotational principle with the expectation of permanent return, labor migration from Turkey to Germany has undergone transformations shaped by changes in the economic, social, and political dynamics of both countries over time. As the number of guest workers in Germany has gradually increased, the discourse has shifted from temporary to permanent. Over time, the migration movements and mobilities between Turkey and Germany have undergone persistent changes, primarily driven by factors such as generational changes, the emergence of transnational identities, and shifts in political and economic contexts. These influential forces have played a significant role in shaping the historical trajectory of migration, leading to the emergence of new patterns and forms of movement.

The Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany- DOMiD was founded as a non-profit organization in 1990 by a group of migrants from Turkey who, in their own words; "were motivated by a glaring deficiency: neither historians nor museums nor archives were paying attention to the history of immigrants"². Initially named "Documentation Center and Museum of Migration from Turkey"- DOMiT, the museum merged with the association of 'Museum of Migration in Germany' in 2007. Extending its scope with the migration collections from Italy, Greece, ex-

² Retrieved from <https://domid.org/en/about-us/history/>

Yugoslavia, Tunisia and several other sending countries, the name of the museum was then updated as "Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany" - DOMiD.

DOMiD's goal of establishing a 'migration museum', a pioneering idea in the field of museology in Europe in the 1990s, was announced to be realized with funding from the federal government of North Rhine-Westphalia and the municipality of Cologne³. By acknowledging Germany as a society shaped by migration, DOMiD sets out its goal as a migration museum to represent how migration has manifested itself in the history of Germany and has influenced the shaping of society today. According to the museum's official website's introduction page, DOMiD asserts itself to have a politically independent and ideologically neutral stance. DOMiD is recognized as a private association of public utility, and the donations made to the organization are eligible for tax deductions. The organization's work is financially supported through project-based funding, charitable donations, membership fees, and, until recently, a significant amount of voluntary, unpaid labor.

Examining through theoretical approaches on the shifting roles of museums, I scrutinize the case of DOMiD as a migration museum from three overlapping aspects; (i) contours of its agency and positionality (ii) its approach towards the representation and contesting of migration history, and (iii) its museum practices in terms of museum display and visitor engagement. In doing so, I draw upon the self-presentation of DOMiD in its official website and the scope, content, and organization of its museum practices.

5.1. Contours of its agency and positionality

The emergence and proliferation of migration museums is an example of the changing roles that museums have historically played in response to societal changes. In a nutshell, the roles historically attributed to museums have shifted from supporting the consolidation of national identities to facilitating the "negotiation of cultural change and values", as well as from operating as "havens of elitist distinction" to "places of empowerment and recognition" (Karp & Kratz, 2014: 301). One of the founders of DOMiD, a former board member of DOMiD and a migrant, Aytac Eryilmaz (2007: 130) states that after decades of disavowing its status as a country of immigration, Germany has recently come to acknowledge that immigrants and their descendants have been forging new "transnational" social identities.

In explaining how a migration museum contribute to a change in the "perception of the relationships between migration and national history", Eryilmaz (ibid.: 132) identifies a migration museum as a setting with "the reservation of space for the hybridity of cultural life concepts" rather than "a place of ritual remembrance, reconstructing historical self-assurance predominantly based on national concepts". As one of the founders of DOMiD, Eryilmaz's (2007: 132) critique of museums serving as ritualistic spaces of remembrance tied to nationalist ideas aligns with ongoing discussions that contest the museums as tools of the state in imposing a singular and cohesive understanding of national history, as argued by scholar such as Bennett (1995) and Duncan (1995). On the other hand, claiming that identities in a migration society are heterogeneous and fluid and based on intercultural exchange, Eryilmaz's (2007: 132-133) definition of the possibilities that a migration museum would bring to society as the allocation of space for the hybridity of cultural life concepts is compatible with Clifford's (1997) claim that museums serve as 'contact zones'. By facilitating contact between diverse actors, according to Clifford, museums provide opportunities for "hybrid possibilities and political negotiations" (2002: 212).

³ Retrieved from <https://domid.org/en/house-of-immigration-society/schedule/>

DOMiD promotes itself as "a focal point of democratic society" that provides "a center for open dialogue and productive discussions about migration and the migration community", a space for active participation in discourses and enables its members to "make their stories visible and listen to others", as stated on their online platform. This self-representation proves that DOMiD embraces a democratic 'from below' approach that conceives museums as democratically mediated spaces. Taken museums as democratically negotiated spaces, Chakrabarty (2002: 6) posits that museums assume a twofold role, serving as both "pedagogic" and "performative" sites; functioning not only as educational tools but also as public spaces where citizens can actively and critically interact with the performances and representations offered by the museums.

