

CERTIZENS Newsletter

Certifications of Citizenship in Africa



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Welcome to Issue 2 of the CERTIZENS Newsletter

Keeping our Eye on Identification and IDs

In this second CERTIZENS Newsletter, we begin with brief reflections from two of our CERTIZENS researchers – Dr Kojo Opoku Aidoo and PhD candidate Amanda Wendel Malm – based on their brief preliminary fieldwork. We continue with selected media reports that have caught our eye, such as one addressing the politics of recognition and passport-related struggles among long-term Banyarwanda residents in Uganda. Another tells of the anticipated phasing out of the unique contributor ID number of Ghana's Social Security and National Insurance Trust, used for claiming pensions among other things, soon to be replaced by the Ghana card as the only form of valid identification. We wonder what will happen in the unclear transition period and what price will be paid by whom in the government's drive towards 'improved efficiency'. By contrast, another report reveals the dire effects for ordinary Zimbabweans of extreme resource constraints and inefficiencies in the delivery of national IDs. At the same time, we read elsewhere about the recent un-transparent awarding by the Zimbabwe government of a highly lucrative contract for the production of e-passports, national identity cards and birth certificates, to an infamously bribe-linked Belgian company.

We're constantly inspired (and sometimes overwhelmed) by the growing number of academic articles and books addressing aspects of our collective research interests in CERTIZENS. Below we mention two recent journal articles related to different dimensions of citizenship in Ghana – one by *Kofi Takyi Asante*, dealing with the relationship between social belonging, national attachment and civic engagement; and the other, by *Mary B Setrana*, looking at indigeneity and citizenship rights for second-generation Fulani herders. A third article, by *Bronwen Manby*, examines the limits of African experiences with naturalization laws and their implementation. Related to such themes, we flag an important new book by *Robtel Neajai Pailey* on dual citizenship and the political economy of belonging, specifically in relation to Liberia, and also make mention of a deep study by *Tarangini Sriraman* on the long history of identification documents in India, with a special focus on how this has affected those in the urban margins.

Additionally, we highlight several sobering reports on some of the failings and direct dangers – including state surveillance, exclusion and even retribution – resulting from the often idealised or over-optimistic promotion and adoption of digital ID or biometric systems in different parts of the continent and beyond. Among the most haunting of these – given the immediacy and scale of the crisis in Afghanistan – is a compelling report in the *MIT Technology Review* about the possible implications of the defeated Afghan government's extensive biometric population database falling into the hands of the new Taliban authorities. This sharply underscores some among the many pressing ethical concerns with digital identification systems that events such as the forthcoming *Turing Trustworthy Digital Identity Conference* on 13 September (noted below) are likely to address, and which are dealt with in a *Stanford Cyber Policy Centre* seminar on the 'Risks and Rewards' of digital identity systems, recorded in June this year and linked to at the bottom of this newsletter.

As ever, we welcome contributions to subsequent CERTIZENS quarterly newsletters and encourage you to contact us at certizens@teol.ku.dk with your suggestions for relevant articles, books, events and opportunities.

Amanda Hammar, CERTIZENS Project Leader
Copenhagen, September 2021

CERTIZENS Updates



FIELD NOTES

[Kojo Opoku Aidoo](#) (University of Ghana) and [Amanda Wendel Malm](#) (University of Copenhagen)

CERTIZENS Africa comprises eight research projects from researchers based in Copenhagen, Kampala and Accra – from studying how 'global' ID policies travel, to several in-depth case studies in both Ghana and Uganda. These trace different contexts and modes of both formal and 'lived citizenship' among differentiated citizens in urban and rural spaces, along borderlands and among nomadic pastoralists; from looking at the digitisation of ID management and ethnographic studies of certification bureaucracies in Uganda, to a study of the historical forms of citizen classification, certification, registration and identification in both Ghana and Uganda. Below we hear preliminary reflections from two CERTIZENS team members currently undertaking research in the field.

KOJO OPOKU AIDOO

Recognising Denkyira belonging in Ghana

One of the key aspects of CERTIZENS is to historicize colonial and post-colonial regimes of national registration, certification and identification, in order to trace the roots of related contemporary systems, policies and practices. In this regard, my project focuses on the meanings of (local as opposed to national) citizenship and practices of identification over time within two Akan chiefdoms. With recent preliminary fieldwork in Jukwa, Denkyira, in central Ghana, I have begun with exploring the evolving relationship between ordinary people and the Denkyira chiefdom, in terms of the forms of authorization of belonging and identification that have made or unmade local forms of citizenship.

