

## Chair: Citizenship and Identities in Africa

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The recent political developments in Africa, youth movements, protests, new waves of oppression, combined with the occurrence of increasing mobility and migration, and the advancement of mobile communication technologies (ICTs), invite for a revisit of questions around citizenship and identity, one of the core questions to understand 'Africa'. The study of citizenship and identity counteracts the idea of 'the invention of Africa' as an exogenous process (Mudimbe 1988, Mbembe 2001) to a quest for 'African agency', i.e. (new) social and cultural expressions of citizenship and identity in Africa.

The study of citizenship and identity is about relations between populations and the structures that govern them. Studies that take the analysis of the State as their point of departure often emphasize the problematic situation in which the State of Africa finds itself, i.e. in the 'working' of the State (Bayart, Ellis & Hibou 1999, Chabal & Daloz 1999). Citizenship studies complement these with an approach from below, through political agency (Chabal 2009), understanding the 'politics of recognition' (Englund & Nyamnjoh 2004), the analysis of media and politics (Englund 2011), or the role of 'feelings of belonging' (Nyamnjoh 2006). In this Chair we complement these approaches with the study of expression: as in social processes (movements, rebellion) and the arts (literature, music, popular culture) (cf. Fabian 1998, Ponzanesi & Merolla 2005, Mokadi 2003). In this dialectic relationship between governance, population and expressions, citizenship and identity dynamics are created (Cerulo 1997). This is a process based on interpretations of past events and projections in the future (aspirations) (Johnson-Hanks 2002), but also of memory work (Fabian 2003).

In this Chair these discussions will be furthered by including two processes that complicate the triangle citizenship-identity-governance: mobility and the role of communication and information technologies. Especially the latter seem to be a vector in new forms of expression of citizenship and identity (de Bruijn & van Dijk 2011, De Bruijn & Both 2017, cf. Castells 2009). Furthermore these processes are influenced by their socio-political histories. A comparison between experiences of different political regimes (duress) will give us insight in processes and expressions of citizenship and identity.

Mobility studies (Adey 2010) put the question of belonging to place and space to the fore. Ferguson and Gupta (1999) and Clifford (1999) can be seen as the anthropological 'fathers' of this debate. How does the increasing mobility (since the 1990ies numbers of people who move are only increasing) influence people's feelings of belonging, citizenship and identity (de Bruijn et al 2001)? And how are these mobilities related to the (new) political developments that we are observing on the continent?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> And of course these increasing mobility are also a response to the slow demographic transition on the continent, with rapidly increasing population numbers, rapidly increasing urbanization numbers, and a very young population on average, particularly in these (mega)cities.

The study of the expression of citizenship and identity refers to the study of popular culture, the role of media, arts, language and discourse. The advancement of connectivity in Africa has deeply influenced these forms of expression, not only in the production of arts, but also in communication through the social media and mobile telephony. Here we enter into a debate on appearance of protest music, street languages and their roles in the (youth) movements, the expression in language and discourse, but also new forms of journalism: citizen journalism. How and for whom the (social) media and ICTs make a difference in dynamics of citizenship and identity is one of the core questions for this Chair to understand present-day developments. A remarkable development is seen in the creative industry where ethnic identities are subdued to commercialization and marketing (Comaroff & Comaroff 2013).

Citizenship and identity is about awareness of oneself and the world around him or her. This introduces another theme in the agenda of this chair. One of the effects of globalization is for instance more access to information, via new Information and Communication Technologies. In this chair the link between awareness raising as a 'local' effect of global technologies (social media and mobile telephones) is a separate research topic. Especially interesting is how and for whom exists this connection between technology and awareness and hence a more conscious choice for citizenship? This idea implies that any project that introduces ICTs will develop a form of awareness and hence create citizenship, demands for rights and well being. This brings this chair also into the field of more hands-on topics like the introduction for ICTs in health practice, or in schooling. The unexpected effects can be interesting to analyse in its politico-social consequences.

In the coming one plus six years we will research and teach about these problematics. Our starting point are past and present day 'movements' and revolutions in post-colonial Africa. These can be political and social movements, but also less obvious movements that have to do with developments in arts, institutions (musea, heritage). Can we interpret these as claims for citizenship? And how do the dynamics of the past influence the present, in leadership, defining heroes, etc. What are exogenous and endogenous forces in the definition of these claims? What difference do the developments in media, (citizen) journalism, visibility of protest art (music, film and festivals) make? Are processes of identification mingled with a sense of nationalism, or 'Africanism'? And are these processes recognized nationally, regionally and internationally, and by whom?

### **Methodology/fields of research and teaching**

The research on the triangle expressions-identity/citizenship-governance, can start from different angles. The Chair will include a search for alternative methodologies.

It can be the study of:

**Social and political movements, past and present.** A specific attention for the recent youth movements (eg. Y-en a marre, Filimbi, Balaie citoyen, #Rhodesmustfall). Here the discussion will start with the idea coined by De Waal & Ibreck (2013) of hybrid movements. In such movements discussions about shared identities or instead conflicting identities are central.

**Youth and generations.** The question of youth has been central in many of the Africa-based research and indeed will be also central in this Chair. However the role of older generations should not be forgotten; the politics of and fights for recognition are often hidden in their memories (Alber, van der Geest & Whyte 2008; Van Walraven 2013).

**Memory and Forgetting.** Expression of citizenship is certainly also related to memory and forgetting (Ricoeur 2004, Radstone & Hodgkin 2009, De Goede, 2015) and how this relates to identity dynamics. The past informs the present and future. We will concentrate on the process of the past in the present as it occurs in narratives, the arts (literature, music, songs) and on the new social media (as a new form of expression, discourse and narratives).

**(Living) Archives.** Archives are hidden in these memories. Heritage studies are paying attention to these processes. Archives are the documented expression of people, that are important for the formulation of identities. Many African countries have not kept their archives (both national, personal, etc.) as they are often lost in the interaction with governance (war, conflict, negligence by the State) (Van den Berselaar, Doortmont et al. 2016).

**Co-creation and Voice.** A central question in this field of African Studies should be: how is the citizen's voice heard. The idea of co-creation of knowledge has been coined anew in the debate around the use of technology in knowledge production (citizen academics). Co-creation should be made visible in publications. This Chair will contribute to the development of co-publication and on-line publications that combine video, photo and text that will allow voices of non-academics to be heard, and their images to be seen and experienced. It will use the methodology developed in the Voice4Thought programme ([www.voice4thought.org](http://www.voice4thought.org)).

**Engagement.** A research and teaching agenda on citizenship and identity under often authoritarian regimes cannot be unengaged. Engagement has to be critically evaluated and the ethical questions scrutinized. These will be part of a continuing discussion in the study of 'expressions of citizenship and identity in Africa'.

**ICT and development.** ICT4D and M4D, the effect on awareness and understanding one's rights.

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