Drawing on a Foucauldian perspective, Bennett (2006b), on the other hand, asserts that despite the apparent shift towards inclusiveness, museums still serve as a means for the elite sectors to extend their influence and act as instruments of governmentality. The perspective of regarding museums as inclusive spaces open to contextual and democratic negotiations faces criticism for downplaying the involvement of various stakeholders, including state institutions. These institutions play a significant role in museums through either controlling and regulating them or selectively and conditionally providing subsidies, driven by their own interests.

In line with the debate on the social and cultural impact of museums on societal issues, DOMiD states that it pursues the following question in its modular and interactive exhibitions: "How can a museum react flexibly to current, even conflictual debates?" In addition to its exhibitions focusing on migration-related themes, DOMiD has developed the educational initiative "DOMiD macht Schule" (DOMiD Goes to School) to promote awareness among teachers and students regarding migration. This initiative aims to provide education on migration history and foster intercultural competences among participants. Setting education of the public as one of its remits, DOMiD adopts and inadvertently reproduces what Henning (2006: 302) refers to as "hierarchies of knowledge" between itself and the public at large. This example demonstrates that while the approach treating museums as a "contact zone" acknowledges the presence of hierarchies, it oversimplifies the power dynamics involved in negotiations. In this respect, highlighting the importance of acknowledging and addressing the structural inequalities that are inherent within the contact zone, Boast (2011) provides a critical perspective on the enthusiastic adoption of the concept of the "contact zone," cautioning against an overly optimistic belief in its transformative potential.

The establishment of DOMiD by a group of migrants and their continued executive positions for over two decades grant the migration museum a "from below" approach as it implies that the diverse experiences and perspectives of migrants who have historically been conceived as the 'other' are inclusively participating in the museum's practices. Upon examining DOMiD's website, it becomes evident that out of the fourteen staff members, including the executive director, only two museum staff members potentially have a personal migration background or come from families with migration experiences. This observation suggests that there may be limited representation of individuals with migration background within the museum's team. It prompts reflection on how DOMiD, an institution that proclaims to embrace pluralism in the representation and participation of migrant communities, puts its perspective into practice. In fact, the 'from below' approach underlines that the institutional functioning of museums itself needs to be problematized, as museum operations and management are also imbued with intra power struggles. In this respect, it emphasizes the importance of recognizing social differences not only in discourse but also in practice, by including different social groups in decision-making mechanisms such as museum management processes.

5.2. *Contesting the migration history through the politics of representation*

DOMiD houses the most extensive collection in Germany dedicated to documenting the diverse migration history of the country. It encompasses a wide range of objects and evidence, including items on loan from private individuals and archival records from recent times. At present, the collection comprises over 150,000 exhibits that, as DOMiD claims, shed light on various aspects of social, cultural, and everyday life throughout history. DOMiD claims that this collection generates "a multi-perspective culture of remembrance ... from different perspectives" and that their museum representation of migration offers its visitors "the opportunity to discover and understand this narrative and to situate themselves within it".

Museums now strive to create exhibits that reflect the multifaceted dynamics of society, incorporating everyday life as a vital component of their displays (Poehls, 2011). One way museums have embraced this shift is by actively collecting and showcasing objects and artifacts related to everyday life. These can include items such as household utensils, clothing, photographs, personal diaries, and even mundane objects that hold cultural or historical significance. By including these artifacts in exhibits, museums invite visitors to engage with the ordinary aspects of daily life and gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of different communities (ibid.).

W. I. Thomas, together with Florian Znaniecki, pioneered a methodological novelty with their book 'Polish Peasants in America' published in 1918, using personal documents, letters, diaries, autobiographies and life stories in the construction of sociological knowledge (Faris, 1967). Museums have moved away from a "methodological nationalism" approach, which solely focuses on the nation-state as the primary lens for analyzing and constructing representations and narratives. This shift acknowledges that society is shaped not only by grand historical events and political structures but also by the everyday experiences, practices, and interactions of individuals (Baur, 2017).

