



MY YEAR AT THE  
WISSENSCHAFTSKOLLEG  
ZEYNEP KIVILCIM

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Zeynep Kivilcim is an Associate Professor of Public International Law. She got her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Université Paris II and she taught gender and law, critical approaches to public international law and international human rights law at Istanbul University until her dismissal by a state of emergency decree in October 2016 for signing a peace petition with 2,200 other Academics for Peace. In Germany, she taught at Göttingen University, Osnabrück University and Humboldt University. She adopts a critical approach and employs feminist and postcolonial theory. Her recent publications include “Legal Violence against Syrian Female Refugees.” *Feminist Legal Studies* (24, 2016); *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*, co-edited with Jane Freedman and Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu (Routledge, 2017); and “Articulating Human Rights Discourse in Local Struggles in a Neoliberal Age.” In *The Politics of Legality in a Neoliberal Age*, edited by Ben Golder and Daniel McLoughlin (Routledge, 2018). She is currently Guest Professor at the Institut für Sozialwissenschaften, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. – Address: Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Institut für Sozialwissenschaften - Vergleichende Demokratieforschung und die Politischen Systeme Osteuropas, Unter den Linden 6, 10099 Berlin, Germany. E-Mail: [kivilcimzeynep@gmail.com](mailto:kivilcimzeynep@gmail.com).

During my year at the Wissenschaftskolleg, I witnessed not only the further degradation of the political situation in my home country, but also the further strengthening of the far-right political movements in Germany, including the very alarming success of the AfD in the German elections and its entry in the Bundestag. The empowering of the right-wing political movements is closely linked with the anti-immigration discourse and

legislations that were at the heart of my research project at Wiko on the new paradigms of refugee protection.

The creative provocation of the talks and discussions with my class of Fellows at Wiko at the Tuesday colloquia and during lunches demonstrated to me the close link between racism and the social sciences, as well as the necessity to engage with colonialism to better understand current approaches to immigration. In this context, I intensified my readings of literature on legal racism and colonialism and reshaped my project, following the axis of the analysis of European migration laws in light of these literatures.

My year at Wiko proved once again that academic production is the fruit of a collective labour with all other members of the academic institution. All the staff members at Wiko in all departments, including the IT Service, the library, the “preparing your stay” team and the restaurant staff, were the collective labourers of our projects at Wiko. All Fellows are indebted to them for their hard work in this co-authorship.

Like many other Fellows, I first finished the articles that I had started before arriving at Wiko. The first one was the book chapter titled “La démocratie radicale dans les discours légaux contemporains au Rojava au cœur de la ‘crise’ Syrienne: Une analyse genrée”; it will appear in the volume *How International Law Works in Times of Crisis*, Oxford University Press (forthcoming). The second article that I finished during my Wiko year became my first work that has been translated into and published in German. Its English title is “Gendering the State of Emergency Regime in Turkey” and has been published in the edited volume *Nach dem Putsch: 16 Anmerkungen zur “neuen” Türkei*, edited by Ilker Ataç, Michael Fanizadeh and Volkan Açar. Wien: Mandelbaum, 2018. I wrote the first article of my Wiko project in late spring. It became a chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Migration Crisis* and will be forthcoming in 2019.

I gave a number of public lectures in Germany and other European countries on academic freedom and on the responsibilities of scholars in the struggles for social justice and for peace in times when neoliberal economic order and political liberalism are in crisis in Europe like they are elsewhere.

I was invited to contribute to two very impressive projects about migration stories in Germany, both initiated by women. The first project is the book prepared by International Women Space, a feminist political group of migrant and refugee women in Germany. It is entitled *In Our Own Words* and is the second book in the series. It aims to document the lives and stories of refugee women in Germany, the experiences of brave women who have fought difficult realities in this host country. Carolin Emcke, with whom I met first

when she gave the keynote speech for the introduction of our Wiko year in October, authors the second project. I have contributed to her project “Archiv der Flucht” at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

The German lessons were among the warmest memories of my stay at Wiko. Eva and Ursula, with their competence, excellent pedagogy and patience, initiated and encouraged my work with the German language. I am committed to continue to study German, since I will stay some more years in Berlin. I want to express my gratitude to Wiko’s academic coordinator Daniel Schönflug, who supported and stood in solidarity with me during my year-long struggle with the German immigration administration.

I feel very lucky to have witnessed the institutional efforts of Wiko to initiate gender mainstreaming measures following a fruitful discussion with Fellows and staff members. The election of a staff member as the responsible person for the establishment and the implementation of the gender-sensitive institutional frames was the very important first step. As a former Fellow and feminist legal scholar residing in Berlin, I want and hope to contribute to the future progress of gender-sensitivity at Wiko.