#### **KITCHEN WORKSHOP: CITYZENSHIP AS INFRASTRUCTURE**

**ABSTRACT** \_\_\_\_\_ This essay focuses on the Kitchen Workshop, a collective by women from Syria and Turkey, initiated in 2015, based in Gaziantep, Turkey. The aim is to explain how the Kitchen Workshop interchanges the roles of hospitality and re-creates the infrastructures of living together. Questioning citizenship as nation-state infrastructure, the paper asks how and what kind of feminist thinking and acting can re-conceptualize and re-articulate the infrastructure(s) for living together, thinking with spaces of migration, migrants as political subjects, and the agency of solidarity.

The departure point of this essay is "Vocabulary of Hospitality," my ongoing work since 2012, which includes research, curating, and design about the spaces of illegalized migration and solidarity in Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey, along Fortress Europe, Hong Kong, in Melbourne, and elsewhere in Australia. This essay particularly focuses on the "Kitchen Workshop," a collective of women from Syria and Turkey, which I am also part of, initiated in 2015 and based in Gaziantep, Turkey. In this essay, questioning citizenship as nation-state infrastructure, I ask how and what kind of feminist thinking and doing can re-conceptualize and re-articulate the infrastructure(s) for living together, thinking with spaces of migration, migrants as political subjects, and the agency of solidarity. I aim to explain how the Kitchen Workshop interchanges the roles of hospitality and re-create the infrastructures of living together. The importance of feminist infrastructures is in their language and exploration towards an equal, free, and just world, despite the patriarchal migration regimes built on uncertainty, exceptionalism, and racism. Feminist thinking "can never be satisfied with equivalences until we have equality, never satisfied with legal rights until we have justice, and never satisfied with democracy until individual freedom is calibrated on the basis of freedom for all" (Arruzza / Bhattacharya / Fraser 2019). In this framework, first I introduce how migration is an emergency to the modern nation-state, and I articulate this relationship in reference to hospitality, law, and citizenship. Then, I discuss this in the context of a broken modernism and nation-state, the inside/outside condition of migration not being enough to understand hospitality and citizenship. Building up on these, I present the Kitchen Workshop, its initiation as a collective, its progression as a temporary physical space and later around a floor table. Finally, I

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FKW // ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR Geschlechterforschung UND Visuelle Kultur NR. 74 // Juni 2024 introduce and discuss "cityzenship" as feminist infrastructures that move based on proximity and participation.

Migration is an emergency to the nation-state, not only as a matter of defining il/legality, but also as a matter of citizenship. I use the term "illegalized migration" to highlight that the illegality of migrants is a result of the laws of the nation-states, rather than a matter of human rights, or an intrinsic feature of migrants (Bauder 2013: 3-4). I use the term "good citizenship" as an infrastructure of the nation-state, with elements of language, education, culture, and others, and these are created for raising the good citizens to live together (see Lemanski 2020). Even if today's nation-state infrastructures are more and more broken, the good citizen is still the basis of its construct, and the migrants, by their very nature, are an emergency to this construct. I utilize the notion of "hospitality" to highlight several dimensions of this emergency, not only from a legal perspective, which is of the nation-state, but also from a socio-economic and cultural perspective, which is of citizenship. I adopt the term "unconditional hospitality" as the search for an understanding of feminist infrastructures based on the entangled roles of hosts and guests who have the right to hospitality in different temporalities.

<u>My</u> discursive references follow two main directions. One is on feminism and spectral thinking by Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser (2019). In relation to them, I also adopt Ulus Baker's theory of intervals (1976). A second strain of references comes from migration and philanthropy, where I mainly go back to Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen (2005), Derrida (2000), and Kant (1795) about territory and hospitality.

Whereas citizenship is the formal infrastructure of the nation-state, illegalized migrants inhabit the gaps, the boundaries and borders, the cracks of this infrastructure; they hold its invisible aspects and act as the glue of these infrastructures through their unregistered economy, however unacknowledged. This essay reveals the inherent hostility in the laws of hospitality of the nation-states and international legal frameworks and is thereafter dedicated to unconditional hospitality as the feminist articulation of a spectral infrastructure, where everybody has the right to host. I explain how unconditional hospitality performed by women in the Kitchen Collective acts upon the infrastructures of the nation-state by focusing on the migrant as a social and political subject, where the representation of the migrant is acknowledged as that of the citizen – not only from a position of mutual aid, care, and responsibility, but also from within the existing but less-used legal