Likewise, DOMiD has been gathering a wide range of materials, including books, grey literature (such as recruitment materials, identification cards, work contracts, and visas), newspapers, magazines, photographs, films, audio recordings, posters, leaflets, and various objects that represent the lives of migrants in both Turkey and Germany. These objects, which often include everyday items like suitcases, furniture, and clothing, play a significant role in the exhibitions organized by DOMiD.

On the other hand, conventionally, museums were structured based on a linear understanding of time and space, presenting monolithic narratives (Duncan, 1995). Following the perspective of 'from below', there has been a growing recognition of the importance of representing and acknowledging the plurality of experiences and memory practices within museums. DOMiD, in its webpage and its promotion of exhibitions and projects, uses the notion of history with the plural suffix -s, expressing plurality and demonstrates its commitment to representing and promoting the diversity of experiences among migrants through its exhibitions and projects. Clifford (1997) argues that museums can be seen as 'contact zones' because they bring together diverse cultures, artefacts, and perspectives and they provide opportunities for different groups to engage with each other, negotiate meanings, and challenge dominant narratives. In this view, museums are not fixed, static institutions but rather dynamic and contested spaces where multiple voices and interpretations can be heard.

By contrast to nineteenth-century museums, which sought to promote modernist ideals by creating rigid, hierarchical classifications and promoting grand national narratives, museums today are becoming more actively recognized as sites of contestation where dominant narratives can be questioned (MacDonald, 2005). Recognition is closely linked to the perceived role of museums as sites of authority that legitimize and validate selected versions of the past. In the case of DOMiD, the recognition of the history of migration and migrant experiences in Germany in particular, as well as the incorporation of migrant memories into the master narrative and their inclusion in a shared

imaginary, form the basis of the museum's purpose. The transformations and changes in DOMiD's own institutional trajectory are closely linked to the state's role as an ultimate recognition authority.

5.3. Museum practices with regard to museum display and visitor engagement

MacDonald (2006: 2) identifies three key aspects that "new museology" encompasses for studying museums: (i) "to understand the meanings of museum objects as situated and contextual rather than inherent", (ii) "commercialism and entertainment", and in relation with the former two (iii) "how the museum and its exhibitions may be variously perceived, especially by those who visit". Accordingly, the "new museology" recognizes that museum objects are not static entities, but rather they hold multiple layers of meaning that are contingent upon the context in which they are encountered (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). Moreover, particularly since the 1980s, under the influence of market forces, museums operate within a competitive sector where visitor experiences are shaped by factors such as entertainment value, marketing strategies, and visitor expectations. The "new museology" points out how museums have begun to engage visitors through dynamic and interactive displays, incorporating elements of entertainment while maintaining the integrity and educational value of the exhibits (ibid.). Lastly, the "new museology", recognizing that visitors bring their own knowledge, experiences, and cultural backgrounds when engaging with museum displays, highlights the significance of visitor participation, dialogue, and co-creation of meaning within the museum space (ibid.).

In the "new museology," museums are seen as interactive and participatory spaces that encourage visitors to actively engage with the exhibits. Rather than being passive observers, visitors are encouraged to ask questions, share their thoughts and opinions, and contribute to the interpretation of the displayed objects. In line with what 'new museology' outlines, DOMiD, in its promotion of exhibitions, underlines the value it grants to the visitor participation. In doing so, in line with their goal of providing a space for social engagement and negotiation, they state that the museum space allows visitors to become more sensitized to exhibitions that address social issues and developments (Eryılmaz, 2007).

On its website where exhibition spaces are promoted, DOMiD addresses the current scope of the visitor's museum experiences by stating that "visitors are not only consumers, but can actively participate in current debates and meet each other.". With the concept of the "visitor as a consumer", DOMiD indirectly implies the commodification of museums and the growing influence of entertainment elements, which aligns with the concerns raised by the "new museology" perspective. However, it is important to note that DOMiD does not completely negate the transformation of museums into consumption-driven spaces, as indicated by its emphasis on the term "only."

As mentioned above aligned with the current shift in museums to recognize the importance of everyday life as a subject worthy of representation, DOMiD's exhibitions often intertwine with the concept of everyday life. In its efforts to implement a 'participatory process', the museum emphasizes that the themes such as identity, borders, language, nation, mobility, change, memory or foreignness that its exhibitions center on are reference points that resonate in everyone's daily lives. Embracing a rather inclusive and participatory approach, DOMiD organizes its museum practices through oral history projects, community collaborations, or interactive exhibits that encourage visitor engagement.

