



# Transnational Lived Citizenship - The Case of the Eritrean Diaspora

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# Transnational Lived Citizenship – The Case of the Eritrean Diaspora

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## Abstract

This special focus section analyses state–diaspora relationships with a focus on the case of Eritrea, a paradigmatic example, as we show in this introduction, to elaborate on the following key questions: What determines loyalty between diaspora and the state? How can we understand the dynamics of co-optation, loyalty, and resistance that characterise many diaspora–state relationships? What is the role of historical events and memory in building alliances as well as divides among different generations and different groups in the diaspora? How do diaspora citizens interpret and enact their citizenship in everyday practice of engagement? By engaging with both citizenship and diaspora studies, this introduction shows the significance of analysing these questions through the lens of “transnational lived citizenship.” This concept enables a look at the intersections between formal aspects of citizenship as well as the emotional and practical aspects related to feelings of belonging, transnational attitudes, and circulation of material cultures.

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## Keywords

Eritrea, lived citizenship, transnationalism, belonging, diaspora

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## Introduction

It is increasingly acknowledged that the world is characterised by a high degree of mobility and that “kinopolitics,” or the politics of movement, makes the migrant a key figure of the contemporary age (Isin, 2018; Nail, 2015; Urry, 2000). Social, political, and economic processes within particular nation-states are significantly impacted by migration, making untenable any attempt to “understand political outcomes solely by looking at actors within the state” (Lyons and Mandaville, 2012: 5; see also Adamson (2016); Fallow et al., 2013; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). This has stimulated new interest in diasporic populations and their potential contribution to transformations in their country of origin as well as residence.

This Special Focus aims to contribute to this debate by delving into the case of Eritrea and its state–diaspora relationships. In spite of its specific political and historical characteristics, the case of Eritrea is in many ways paradigmatic, as we show in this introduction, to elaborate on key questions in the debate, such as how can we understand the dynamics of co-optation, loyalty, and resistance that characterise many diaspora–state relationships? What shapes the multi-faceted relationships between the state of origin and the diverse cultural, ethnic, religious identities that make up the many groups defined as diaspora? What is the role of historical events and memory in building alliances as well as divides among different generations and different groups in the diaspora? How do diaspora citizens interpret and enact their citizenship, defined not only as a formal status, but as an everyday practice of engagement? By drawing on both citizenship and diaspora studies, this introduction shows the significance of analysing these questions through the lens of “transnational lived citizenship.” This concept enables us to look at the intersections between formal aspects of citizenship as well as its emotional and practical aspects related to feelings of belonging, transnational attitudes, and circulation of material cultures.

## Debating Diaspora and Transnational Lived Citizenship: A Snapshot of the Debate

Many homeland states have developed diaspora engagement policies aimed at building and sustaining relationships with emigrants and their descendants (Bauböck, 2009). This trend has been particularly evident for developing countries that seek to benefit from remittances, investment potential, and the skills of their diasporic populations. An important element of these strategies is the extension of citizenship rights to their populations abroad in return for certain responsibilities and duties (Cohen, 2017; Collyer and King, 2015; Gamlen, 2008; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003). These dynamics are analysed in the rapidly expanding literature on diaspora members as political actors (Kleist, 2008; Müller-Funk and Krawatzek, forthcoming; Turner, 2013; Van Hear and Cohen, 2017; Wilcock, 2019).

In parallel, in light of the studies on transnationalism (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004), concepts of citizenship have expanded beyond the nation-state. Concepts such as external citizenship, diaspora, and transnational citizenship are variably used in the debate to refer to the varied constellations of statuses that link subjects abroad and

their homeland (Bauböck, 2010). Citizenship here is conceived not only as an acquired status but also as the set of relational practices that connect migrants to nation-states. In such an understanding, citizenship moves beyond legal status and its ritualised practices, to encompass concrete, often everyday acts (Isin and Nielsen, 2008; McNevin, 2006; Müller, 2016; Nyers and Rygiel, 2012; Wood and Black, 2018). Citizenship thus becomes a practice that potentially disrupts social-historical patterns of exclusion, in that subjects “constitute themselves as citizens” (Isin and Nielsen, 2008: 2) regardless of legal status or official rights. Focusing on such “acts of citizenship” makes it possible to analyse actual encounters, performances, or enactments, and to examine citizenship as a practice related to homelands, hostlands, or the wider transnational social field.

