



PHOTO: UNHCR/Hélène Caux

### Welcome to Issue 6 of the CERTIZENS Newsletter

Our sixth CERTIZENS Newsletter combines a familiar mix of gems. It includes brief but enlightening research updates from two of the CERTIZENS PhD researchers, as well as the usual highlighting of current news items, recently-published journal articles, books and reports and other kinds of public, openly accessible events and resources to fuel further thinking and debate.

Particularly notable in the present newsletter are strong resonances across the different featured elements, related to the serious dangers associated with the increasingly rapid and expanding uptake of digitised ID systems across the globe. This is evident especially across Africa within various national and sector-specific spaces. Here, different sources – some of which are featured in this newsletter – are providing well-documented evidence of threats to and actual effects on aspects of privacy, physical security, access and exclusion to services and to IDs, as well denial of rights to citizenship itself. In spite of this growing body of evidence, there continues to be surprisingly unreflective promotion of digital identification ‘solutions’ to the immense challenges highlighted by SDG 16.9 of the effects of lack of access to legal identity for over a billion ‘citizens’ worldwide. However, the newsletter also includes a few more optimistic discussions on the positive progress anticipated and/or achieved to date in terms of increased access to legal identity in Africa and elsewhere.

There’s always much to consider within this crucial field. Why not consider engaging with some of the core questions on 16th September, which marks International Identity Day.

**Amanda Hammar**, CERTIZENS Project Leader  
Copenhagen, September 2022

## CERTIZENS Updates



### FIELD NOTES FROM TWO CERTIZENS RESEARCHERS

**Agnes Doe Agbanyo** (University of Ghana) and **Martin Buhamizo** (Makerere University, Kampala) share their reflections from undertaking research on ID systems in Ghana and Uganda.

#### Certifying Citizens at the Ghana-Togo Border

By Agnes Doe Agbanyo

Recent global policy discourses espoused by bodies such as the World Bank claim that country-specific growth is unattainable without a uniform, centralized system of citizen identification. Consequently, digital and biometric identification technology has been extensively embraced and hailed as the solution to the so-called ‘identity gap’, especially in Africa. Nevertheless, digitization rarely addresses fundamental problems of citizenship and state formation. Often, universal biometric identity technologies depoliticize questions of state authority and control, as well as overwriting multiple systems of citizen identification which may already exist within a country.

My research examines how Ghanaians are identified, registered, and certified as citizens in the districts of Ketu South and Ketu North, located on the Ghana-Togo border. I am looking specifically at two newly introduced national identification documents: the Voter Identity Card and the Ghana Card. The Ghana-Togo borderlands are fascinating empirical sites for my topic because they raise important questions about the effectiveness of these new systems. Little is known about the processes and protocols involved in the roll-out of these two ID documents, as well as the experiences of people attempting to acquire them. My study looks at the day-to-day working practices of state officials as part of processes of state-building and the construction of legal citizens, including the ways in which social ties mediate the power of the state in the establishment of legally recognized citizens.

My fieldwork has yielded a number of insightful discoveries. Disputes during the application procedure for identification documents are widespread and result in the exclusion of some individuals from the rights and privileges attached to the Ghana Card and Voter Identity Card. For instance, a number of individuals who reside in Togo were supposedly accused of being aliens during the registration process. Some of these instances were decided by a court of law, resulting in the denial of citizenship. There are also allegations that political party agents have subjected ‘alien’ registrants to physical assaults and other forms of intimidation that have prevented them from being recognized as citizens.

Currently, the registration pressure has subsided, and purported on-site assaults, contestations, and intimidation are nonexistent, allowing individuals to register without incidents. However, there are some emerging bureaucratic obstacles, such as the shortage of supplies to print identification cards. In the interim, those who supposedly ‘pay something’ to officials are more likely to receive their Ghana Card. The irregularity and selective negotiability of citizenship in the hands of government officials underscores the significance of certification in the complex processes of state-making and citizen-making.

#### Understanding citizen certification and electronic IDs in Uganda

By Martin Buhamizo

My PhD project investigates the bureaucratic processes and practices involved in Uganda’s national identification systems, especially in their digitised forms, and how they impact nation-building, state-making and citizen-making. There has been a shift from paper-based identification to electronic identity cards in recent years, with profound impacts on how Ugandans interact with the state, including some worrying trends of exclusion among certain groups. I’m interested in understanding how and why the digitisation policy framework came into being, as well as its multi-layered effects on Ugandans who are included or excluded to varying extents in the system.

Through my preliminary research, the requirements of the new electronic ID cards are raising several issues of interest. For example, tracing of individuals’ origins raises questions related to ethnic identification, which exposes vulnerabilities of non-recognition of citizens of certain ethnicities within the Uganda Constitution, such as the Maragoli and Banyarwandans. Another insight is that new forms of categorisation of populations have uneven effects in relation to national resource planning and public service delivery.