frameworks. I claim that feminist infrastructures infuse through what is already there in the infrastructure and regenerate it, but are made invisible through the territorial claim of the sovereign. I claim that if hospitality as feminist infrastructures did not exist, the formal infrastructures of the nation-state would not function either. Hospitality, in this unconditional form, is vital to the formal infrastructures of citizenship, while citizenship is not essential to hospitality. Finally, I claim that while citizenship includes rights and equality for citizens, unconditional hospitality as feminist infrastructures imagine plurality, accessibility, and justice for all. This is where the idea of cityzenship comes to the fore as possible feminist infrastructures. Cityzenship defined based on belonging to a city, working based on proximity and participation facilitate relations that can propose unconditional hospitality where everyone is entitled to be hosts and guests in different temporalities.

**ON EMERGENCY AND HOSPITALITY** \_\_\_\_\_\_ Feminist infrastructures of migration work to create accessibility towards an imagined world of equality and justice for all. The patriarchal thinking and politics are based on the distinction between "us/inside" and "them/outside." Schmitt (1985: 55). The state of emergency – in this case the act of migrating and the arrival of migrants at the border of the nation-state – enables the sovereign (host) to suspend the law, creating an ambiguous, uncertain territory for the migrants (guests). Kant's and Derrida's discussions on the right to hospitality (*Perpetual Peace* ([1795] 1917: 137–138, and *Of Hospitality* [2009]) highlight the nation-state and philanthropy; where simply by asking the guest their name, they are enjoined to the realm of legality.

\_\_\_\_\_ This can be furthered by the explanation of Diken and Laustsen (2005: 80) that the nation-state keeps illegalized migrants "inside" by making them subject to itself, but also "outside" by keeping them as guests, and not letting them participate in the law. The articulation to be made here is about migrants being "inside" the law through a registration process of their own, hence being subject to the law if necessary, yet remaining "outside" the law, in temporary protection, exempt from the rights to work, from social security, and from citizenship. In such politics of migration, "inside" and "outside" is not enough as a conceptualization.

\_\_\_\_\_ Furthermore, the guest (illegalized migrant) introduces a different world to the host's (nation-state) space of sovereignty, representing alternative values, languages, cultural practices, and behaviors that might or might not suit that of the host. The nation-state is built on the idea of the "good citizen," whereupon all

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its mechanisms are devised for this purpose, via legal structures, education, work, and leisure, and by organizing culture and daily life. The guest has to learn the values, customs, and languages in order to live together with the good citizens, but still may or may not become a citizen (legally), or a good citizen (socially and culturally). This means that guests (migrants) are already an emergency to the modern nation-state because they do not fit the nation-state's established understanding of the good citizen. This means unconditional hospitality is impossible for the nation-state, since giving migrants the right to reside without teaching them to be good citizens is impossible for it. The "inside" and "outside" entangle both on a legal, social, and cultural basis.

This entanglement can also be observed in labor. The formal infrastructures of work established by the nation-state, which include just payment schemes, taxing, and social security, do not apply to guests (migrants). Illegalized migrants, while not having the right to work, still make the economy work, through their informal, seasonal, undocumented labor, and the related time, solidarity, maintenance, and consumption, which altogether create infrastructures that the nation-state's formal infrastructures depend on. Here, it is necessary to re-iterate that "inside" and "outside" are not necessarily enough as a conceptualization, because illegalized migrants, while being exempt from the rights related to labor, social security, health care, and retirement, are interior to the workplace and labor infrastructures through their labor.

**HOSPITALITY AND NATION-STATE** \_\_\_\_\_ Turkey's national politics have treated migrants differently according to their identity, class, as well as the international political context at the period of arrival. While the political and legal actors have referred to migrants as "guests," some were granted citizenship, some were relocated to "developed" countries, while others have remained in transition or unregistered, making them illegalized migrants indefinitely. Important to note here is that this pattern was not assumed to function until the turn of the century; migrants arriving in Turkey were expected to move on towards Europe; thus, Turkey was a temporary refuge. However, a consequence of the Twin Tower bombings on September 11, 2001 has been the implementation of increasingly harder international policies of asylum which have resulted in periods of stay for migrants in Turkey gradually increasing from three months to six years (Ek 2014: 363-386), and currently longer (without any formally declared waiting time anymore.)

