

PHOTO: UNHCR/Håkan Clauss

Welcome to Issue 9 of the CERTIZENS Newsletter

We are delighted to have resumed publishing the CERTIZENS Newsletter and to share it with you before the year draws to a close. Unforeseen circumstances this spring prevented the planned summer and autumn editions. Nonetheless, CERTIZENS has been very busy over the year with many positive activities, collectively and individually. The team itself has expanded to include five new fully-funded MPhil students for one year, two in Ghana, three in Uganda, plus two additional smaller grant-holders to be introduced in the next Newsletter.

In terms of research activities, we ran an exciting two-session panel at the European African Studies Conference (ECAS) in Cologne in June where almost all main CERTIZENS researchers presented papers. We've hosted a CERTIZENS PhD guest researcher, and arranged several seminars and workshops in Copenhagen including international guests. The CERTIZENS Ghana team recently organized a research retreat in Ghana, while the CERTIZENS Uganda team is at the forefront of planning a CERTIZENS East Africa Regional Workshop in Kampala in mid-January on *Changing ID Systems in East Africa: Histories, Policies and Practices and the Reshaping of States and Citizens*. This is the first of its kind to focus on such a topic.

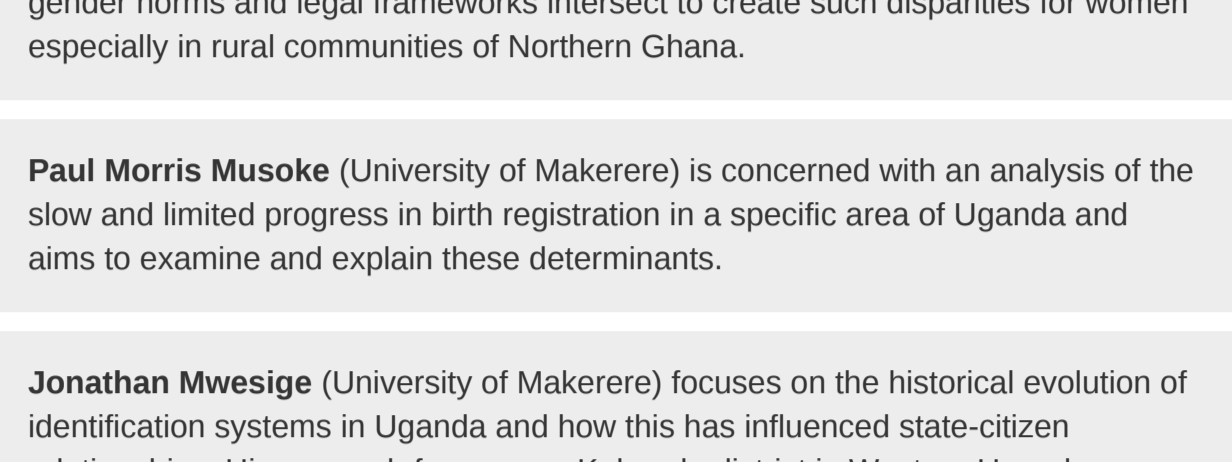
In the meantime, globally and especially on the African continent, dynamic shifts and expansions within the realm of ID systems, processes and politics continue at a mixed pace and with uneven results, not least in relation to the evolving digitalisation of such systems. Examples of these developments and their effects can be found in the selection of media reports below. Additionally, we share some of the recent academic literature and reports that are on our current radar screen.

We continue to be committed to working within this crucial arena, in which so much is at stake for so many. And we are truly excited by the range of scholars, activists, policy makers and practitioners with whom we are proud to make up this important and growing community. These are all times when working openly and generously and in solidarity towards just systems in all senses, is of the utmost importance.

Wishing you all a peaceful holiday period,

Amanda Hammar, CERTIZENS Project Leader
Copenhagen, December 2023

CERTIZENS Updates



CERTIZENS welcomes new MPhil students from Ghana and Uganda

We welcome **five new members of the CERTIZENS research team**. These are MPhil students from the University of Makerere and University of Ghana respectively, who have been awarded scholarship to support them in the final year of their research and thesis writing.