Overall, the "new museology" underlines a shift from a traditional 'from above' approach to a more participatory and inclusive model of museum practice (MacDonald, 2006). Incorporating new technologies and interactive exhibition styles into its approach and its effort to operate a participatory process with its modular and interactively designed exhibition spaces, it would be no mistake to state that DOMiD embraces the "new museology".

6. Conclusion

Viewing through the lens of critical approaches on the roles of museums, in this study, I examined how DOMiD, which I argued constitutes an example of 'new museology', operates the concept of 'contact zone' and adopts a 'from below' approach in its museum representation of migration. I delve into scholarly research that critically examines the historical role of museums as spaces of power and influence, where societal hierarchies are reinforced and specific narratives are promoted. As studies indicate museums historically have been instrumentalized to legitimize prevailing social, political, and cultural ideologies, and actively contribute to the construction of a national historical narrative through selective processes of remembering and forgetting. Over the past three decades, there has been a noticeable shift in how museums are perceived and the roles they fulfill in modern society. This change encompasses both theoretical and practical dimensions, indicating a departure from conventional practices.

Transformations of museum space are commonly approached from two different perspectives: 'from above' and 'from below' (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). The 'from below' approach, influenced by a culturalist framework, argues that museums are contextually diverse, democratically negotiated spaces with the potential for inclusive spaces (Clifford 1997; Chakrabarty 2002; Sandell 2007). The "from above" approach, on the other hand, treats museums as a pedagogically oriented instrument of the state that envisions and enacts a coherent understanding of national history.

Given the role of museum space in the formation and consolidation of nation-states, migration museums constitute an intriguing instance as they engage in processes of contestation, negotiation, and reinterpretation, addressing the historical and ideological legacy and heritage of museums. Migration movements between Turkey and Germany, which have a history of more than 60 years, constitute a remarkable example of the emergence of transnational identities that have evolved and transformed over time, influenced by generational shifts as well as changing political and economic circumstances. I examined how DOMiD, founded in the 1990s by a group of migrants from Turkey, approaches the museum representation of migration history. I argued that DOMiD, adopting a 'from below' approach, modeled its museum approach and practices on Clifford's concept of the 'contact zone'.

References

- Anderson, B. (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Baur J. (2017) "Staging Migration – Staging the Nation. Imagining Community at Immigration Museums", in Reinhard B., Hofmann K. P. & Sommer U. (eds.), *Between Memory Sites and Memory Networks. New Archaeological and Historical Perspectives*. Berlin: Edition Topoi.
- Bennett, T. (1995). *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Bennett, T. (2006a). 'Civic Seeing: Museums and the Organization of Vision', in Macdonald, S. (ed.) *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Bennett, T. (2006b). 'Exhibition, difference and the logic of culture', in I. Karp, C.A. Kratz, L. Szwaja and T. Ybarra-Frausto (eds.) *Museum Frictions*, Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press.
- Bennett, T. (1999). 'Exhibitionary Complex'. in Boswell, D. and Evans, J. (eds.) *Representing the Nation: A reader: Histories, Heritage and Museums*. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. (1990). 'Narrating the Nation', in Bhabha, H. (eds.) *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge.
- Boast, R. (2011). Neocolonial collaboration: Museum as contact zone revisited. *Museum anthropology*, 34(1), 56-70.
- Bourdieu, P., Darbel, A., & Schnaper, D. (2012). 'Conclusion to the Love of Art'. *Museum studies: An anthology of contexts*, 453-456.