Key to both formal and informal identification is *recognition* – both recognition by a given authority (in this case, Akan chiefs, as well as clan leaders, heads of families and so on), and being able to *be* recognized by certain positions, practices, performances or discursive or corporeal signs. In relation to these two dimensions in Denkyira, there are clear if shifting hierarchies of authority across time, alongside various social constructions of recognizable forms of belonging or entitlement to belong. So for example, for an individual to be recognized as 'Denkyira', historically and similarly in the present, this may be related to one or a combination of the following identifiable aspects: having a certain Denkyira name in your lineage; bearing specific Denkyira facial markings or bodily tattoos; being openly professed to be Denkyira by a parent or openly professing oneself; declaring allegiance and swearing an oath to the Denkyira stool or king; or, by association, having offered some form of military service on the side of Denkyira.

As anywhere else – whether a formal, so-called 'modern' system citizenship, or more locally, culturally and informally defined versions – there have long been socially constructed, and contested, systems of citizen classification, certification and identification within Denkyira communities. These in turn have generated – and continue to generate – their own localized forms of social contract. What remains interesting to continue investigating further is how these more historically grounded, culturally but also social, economically and politically informed local Denkyira systems, articulate with contemporary national systems of citizen classification, certification and identification, and what effects these have for whom.



AMANDA WENDEL MALM

Tracing origins and destinations of travelling identification policy models

My PhD project is focused on the mobility of so-called 'global' policies related to citizen certification, registration, and identification, and how these policies are locally adopted and adapted (or not) by national certification regimes in African settings – specifically in Ghana and Uganda.

As with many other major global concerns, highly uneven patterns of citizenship and access to certification and identification have received increasing policy attention from major multilateral organisations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. This has resulted in a UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 16.9) that addresses the importance of legal identity documents for all. This has been followed by the establishment of the UN Legal Identity Agenda, and other related strategies developed by UN organisations such as UNICEF and UNDP. It is within this context that the World Bank developed its global ID4D (Identity for Development) programme, as a strategic intervention into the problematic question of legal identities, with a particular focus on digital identification systems.

However, neither the development of the ID4D framework, nor the push to encourage its implementation in different countries, are simple or straightforward processes. Of particular interest for my project are the variations in the forms and/or extent to which individual African countries have adopted the principles, or agreed to work explicitly with the ID4D institutional framework. With respect to the CERTIZENS partner countries, for example, while the programme is actively present in Uganda, this is not the case in Ghana. Nonetheless, the government in Ghana is working actively to create a national registration and identification system. This raises interesting questions about the underlying reasons for – and implications of – divergent policy decisions related to ID4D and/or alternatives in different African countries.

Analytically, my project will explore the unspoken 'universalising' assumptions embedded in ID4D and in relevant organisations' principles, policies, programmes and conditionalities shaping the certification-identification sector. This is often done without sufficient consideration of the specific histories and empirical realities of individual country contexts. It also requires attention to political economy and the persistent dynamics of older authority structures and imposed agendas within unequal global development relations. The travelling policy model approach that I use in my research is well suited to such an investigation. It will enable me not only to look at key 'global' policies, strategies and programmes related to certification and identification at their apparent point of origin, but also at what happens to them when they travel, 'arrive' at and articulate with their diverse destinations.

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

Banyarwanda community calls for formal recognition in Uganda
[News Editor reports](#) on the ongoing fight for formal state recognition by Uganda's Banyarwanda minority. The community claims the government's immigration offices have denied them access to passports and have now brought their case to the High Court. An article in *Spy Uganda* follows a recent attempt by the Principal Immigration Officer to get a prominent Banyarwandan representative [barred from court](#).

Ghana's new national ID card used for pension scheme
Graphic reports on the roll out of the Ghana Card in the country's national pension scheme, the latest development in the initiative to create a uniform identification system for Ghanaian citizens. Close to 15 million people have received Ghana Cards so far.

Zimbabwean citizens face severe delays for ID documents
Queues of thousands of people formed outside registry offices in Harare this June, due to a network failure which stalled the issuing of ID documents for weeks. Read the report from New Zimbabwe [here](#).

Vulnerable Ugandans excluded from emergency Covid-19 relief
Ugandans are facing exclusion from emergency relief during a Covid-19 lockdown, due to cash payments being made via the national biometrics-based digital ID system. A third of the population, including vulnerable adults, are prevented from registering in the system. [Read more on why here](#).

And more...
[Zimbabwe awards passport production contract to bribes-linked Belgian firm](#), *Zim Live*, 16 August 2021
[Ghana to become first country to use contactless biometrics in national vaccination program](#), *Biometric Update*, 19 July 2021
[Ghana Card to function as full biometric passport under government plan](#), *Biometric Update*, 15 July 2021
[Migrants, refugees will face digital fortress in post-pandemic EU](#), *Al Jazeera*, 31 May 2021

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

Kofi Takyi Asante, *Citizens or Spectators? Civic Engagement and Informality of Citizenship in Ghana*
Contemporary Journal of African Studies Vol 7 (2020)

In brief: This paper reflects on patterns of social belonging and civic engagement using data from the nationally representative Afrobarometer survey, newspaper sources, and in-depth interviews. The paper offers an analysis of Ghanaian 'attached-detachment' – a sense that Ghanaians have both a strong sense of social belonging and national attachment, while also shying away from formal engagement with the state.