These are their focus areas:

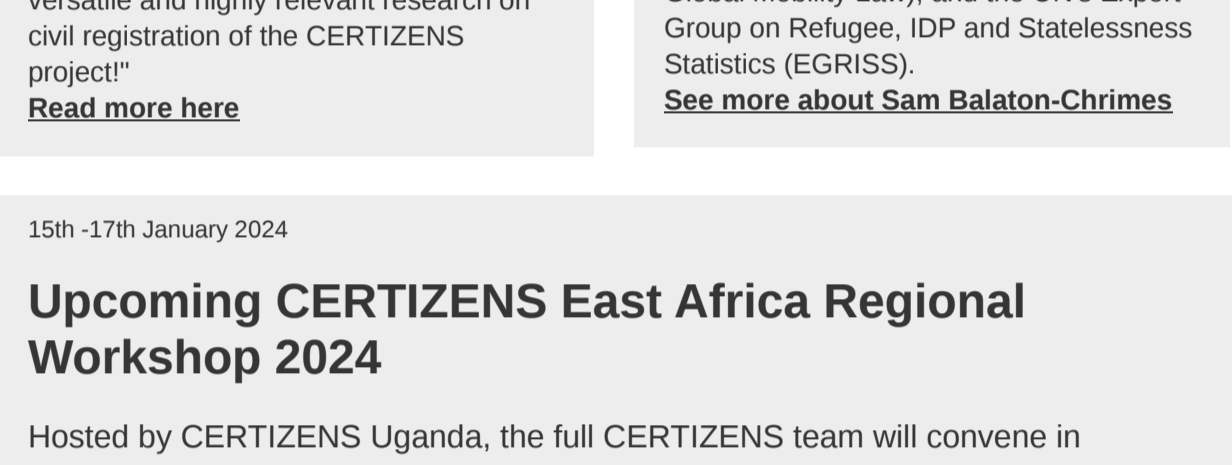
Ramatu Issah (University of Ghana) focuses on the relationship between citizenship and marginalization. Her research explores the contrasting experiences of Zabarmas and Fulanis in obtaining identification cards in Ghana, examining their respective perceptions of identity, nationality, citizenship, and belonging. The empirical research within Juapong in the Volta region aims to uncover disparities in citizenship access and marginalization.

Rafiatu Abdul Rauf (University of Ghana) explores gender disparities in citizenship certification and rights in Northern Ghana. Her study analyses how gender norms and legal frameworks intersect to create such disparities for women especially in rural communities of Northern Ghana.

Paul Morris Musoke (University of Makerere) is concerned with an analysis of the slow and limited progress in birth registration in a specific area of Uganda and aims to examine and explain these determinants.

Jonathan Mvesige (University of Makerere) focuses on the historical evolution of identification systems in Uganda and how this has influenced state-citizen relationships. His research focuses on Kabarole district in Western Uganda.

Nageeba Hassan Tegulwa (University of Makerere) is focusing on Uganda's refugee policy. Her study is anchored in examining the nexus between refugees' identification and personal security in the digital era, with the aim of working towards creating peaceful communities. It focuses on a case of Somali refugees in Kisenyi, a suburb of Kampala.



From left to right: Agnes Daw Agbonyi (PhD), City Cabrina (MPhil), Ramatu Issah (MPhil) and Rafiatu Abdul Rauf (MPhil). Back row left to right: Prof. Essumun Johnson, Dr. Kojo Opoku Aidoo (CERTIZENS Coordinator, Ghana), Prof. Samuel Nwusu (Director of the Institute of African Studies), Prof. Kpessah Whyte, Prof. Kofi Annan, Charles Donkor (MPhil) and Isaac Oseiwa Nsoah (PhD).

