

# ***Regional citizenship regimes from within: unpacking divergent perceptions of the ECOWAS citizenship regime\****

AMALIE RAVN WEINRICH 

*School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Konstepidemens väg 2B,  
413 14 Göteborg, Sweden Email: [amalie.weinrich@gu.se](mailto:amalie.weinrich@gu.se)*

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) citizenship regime by investigating the institutional perceptions of five departments of the ECOWAS Commission. Creating a citizenship regime has been a central objective of the organisation's institutional framework but previous research has refrained from examining its multiplicity. The paper uses the concept of *citizenship regime* consisting of the dimensions rights, access, belonging and responsibility mix as the conceptual lens and draws on institutional documents and primary data from interviews conducted at the ECOWAS Commission. The paper contributes to current debates in citizenship studies and African regionalism and the literature on supra-national citizenship building, regional integration and governance research in Africa and elsewhere. The empirical data show that movement is central to the ECOWAS citizenship regime, whether formulated in terms of a right, as a way to facilitate access, or a way to establish a sense of regional belonging.

**Keywords** – West Africa, regional governance, regional integration, free movement, international bureaucrats.

## INTRODUCTION

How do institutional actors of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) perceive the ECOWAS citizenship regime? This paper explores the

\* The data collection for this article was conducted with the help of the personnel at the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Nigeria, who provided important contact to the ECOWAS Commission staff. A special thanks to Axel Harneit-Sievers, Barbara Sievers and Donald Ikenna Ofoegbu for the help and support in Abuja. I am also grateful for the constructive comments on earlier drafts from Ebenezer Obadare and the anonymous reviewers of the JMAS.

ECOWAS citizenship regime through investigating how different actors of the ECOWAS Commission perceive the ECOWAS citizenship regime and how these institutional perceptions vary. The early objective of ECOWAS to forge a borderless region, which was part of the organisation's post-colonial region-making agenda (Obi 2012), resulted in the establishment of a free market zone for goods, services and persons. Thus, the ECOWAS Treaty (1975), the Revised Treaty (ECOWAS 1993), and a subsequent set of protocols were developed to enhance regional integration and begin a new community building project under the framework of the ECOWAS community citizenship.

Despite the historical and contemporary importance of citizenship in West Africa (Manby 2009; Obi 2012) and the relationship between regional integration and citizenship building in Africa and elsewhere (Wiener 1998; Jenson 2007; Mengisteab & Bereketeab 2012), the literature on regionalism in West Africa focuses primarily on regional institution-building (Nwankwo 2014). Moreover, scholars have provided thorough research on the development of regional political and economic integration policies (Iheduru 2011), intra-regional mobility governance (Bisong 2019; Lavenex 2019), the relationship between free movement protocols and national policies (Brown 1989) and discussed African regionalism based on an international public administration approach (Gänzle *et al.* 2018). However, few studies have drawn attention to the relationship between citizenship and regionalism in West Africa, and the existing works have applied a legal approach (Okom & Dada 2012; Ukaigwe 2016). The lack of research on regional citizenship in West Africa, in both citizenship studies and the regionalism literature, means that there remains an insufficient understanding of the nature of the ECOWAS citizenship regime.

The paper explores how five departments that have the mandate to develop ECOWAS citizenship under the ECOWAS Commission understand the ECOWAS citizenship regime. ECOWAS is the regional organisation with one of the most comprehensive legal frameworks in Africa (Ukaigwe 2016). Its citizenship regime has been a central objective of the organisation since its foundation (ECOWAS 1975) and a role model for other regional organisations in Africa (Obi 2012). The five departments, whose views the paper analyses, are the Department of Trade, Custom and Free Movement, the Department of Infrastructure, the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, the Department of Social Affairs and Gender and the Department of Education, Science and Culture. The paper draws on institutional documents and primary data from 27 semi-structured interviews conducted during fieldwork between October and December 2019. It deploys the four-tiered concept of citizenship regimes consisting of the dimensions rights, access, belonging and the responsibility mix (Jenson 2007; Auvachez 2009) as the 'conceptual lens'.

The study of the institutional perceptions of the ECOWAS citizenship regime contributes to current policy and scholarly debates in citizenship studies and the regionalism literature in several ways. First, the paper contributes new empirically grounded data to the scholarship on the relationship between citizenship and regional organisations, a field which is still heavily dominated by research

on the EU citizenship regime (Strumia 2017; Vink 2017; Weinrich 2021). The existing body of work on EU citizenship is, however, of limited use for understanding the regional citizenship agenda of ECOWAS since the ECOWAS citizenship project was developed as a region-making, post-colonial project and consequently emerged under different circumstances. Thus, the empirical findings contribute to the growing body of literature which examines regional citizenship building beyond Europe (Auvachez 2009; Weinrich 2020; Cabrera & Byrne 2021) and show that these regimes are not merely mimics of the EU.

Second, the analysis of the perceptions of the regime is also relevant to studies on regionalism and contributes to debates on our understanding of regional integration and governance. Recent research has shown the significant impact of regional organisations' commissions and secretariats on the transformation of national governance (Gänzle *et al.* 2018). Unpacking the diverse institutional citizenship perceptions of the executive arm of ECOWAS speaks to studies of African regionalism and informal international relations (IIR), which examines the role and impact of bureaucrats (Tieku *et al.* 2020) and highlights their importance in (re)shaping national policies (Gänzle *et al.* 2018).

The paper continues with an outline of the conceptual framework. In this section, the paper briefly presents the relevant literature on citizenship and outlines each of the four dimensions of the citizenship regime concept. Thereafter, the method and data are introduced, followed by a section which presents the empirical findings. This section is divided into five sub-sections, each exploring the institutional perceptions of the citizenship regime of one of the five departments. Lastly, the paper summarises and discusses the empirical findings and concludes by indicating opportunities for further research.

#### THE CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP REGIME

Citizenship is a concept which denotes a status, rights and duties, access to participation in a community's political life, and a feeling of belonging (Obi 2012). In Western perceptions and contexts, citizenship historically derived from a relationship between certain privileged persons and the city-state. As such, citizenship entails being granted legal status (and protection) within a community that determines boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Such a community, established on shared norms, rules and regulations, is not static but subject to ongoing political and moral discussions and negotiations on who belongs to it and on what premises membership status is granted. Recent debates in citizenship studies have drawn particular attention to the locus of citizenship (Maas 2017; Weinrich 2021). Within this debate, regional citizenship adds a new conceptual and theoretical interpretation of the traditional understanding of citizenship.