The three empirical articles in this Special Focus engage with these theoretical debates on transnationalism, citizenship, diaspora politics, and belonging. In doing so, the Special Focus follows a recent call in the literature for a multi-level approach that “enables a greater understanding of the ways in which the engagement of the state, individuals and communities interact and influence transnationalism” (Bloch, 2017: 1510). The contributions of this Special Focus speak more or less explicitly to the concept of “transnational lived citizenship” (Kallio and Mitchell, 2016; see also Al-Ali et al., 2001) and related ideas around political belonging and the politics of belonging (see Müller, 2012b; Youkhana, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Taken together, transnational lived citizenship expands the understanding of citizenship in important ways. First, it allows to analyse citizenship beyond rights-based status conferred by the nation-state (Kallio et al., 2020). Second, it conceives of citizenship as relational and affective practices grounded in multiple forms of belonging and interconnectedness (Al-Ali et al., 2001; Isin and Nielsen, 2008; Wood and Black, 2018). Third, it allows to pay close attention to the role of the nation-state and the extent to which it remains or ceases to be a decisive arena of aspired citizenship and political belonging (Brubaker, 2010), as is evident in the three articles of this Special Focus.

The turn towards transnational lived citizenship, in particular its usefulness as an analytical category, has not been unquestioned, though. A focus on citizenship as practised in everyday encounters, regardless of official status or rights granted by a nation-state, risks being “‘everything’ and therefore ‘nothing’” (Kallio et al., 2020: 3). Lived citizenship, it is argued, needs clearer demarcation. Four categories have been proposed to sharpen its analytical value – namely, spatial, intersubjective, performed, and affective (Kallio et al., 2020). While those categories can indeed be useful to analyse activist forms of lived citizenship in a potentially more systematic way, they at the same time provide a normative framing that is in danger of missing other important dimensions of lived citizenship, including its link to personal aspirations, memories and concepts of the past, and material cultures. In this Special Focus, the emphasis is therefore on how transnational lived citizenship relates to the latter dimensions, without losing connection with the home state as an important frame of reference. The articles in this Focus investigate how the home nation-state transnationally moulds citizenship statuses and practices, resulting in stratified forms of citizenship and a great amount of ambivalence, as well as

seemingly contradicting state attitudes towards diaspora citizens and vice versa (Belloni, 2018; Cole, 2019; Müller, 2012a).

## **The Case of the Eritrean Diaspora as a Paradigmatic Example**

All the articles focus on the case of Eritrea, a case that represents in many ways a model for wider understandings of stratification of citizenship and practices of belonging (Bernal, 2006; Woldemikael, 2019). Eritrea is situated in the Horn of Africa, a site of intensive emigration, both within the region and further afield to the Gulf States (Thiollet, 2011), Europe (Belloni, 2019), the USA (Bernal, 2006), Canada (Berhane and Tyyskä, 2017), and Israel (Müller, 2015; Sabar and Rotbard, 2015) – to name some major destinations of Eritrean migrants. Eritrea is one of the most diasporic states globally with an estimated one-third of its population in the diaspora (even if statistics are outdated). Remittances here play an important role in the survival of families as well as of the state. The diaspora is historically characterised by high levels of homeland political engagement (Clapham, 2017; Dahre, 2007) even if the contemporary political scene presents a wide spectrum of political behaviours ranging from patriotism to opposition, from avoidance to indifference (Belloni, 2018; Hirt and Mohammad, 2018; Treiber, 2019). Different generations of the diaspora have been instrumental in nation-state building as well as in contemporary regime survival and regime resistance (Hirt, 2015; Iyob, 2000; Müller, 2020). These include the generation who left during the Eritrean war for national liberation, many of whom became key supporters of the liberation struggle, also referred to as “generation nationalism,” or key figures in opposition movements (Hepner, 2009a; Hepner, 2009b). Another generation is made up of the various movements of post-independence (post-1991) refugees, movements that greatly accelerated after the end of the 1998–2000 war with Ethiopia and the subsequent political crackdown on any dissent or opposition, and the narrowing of political space. This generation has been referred to as “generation asylum” (Hepner, 2009b), a title that might suggest more coherence as might actually be found among them (Belloni, 2018). Then there is the important generation of those born to Eritrean parents in the diasporas, a quasi-second-diaspora generation – who are as divided as many of their parents in relation to their allegiances or opposition to the Eritrean state and the wider transnational Eritrean community (Graf, 2018; Graf and Thieme, 2016).