CERTIZENS Ghana on Retreat in Aburi

Away from the distractions of metropolitan surroundings, CERTIZENS Ghana facilitated a three-days retreat in Aburi, Ghana. Country Project Coordinator, Dr. Kojo Opoku Aidoo, organized the gathering with the central focus on 'Expanding the Frontiers of Knowledge'. During the retreat, presentations made by senior scholars reflected on the evolution of the CERTIZENS project, as well as stimulating an intensive exchange about prospects and concrete challenges of the PhD path. All PhD and MPhil candidates presented either on their findings to date, or their proposals, and received comprehensive feedback from their supervisors and peers.

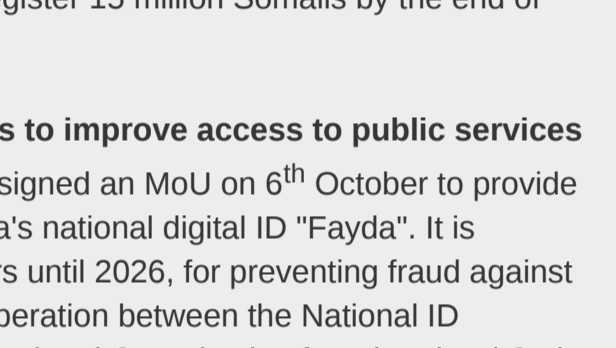
The retreat served not only as an accelerator for successful dissertation completion, but also encouraged social networking between candidates and supervisors. In addition, the senior participants took the chance to share personal stories from their own PhD journeys, which provided extra motivation for students to continue despite challenges. Each day of the two-day training ended with refreshing walks along the green slopes of the Aburi mountain.



Visiting PhD Researcher
Leonie Jegen at CERTIZENS Copenhagen
Doctoral researcher Leonie Jegen from the University of Amsterdam's Institute for Social Science Research reflects on her visiting stay with CERTIZENS at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Copenhagen.

"My research stay at the CERTIZENS Project in Copenhagen from October to November 2023 was very fruitful and inspiring. During my stay I engaged with a community of scholars based in Denmark, Ghana, Uganda, and Australia, and attended seminars and workshop on issues related to citizen registration on the African continent. I had the chance to present my paper draft on symbolic modernism in EU funded reform of the Senegalese civil registration system at the African Council.

I am leaving the university with new ideas, insights and a lot of useful feedback for my paper. I am looking forward to follow the versatile and highly relevant research on civil registration of the CERTIZENS project".
[Read more here](#)



Seminar with Dr Samantha Balaton-Chrimes
CERTIZENS Copenhagen recently welcomed Dr. Sam Balaton-Chrimes (Deakin University, Melbourne) to present from her forthcoming publication on 'Statelessness, Ethnicity and Registration in Kenya' in a small seminar.

Grounded in research into minority ethnic group citizenship rights in Kenya since 2009, she explored her ideas on the differences and entanglements between individual/legal and group-based/political rights in relation to citizenship policies and practices, and the risks and opportunities within each. She also unfolded the generative conceptual lens of 'cultivated vagueness' that marks the role of ethnic identity in registration and citizenship in Kenya, which she argues, requires our close attention. The seminar included presentations by CERTIZENS researchers, Take Mdelup Wolff and Amanda Maini. We were joined by colleagues from the Faculty of Law's MOBILE Centre (Centre of Excellence for Global Mobility Law), and the UN's Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Stateless Statistics (EGRIS).
[See more about Sam Balaton-Chrimes](#)

Upcoming CERTIZENS East Africa Regional Workshop 2024

Hosted by CERTIZENS Uganda, the full CERTIZENS team will convene in Kampala in mid-January, together with a range of both junior and senior scholars whose work is focused mainly on the East Africa region, for a workshop on *Changing ID Systems in East Africa: Histories, Policies and Practices and the Reshaping of States and Citizens*. Keynote speakers include Dr Samantha Balaton-Chrimes (Deakin University, Australia) and Professor Keith Breckenridge (University of Witwatersrand, South Africa). This event provides a rare opportunity to bring together researchers from different parts of the continent and further afield, to highlight and engage with emerging research on diverse aspects of identification, certification and registration systems and experiences, and their implications for citizenship, primarily within the East Africa region. It's hoped that an edited publication will result.