Mary B. Setrana, *Citizenship, Indigeneity, and the Experiences of 1.5- and Second-Generation Fulani Herders in Ghana*
Africa Spectrum Vol 56 (2021)

In brief: This article explores issues of indignity and citizenship rights for second-generation pastoralist migrants across West African States, specifically Fulani herders in the Shai-Osu-Doku and Agogo traditional areas of Ghana. The article captures the crises of citizenship facing descendants of Fulani herders and families, particularly in relation to their integration into local host communities.

Bronwen Manby, *Naturalization in African states: its past and potential future*
Citizenship Studies Vol 25 (2021)

In brief: This article considers the African experience of citizenship by naturalization, a phenomenon which is rare in all countries in the continent. It sets out the comparative law on naturalization and the limited information that exists on the implementation of these rules in practice. The article argues that amendments to the rules of naturalization are mainly performative and attempts by states to reach groups who are particularly excluded from citizenship are rare.

Books

Development, (Dual) Citizenship and Its Discontents in Africa: The Political Economy of Belonging to Liberia, Robtel Neajai Pailey, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2021

In brief: Does dual citizenship reproduce inequalities? Robtel Neajai Pailey grapples with this question and more in this monograph, drawing on life histories from over 200 interviews in West Africa, Europe, and North America, to examine socio-economic change in Liberia. An in-depth case study on citizenship construction and practice in Africa's first black republic.

In Pursuit of Proof: A History of Identification Documents in India, Tarangini Sriraman, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018

In brief: How did the ration card, which went by different names such as the food card, the household consumer card, and more recently, the food security card, crystallize into proof of residence in India? After the Partition, how did the Indian state classify refugees as poor, displaced, and lower caste? Might there be alternative conceptualizations of the period corresponding to what has been regarded as both the malignant 'Licence Raj' and the 'Inspector Raj'? Sriraman's book addresses these questions and more through ethnographic and archival research with a focus on the urban margins of India, and Delhi in particular.

Reports and Analysis

The **Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems** have produced a [technical brief](#) on how Ugandan authorities innovated a mobile system for registering births in 2020, when civil registration offices were forced to close due to Covid-19.

A report by **NYU School of Law** and two Kampala-based organisations, the **Initiative for Social and Economic Rights** and **Unwanted Witness**, *Chased Away and Left to Die*, zooms in on the failings of Uganda's national digital ID system – including its exclusions of women, older people and many other marginalised groups from accessing human rights.

A report by Rose Mosero Maina for **Cyrrilla (Advancing Access to Digital Rights Law)** analyses the impact of digital ID frameworks on marginalised groups in South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Cameroon.

The **MIT Technology Review** writes on how the Afghan government's extensive biometric database could help identify millions of people to the Taliban and facilitate retributions.

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

Turing Trustworthy Digital Identity Conference
13 September 2021 10:00-17:00 (BST)
This conference brings together prominent academics and practitioners in the field of digital identity – from government officials to industry stakeholders – to advance knowledge and debate on technical, security, privacy and ethical concerns. To apply to attend, or to submit a presentation or paper, [visit the event page here](#).

International Summit on the SDGs in Africa
13-15 September 2021
The University of Cape Town will host the summit, postponed from April 2020 due to Covid-19, for academics, government, business and civil society – developing partnerships for achieving the SDGs in Africa by 2030. [Read more about the event and register here](#).

ID4Africa LiveCast Series: i-On-Africa
Launches 15 September 12:30 (GMT) (Nigeria & Rwanda); 29 September (Kenya & South Africa); 13 October (Lestotho & Morocco)
Online series hosted by Joseph Atick, formerly of the World Bank and now chairman of ID4Africa – an association which brings together ID companies, African governments, and donors to discuss the SDG goal of 'identity-for-all'. Each episode will feature an in-depth report and analysis of two countries' progress towards this goal.

International Identity Day
16 September 2021
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](#).

ID4Africa AGM
15-16 June 2022
The ID4Africa Annual General Meeting brings together stakeholders from the African and international identity community, for knowledge exchange and networking. The organisers expect to hold the event in person in Marrakesh, Morocco, next year – [see more details 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, researching funding, or other opportunities. Please email: certizens@teol.ku.dk

Event Video Recording
Accessing National Digital Identity Systems: Risks and Rewards
Watch this event convened in June 2021 by the **Stanford Cyber Policy Centre**, featuring Amber Sinha of India's Center for Internet and Society (CIS), Anri van der Spuy of Research ICT Africa (RIA) and Dr. Tom Fischer of Privacy International. [Watch in full here](#).

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