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Migration and the multiple spaces of citizenship

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Abstract:

Political and social citizenship is still predominantly conceptualized as state membership and tied to national identification. Yet, various global dynamics have led the debate on contemporary citizenship to discuss several new forms and concepts, among which urban as well as transnational (and translocal) versions stand central. Importantly, from both angles scholars emphasize that in spite of the global movements of people, as well as that of money, goods, information and ideas, people's life remains anchored locally and that place may even have gained in importance, in relation to identification, but also in terms of (the exercise of) rights and practices. Considering cross-border migration and the related transnational ties and practices that often emerge from it the notion of place may have to be substituted by the plural 'places' and the translocal connections in-between.

In order to reflect on the meaning of these dynamics for the notion of citizenship, the contribution offers a theoretical discussion that brings together several recent strands of research. On the one hand, migration is often investigated as a challenge to citizenship in its classical understanding of bounded state membership. Here, normative, legal and practical issues of access to citizenship as well as migrants' urban mobilization and their organizing as disenfranchised (non-)citizens are major topics. On the other hand, there is a growing literature on cross-border mobilization and struggle for extraterritorial membership of migrants vis-à-vis their countries and communities of origin. Yet, rather than constituting separate spheres or issues, through spatial mobility situations emerge where various spaces of citizenship overlap and become entangled. It is, thus, argued that in order to understand people's struggle for inclusion, membership and citizenship multiple sites and scales need to be taken into account.

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