- Clifford, J. (1997). *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2002). Museums in Late Democracies, *Humanities Research*, 9(1), pp. 5–12.
- Duncan, C. (1995). *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. New York: Routledge.
- Duncan, C. (2005). 'The Art Museum as Ritual', in Corsane, G. (eds.) *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Eryilmaz, A. (2007). The political and social significance of a museum of migration in Germany. *Museum International*, 59(1-2), 127-136.
- Evans, J. (1999). 'Introduction: Nation and Representation', in Boswell, D. and Evans, J. (eds.) *Representing the Nation: A reader: Histories, Heritage and Museums*. London: Routledge.
- Frey, B. and Meier, S. (2006). 'Cultural Economics', in Macdonald, S. (eds.) *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Frey, B. S. and Meier, S. (2014). 'The Economics of Museums', in Ginsburgh, V. A. and Throsby, D. (eds.) *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Gourievidis, L. (2014). *Museums and Migration: History, Memory and Politics*. Routledge.
- Harvey, D. (2000). *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Blackwell.
- Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2020). *Museums and the interpretation of visual culture*. Routledge.
- Karp, I., & Kratz, C. A. (2014). The interrogative museum. in *Museum as Process*. Routledge.
- Lavine, S. D., & Karp, I. (1991). Introduction: Museums and multiculturalism. *Exhibiting cultures: The poetics and politics of museum display*. Smithsonian Institution.
- Lavine, S. D., & Karp, I. (1991). Introduction: Museums and multiculturalism. in Karp, I. (eds.) *Exhibiting cultures: The poetics and politics of museum display*, 1-9.
- Macdonald, S. (2006). 'Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction', in Macdonald, S. (eds.) *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Macdonald, S. (2012). Museums, national, postnational and transcultural identities. *Museum studies: An anthology of contexts*, 273-286.
- Nora, P. (1989). Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations*, 26, 7-24.
- Pearce, S. (1991). *Museum Economics and the Community*. Susan Pearce. Cambridge: The Athlone Press.
- Poehls, K. (2011). Europe, blurred: Migration, margins and the museum. *Culture Unbound*, 3(3), 337-353.
- Pelsmaekers, K., & Van Hout, T. (2020). People on the move: how museums de-marginalize migration. *Social Semiotics*, 30(4), 607-624.
- Sandell, R. (2007). *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Small, S. (2011). Slavery, colonialism and museums representations in Great Britain: old and new circuits of migration, *Human Architecture*, 9(4): 117–27.
- Urry, J. (1990). *The Tourist Gaze*. London: Sage Publications.
- Vergo, P. (1989). *The New Museology*. Peter Vergo. London: Reaktion Books.
- Walsh, K. (2002). *The representation of the past: museums and heritage in the post-modern world*. Routledge.

Özet

Müzenin rollerine ilişkin eleştirel yaklaşımların merceğinden baktığım bu çalışmada, 'yeni müzecilik' örneği oluşturduğunu savunduğum DOMID'in göçün müzedeki temsilinde 'temas bölgesi' kavramını nasıl işlettiğini ve 'aşağıdan' bir yaklaşımı nasıl benimsediğini inceledim. Araştırmaların da gösterdiği gibi, müzeler tarihsel olarak hakim sosyal, siyasi ve kültürel ideolojileri meşrulaştırmak için araçsallaştırılmış ve seçici hatırlama ve unutma süreçleri yoluyla ulusal bir tarih anlatısının inşasına aktif olarak katkıda bulunmuştur. Son otuz yılda, müzelerin algılanış biçimlerinde ve modern toplumda üstlendikleri rollerde gözle görülür bir değişim yaşanmıştır. Müze

mekânının dönüşümüne genellikle iki farklı perspektiften yaklaşılmaktadır (Hooper-Greenhill, 2020). 'Yukarıdan' ve 'aşağıdan'. Kültüralist bir çerçeveden etkilenen 'aşağıdan' yaklaşım, müzelerin bağlamsal olarak çeşitlilik gösteren, demokratik olarak müzakere edilen ve kapsayıcı alanlar yaratma potansiyeli olan mekânlar olduğunu savunur (Clifford 1997; Chakrabarty 2002; Sandell 2007). Öte yandan "yukarıdan" yaklaşım, müzeleri, tutarlı bir ulusal tarih anlayışı öngören ve dayatan, devletin pedagojik yönelimli bir aracı olarak ele alır.

Müze mekânının ulus-devletlerin oluşumu ve pekişmesindeki rolü göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, göç müzeleri, müzelerin tarihsel ve ideolojik mirasını ve mirasını ele alan tartışma, müzakere ve yeniden yorumlama süreçlerine katıldıkları için ilgi çekici bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Türkiye ve Almanya arasında 60 yılı aşkın bir geçmişe sahip olan göç hareketleri, kuşak değişimlerinin yanı sıra değişen siyasi ve ekonomik koşullardan etkilenerek zaman içinde gelişen ve dönüşen ulusötesi kimliklerin ortaya çıkışına önemli bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Bu çalışma, 1990'larda bir grup Türkiyeli göçmen tarafından kurulan DOMiD'in göç tarihinin müzelerde temsiline nasıl yaklaştığını incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, DOMiD'in müze yaklaşımı ve uygulamalarında 'aşağıdan' bir yaklaşımı benimsediğini ileri sürmektedir.