In the News

Here we present a selection of CERTIZENS-relevant items in the press. To suggest a news report or feature for the next newsletter, please email: certizens@teol.ku.dk

Somalia has launched its new biometric identity card system
Thirty years after the collapse of citizen registry in the 1990s, the launch of a new ID system is celebrated as a significant milestone. A multi-million dollar grant and technical support by Pakistan has enabled the development of the new system. The Somali government envisions to register 15 million Somalis by the end of 2026. [\(Biometric Update\)](#)

Ethiopia plans on digital ID for refugees to improve access to public services
UNHCR and the Government of Ethiopia signed an MoU on 6th October to provide refugees and returnees access to Ethiopia's national digital ID "Fayda". It is planned to issue 90,000 digital ID numbers until 2026, for preventing fraud against public services. [\(Biometric Update\)](#) A cooperation between the National ID Program of Ethiopia (NIDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has enabled thousands of returning Ethiopians to access re-integration services, according to an IOM press release in November. [\(Biometric Update\)](#)

Uganda NIRA and Police confiscate national ID cards from money lenders
National ID cards are being used to secure loans from money lenders and get claimed as lost afterwards. Concerned with the misuse of ID documents, attention to this illegal practice has prompted a police operation in collaboration with the National Identification Registration Authority. [\(The Independent UG\)](#)

Nigeria launches digital CRVS platform for birth and death certificates funded with public-private partnership
The government's aim is to reduce costs and physical visits to civil registration centres, but also to increase the rate of birth and death registration. The platform was developed through a PPP by the Nigerian digital services and biometric software company Banksforte Technologies Limited. [\(Biometric Update\)](#)

Zimbabwe's Population Registry System (ZPRS) will be updated to include online services by end of year
This includes online application for ID cards, passports and birth registration. It is planned to directly link the database to several government departments, including hospitals to enable the instant registration of births and deaths. Special measures are planned for rural areas like registration through local chiefs via iPads. [\(Sunday Mail\)](#)

And more...
Cameroon starts campaign to issue 500,000 birth certificates for children without a foundational identity document. [\(Biometric Update\)](#), 29 Aug 2023
Ghana begins second phase of registration for Ghana card in 276 district offices. [Ghanaian Times](#), 5 Sep 2023
Kenya delays launch of new digital ID due to 'circumstances beyond the government's control'. [\(Biometric Update\)](#), 2 Oct 2023
Digital Government Africa Summit 2023 in Lusaka with government delegations from all over Africa and private technology providers. [\(Biometric Update\)](#), 4 Oct 2023
Botswana considers using national ID cards for cross-border travel to Zimbabwe. [News Ghana](#), 5 Oct 2023
Liberia launches plans for biometric residence permits from next year on, but national press questions contractor. [\(Biometric Update\)](#), 16 Oct 2023
Kenyan High Court blocks a government proposal to increase fees for several ID documents. [\(Biometric Update\)](#), 13 Nov 2023
Over-voting claims and other irregularities in three Nigerian State elections despite two-factor biometric authentication system in place. [\(Biometric Update\)](#), 14 Nov 2023

What We're Reading

This section presents a selection of recent journal articles, books, reports and blogs on CERTIZENS-relevant themes. To suggest an item for the next newsletter please send a link to the work and a brief description of its relevance to: certizens@teol.ku.dk

Journal articles

Dilemmas of 'biometric nationality': migration control, biometric ID technology and political mobilisation of migrants in West Africa
Victor Chidubem Iwuoha, Martin Doevenspeck
Thirdity: Politics, Governance, Vol.11, May 2023

In brief: The concept of migration instrumentalization describes the strategic use of mobility or immobility for political or other purposes, often by the state. This article analyses the use of biometric ID technology to enable the political mobilization of migrants for election purposes. The authors show how the instrumentalization of biometric ID technology undermines the legitimacy of the state. They explore how migrants' efforts and demands for political belonging, specifically through 'biometric nationality' (e.g. biometric registration for banks without full citizenship) is entangled with manipulations by political elites. The qualitative study draws on interviews with long- and short-term migrants in Nigeria originating from Niger, Chad, Benin, Cameroon, Togo.