I’ve also noted that registration of citizens currently is not strongly enforced, and that some Ugandans are hesitant to get registered. There are several apparent reasons for this. The initial introduction of the new ID system in 2015 occurred one year prior to the general elections, and the call for registration of citizens was perceived as having a politically motivated agenda. Some citizens did not support the National Resistance Movement (NRM) – the government in power – and coupled with limited public sensitization, did not register for a national identity card. Another relates to those reluctant to become more visible due to possible ‘illicit’ activities and wanting to remain under the radar.

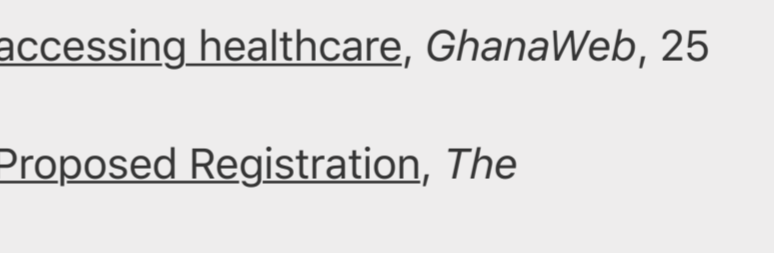
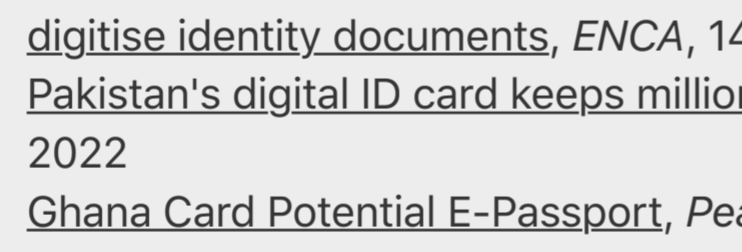
### Student Assistant job on the CERTIZENS project

The CERTIZENS project is seeking a part-time student assistant to support our dynamic and international research team. The role involves a range of responsibilities including the creation and management of research communications outputs, administration, and ad hoc research support tasks. The assistant would be expected to work an average of 10 hours per week. Applicants should be a student based in Denmark or close enough to travel on a regular basis to work at the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen.

The preferred starting date for the position is 1 October 2022 and the deadline for applications is **midnight 13 September 2022**.

[Read more about the role and how to apply here.](#)

## CERTIZENS AFRICA



**CERTIZENS Africa podcast**

Episode 1: Professor Amanda Hammar: Introducing CERTIZENS

Episode 2: Dr Bronwen Manby: Identification in Africa

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## In the News

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

**Ghana introduces fee for biometric SIM registration**  
A new self-service mobile app for SIM registration aims to fast-track the registration of about 26 million SIM cards, but concerns have been raised by Ghanaians – including data security issues and the alleged illegality of the surcharge for using the app. [Biometric Update reports](#).

**Citizenship by descent not allowed in Uganda**  
The Ugandan government is facing a lawsuit for failing to recognise citizenship by descent in the registration for national ID cards. [says Chimp Reports](#).

**UN expects over 300 million to get legal identity by 2025**  
According to a UN official speaking to [Biometric Update](#), 350 million of the one billion currently without legal identity globally will be able to prove who they are in the next three years. The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.9 aims for legal identity for all by 2030.

**And more...**  
[Ghana card to be the only card used for accessing healthcare](#), [GhanaWeb](#), 25 August 2022

[Taxi Operators in Kampala Divided Over Proposed Registration](#), [The Independent](#), 22 August 2022

[Video: South African Home Affairs Dept to recruit 10,000 unemployed youth to digitise identity documents](#), [ENCA](#), 14 August 2022

[Pakistan’s digital ID card keeps millions locked out](#), [Thomson Reuters](#), 25 July 2022

[Ghana Card Potential E-Passport](#), [Peace FM Online](#), 15 June 2022

## 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](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk)

## Journal articles

**Damian Eke et al., Niger’s Digital Identification (ID) Management Program: Ethical, Legal and Socio-Cultural concerns**  
*Journal of Responsible Technology* Vol 11 (2022)

**In brief:** This paper examines Niger’s attempt to build a national ID management database for its over 100 million residents. The article highlights that there are privacy, security, human rights, ethics and socio-cultural implications associated with the design and scaling of such a system at a national level. Through a mixed method approach, this paper identifies some of these concerns and categorises which ones Nigerians are most worried about, and offers recommendations on enhancing privacy, security and trustworthiness of the digital infrastructure for identity management in Nigeria.

**Pádraic Kerrigan and Amber Cushing, ‘Our story with the state’: Birth certificates, data structures and gay and lesbian families**  
*Sexualities* Vol 0 (2022)

**In brief:** Birth certificate data is central to providing complete and accurate information on demographics, particularly as it relates to families. Often, however, these forms of data collection are very much hetero-centric, re-embedding normative conceptualizations of identity, particularly as it relates to sex, gender and sexuality. This article explores the significance of the birth certificate for LGBTQ+ Irish families, particularly in light of the varying inequalities that emerge from the data gaps they create for both parent and child.