The paper applies the concept of citizenship regime as the lens for analysing the divergent perceptions of the ECOWAS citizenship regimes within the organisation. The concept has guided previous research on national citizenship regimes (Vink 2017) and citizenship regimes developed within a political unit

beyond the nation-state (Auvachez 2009; Benhabib 2018), in particular in relation to studies of the EU citizenship regime (Meehan 1993; Wiener 1998; Jenson 2007). According to Jenson, a citizenship regime denotes ‘the institutional arrangements, rules, and understandings that guide and shape concurrent policy decisions and expenditures of states’ (2007: 55). Similarly, Vink (2017: 222) argues that citizenship regimes tell us ‘how political membership is regulated in different contexts, by states, as well as in sub-state and supra-national communities’. The institutional arrangements can be formal or informal, and consist of four constitutional dimensions: rights, access to participation, belonging and the responsibility mix (Jenson 2007; Auvachez 2009). Each of the four dimensions is mutable and can be modified and developed over time. Thus, the ECOWAS citizenship regime is subject to ongoing redefinition due to changing institutional norms, rules, regulations, and political will and capacities.

The rights dimension is often associated with the work of Thomas H. Marshall (1950) and his three-tiered citizenship theory, consisting of civil, political and social rights. This rights-based theory has shaped political and social thought in citizenship studies across different regions significantly, although predominantly in the context of research focusing on democratic countries in the West. According to the liberal theoretical theory, which spread during the 20th century as the dominant political theory and philosophy in Western, democratic societies (Kymlicka 1995), individualism and rights are core elements of citizenship. On the contrary, communitarian and republican theories often conceptualise rights as group-defined and context specific (Walzer 1990). Thus, the communitarian theory emphasises the importance of a collective and just society and values civil obligations over individual rights (Walzer 1990). This paper pays special attention to the three overall rights, civil, political and social rights (Meehan 1993; Wiener 1998; Jenson 2007). Civil rights primarily encompass the right to movement, residence and human rights. Political rights encompass the right to political procedures, association, assembly and participation. Finally, social rights refer to the right to social protection, health-care and education (Marshall 1950; Wiener 1998).

The second dimension, access, commonly takes two forms, a direct, constitutional form and an indirect, practice-based form. The first refers to having the constitutional right of access to participate in a community politically through, for example, voting. The second refers to indirect access to participation, obtained through engagement in political forums or civil society organisations (CSOs) (Wiener 1998). In a political community, norms, rules and regulations set the terms for how access to participation is granted. Whereas liberal theories commonly emphasise rights and legal status as the constitutive dimensions of citizenship, the republican tradition pays particular attention to access. Adherents of the republican tradition argue that citizens should be active participants in a community instead of passive recipients of rights that are granted based on a legal status. The semi-structured interviews explored both types of access as this dimension tells us how citizenship is practised in the ECOWAS

citizenship regime and how members of the ECOWAS Commission assess its levels of openness and inclusiveness.

Belonging denotes both a legal dimension, which is recognised by holding a passport or an ID card and a more dynamic dimension, referring to the feeling of mutual recognition among people within a community (Fourot *et al.* 2018). For the analysis, belonging is best described as an institutional, ‘top-down’ dimension forged by the organisation rather than by the citizens. Communitarian scholars argue that rights are a ‘tool’ for constructing a cohesive community, contrasting the liberal theory which claims that belonging is a feeling that develops from having a legal status and rights. Thus, this dimension is understood to be essential for community building in the communitarian tradition, since citizenship becomes meaningful through social interaction and the sense of community belonging it creates (Wiener 1998). The two different types of belonging are explored in the analysis of this paper, by investigating the policies and protocols and through the semi-structured interviews, which enable me to analyse how belonging is perceived by the five departments.

The responsibility mix refers to the responsibilities of institutional actors towards citizens. The establishment of new citizenship regimes has resulted in the emergence of multileveled governance structures in which citizenship-related responsibilities increasingly play a central role (Jenson 2007). The responsibility mix has two axes. The horizontal axis organises the actors involved in citizenship practices, such as state governments, regional organisations, NGOs and CSOs. The vertical axis links the different government scales, such as the local, national and regional levels (Auvachez 2009). The establishment of the ECOWAS’ community citizenship means that ECOWAS as well as non-state actors, third sectors and national governments have citizenship responsibilities.

#### METHOD AND DATA

The paper draws on primary research conducted in Abuja, Nigeria, where the headquarters of ECOWAS is. Data were gathered through the analysis of institutional documents and 27 semi-structured interviews, conducted during fieldwork between October and December 2019. The documents can be divided into two main groups. The first group consists of legally binding documents such as the ECOWAS Treaty and Revised Treaty, agreements, protocols, statutes, conventions and acts. The second group consists of legally non-binding documents such as action plans, statements, reports and declarations. The information obtained from the institutional documents provided an overview of and insight into the organisation’s legal framework and the official rules regulating the ECOWAS citizenship regime.

The semi-structured interviews supplemented the institutional documents and provided a more nuanced insight into the ways in which each of the five departments perceive the regime. The departments selected for the study were the Department of Trade, Custom and Free Movement, the Department

of Infrastructure, the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, the Department of Social Affairs and Gender, and the Department of Education, Science and Culture. The departments are part of the ECOWAS Commission, one of three governance bodies of ECOWAS. The rationale for focusing on departments of the Commission rather than the ECOWAS Parliament and the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice was that the Commission is responsible for the functioning of the community (Ukaigwe 2016). Therefore, rather than investigating how the legislative and judicial bodies perceive citizenship, the paper focuses on departments with mandates to develop the ECOWAS citizenship strategies and objectives.

Before the fieldwork, the relevant departments were identified according to their roles in the framing of the ECOWAS citizenship regime. The selected departments work specifically on developing the citizenship rights of ECOWAS citizens, such as the right to free movement, the right to reside and the right of access to healthcare in all member states. Moreover, these departments have identified specific milestones for the process of forging a regional ECOWAS identity. The five departments' different perceptions were analysed in two ways. First, guided by the conceptual framework, I analysed the institutional documents on citizenship rights, access to participation and the establishment of a regional sense of belonging. Moreover, I analysed the mandates of ECOWAS actors involved in creating the citizenship regime to gain an understanding of the regional responsibility mix. Second, I analysed the interviews with the aim to capture how perceptions of ECOWAS citizenship varied between the five different departments the respondents belonged to. The interviews were conducted with heads of divisions, heads of directorates, directors and programme officers from the five departments. Speaking with officials at different authority levels and with different responsibilities allowed me to study the official perceptions of the citizenship regime in the five departments rather than the personal views of the respondents. Moreover, a recent study shows that in the ECOWAS Commission, 'commissioners and staff are more inclined to adopt a departmental mind-set than an intergovernmental one' (Gänzle *et al.* 2018). Additionally, interviewees knew the objective of the research project and agreed to express opinions in their respective official capacities rather than as private individuals.

#### THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

After gaining independence from the British, the French and the Portuguese colonial powers, the leaders of the newly established nation states in the geographic region of West Africa initiated discussions on region-making as part of their broader post-colonial agenda (Fawole & Ukeje 2005; Obi 2012). The wish to improve regional collaboration resulted in negotiations led by the head of state of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon, and the Togolese head of state, General Eyadema (Ukaigwe 2016). After meetings with the 13 other leaders of West African states in July and August 1973, the general ideas and

structure of a regional economic community were established, and the ECOWAS Treaty was drafted. On 28 May 1975, the 15 leaders of West African countries founded the Economic Community of West African States.

One of the leaders' motives was to improve cooperation and development in the region. Thus, an early objective was to increase peace and security nationally and regionally, as colonial legacies and laws had led to civil wars and protests in part due to a lack of recognition of nationality and subsequent rights in the newly founded nation-states (Obi 2012). Subsequently, two protocols were signed, the 1978 Protocol on Non-aggression and the 1981 Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence (Ukaigwe 2016). Moreover, to realise the goals of increased regional development, cooperation, peace and security, the Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment was adopted in 1979.

Early on, the leaders of ECOWAS member states agreed that achieving the objectives of ECOWAS would necessitate the creation of a West African citizenry that would transcend the borders of nation states, that had been created arbitrarily by colonial powers. Considerations of regional citizenship were thus important early on. The 1975 ECOWAS Treaty initially alluded to the future citizenship regime and the 1979 Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment outlined the rights of the citizens of ECOWAS. The citizenship regime was eventually defined in greater detail in the 1982 Protocol Relating to the Definition of Community Citizen, which described what ECOWAS citizenship should entail. These provisions were ratified in the ECOWAS Treaty of 1993. In combination with other rules and regulations,<sup>1</sup> the ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993 firmly rooted the ECOWAS citizenship regime within the organisation's legal framework.

The following five sub-sections explore how the ECOWAS citizenship regime is understood beyond its legal definition in five departments of the ECOWAS Commission to illustrate that citizenship is understood in a variety of ways, which emphasise different aspects of citizenship by the departments that hold the mandate to develop it.

### *Citizenship as movement: the Department of Trade, Custom and Free Movement*

The Department of Trade, Custom and Free Movement consists of the Directorate of Trade, the Directorate of Customs, and the Directorate of Free Movement and Tourism. The department's primary objective is to develop, institutionalise and implement the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment (ECOWAS 1979), facilitate intra-regional trade, and to oversee regional customs laws. Thus, free movement is the guiding principle and concept for the department's work. In the 1979 Protocol, the status of 'ECOWAS citizens' is broadly defined as a 'a citizen of any [ECOWAS] Member State' (ECOWAS 1979). However, the interviews show that three specific perceptions are emphasised by the department.

First, the citizenship regime is built on the framing and ratification of the right of entry, residence and establishment (ECOWAS 1975, 1993). The

regime connotes these three rights, which are all associated with the right of movement. Thus, in defining the ECOWAS citizenship regime, the department emphasises the rights dimension, especially the civil right to free movement. During an interview with Dr Tony Elumelu, head of the division of Free Movement and Migration, he described the steps ECOWAS has taken towards institutionalising the rights of entry, residence and establishment in the region. He explained that in accordance with the 1979 Protocol, persons exercising the right of entry need to pass through approved entry points and carry a recognised travel document, such as a national ID card, the ECOWAS passport or a biometric card.

Second, and related to the first point, the citizenship regime connotes free movement without visa requirements. The abolition of visa requirements in the region was emphasised as one of the most significant achievements in putting the citizenship regime into practise. During the interview with Dr Elumelu, he explained that

The first action taken in establishing community citizenship was the abolition of visas. When you abolish visas, you emphasise the concept of citizenship. I believe, as do my colleagues, that you cannot create an ECOWAS community citizenship without abolishing visas because the concept of community citizenship grants you permission to enter the ECOWAS territory without any obstacles. (Elumelu 2019, Int.)

Third, the ECOWAS citizenship regime is inherently linked to the regional integration objective of the organisation. The citizenship regime is meant to foster the movement of persons, goods and capital in the region. Thus, during the interviews, several officers argued that the citizenship regime could foster greater regional integration, which is why movement is a central concept. The protocols on intra-regional trade and customs laws emphasised this objective, and in the conversation with Dr Elumelu, he highlighted that

Free movement and the Protocol on citizenship from 1982 were established in order to re-enact the relationships that were there before colonialism and to be able to reach regional integration, which is our main objective in ECOWAS. The protocols made official something that was already practised and felt by most people in the region. (Elumelu 2019, Int.)

The relationship between movement and citizenship is also evident in the protocol guiding the daily work of the department. The 1979 Protocol was one of the first to be ratified by ECOWAS, and any subsequent protocols were based on the premise that citizens of the community should be allowed to move freely within the region. These two concepts are thereby intertwined, which was emphasised by Aissata Yameogo, programme officer at the Directorate of Customs, who explained that

The establishment of the ECOWAS community citizenship regime made deeper regional integration possible among the West African states due to free movement. When we speak of the citizenship regime, we often talk about the right of movement.



There is no migration within our community, just movement. Migration is used to describe movement into and out of our community. Movement is a right of all citizens, and we see movement as the main part of our ECOWAS citizenship. (Yameogo 2019, Int.)

During an interview at the Directorate of Trade, Kolawole Sofola, principal programme officer at the Directorate of Trade, also emphasised this relationship. He explained that

For us, making the ECOWAS community citizenship and introducing free movement was the basic starting point for ensuring that people who are the same family on each side of the borders are allowed to continue living as normal in their local communities. The colonial borders were not representing real-life feelings. We have the same ideology, climate, culture and all, so we have so much in common, and we tried to facilitate this through free movement. (Sofola 2019, Int.)

The document analysis and the interviews at the three directorates illustrate that the ECOWAS citizenship regime is perceived as a concept which denotes free movement. Through the right to free movement, the status of 'ECOWAS citizen' also grants citizens other rights and benefits. For example, the officers emphasised that movement creates belonging, and with movement, people can access new opportunities within the regional community. Connecting the empirical observation on the perception of the citizenship regime with the conceptualisation of citizenship regimes more broadly, the department's perception of the citizenship regime connotes the right to movement. Thus, the department primarily conceptualised the ECOWAS citizenship regime as a civil rights regime, that created and fostered other dimensions such as belonging and access. This also means that regional citizenship responsibilities were perceived to rest primarily with institutions ensuring free movement, such as the Joint Border Posts.