\_\_\_\_\_ The first law on migration and asylum in the history of Turkey,

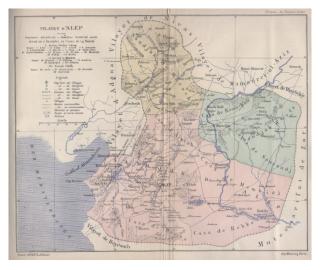
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"Law Nr. 6458; Law on Foreigners and International Protection" (Official Newspaper no. 28615, April 11, 2013), which was fully accredited with the European Union framework, has recognized those notions of asylum and refuge, although it exempted the migrants arriving from non-European countries. This exemption integrates emergency as an assumption in the law, within the state's philosophy of defining citizenship. Every time migrants arrive from outside Europe (which is the main pattern of migration towards Turkey) is an emergency, which leads to the possibility of a continuous illegalizing of migration, and a continuous uncertainty for illegalized migrants.

Since the beginning of the Syrian War in 2011, Turkey has become the largest host country in the world, with 3,644,342 registered people under temporary protection (UNHCR 2019), the majority of whom reside in major cities of Turkey, and in cities close to the border with Syria. Gaziantep is one of the border cities where both camps and urban environments provide temporary protection. Migrants from Syria make up 22% of the city's population (437,844), and only 3% of them are located in the camps (UNHCR 2019). Most of the migrants from Syria in Gaziantep have come from Aleppo (Akdemir 2017), a city that Gaziantep was actually a part of during the Ottoman Empire. After the First World War, the national border that was drawn separated extended families, relatives, and friends who were originally from the Vilayet of Aleppo into the respective cities and nationalities of Turkey and Syria. Gaziantep is the largest and the only metropolitan city in the southeast of Turkey, and a project city of modern Turkey, established through the modern infrastructures to raise good citizens. Since the revolution and extended conflict in Syria, Gaziantep has been the first destination for migrants from Aleppo, precisely because of the centuries of relationship between the (now) two cities. Syrian migrants were seen to be moving closer to their friends and families in Turkey, but this time legally becoming their guests under temporary protection (Kavuncu 2018: 42).

In 2016, after signing the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan on migration (European Parliament 2016), which covered issues of the return of illegalized migrants from Europe to Turkey and the resettlement of illegalized migrants from Syria, Turkey started implementing new policies, including providing citizenship to eligible migrants from Syria, as well as implementing a mobility



#### // Figure 1

Map showing Gaziantep as part of the city of Aleppo during the Ottoman Empire (between 1890 and 1895, Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie D'asie*. Open access map. Printed in Paris.)

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restriction regime, limiting their movement only to the cities they are registered in (UNHCR 2017). This has meant that the migrants cannot leave the cities they are registered in without obtaining permission from the State Department of Migration. This context attests to the guesthood of migrants under temporary protection, taking them hostage, whereupon the borders of a city spatially reproduce the borders of the nation-state. Between the national and international laws and the agreements between the EU and Turkey, the city replaces the camp.

**KITCHEN WORKSHOP AND CITYZENSHIP** \_\_\_\_\_ The nation-state border is where humans are identified as hosts (citizens) or guests (migrants), and it is the nation-state borders that are reproduced as the borders of camps, neighborhoods, and cities in order to further define, expand, or limit the laws of hospitality. The camp is the space of management and confinement where the migrant is hostage, shares guesthood, or becomes a ghost. Although the city is re-legislated to become a camp, and the neighborhood is where the migrant is a guest, there lies the possibility of becoming a host through social relationships and solidarity. Feminist infrastructures inhabit these borders of the inside and outside amongst national borders, as well as those perpetuated; intersecting and parallel worlding, in the borders and across the boundaries, along the peripheries, as well in the rooms and cracks of the broken nation-state infrastructures.

At the end of 2014, a solidarity kitchen was initiated by a women's group in Gaziantep, based on shared feelings and issues among the hosts (citizens) and the guests (migrants), such as working conditions, children's education, public health, racism, discrimination, segregation, women's visibility in public space, and violence against women. This kitchen was located in the Bey neighborhood, down a side street that leads to Atatürk Boulevard, on the ground floor of a heritage building owned and used by the Kırkayak Cultural Center, a registered NGO in the city. The kitchen was created as an epilogue to two years of activities by women who made use of different spaces in the city. These activities included self-defense workshops, performative group therapy sessions, and meetings with different Turkish and Syrian NGOs about what can be done to create better conditions for living together in the city. The women who set up the kitchen come from different backgrounds in Gaziantep and Aleppo, and they either know each other from Aleppo or Gaziantep, but all have participated in different previous activities at the Kırkayak Cultural Center. The first gathering for the Kitchen Workshop was made via the initiative of a smaller group of

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FKW // ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR GESCHLECHTERFORSCHUNG UND VISUELLE KULTUR NR. 74 // JUNI 2024 women, which enabled all those interested women to come together for a conversation, although the idea was not necessarily to set up a physical kitchen. This particular idea and others emerged and evolved over time. Later activities included cooking, walking in the city, visits to other sites and organizations, conversations on culture and cultural production, language, daily life, women's issues, migrants' issues, and so on.