All the above make Eritrea and its diasporic populations crucial sites to investigate lived citizenship, transnational identity formation, and political belonging. In the following section, we briefly outline three major aspects in which the concept of lived citizenship can be further developed to understand diasporas and their engagement across the wider transnational social field: lived citizenship as belonging; lived citizenship as ambivalence; lived citizenship as materiality. We then demonstrate how these practices and their linkages to home state governance form patterns of graduated citizenship and stratification. These patterns in turn shape important aspects of the Eritrean diaspora in different geographical locations, as illustrated through different aspects in the three empirical articles.

## Investigating Lived Citizenship as Belonging

The concept of lived citizenship is a useful framing to shed light on the different ways in which diaspora populations exercise belonging (Alinia and Eliassi, 2014; Kleist, 2013; Müller, 2020; Yuval-Davis, 2006). For many refugees and migrants, some form of displacement of belonging has occurred once they left, or were forced to leave, the communities where their previous lives unfolded. At the same time, they remain connected to multiple allegiances related to their previous lives, their country of origin, and/or the various stages of and experiences during their journeys.

Often, in particular if diasporas relate back to authoritarian states of origin and are exposed to extra-territorial practices of such states, this leaves them with complex dilemmas. The state of origin to which they may have multiple attachments might regard them as traitors, whereas their aspirations may be to demonstrate their patriotism or their loyalty (Glasius, 2018; Müller, 2018a).

Glasius (2018: 180) argues that citizenship is in fact not the appropriate lens to understand authoritarian emigrant or diasporic states, as such states exercise control over populations abroad as “subjects to be repressed and extorted.” We argue instead that the interactions between transnational authoritarian states and its diaspora subjects cannot be interpreted only through the lens of subjugation, coercion, and co-optation, but needs to also be analysed through the concepts of participation, loyalty as well as struggle and resistance. These dynamics, as illustrated in the empirical contributions of this Special Focus, highlight the multiple active roles of diaspora. Based on shared political understandings, a shared trauma of the past (Hirt, this Special Focus) or a feeling of belonging to a religious (Mohammad, this Special Focus), and/or local community (Belloni, this Special Focus), migrants and refugees continuously reconstitute themselves as citizens even when they are formally excluded from legal rights, political participation, property transaction, or exposed to travel restrictions. All these practices – or acts (Isin and Nielsen, 2008) – reflect the lived dimension of citizenship, as opposed to a more formal and institutional definition of it. They are grounded in diverse ideas and feelings of belonging, and that is why we call them practices of belonging.

In this regard, Yuval-Davis (2006) identifies three distinct categories of belonging: social and economic locations; identifications and emotional attachments; and ethical and political values. These categories are particularly useful when trying to understand the linkages and ruptures between emotional forms of identification, material dimensions of belonging, and political and ethical beliefs and value systems. Among diaspora populations, these categories are seldom aligned within and across generations or, if so, often to an imagined homeland that perhaps never existed. What is important to highlight here is that diasporas, far from being monolithic communities, are made up of different people with diverse ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds, and from different generations that diversely engage or disengage in homeland politics (Kleist, 2013; McAuliffe, 2008; Müller-Funk, 2020). Divides within the homeland may disappear or expand abroad. All the articles in this Special Focus illustrate the importance of these divides to understand different politics of belonging and different practices of transnational lived citizenship.