Investigating the Role of Identity Documents in Refugees' Access to Education in South Africa
Elvis Muryoka
Southern African Journal of Policy and Development Vol. 7(1), June 2023

In brief: The article argues that refugees encounter difficulties in accessing education in South Africa when they lack identity documents. It is based on desk research and reviews recent studies and literature. The analysis reveals that refugees face challenges in enrolling in educational institutions without identity documents. This situation has significant consequences for their future access to employment and livelihood opportunities and is against the South African Constitution.

Dreaming biometrics in Niger: The security techniques of migration control in West Africa
Alizée Dauchy
Security Dialogue Vol. 54(3), April 2023

In brief: This article analyses the implementation of biometrics under the EU Trust Fund by international agencies (Interpol, the International Organization for Migration, UNHCR) and national actors in Niger for migration control and is based on in-depth interviews, observation and anthropology of aid studies. The author concludes that biometric technologies are more than an instrument for Nigerian authorities to better identify Nigeriens or foreigners who are crossing borders. While heterogeneous actors share a dream about biometrics, the study shows that in practice biometrics helps international actors to produce their own security knowledge in Niger and thereby enhance the capacity to trace ECOWAS citizens and reinforce the EU border regime.

Books

Biometric Turn and the Quest of Public Interest. Assessing the National Identification Policy in Cameroon
Alphonse Bernard Amougou Mbarga, Raoul Tamekou Tsowa
Chapter in *Public Policy and Technological Transformations in Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan 2023

In brief: This chapter explores the 'biometric turn' as symbol of progress and modernity in Cameroon and at its center, the national ID card. It analyses institutional, social, political, and administrative tensions that biometric techniques induce in the national identification process of Cameroon, including digitalization and provides a historical analysis. The authors argue that the question of biometric identification goes beyond state control. Biometric identification technology is more than a policy instrument that serves state interests. The ID card itself as a material device of identification influences persistent debates on legitimacy of state and citizen and influences a sense of belonging.

Silicon Savannah or Digitising Marginalisation? A Reflection of Kenya's Government Digitisation Policies, Strategies, and Projects
Job Mwaura
Chapter in *International Rights in Africa*, Routledge 2023

In brief: Kenya's government has implemented several digitalization projects in the last years. This chapter analyses the effect of those initiatives on pastoralist communities and explores how it has extended their marginalization. The author argues that the digital strategy documents of Kenya's government have the potential to further marginalize pastoralist groups which have experienced problems in acquiring a national ID card in the past. The research is based on interviews with members of pastoralist communities and policy analysis.

Reports and Analysis

Mapping the Supply of Surveillance Technologies to Africa: Case Studies from Nigeria, Ghana, Morocco, Malawi, and Zambia
Tony Roberts (editor)
Institute of Development Studies Brighton, September 2023

In brief: This research report analyses which companies from which countries are supplying surveillance technology to African governments. The report documents the digitalization and algorithmic automation of state surveillance in Zambia, Malawi, Morocco, Ghana and Nigeria. The qualitative analysis is based on a range of open-source data types, e.g. open government data sets, export license portals, procurement notices, media coverage. The authors analyse biometric identification as one out of five surveillance technologies. The report is concerned with state surveillance that is unlawful or violates protected human rights.