One of the main directions of conversation in the Kitchen Workshop was the historical connection between Gaziantep and Aleppo. The fact that Gaziantep was once part of Aleppo cancels out what is commonly thought today, that the people from Gaziantep are the hosts to those from Aleppo. This brought the conversation towards the idea of "cityzenship" (hemsehri in Turkish and Arabic), thus defining the socio-spatial condition of being from the same city. Cityzenship is also a concept acknowledged by Turkey's "Law No. 5393; Municipality Law" (Official Newspaper no. 25874, May 3, 2005), which maintains that people living in the same city are bonded with the concept of belonging to the same city, which is re-phrased in this article as "cityzenship," and they have the right to participate in the decision-making mechanisms in/regarding the city. However, this law and the particular aspect of the law on local representation have been overlooked and neglected. These social and legal dimensions of cityzenship made it one of the main discourses that the Kitchen Workshop communicated later on, emphasizing how the Municipality Law brings forward an understanding of hospitality, living together in the same city, and the representation of cityzens. The Kitchen Workshop took the notion of cityzenship as a basis, and reflected on unconditional hospitality as a physical space, not as a question of nationality (original belonging), but a question of collective belonging to the city, and the Kitchen Workshop assuring the right to remain and participate in decision-making, not based on a territory of the city, but based on inhabiting the city. This approach was about sharing the common struggles of being a woman in the city, which is built on patriarchal rules, as well as leaving out a categorization related to migration, by acknowledging the collective belonging, and the interchanging roles of hospitality.

**THE TEMPORARY KITCHEN** \_\_\_\_\_ The idea of cooking went forward in 2016 with a physical kitchen, created by renovating an existing space on the ground floor of the Kırkayak Cultural Center. This space opened directly onto the street with its own entrance, making it accessible before and after the cultural center's opening hours.

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FKW // ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR Geschlechterforschung UND Visuelle Kultur NR. 74 // Juni 2024 The outside door was not locked most of the time, making it possible for people to come in, cook, produce, organize activities, or rest during different times of the day. The space was composed of two rooms: a smaller back room that stores food and equipment, and a front room that has a free space in the middle and auxiliary niches embedded in the walls. The front room was square in plan, with a free-flow space in the middle, making it suitable for activities of different temporality. The use and design of the spaces were decided collectively, experienced through self-observing the use of space during common activities. The stone load-bearing walls had niches that were used as temporary storage for stools, floor tables, jars, books, etc. The floor cover was not only functional for the activities of/for women, but also suited to the culture - such as eating on the floor or gathering around a circular floor table. A niche by the window place overlooking the street was used as the display facade, presenting various temporary displays of banners and posters to the outside.

In this case, the Kitchen Workshop functioned as a space of sharing and sustaining the struggle for hosthood, for women from different backgrounds, both from Gaziantep and from Aleppo, based on their common issues. Working as a network, women mobilized and organized workshops, as well as continuous cooking activities. Food was not perceived as a cultural commodity, but appeared as a metaphor for production, constituting a space in itself for cooking up, researching, and preparing ideas of living together in the city. The Kitchen in this instance also performed as a space of unconditional hospitality, where the one who comes and cooks for the time being is the host at the kitchen during that time.

**POLITICS OF THE FLOOR TABLE** \_\_\_\_\_ The world went through the COVID Pandemic of 2020–2022. This was another time of rupture in Gaziantep and Turkey, like elsewhere, a time of isolation and further insecurity for all, but especially for the illegalized migrants. Access to hygiene, masks, and health care (testing and medicine) were major issues, in addition to the worsening work conditions within the precarity of capitalism and the undocumented economy. It was impossible to operate the kitchen as an interior space in this period, but togetherness was important more than ever.