The complex and often contradictory dynamics between practices of belonging and how citizenship is being performed by migrants or return-migrants has been analysed in the wider literature often with respect to past historical periods and as connected to collective memory formation, for example in relation to post-socialism (e.g. Burton, 2019; Bernal (2006); Freytag (1998); Müller, 2012b, 2018b, 2021; Pitcher, 2006). More recently, the role of the internet and social media in altering conceptions of belonging among diasporas that translate into new forms of lived citizenship and conceptions of home and host states has received scholarly attention (Bernal, 2006, Bernal, 2020; Royston, 2020; Turner and Berckmoes, 2020).

The articles in this Special Focus pick up and expand on these issues in demonstrating in novel ways how collective memory interacts with material and emotional realities of diaspora lives to enforce and contest political belonging. In doing so, the Special Focus demonstrates how the psychological mechanisms of “postmemory” and “social trauma” can be used as successful political tools in diaspora management (Hirt, this Special Focus), as well as how lived citizenship among diaspora populations is strongly linked to material categories of belonging and characterised by ambivalence in relation to identification and values (Belloni, this Special Focus; Mohammad, this Special Focus).

## Lived Citizenship as Ambivalence

The concept of transnational lived citizenship that we aim to investigate in this Special Focus is connected to a key dimension of the migrant experience that has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars: ambivalence. Rather than conceiving of citizenship as participation versus exclusion (from a state perspective), or as loyalty versus resistance, the concept of ambivalence allows to understand contradictory attitudes within individuals, groups or the state.

Several studies have highlighted how migrants on an individual level may have ambivalent feelings towards their homeland (Bocchagni and Kivisto, 2019). Love and hatred, nostalgia and desire to stay away often mix within transnational attitudes and home state-oriented political practices of diaspora groups. Dayal (1996) talks about double consciousness of the diaspora where both nationalistic and anti-nationalist feelings and ideas of belonging converge. Kivisto and Vecchia-Mikkola, 2013 investigate how Iraqis in Rome and Helsinki solve their ambivalent belonging to two societies by choosing between exit (alienation from the home society to seek full incorporation in the host society), loyalty (expressed as homesickness and subsequent isolation in the country of settlement), and voice (for those migrants who choose to live a transnational life in between countries). McIlwaine and Bermudez (2015) talk about ambivalent citizenship: the mixture of trust and mistrust that emigrants develop towards homeland politics (partly linked to the reasons that led them to depart) is crucial, they argue, to explain why given the possibility many do not participate in elections. Similarly, Belloni (2018) argues that ambivalence – defined as the emotional, conative, and intellectual experience of being pulled in opposed directions – is a useful concept to make sense of a rather common, but often neglected, dimension of disengagement of diaspora groups in homeland politics. Drawing from the case of Eritrea, she argues that even those who fled from the government in fear of persecution reproduce some kind of loyalty towards



the establishment. This has an immobilising effect on the potential of diaspora groups to advance political change in their (former) homeland (see also Hirt, 2015). She also argues that ambivalence is a useful concept to understand the contradictory attitudes of the Eritrean state towards its refugee population: on the one hand, punished and excluded; on the other hand, needed for their potential economic and political contributions to the regime.

In her contribution in this Special Focus, she further explores these ambivalent political attitudes by analysing remittance houses as material symbols of contradictory attitudes of the state towards its diaspora populations, stratified along generational lines. Through the stories of houses and their dwellers, she illustrates not only how long-standing opponents end up contributing to the regime for the sake of left-behind relatives, but also how passionate regime supporters become dissatisfied citizens. In a further layer, she unpacks how often politically disengaged refugee populations, through informal remittances invested in housing, pose potentially a real threat to the Eritrean gatekeeper state (Poole, 2013).

The article by Hirt engages with these issues focusing on second generation Eritreans for whom a form of survivors' guilt (not having had to make sacrifices for Eritrean independence) is overcome by the celebration of idealised history narratives. The underlying ambivalences between pride about the achievements of the liberation struggle and doubts about fulfilment of its promises and the transformation of Eritrean society are overwritten by uncritical support of the current regime mediated through that regime. In this way, ambivalence turns into loyalty, a loyalty based on a heroic history of the past that makes those who reject it into traitors.