#### *Citizenship as accessibility: the Department of Infrastructure*

The Department of Infrastructure consists of the Transport Division and the Air Transport Division. Similar to the Department of Trade, Custom and Free Movement, moving freely within the regional community was perceived as an essential part of the ECOWAS citizenship regime by the Department of Infrastructure. However, instead of focusing only on movement, the department emphasised access to movement and other citizenship rights as the primary dimensions characterising the ECOWAS citizenship regime. Due to their specific focus on infrastructure, such as air transportation, roads and border management, the officials argued that it is not enough to have the right of movement, but that this right needs to be accessible to all citizens for the ECOWAS citizenship regime. However, instead of emphasising accessibility in terms of direct and indirect access, obtained through voting or participation in CSOs, which is often how access is theorised in citizenship studies (Wiener 1998; Jenson 2007;

Auvachez 2009), they emphasised physical access as crucial for facilitating intra-regional movement and for people to realise their citizenship.

According to Weiner (1998: 25) referring to her study of European citizenship practices, access ‘provides information about the conditions for practising the relationship between citizens and the polity’. Therefore, access commonly refers to having direct or indirect access to the community and the rights granted. That said, during the interviews at the Department of Infrastructure, the officials emphasised that the citizenship regime especially implies physical access to the community, an aspect of access often overlooked or taken for granted in existing research. During an interview with Saidat Adeniran, programme officer of transport at the Transport Division, she explained the importance of physical access as part of the citizenship regime and the regional integration objective. She explained that

We work on making physical access across borders by car or by water easy and possible for all the ECOWAS people who move regionally. Accessibility, and especially physical access across the region is very important for our community citizenship to work. (Adeniran 2019, Int.)

ECOWAS citizens need a travel card to identify themselves as nationals of a member state and to move across national borders (Ukaigwe 2016). Besides using national passports as official travel documentation, ECOWAS established the ECOWAS Travel Certificate in 1985 (ECOWAS 1985). However, the availability of the certificate has been under scrutiny as it has proven difficult for the citizens of some member states to obtain the card. In working towards the abolition of obstacles to free movement in the region – in line with the department’s focus on accessibility to the citizenship regime – the ECOWAS Commission decided in 2014 to establish a new travel document, the ECOWAS Biometric ID Card. This card is currently being rolled out in the West African countries. In discussing access as a constitutive dimension of the ECOWAS citizenship regime, Dr Ganemto, project director at the Air Transport Division, explained that

The ECOWAS Commission is currently working on creating and implementing the ECOWAS Biometric ID card because the ECOWAS Passport is mainly used by the elites and people who travel by plane. There needs to be a document working for the whole population. The labour migrants or herders do not use passports – they do not even own one. Therefore, ECOWAS decided to establish the cheaper and easier accessible Biometric ID Card. (Ganemto 2019, Int.)

To improve access to the right to movement, the Department of Infrastructure works specifically on improving the mechanisms for crossing national borders. As emphasised by Adeniran, ‘the joint border post program facilitates people’s free movement. We call the border crossing zones a neutral zone or an ECOWAS zone’ (Adeniran 2019, Int.). Besides facilitating access to citizenship rights on the ground, the department also works on technology infrastructure programmes. The ECOWAS Vision 2020 and the move from an ‘ECOWAS

of state to an ECOWAS of people' (ECOWAS 2020b) resulted in the department's increasing focus on technological accessibility and the improvement of regional information and communication technology (ICT). Adeniran further explained: 'I believe that focusing on access to the community makes citizenship stronger as it creates an identity. We identify with the region because we can access it, physically and technologically' (Adeniran 2019, Int.).

The institutions working on facilitating access to citizenship rights, in particular, have responsibilities for developing the ECOWAS citizenship regime. While access was emphasised as the primary dimension of the creation of belonging, the officials at the department noted that the institutions working on border management hold crucial citizenship responsibilities. They also highlighted other ECOWAS departments working on improving access to the ECOWAS citizenship regime, such as the Department of Social Affairs and Gender, as important actors with regional citizenship responsibilities.

### *Citizenship as security and rights: the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security*

The Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security consists of the Directorate of Early Warning, the Directorate of Political Affairs and the Directorate of Peace-keeping and Regional Security. The department's primary objective is to develop and implement protocols on peacekeeping, regional security, democracy, good governance and human rights. During the interviews at the department, the officials emphasised that the citizenship regime should foster security in the region based on the equal rights of all citizens and help bridge the historical division between Francophone and Anglophone countries. According to Babatunde Afolabi, the former head of section of political affairs, 'after the civil wars of the 1970s, security and peace were vital to establish, and the citizenship regime was believed to foster greater security collaboration' (Afolabi 2019, Int.).

During the interviews at the department, the officials emphasised the new and growing responsibilities of the different community actors for protecting the ECOWAS citizenship rights. They particularly emphasised that the ECOWAS citizenship regime connotes equal rights and regional security. In an interview with Onyinye Onwuka, head of political affairs and international cooperation, she explained that free movement could be both an obstacle for ensuring security or a means to improve it, as free movement can have a positive effect on employment rates, which in turn positively affects stability.

Yet, a recent study has shown that mobility and trans-nationality play important roles in the increasing insecurity within the West African region (Twagiramungu *et al.* 2019). Onwuka explained that since the adaptation of the 1993 Treaty, the department has tried to address the increased insecurity in the region, which they view as an outcome of the intra-regional movement, by implementing new protocols and initiatives on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Onwuka emphasised that although the protocol on free

movement is often highlighted as essential to the citizenship regime, West Africa's people have always moved. ECOWAS 'simply organised a more formal regional movement with the protocol' (Onwuka 2019, Int.). She further emphasised that

When we gained independence, it was extremely important that we quickly learned how to work together, built security and peace in the region and in each country. The ECOWAS citizenship emerged as an economic post-colonial project, but it was founded on the idea to establish a secure region for all citizens. Rights and security were central to the concept from the very beginning. (Onwuka 2019, Int.)

With an increasing focus on democracy and the rule of law, especially after adopting the 1993 Treaty, the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (ECOWAS 2001) formalised a human rights discourse within the organisation. It expanded the rights of ECOWAS citizens to include freedom of association and the right to meet and to organise peaceful demonstrations, freedom of speech, and press freedom. Thus, political rights were added to the existing focus on civil rights in the regional citizenship framework.

The Department of Political Affairs Peace and Security emphasised the importance of one new institutional actor in particular, the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice. Although the court is a separate institution, its work intersects with the department due to the focus on human rights violations, the rule of law and the rights of ECOWAS citizens. Article 15 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty (1993) outlined the court's establishment and functions although the court's operationalisation had been established a few years prior in the Protocol Relating to the Community Court. The court became operational after the adoption of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in 2001 (ECOWAS 2001), which the Department of Political Affairs Peace and Security had developed. In 2005, the member states agreed to make it possible for individuals to access the court 'on application for relief for violation of their human rights' (ECOWAS 2005), thus establishing a 'rights community', which transcends the jurisdiction of every nation-state member.