**Kalathimika Natarajan, The privilege of the Indian passport (1947-1967): Caste, class, and the afterlives of indentured labourers in Indian diplomacy**  
*Modern Asian Studies*, Research article (2022)

**In brief:** This article examines the postcolonial Indian state’s 20-year-long discretionary passports policy until 1967, often in collaboration with the British government in its efforts to limit growing numbers of Indian immigrants. While a vast scholarship has shown the racialized limits to mobility perpetuated by the passport and visa system against ‘coloured immigrants’, this article considers the Indian state’s own restrictions over the emigration of a particular category of its ‘undesirable’ citizens.

## Books

**License to Travel: A Cultural History of the Passport**  
Patrick Bixby, US: University of California Press 2022

**In brief:** *License to Travel* exposes the passport as both an instrument of personal freedom and a tool of government surveillance powerful enough to define our very humanity. Patrick Bixby examines the passports of artists and intellectuals, ancient messengers and modern migrants to reveal how these seemingly humble documents implicate us in larger narratives about identity, mobility, citizenship, and state authority.

**Everyday State and Democracy in Africa**  
Edited by Wale Adebani, US: Ohio University Press 2022

**In brief:** This volume examines contemporary citizens’ everyday encounters with the state and democratic processes in Africa. The contributions reveal the intricate and complex ways in which quotidian activities and experiences – from getting an identification card (genuine or fake) to sourcing black-market commodities to dealing with unreliable waste collection – both (re)produce and (re)constitute the state and democracy. This approach from below lends gravity to the mundane and recognizes the value of conceiving state governance now in terms of its stated promises and aspirations but rather in accordance with how people experience it.

**Identifying with Nationality: Europeans, Ottomans, and Egyptians in Alexandria**  
Will Hanley, New York: Columbia University Press 2017

**In brief:** In *Identifying with Nationality*, Will Hanley uses the Mediterranean city of Alexandria to develop a genealogy of the nation and the formation of the modern national subject. Alexandria in 1880 was an immigrant boomtown ruled by dozens of overlapping regimes. On its streets and in its police stations and courtyards, people were identified by name, occupation, place of origin, sect, physical description, and other attributes. Yet by 1914, nationality had become the defining category of identification. *Identifying with Nationality* traces the advent of modern citizenship, where ordinary people abandoned old identifiers and grasped nationality as the best means to access the protections promised by expanding states.

## Reports and Analysis

An important report by **NYU School of Law** – *Paving a Digital Road to Hell?* – investigates the role of the World Bank and other global actors in promoting digital IDs.

A [policy note](#) by the World Bank Group to ensure the implementation of a national ID programme in Lesotho and how to insure such systems are ‘people-centred’.

A report by **Privacy International** and the **Centre for Internet and Society (India)**, *Surveillance Enabling Identity Systems in Africa: Tracing the Fingerprints of Aadhaar*, identifies the external influences and actors playing a part in biometric ID programmes in developing countries.

## 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](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk)

**International Identity Day**  
**16 September 2022**  
Awareness-raising day highlighting the importance of legal identity for all. The campaign was initiated by ID4Africa in 2018 and the choice of the date is in recognition of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.9 (legal identity for all including birth registration by 2030). [Read about the campaign here.](#)

**Turing Trustworthy Digital Identity International Conference**  
**16 September 2022, London, UK**  
Conference on the challenges of implementing in-country trustworthy digital ID systems. The hybrid event will bring together academics and key players in the field of digital identity from government and industry sectors. Applications to attend have now closed but you can [read about the conference here.](#)

**4<sup>th</sup> Privacy Symposium Africa**  
**2-4 November 2022, Online and in Nairobi, Kenya**  
The Privacy Symposium Africa (PSA) is a Pan African Privacy and Data Protection platform established in 2019 by the NGO Unwanted Witness to discuss research and the latest technological developments related to personal data protection and privacy. The event gathers the business community, ICT experts, academics, lawyers, regulators, policymakers, and civil society for three days of keynote addresses, panels, masterclasses, and networking. [You can register to attend here.](#)

## 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, research funding, or other opportunities. Please email: [certizens@teol.ku.dk](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk)

**Podcast: ID16.9**  
This podcast examines progress towards the realisation of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 16.9 of providing legal identity for all people, including birth registration, by 2030. The first series covers death registration, open-source civil registration systems, and the role of private sector interests in ID schemes. [Listen here.](#)

**Call for participation: Research Sprint on Digital Identity in Times of Crisis**  
The Berkman Klein Center at Harvard University (BKCC) in collaboration with metalAB and the Edgeland Institute invites graduate students and early career professionals to collaborate with an interdisciplinary team on the ethical, human rights, and societal impacts of digital identity in times of crisis. [See the full call for participation here.](#) **Deadline to apply is 17:00 EST, Monday 5 September.**

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



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