Mohammad's article shows the multiple layers of ambivalence expressed in ethnic, religious, and national identities. Eritrean pre-independence history was characterised by multiple conflicts related to shifting ethnic and religious identities, conflicts that the nationalist project of the liberation struggle aimed to overcome. It did indeed do so to a certain extent, even though those previously existing cleavages were covered up rather than overcome. This has resulted, as Mohammad shows, in a strong resurfacing of dividing ethnic and religious identities within different diaspora communities. These cleavages, however, do not produce explicit opposition: while the nationalist narrative propagated by the Eritrean regime is rejected, a large percentage in the diaspora still pays taxes to that same regime or supports it through remittances, for a variety of reasons.

## **Lived Citizenship and Materiality**

An important point that this Special Focus advances is the role of materiality and material cultures in the analysis of lived citizenship. This relates to what Yuval-Davis (2006) calls "social and economic location." Current debates on materiality and citizenship mostly highlight how states increasingly exert power over their citizens through a set of technical tools or concrete demands in exchange for documents, certifications, and the verification of identity papers. The work of Carswell and De Neve, 2020, for example, discusses paperwork and patronage in Tamil Nadu, while the study of Chhotray and McConnell, 2018 analyses the certification of citizenship used by South Asian states to



identify their diaspora members. Another interesting field of multi-disciplinary research concerns the role of material infrastructures to control, segregate, and recognise different groups of citizens from others (Anand, 2017; Diouf and Fredericks, 2014). The concept of “hydraulic citizenship” proposed by Anand (2017) is paradigmatic. By looking at water distribution infrastructure in Mumbai, Anand shows how water access is closely connected to the public recognition of certain areas and certain groups of citizens in the city. Material structures thus reinforce mechanisms of control, exclusion, and segregation in the governance of the city.

Similar mechanisms can also be found in the transnational arena. There, scholars focusing on material cultures for example illustrate to what extent different practices of citizenship and belonging are symbolised and reified in objects, such as souvenirs, photographs, and pieces of art that people carry with them. The work of Tolia-Kelly (2004, 2016) on material culture is exemplary in this regard. While describing the photographs, fabrics, pictures, and paintings displayed in homes of South Asians living in Britain, Tolia-Kelly (2004: 675) argues that visual cultures of landscape are “critical modes of securing a sense of being and belonging within Britain, for this group of post-colonial migrants.” The representation of migrants’ experiences as refracted through the paintings of landscapes of South Asia, East Africa, and England points to how the women interviewed by Tolia-Kelly reinterpreted their belonging and citizenship in the context of exclusionary politics that they experience in the UK. They represent a way of re-appropriating one’s identity through a vocabulary that communicates mobile cultural citizenship (Tolia-Kelly, 2004, 2016).

These considerations highlight the importance of materiality to understand practical engagement of people with identity, belonging, and citizenship. Studies on remittance houses also play a key role in shedding light on the significance of materiality in the debate on transnationalism. Several studies show how the architectural design of these houses, built with migrant remittances in the country of origin, mirror the migration experience of the owner (Boccagni and Bivand Erdal, 2020). Latinos living in the USA tend to reproduce architectural models referring to high-class villas in Los Angeles (Lopez, 2015). Remittances sent by Chinese migrants from the ZhongShan area living in Australia have resulted in different kinds of housing architecture that often mix interpretations of Chinese traditions and European neo-classic styles (Byrne, 2020). Whereas these houses’ outlooks reflect a diasporic and migrant identity, their existence testifies rootedness: in spite of a life built elsewhere, and in spite of the difficulties that migrants face in the country of origin, they still decide to invest back home for the sake of keeping a material link with their origin and their families there or for a future return that may never materialise. These houses, as well as exemplifying material cultures in general, point to some dilemmas of transnational citizenship, such as the gap between migrants’ aspiration to be present in their home countries, while being absent; or the need to reaffirm one’s own membership to the community, while also showing a migrant identity and an improved socio-economic status. At the same time, as Belloni points out in this Special Focus, these dilemmas give scope to repressive home states. Given the key symbolic value of remittances houses for migrants’ sense of belonging, repressive

governments can use them to exert control over their diasporas. Thus, they are a key tool for migrants to perform their transnational citizenship, as well as for states to regulate it.