During an interview at the department, Dr Brown Odigie, programme officer of mediation, reflected on the importance of the court and the rights and security aspect of the citizenship regime.

The development of the community court is an example of the work we do at the department on security, human rights and the rule of law. The community court has a big responsibility in securing rights for individuals. This makes citizenship more than a passport or an ID card and more than being able to move freely – it provides security for the citizens. (Odigie 2019, Int.)

The court is an ECOWAS institution that holds a responsibility towards regional citizens. Thus, the court is an actor within the regional responsibility mix that emerged together with the citizenship regime's formation and development. The Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security's emphasis on access to the rights community mirrors the understanding of accessibility advanced

by the Department of Infrastructure and shows that the different perceptions of the ECOWAS citizenship regime do not necessarily compete but often overlap.

*Citizenship as access to equal opportunities: the Department of Social Affairs and Gender*

The Department of Social Affairs and Gender consists of The Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs and the Directorate of the Gender Development Centre. Moreover, the department administers the Youth and Sports Development Centre and the Gender, Youth, Sports, CSO, Employment and Drug Control Centre. Two regulations in particular guide the department's work, the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Peace-Keeping and Security (ECOWAS 1999), and the Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region (ECOWAS 2015a).

The department officials argued that the citizenship regime primarily connotes equal opportunities for all citizens of the region. They emphasised that the citizenship regimes' primary objective is to grant equal rights, access to opportunities in the region, and to establish a sense of belonging. Moreover, they particularly emphasised the importance of having access to social rights. In their understanding, access means access to political life and access to the region's resources, facilitated by movement and made possible by a formalisation of belonging, an ECOWAS passport or ID card. During an interview with Abimbola Oyelohunnu, programme officer of labour migration, she emphasised that

ECOWAS citizenship is primarily about access to opportunities and participation. Access is important because regional integration is built by citizens having access to opportunities in the entire region, and therefore, we need to protect rights so that people can better access work or studies. Although rights and belonging are important, it is primarily built on the opportunity to access rights and services in the region. This also explains why free movement was introduced very early because, with free movement, you are better able to access opportunities. (Oyelohunnu 2019, Int.)

During the interview, Oyelohunnu referred to both the constitutional and the practice-based types of access when she discussed the ECOWAS citizenship regime as connoting equal access to opportunities. The constitutional type of access can be traced back to the adaptation of the 1994 Protocol Relating to the Community Parliament (ECOWAS 1994). However, Oyelohunnu mentioned that due to the department's objectives, access to equal opportunities could also be obtained through CSOs and the involvement of non-state actors.

Since its foundation, regional citizens can access the community and the political discussions through civil society participation, a notion that was emphasised in the ECOWAS Vision 2020. Article 81 of the Revised Treaty (ECOWAS 1993) states that the community 'shall co-operate with regional

non-governmental organisations and voluntary development organisations to encourage the involvement of the peoples of the region'. ECOWAS is the most advanced regional organisation in Africa when it comes to both the legal framing of access to participation and the de facto access to participation through CSOs and other non-state actors (Reinold 2019). The formal avenue for CSO participation is a priority of the Department of Social Affairs and Gender. ECOWAS invites CSOs to meetings on thematic issues where their expertise is needed, and the CSOs negotiate memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and present research at the ECOWAS Council of Ministers (Iheduru 2014). Moreover, working towards improving access to participation, ECOWAS established the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF) in 2003, 'as an interface between ECOWAS and CSO forums/thematic groups in the region' (ECOWAS 2020a).

Opening the ECOWAS consultation procedures to include collaboration with CSOs and NGOs is another example of the complex interconnection between the different institutional actors in the region and the developing responsibility mix. The increasing involvement of non-state actors and new ECOWAS institutions shows that the definition and implementation of citizenship-related policies are not thought of as the exclusive responsibility of the member state governments.

The perception of the ECOWAS citizenship regime as primarily connoting access to equal opportunities was also brought up by Bolanle Adetoun, director of the ECOWAS Gender Centre. She emphasised that

Equal opportunities and rights are important because we see that women crossing intra-regional borders are harassed a lot, and trafficking is still a big problem. Statelessness is another issue we are working on because some countries have gender discrimination in their nationality laws that can result in statelessness. We need to make sure every ECOWAS citizen can access the same opportunities, despite their gender or status. (Adetoun 2019, Int.)

To overcome statelessness and create a regional citizenship regime for all ECOWAS citizens, the organisation adopted the Abidjan Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness in 2015 (ECOWAS 2015b). This has resulted in changes to national citizenship laws in several West African countries, ensuring the right to a nationality, based on which the ECOWAS citizenship status is granted.

To improve equal opportunities in the region, the department has worked on regional social protection schemes. The most important document enshrining the right of ECOWAS workers to a degree of social security is the General Convention on Social Security (ECOWAS 2013). Although this Convention is a vital step towards recognising the importance of social security and allowing access to social rights, it only targets workers in the formal economy leaving behind some of the most vulnerable ECOWAS citizens.

*Citizenship as cohesion and belonging: the Department of Education, Science and Culture*

The Department of Education, Science and Culture consists of one directorate, the Directorate of Education, Culture, Science and Technology. During the analysis of the four other departments' documents and the data from the interviews, the dimension belonging was mainly emphasised as an element that derives from having regional rights and access. However, the protocols and regulations guiding the Department of Education, Science and Culture, and the interviewees from the department, emphasised belonging as the central constitutional dimension of the ECOWAS citizenship regime. For example, the department establishes regional education schemes and syllabi, cultural exchange programmes, and cross-national technology and science collaborations because it believes that belonging and social cohesion are fundamental aspects of the citizenship regime.

According to the department, belonging and social cohesion must be established before other regional integration initiatives – such as rights and access – can function. Their statements contradicted Neuvonen's (2019) argument that regional belonging is 'a product of, rather than a precondition for, socio-political membership' (Neuvonen 2019: 248). In her research on regional identity formation in ASEAN, Mercosur, and ECOWAS, Neuvonen analyses what comes first, 'a sense of regional belonging or access to socio-political membership' (2019: 248). The conversations with the different department officials show that this is indeed a contested topic at ECOWAS. During the interview with Dr Émile Zida, head of the cultural division, he noted that ECOWAS citizenship extends the mere notion of rights, and explained that

When we refer to ECOWAS citizenship, a passport or an ID card do not fully capture this concept. Instead, it is about accepting each other. If we want an ECOWAS citizenship regime that works for all, we need to recognise each other, not only legally, but a recognition of common values and history to make the citizenship being felt by the people. (Zida 2019 Int.)