UNPD Model Governance Framework for Digital Legal Identity System
(early access version)
UNPD and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023

In brief: This UN framework intends to support partner governments and civil society groups to ensure that the efforts in digitalisation of legal identity are grounded on a robust protection of human rights, personal data and privacy. UNPD advocates for rights based, inclusive digital identity systems. The framework's seven pillars are specified in corresponding "anchor questions" and "rights implications" and extend from non-discrimination over data-protection to questions of user value and access to information concerns.

The report is discussed from several perspectives in [LiveCast EP45 by ID4Africa](#), [for all Radio](#).

UNPD Guide Drafting Data Protection Legislation: A Study of Regional Frameworks
UNPD and Centre for Communication Governance, National Law University, Delhi 2023

In brief: This report aims to support UN Member States develop domestic data protection legislation and create a robust privacy-protecting regulatory framework. It focusses a state perspective on data-protection for legal identity systems (e.g. birth and death registration) and personal data processing. The structure of the guide follows elements that are covered in a typical data protection legal framework, which have been identified based on a comparative analysis of various regional data protection frameworks (e.g. APEC, ASEAN, AU, EU, CARICOM, Organization of American State Principles, OECD). It covers data protection principles, individuals' rights over their own data, and special protections for children's data and cross-border flows of data.

What We're Listening To

This section presents a selection of recent podcasts and audio material on CERTIZENS-relevant themes. To suggest an item for the next newsletter please send a link to the work and a brief description of its relevance to: certizens@teol.ku.dk

IDINA: community-generated identity – ID16.9
This podcast explores ways to generate identity systems in the most remote or most neglected communities of the world. A group of academics at IN-ASTEC and the University of Minho, Portugal, have developed the idea of "non-authoritative digital ID systems", whereby the proof of identity is not provided by a government or an official institution, but created and issued by the community itself. Host Frank Hersey and project leader António Sousa discuss its potential in strengthening the legal position of individuals and for a transmission into authoritative ID systems.

Unblock My ID. Unblock My Life – Lawyers for Human Rights
This new podcast series tells the personal stories of people whose lives have been impacted by the growing issue of blocked IDs in South Africa and the complexity behind it. ID blocking is a practice of South African authorities claiming duplication, fraud and illegal possession of IDs. It is produced by a South African human rights NGO which is currently representing over 100 people with blocked ID in a lawsuit against the South African Department of Home Affairs.

Conversations Across State Lines: Kaduna State's Digital ID Journey – Inclusion-for-all Radio
This Nigerian podcast is the first of a series of conversations aiming to shed light on the exclusion of poor Nigerians across the different states of Nigeria to foster state-to-state learning. This episode is an interview with Zayyad Tsiga, the Executive Secretary of the Kaduna State Residents Identity Management Agency (KADRIMA) and narrates the digital ID process of Kaduna State. He shares insights on his experience with digital transformation and the impact which digital IDs are having.

Upcoming

To suggest an entry for the next newsletter's Upcoming section, please send details of the conference, seminar or other relevant event to: certizens@teol.ku.dk

ID4Africa Annual General Meeting (AGM)
May and June 2024
The event (in Cape Town (South Africa) combines a conference (21-24 May), Exposition (21-23 May) and Live casts (5 and 12 June) under the theme "Digital Identity as DPI: Fostering Trust, Inclusion & Adoption". The conference and expo are expected to attract over 2,000 attendees from over 90 countries (over 50 African countries).
Registration opens in January

Resources and Opportunities

We encourage you to submit announcements of relevant opportunities for the next CERTIZENS newsletter, including conference calls, calls for journal articles or book chapters, job openings, researching funding, or other opportunities. Please email: certizens@teol.ku.dk

Post-Doc position at ERC project 'Citizen Gap – Legal Identity for All?' at University of Amsterdam
Application Deadline: 22 December 2023

The project combines a cross-national comparative approach, but Mexico and India are selected case study countries. The project uses a multi-method approach: combining quantitative demographic and spatial (GIS) datasets with fieldwork, archival sources, interviews and focus groups and is led by Dr. Imke Harbers. The position is funded for two years.

Do you know someone who would enjoy this newsletter? Please forward it on