In this second CERTIZENS Newsletter, we begin with brief reflections from two of the project’s Principal Investigators, Tarangini Sriraman and Nils Palsson. The newsletter also highlights recent developments and collaborative work within the CERTIZENS project. The first journal article features in this newsletter is by Tarangini Sriraman from the London School of Economics. It focuses on exploring the evolving relationship between ordinary people and the Denkyira stool or king; or, by extension, the more general question of how people in Ghana grapple with narratives of identity, citizenship, and belonging in a specific context.

Sriraman’s ethnographic studies of certification bureaucracies in Uganda, to a study of differentiated citizens in urban and rural spaces, along borderlands and among economic and social groups. These trace the history of identification documents in India, with a special focus on how this has limited African experiences with naturalization laws and their implementation. The article demonstrates the importance of understanding the historical and political context of identity and citizenship in different regions and how these processes have varied significantly across time and space.

The second journal article is by Nils Palsson and a co-author. It analyzes the impact of digital ID frameworks on marginalized groups in Uganda, focusing on key ‘global’ policies, strategies, and programmes related to certification. It reflects on the unequal global development relations that have influenced the implementation of these frameworks. The article discusses the travelling policy model approach that has shaped the implementation of ID systems in different countries and highlights the need for attention to political economy and individual country contexts. It also considers the role of UN organisations, such as UNICEF and UNDP, in encouraging the implementation of such frameworks in different countries.

The article examines the push to encourage the development of ID4D frameworks and the push to use ID systems for various purposes, including for claiming pensions. It raises questions about the simplicity and straightforwardness of these frameworks and the challenges they face in different contexts. The article also considers the role of the Global Partnership for Relevant ID (GPRID) in promoting the use of ID4D and the push to improve ID systems globally.

Furthermore, the article highlights the dual citizenship and the political economy of belonging, specifically in relation to Africa. It discusses efforts by states to reach groups who are particularly excluded from citizenship and the recognition of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.9 (legal identity for all children). The article suggests a news report or feature for the next newsletter, inviting readers to contact the CERTIZENS team at certizens@teol.ku.dk.

The newsletter concludes with the Launch of International Identity Day, a day to celebrate the importance of identity and the role of digital ID systems. The newsletter encourages readers to get involved in this special day and to share their thoughts and experiences on the topic.

If you know someone who would enjoy this newsletter, please forward it on to them. The CERTIZENS newsletter is published regularly, providing updates on the project’s progress, recent developments, and collaborative work. Visit the CERTIZENS website for more information on the project and its activities.