Social cohesion, a concept emphasised both in the institutional documents and during the interviews, emerges when communities construct, institutionalise and negotiate citizenship together. Drawing on the conceptualisation of the Canadian citizenship regime, Jenson and Saint-Martin (2003: 78–9) argue that 'social cohesion is a characteristic of the social unit, and a macro-level concept refers to the overall state of social bonds within any society'. However, how to 'obtain' social cohesion and a sense of belonging in a community is a topic of ongoing discussion, a state that is mirrored by my empirical data. During the interview with Zida, he explained how the cultural division is working on four policy areas to foster regional cohesion and belonging. These were adopted in 2019 as part of the ECOWAS Vision 2020. The four areas are protecting and promoting regional diversity, promoting cultural and creative industries in ECOWAS, developing intellectual property and

developing education for culture and peace. Examples of cultural programmes under these four policy areas are the establishment of the West African Festival on Art and Culture and regional religious dialogues.

In the framework guiding the work at the department, belonging is understood both as formal and practice-based. The previously mentioned creation of the ECOWAS passport and the biometric ID card, which is currently being rolled out, created a formal recognition of belonging to the region. However, the official recognition of all Member State citizens as regional citizens also emphasised a feeling of belonging that many citizens already felt (Obi 2012). Thus, since the founding of ECOWAS, the organisation has put in place legal policies and institutional practices that emphasise a regional identity and are supposed to foster a greater formal identification with the region and the organisation to advance greater regional integration.

In the context of the discussion of social cohesion, belonging and citizenship, Professor Abdoulaye Issaka Maga, director of the Directorate of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, reflected on the creation of the ECOWAS Vision 2020 by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in 2007. He explained that ‘the vision was created to transform ECOWAS from being an organisation of states to a community of people’. The idea was ‘to make the ECOWAS Vision 2020 a people’s document and make both the region’s integration and development process people-centred and people-driven’ (ECOWAS 2020b). Thus, the vision illustrates the institutional turn to people-centred regionalism, which Professor Maga emphasised when discussing the departmental work on forging a regional citizenship regime.

In a way, ECOWAS focused on both aspects simultaneously, on the right of the citizens and on creating an identity. Although free movement might be easier when people feel connected, many of the aspects of the ECOWAS community citizenship are developed simultaneously. In our department, we focus on the identity aspect, and I think it is at the root of what makes citizenship work too, that people feel like they belong in a community that is not a colonial construct such as our countries. (Maga 2019, Int.)

#### DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The ECOWAS citizenship policies and the interviews conducted at five departments of the ECOWAS Commission show that the regime connotes movement, accessibility, security, rights, equal opportunities, social cohesion and a sense of belonging. Thus, the departments emphasise various dimensions that are not included in the legal definition of the ECOWAS citizenship regime (ECOWAS 1982). Two findings are of particular importance. First, movement is a central part of the ECOWAS citizenship regime, whether formulated in terms of a right, as a way to facilitate access or a way to establish a sense of regional belonging. The five departments highlight the importance of movement in creating the ECOWAS citizenship regime and for successfully fostering



deeper regional integration, a policy objective that has been central to ECOWAS since its foundation. The mobility of ECOWAS citizens is an underlying aspect of the regional citizenship regime, and regionalism in West Africa. However, despite a shared focus on free movement across all five departments, it became clear that movement is a contested aspect of the ECOWAS citizenship regime. During the interviews at the Department of Trade, Custom and Free Movement, the officers argued that to facilitate regional citizenship, all obstacles to movement within the region ought to be removed and highlighted the significance of the abolition of visas. Here, movement was highlighted as a positive feature of citizenship and regionalism.

During the interviews at the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, movement was considered with more scepticism. Due to the department's emphasis on regional security, movement was highlighted as important to the regional integration agenda, a fundamental part of the ECOWAS citizenship regime. Yet, it was also flagged as a potential challenge to regional security, because of its potential for fostering cross-border crime. A recent study supports the argument by the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, that intra-regional movement might lead to more challenges in terms of security (Twagiramungu *et al.* 2019).

During the interviews, movement was also discussed in relation to equal access, social cohesion and accessibility in the region. The argument by Yameogo at the Department of Trade, Custom and Free Movement that 'there is no migration within our community, just movement. Migration is used to describe movement into and out of our community ... and we see movement as the main part of our ECOWAS citizenship' (Yameogo 2019, Int.), shows that despite some scepticism, free movement is a constituent ideal of the citizenship regime that is thought to foster a regional community.

Second, the departments of the ECOWAS Commission responsible for formulating and developing the citizenship regime hold diverse institutional perceptions of the regime. The diverse perceptions are dependent on the departments' mandates and their daily work and thus shape the implementation of the legal definition (ECOWAS 1982). That different mandates shape the institutional perceptions of the citizenship regime may not be altogether surprising. However, the empirical analysis shows that the perceptions overlap rather than stand opposed to one another. Importantly, they exist in a dynamic relationship, influence each other, and create a complex and diverse regional citizenship regime.

The Marshallian perception of citizenship entails civil, political and social rights. This liberal, contract-based understanding, with an emphasis on rights, was reflected in the conversations at the Department of Trade, Custom and Free Movement and at the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. The rights dimension was under scrutiny by other departments, which argued that although rights are an essential aspect of being a regional citizen, ensuring access to rights remains a challenge for ECOWAS. The Department of Infrastructure and the Department of Social Affairs and

Gender both emphasised access as the core constitutional dimension. However, their institutional understanding of access varied. The Department of Infrastructure argued that ECOWAS citizenship connotes physical access to the region, including information access through information and communication technology (ICT). This type of access is primarily granted through protocols and policies, securing, for example, access to border crossings. Thus, the department added a new dimension to what has commonly been framed as direct access. This dimension could be called direct physical access, highlighting the importance of infrastructure development for direct access. This notion illustrates how perceptions of citizenship vary between the EU, where physical components of direct access have long been taken for granted, and ECOWAS, where this dimension remains a high priority concern.

The Department of Social Affairs and Gender also emphasised access and argued that the citizenship regime primarily implies equal access to opportunities in the region. Their emphasis on rights and the possibility of accessing the rights granted with the status ECOWAS citizen is an aspect of citizenship discussed by Marshall (1950). Although the Marshallian perception of citizenship is primarily a contract-based relationship defined by rights and duties, he problematised unequal access to social rights. This concern was also raised at ECOWAS, especially at the departments working on the right of marginalised groups, women and children.

The empirical findings also show a disparity regarding the understanding of belonging. Regional belonging, identity and social cohesion were all concepts mentioned as vital aspects of the ECOWAS citizenship regime. The dominant argument was that regional belonging is the product of other policies rather than being a way to increase integration and strengthen the citizenship regime. However, the Department of Education, Science and Culture contested this understanding and argued that belonging and social cohesion must be established before other regional integration elements, such as rights and access, can function. Whether belonging is understood as being a result of having regional rights and access, or a way to establish a functioning regional citizenship regime, the institutional emphasis on this dimension illustrates the turn to people-centred regionalism, further evident in the ECOWAS Vision 2020.