\_\_\_\_\_ The kitchen as the physical space in the Kırkayak Cultural Center was given to a family in need of shelter, and the kitchen decided to gather out in the open. Helped by the warm climate of Southeast Turkey, the floor table enabled the collective to take place in parks and other open public spaces, creating commons

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from within the NGO and the urban space of the city. The politics of the floor table was brought into conversation, where people sit on the floor around a circular table and share the food. The floor table is an extremely politicized object in Turkey. Presented as a lack of civility by the modern republic, the floor table represented those who are unmodern, uneducated, rural, and uncivilized, whereas the modern dinner table was where the good citizen was represented with chairs, individual plates and cutlery, and table manners. Since 2012, around the same time as the migration from Syria, there were different winds of populism in Turkey, this time embracing the floor table, adding tradition and religion in the mix of representational rhetorics of the floor table. The conversations within the Kitchen Workshop moved on with the possibility of re-appropriating the narrative and taking ownership of the floor table, from a position of commoning both the floor (ground) and the table as objects for collective inhabitation.

**TOWARDS FEMINIST INFRASTRUCTURES** Ulus Baker's theory of intervals (1976) was useful to bring forward in these conversations. Originally from the philosophy and theory of visual culture, where Baker deals with film and moving images, they emphasized the proximity between two things, and the principle of participation as the elements of the theory of intervals. The conversations were about how the proximity and participation of the rules were continuously redefined in the Kitchen Workshop, so, instead of thinking territory, the idea was to think of proximity; instead of thinking borders, the idea was to think of participation. These motivations hold the basic working process of the Kitchen Workshop in order to create the sustenance of living through the disasters in the unjust spaces that the nation-state's formal infrastructures produce.

\_\_\_\_\_ This map visualizes the process and ethics of gathering in the Kitchen Workshop across Gaziantep, Aleppo, and the border landscape. The elements of the map were brought together collectively by the women thinking about mobility and movement, the memory of places, objects, and people, and the experience of labor and livelihood. Terms, sentences, and figures are representations of different processes, traumas, desires, symbols of togetherness, separations, and gatherings. These were then brought together for presentation and made into this map.

Kitchen Workshop put forward proximity and participation as a process of creating other infrastructures that possibly work outside the formal infrastructures, or by hacking them, or by flowing/ filling their gaps and incompetent parts. Feminist spaces and acts



FKW // ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR GESCHLECHTERFORSCHUNG UND VISUELLE KULTUR NR. 74 // JUNI 2024 can be defined upon feminist infrastructures; however, the aim is not to stay in the cracks but to transform and create anew. Here the words of Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser (2019) need to be re-iterated: Feminist thinking "can never be satisfied with equivalences until we have equality, never satisfied with legal rights until we have justice, and never satisfied with democracy until individual freedom is calibrated on the basis of freedom for all."

\_\_\_\_\_ Towards feminist infrastructures, I con-

clude by bringing forward the sentences from the Kitchen Workshop map **[fig. 2]**: "The values of cityzenship are sharing, collective belonging, equality, participation, learning together, self-organization, solidarity, unconditional hospitality, freedom and justice for all. The floor table is the guarantee of sitting in equal intervals. The basis of the floor table is equity in participation; both in sharing the labor, and the decision-making. The kitchen is a space of unconditional hospitality. The kitchen is a space of gathering, a space of collective inhabiting. Learning to live together is the practice of commoning. The collective belonging in the kitchen is 'cityzenship.' Equality, justice, and freedom for all are shared aspirations and the basis of solidarity."

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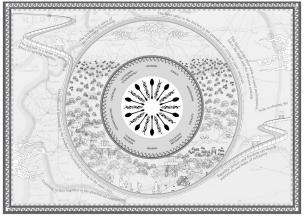
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#### // Figure 2

The Kitchen Workshop Map (2020–2022). Mapping process by women in the Kitchen Workshop, prepared by Merve Bedir. Courtesy of Kitchen Workshop and the *Designing Peace* exhibition at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum.

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Figure 1: Map showing Gaziantep as part of the city of Aleppo during the Ottoman Empire (between 1890 and 1895, Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie D'asie*. Open access map. Printed in Paris.) Figure 2: The Kitchen Workshop Map (2020–2022). Mapping process by women in the Kitchen Workshop, prepared by Merve Bedir. Courtesy of Kitchen Workshop and the *Designing Peace* exhibition at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum.

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Merve Bedir is an architect based in the Netherlands. Her research focuses on the spatial dimensions of hospitality and mobility and their politics. Her most notable works are framed under "Vocabulary of Hospitality," which has been published in *The Funambulist*, reviewed by *The Guard-ian* and the *Avery Review*, and exhibited at the *Istanbul Design Biennale* and at the *Smithsonian Design Museum*, among others. Bedir holds a Ph.D. from Delft University of Technology, and B.Arch. from Middle East Technical University in Ankara.

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