The role of materiality in subtly reifying transnational citizenship emerges also in Hirt's article. She shows, with a particular focus on diaspora artists who often grew up in tough circumstances and/or materially deprived conditions in their host-country, how feeling valued by the regime of their country of ancestry serves as an important manifestation of pride, displayed through their artwork. It acts as a material-like asset of self-worth and provides a valued identity, and in doing so allows authoritarian regimes some sort of propaganda victory.

In Mohammad's article, it comes to the fore how ethnic or religious based diaspora organisations materialise alternative identities – built around a somehow reified understanding of faith, culture, ethnicity, and shared memories – which are often neglected in Eritrean nationalist narratives. These organisations are a silent (or vocal) protest against the regime and its unifying narrative. At the same time, they represent a solidarity based on ethnic and religious identities that has a strong material component: members in wealthy countries provide material support to fellow citizens from the same ethnic or religious grouping stranded in refugee camps or otherwise deprived circumstances. They thus enact citizenship almost like an aspiring welfare state across borders.

## Overview: Special Focus

Taken together, what we take from the wider literature and our own work on Eritrea and beyond is that transnational lived citizenship among diaspora populations is a process characterised by stratification mechanisms exercised by their (former) home state as well as ambivalence and complex patterns of belonging on part of diasporas. Stratification is done partly psychologically and emotionally, through the imposition of an imposed narrative of joint history, sacrifice, and trauma, a narrative that is partly being resisted in favour of other or previous primordial identities. Stratification is also executed in concrete material terms, in relation to for example who gets the permission to build or own property or engage in business activities. Also in this material field, contestation and resistance is being created – for example, in illicit building activities that may be torn down again (or not). The three articles in this Special Focus first and foremost demonstrate that the performances of lived citizenship of many members of the Eritrean diaspora, as well as the demands posed by the Eritrean government as a prerequisite of citizenship, are ultimate “unhappy performatives” (Müller, 2020): they neither fulfil the aspirations to demonstrate belonging to the Eritrea nation (state) in the way aspired to by many diaspora citizens, nor do they create the loyalty demanded and required by organs of the Eritrean state.

The article by Hirt focuses on belonging among second-generation Eritreans and explores how experiences of collective trauma and post memory can create a particular form of long-distance nationalism based on an idealised view of the homeland, a pattern that has been observed more generally in the wider literature in relation to post-liberation regimes. Through the concepts of trauma and post memory and by using an innovative

interdisciplinary approach, Hirt shows the relevance of such “performances of trauma” in understanding diaspora politics. Those are visible, for example, in second-generation migrants in democratic settings defending repressive politics in their parents’ homeland, as well as the repressive Eritrean state manipulating contemporary artists abroad. Taken together, such performances, while often analysed as the successful manipulation of diaspora populations by the Eritrean state, are perhaps better understood as exposing hybrid identities, or as forms of belonging exercised in and from post-conflict states.

Mohammad’s contribution demonstrates how state-centred and sponsored nationalism is on the retreat among diaspora networks in favour of primordial identities. The author shows how ethnic and religious identities emerge as reaction to the government’s attempt to create a transnational control network, yet without retreating entirely from the national project. Thus, ambivalence remains the key to understand the way transnational lived citizenship unfolds, and can be analysed in concrete details through a clear focus on political belonging across the wider transnational social field and the identities this creates in everyday encounters and practices.