#### CONCLUSION

The paper has presented a new analysis of the ECOWAS citizenship regime by empirically investigating how five departments of the ECOWAS Commission perceive the ECOWAS citizenship regime. By drawing on the concept of citizenship regime as the conceptual framework, the paper has shown the diversity of and variation between the institutional understandings of citizenship. The analysis resulted in two main findings. First, movement is a central part of the ECOWAS citizenship regime, whether formulated in terms of a right, as a means to facilitate access, or a way to establish a sense of regional belonging. Second, the departments of the ECOWAS Commission responsible for

formulating and developing the citizenship regime have diverse institutional understandings of citizenship. The diverse perceptions are dependent on the departments' mandates and their daily work and thus shape the practical application of the legal definition.

The empirical analysis shows that the institutional perceptions of the ECOWAS citizenship regime are rooted in notions of rights, especially the civil right to movement and residence, in notions of access to citizenship rights, equal opportunities, physical accessibility, and in a specific institutional sense of belonging. The findings have implications for current scholarly and policy debates in West African regionalism and citizenship studies and show a gap between the legal definition of ECOWAS citizenship and the institutional perceptions of the departments responsible for implementing it. The variation in the perception of the regime is significant for regional governance and the integration agenda of ECOWAS.

Citizenship has always been a complex and contested concept in West African history, both nationally and regionally (Manby 2009; Obi 2012). Unpacking the institutional perceptions helps us understand the regime's divergent nature. Moreover, understanding these perceptions and how they vary provides new, empirically informed knowledge of how regional organisations build citizenship, which speaks to current debates in citizenship studies (Weinrich 2020; Cabrera and Byrne 2021). Additionally, the institutional perceptions affect what aspects of the regime are developed. This has two main implications. First, it impacts national governance and policies, which the recent changes to nationality laws in some West African countries illustrate. Second, it allows us to categorise the regime and to contrast it with other citizenship regime types, such as the rights-based citizenship regime of the EU (Jenson 2007) or the informal and identity-based regime of ASEAN (Weinrich 2020; Cabrera and Byrne 2021).

The paper has presented novel, empirical data on the institutional perceptions of five departments of the ECOWAS Commission. It has focused on the actors which formulate and develop the regional citizenship regime. To gain an understanding of how the citizenship regime is implemented and practiced, and the challenges faced by ECOWAS, future research would benefit from including the perspectives of national ECOWAS offices, national authorities of the member states, border agents and the ECOWAS citizens who cross intra-regional boundaries daily. Importantly, only such future research would be able to show how the various ideal goals of citizenship development pursued by the departments work in practice and whether they are successful at enhancing citizenship in ECOWAS. As such, this study is an important stepping-stone which provides a thorough investigation of the complexity of the ECOWAS citizenship regime. In doing so, it has unpacked the legal definition of the ECOWAS citizenship regime and has illustrated the multiplicity of the concept through an empirically grounded analysis.

COMPETING INTERESTS. The author declares none.

## NOTE

1. The ECOWAS citizenship regime is, besides the Protocols of 1979 and 1982, and the 1975 and 1993 Treaties, also included in sections of the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Governance, the 1991 Protocol of the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice and the 1994 Protocol of ECOWAS Parliament (ECOWAS 1991, 1994).

## REFERENCES

- Auvachez, É. 2009. 'Supranational citizenship building and the United Nations: is the UN engaged in a "citizenization" process?', *Global Governance* 15, 1: 43–66. doi: 10.1163/19426720-01501004.
- Benhabib, S. 2018. 'Towards global political communities and new citizenship regimes', *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation* 2018, 1. doi: 10.12893/gjpci.2018.1.1.
- Bisong, A. 2019. 'Trans-regional institutional cooperation as multilevel governance: ECOWAS migration policy and the EU', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, 8: 1294–309. doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1441607.
- Brown, M. 1989. 'Nigeria and the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement and Residence', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 27, 2: 251–73. doi: 10.1017/S0022278X0000471.
- Cabrera, L. & C. Byrne. 2021. 'Comparing organisational and alternative regional citizenships: the case of 'Entrepreneurial regional citizenship' in ASEAN', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 75, 5: 507–26.
- ECOWAS. 1975. *Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <<https://www.refworld.org/docid/49217f4c2.html>>, accessed 22 November 2020.
- ECOWAS. 1979. *Protocol Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <<https://www.refworld.org/docid/492187502.html>>, accessed 22 November 2020.
- ECOWAS. 1982. *Protocol Relating to the Definition of Community Citizens*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <[http://documentation.ecowas.int/download/en/legal\\_documents/protocols/Protocol%20Relating%20to%20the%20Definition%20of%20Community%20Citizen.pdf](http://documentation.ecowas.int/download/en/legal_documents/protocols/Protocol%20Relating%20to%20the%20Definition%20of%20Community%20Citizen.pdf)>, accessed 9 November 2020.
- ECOWAS. 1985. *Decision A/DEC.2/7/85*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <<http://ecotipa.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/56-A-DEC-2-7-85-OF-THE-AUTHORITY-OF-HEADS-OF-STATES-AND-GOVERNMENT.pdf>>, accessed 20 November 2020.
- ECOWAS. 1991. *Protocol Relating to the Community Court of Justice*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <<http://prod.courtecowas.org/>>, accessed 8 November 2020.
- ECOWAS. 1993. *Economic Community of West African States: Revised Treaty*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <<https://www.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Revised-treaty.pdf>>, accessed 19 September 2020.
- ECOWAS. 1994. *Protocol Relating to the Community Parliament*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <<https://documentation.ecowas.int/legal-documents/protocols/>>, accessed 23 November 2020.
- ECOWAS. 1999. *Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Peace-Keeping and Security*. <<https://documentation.ecowas.int/legal-documents/protocols/>>, accessed 11 January 2021.
- ECOWAS. 2001. *Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance: Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <[http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/350\\_ECOWAS%20Protocol%20on%20Democracy%20and%20Good%20Governance.pdf](http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/350_ECOWAS%20Protocol%20on%20Democracy%20and%20Good%20Governance.pdf)>, accessed 18 September 2020.
- ECOWAS. 2005. *Supplementary Protocol A/SP.1/01/05*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <[http://prod.courtecowas.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Supplementary\\_Protocol\\_ASP.10105\\_ENG.pdf](http://prod.courtecowas.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Supplementary_Protocol_ASP.10105_ENG.pdf)>, accessed 3 November 2020.
- ECOWAS. 2013. *ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security: Supplementary Act*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <[https://www.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Social\\_Security.pdf](https://www.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Social_Security.pdf)>, accessed 21 November 2020.
- ECOWAS. 2015a. *The Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region*. <<https://www.ccdg.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/Supplementary-Act-on-Gender-Equality.pdf>>, accessed 11 January 2021.
- ECOWAS. 2015b. *Abidjan Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness*. <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/54536.pdf>>, accessed 11 January 2021.
- ECOWAS. 2020a. *Gender, Youth, Sports, CSO, Employment and Drug Control*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <[http://www.comm.ecowas.int/departments/social-affairs-gender-2/directorate-of-gender-youth-sports-cso-employment-and-drug-control/#\\_Toc412624651](http://www.comm.ecowas.int/departments/social-affairs-gender-2/directorate-of-gender-youth-sports-cso-employment-and-drug-control/#_Toc412624651)>, accessed 21 November 2020.