The last article by Belloni moves to more material aspects of political belonging: she analyses membership claims and lived citizenship by Eritreans abroad by examining their desire to own a house back home and how these are shaped by state housing policies. Remittance houses, the author argues, are a crucial site to understand the stratified and complex relationships characterising diaspora citizens and their (former) homeland. By looking into the history of housing policies and the different kinds of remittance houses present in Eritrea, Belloni shows how these artefacts can represent both loyalty and resistance to the state project. Finally, through the stories of the inhabitants of these houses, Belloni provides a nuanced account of how opposition often transforms into co-optation, loyalty into disappointment, and exclusion into participation as a result of the interaction between personal aspirations and state regulations.

Taken together, the three articles demonstrate in novel ways how lived citizenship and belonging interact to create hybrid identities and divided loyalties among different generations of diaspora populations. In contrast to the simplification often found in visible diaspora political engagements that appear clearly divided between support or hatred of the home regime, the articles look at the nuances of diasporic being. In doing so, they pay particular attention to the under-appreciated dimensions of political belonging, ambivalence, and materiality, when trying to understand the complex transnational practices of citizenship. But they also demonstrate how the home nation-state remains a key site of identification and plays an important role in moulding transnational lived citizenship.

## **Conclusion**

This Special Focus analyses transnational lived citizenship, its performances, and the forms of belonging and contestation that arise from it, using the example of Eritrean diaspora populations. It argues that the Eritrean diaspora can be seen as a paradigmatic example to explore the different aspects that define loyalty between different diaspora populations and their ancestral or home state, as well as patterns of resistance to it and co-optation by it. Key issues

that the Special Focus identifies are emotional attachments to (state-propagated) memories of an idealised past and new loyalties that have emerged as resistance to those; and the importance of material cultures in connection to the home state.

In demonstrating through three distinct contributions how interactions between authoritarian states and diaspora citizens are based on participation, loyalty, struggle and resistance at the same time, we make the case that such interactions can usefully be analysed through the concept of transnational lived citizenship. This concept allows not only to emphasise how citizenship is deeply intertwined with personal aspirations, concepts of the past, and material cultures, but also how the home nation-state transnationally moulds citizenship, resulting in stratified access to rights and duties, to cultural membership and political participation. Transnational lived citizenship ultimately enables us to look at the intersections between formal and aspirational aspects of citizenship combined, and its emotional and practical aspects – those aspects defined by feelings of belonging, transnational attitudes, and circulation of material cultures.

With its contribution to the debate on transnational lived citizenship and how it links to complex dynamics of belonging, this Special Focus hopes to provide a better understanding of how authoritarian home states, individuals, and communities interact, create, and perform transnationalism.

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## **Transnationale gelebte Staatsangehörigkeit – der Fall der eritreischen Diaspora**

### **Zusammenfassung**

In dieser Einleitung zum Sonderheft werden die Beziehungen zwischen Staat und Diaspora am Beispiel Eritreas analysiert. Es werden zentrale Fragen erörtert, darunter: Wodurch wird die Loyalität zwischen Diaspora und Staat bestimmt? Wie können wir die Dynamiken von Kooptation, Loyalität und Widerstand verstehen, die viele Beziehungen zwischen Diaspora und Staat kennzeichnen? Welche Rolle spielen historische Ereignisse und Erinnerung bei der Bildung von Allianzen, aber auch von Trennungen zwischen verschiedenen Generationen und unterschiedlichen Gruppen in der Diaspora? Wie interpretieren und leben Bürgerinnen und Bürger in der Diaspora ihre Staatsangehörigkeit im Alltag? Indem wir uns in dieser Analyse sowohl mit Literatur zu Staatsangehörigkeit und Diaspora beschäftigen, zeigt diese Einleitung die Bedeutung der Analyse dieser Fragen mithilfe des Konzeptes der „transnational gelebten Staatsangehörigkeit“. Dieses ermöglicht einen Blick auf die Überschneidungen zwischen formalen Aspekten der Staatsangehörigkeit sowie ihren emotionalen und praktischen Aspekten, die mit Gefühlen der Zugehörigkeit, transnationalen Einstellungen und der Zirkulation materieller Kulturen zusammenhängen.

### **Schlagwörter:**

Eritrea, gelebte Staatsangehörigkeit, Transnationalismus, Zugehörigkeit, Diaspora