- ECOWAS. 2020b. Vision 2020. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission. <<https://www.ecowas.int/about-ecowas/vision-2020/>>, accessed 18 November 2020.
- Fawole, W.A. & C. Ukeje. 2005. *The Crisis of the States and Regionalism in West Africa: Identity, Citizenship and Conflict*. Senegal: CODESRIA.
- Fourot, A.C., M. Paquet & N. Nagels 2018. *Citizenship as a Regime: Canadian and International Perspectives*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 60–82.
- Gänzle, S., J. Trondal, & N.S.B. Kühn. 2018. "Not so different after all": governance and behavioral dynamics in the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)', *Journal of International Organization Studies* 9, 1: 81–98.
- Iheduru, O.C. 2011. 'The 'New' ECOWAS: Implications for the Study of Regional Integration', in T. M. Shaw, J.A. Grant & S. Cornelissen, eds. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Regionalisms*. London: Routledge, 129–44.
- Iheduru, O. 2014. 'Civil society and regional integration in West Africa: partners, legitimizers, and counter-hegemonic actors', in L. Fioramonti, ed. *Civil Society and World Regions. How Citizens are Reshaping Regional Governance in Times of Crisis*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 137–60.
- Jenson, J. 2007. 'The European Union's citizenship regime: creating norms and building practices', *Comparative European Politics* 5, 53–69. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.cep.6110102.
- Jenson, J. & D. Saint-Martin. 2003. 'New routes to social cohesion? Citizenship and the social investment state', *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 28, 1: 77–99.
- Kymlicka, W. 1995. *Multicultural Citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lavenex, S. 2019. 'Regional migration governance – building block of global initiatives?', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, 8: 1275–93. doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1441606.
- Maas, W. 2017. 'Multilevel citizenship', in A. Shachar, R. Bauböck, I. Bloemraad & M. Vink, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 644–68.
- Manby, B. 2009. *Struggles for Citizenship in Africa*. London: Zed Books.
- Marshall, T.H. 1950. *Citizenship and Social Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meehan, E. 1993. *Citizenship and the European Community*. London: Sage.
- Mengisteab, K. & R. Bereketeab. 2012. *Regional Integration, Identity and Citizenship in the Greater Horn of Africa*. Woodbridge: James Currey.
- Neuonen, P.J. 2019. 'Transforming membership? Citizenship, identity and the problem of belonging in regional integration organisations', *European Journal of International Law* 30, 1: 229–55. doi: 10.1093/ejil/chz007.
- Nwankwo, C.M. 2014. 'Legitimation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): a normative and institutional inquiry.' PhD dissertation. <<http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/9387/1/FulltextThesis.pdf>>, accessed 12 November 2020.
- Obi, C.I. 2012. 'The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the quest for community citizenship: any lessons for the Greater Horn Region?', in K. Mengisteab & R. Bereketeab, eds. *Regional Integration, Identity and Citizenship in the Greater Horn of Africa*. Woodbridge: James Currey, 237–54.
- Okom, M.P. & J.A. Dada. 2012. 'ECOWAS citizenship: a critical review', *American Journal of Social Issues & Humanities* 2, 3: 100–16.
- Reinold, T. 2019. 'Civil society participation in regional integration in Africa: a comparative analysis of ECOWAS, SADC, and the EAC', *South African Journal of International Affairs* 26, 1: 53–71. doi: 10.1080/10220461.2019.1595127.
- Strumia, F. 2017. 'Supranational citizenship', in A. Shachar, R. Bauböck, I. Bloemraad & M. Vink, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 669–93.
- Tieku, T., S. Gänzle & J. Trondal. 2020. 'People who run African affairs: staffing and recruitment in the African Union Commission', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 58, 3: 461–81.
- Twagiramungu, N., A. Duursma, M. Berhe & A. De Waal. 2019. 'Re-describing transnational conflict in Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 57, 3: 377–91. doi: 10.1017/S0022278X19000107.
- Ukaigwe, J. 2016. *ECOWAS Law*. London: Springer.
- Vink, M. 2017. 'Comparing citizenship regimes', in A. Shachar, R. Bauböck, I. Bloemraad & M. Vink, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 221–46.
- Walzer, M. 1990. 'The Communitarian critique of Liberalism', *Political Theory* 18, 1: 6–23.
- Weinrich, A. 2020. 'The emerging regional citizenship regime of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations', *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 40, 2: 201–23.
- Weinrich, A. 2021. 'Varieties of citizenship in regional organisations: a cross-regional comparison of rights, access, and belonging', *International Area Studies Review* 24, 4: 255–73.
- Wiener, A. 1998. *European Citizenship Practice: Building Institutions of a Non-State*. Oxford: Westview Press.

*Interviews*

- Participant 1, Aissata Yameogo, Programme Officer, Directorate of Customs, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 1.11.2019.
- Participant 2, Dr Tony Elumelu, Head of Division of Free Movement and Migration, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 6.11.2019.
- Participant 3, Kolawole Sofola, Principal Programme Officer, Directorate of Trade, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 6.12.2019.
- Participant 4, Saidat Adeniran, Programme Officer of Transport, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 8.11.2019.
- Participant 5, Dr Paul-Antoine M. Ganemtoire, Project Director at the Air Transport Division, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 4.11.2019.
- Participant 6, Babatunde Afolabi, Former Political Affairs Officer and Head of Section, Directorate of Political Affairs, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 25.10.2019.
- Participant 7, Onyinye Onwuka, Head of Political Affairs and International Cooperation Division, Directorate of Political Affairs, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 12.12.2019.
- Participant 8, Dr Brown Odigie, Programme Officer of Mediation, Directorate of Political Affairs, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 30.10.2019.
- Participant 9, Abimbola Oyelohunnu, Programme Officer of Labour Migration, Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 8.11.2019.
- Participant 10, Bolanle Adetoun, Director of ECOWAS Gender Centre, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 2.12.2019.
- Participant 11, Dr Émile Zida, Head of Division of Culture, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 6.12.2019.
- Participant 12, Professor Abdoulaye Issaka Maga, Director of the Directorate of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, 6.12.2019.