

CERTIZENS Newsletter

Certifications of Citizenship in Africa



PHOTO: UNHCR/Hélène Caux

Welcome to Issue 3 of the CERTIZENS Newsletter

This third Newsletter comes at the end of the first full year of the CERTIZENS project, during which all three projects and team members in Ghana, Uganda and Denmark have been in place. In mid-November we were fortunate to finally be able to gather in Accra for the first time for our official Annual Meeting, concluding just before the COVID Omicron variant began closing down travel yet again.

The content of this CERTIZENS Newsletter partly reflects the recent Annual Meeting in Accra in terms of a higher than usual focus on Ghana. It taps into the intensity of current local debates related to the Ghana Card and its actual and anticipated effects. But we're also interested to note Zimbabwe's quite dramatic announcement of the planned introduction of e-passports in 2022. Beyond this, we continue to highlight a range of interesting publications and reports we're reading, worthwhile seminars and debates we're attending (primarily online) and others that are forthcoming, alongside various resources that are publicly available. Featuring these selected activities and materials here in no way attempts to be comprehensive or systematic either in any specific or general sense. It is more of an eclectic mix of things that come onto our individual or collective radar screens, and that strike us as interesting and worth sharing more widely. We have no doubt about the wealth of important matter/s that we miss, and continue to welcome suggestions and inputs that can be included in future newsletters, so please do get in touch at certizens@teol.ku.dk.

Wishing all a safe, healthy and peaceful holiday period and transition into a hopefully gentler new year.

Amanda Hammar, CERTIZENS Project Leader
Copenhagen, December 2021

CERTIZENS Updates



CERTIZENS Annual Meeting in Accra, November 2021

During the week together we discussed in depth our own work progress, challenges and ongoing questions. We also ran an open PhD workshop around the theme of *Certification, Citizenship and State Making*, including other Ghanaian PhD students working with a broader range of topics that added new dimensions to our thinking, as ours did to theirs. Additionally, we hosted a fascinating Stakeholders Workshop with representatives of key Ghanaian and multi-lateral agencies working with national identification cards, immigration, birth and death registration, and refugee identification, as well some concerned with voter registration and democracy. Bringing together these actors into a shared space and conversation is not common. As such, it was clear how much work remains to be done to ensure much greater knowledge sharing and coordination among the multiple actors engaged in different processes of classifying, recognising and certifying citizens, and non-citizens, within a single country.

Follow CERTIZENS on Twitter @CertizensAfrica

We've joined the online conversation! [Follow us on Twitter](#) for project updates, resource-sharing and exchange.



My Father's Driver's Licence: Snapshot of an Old Ghanaian ID Document

By [Isaac Owusu Nsiah](#)

Here, one of CERTIZENS' Ghanaian PhD researchers reflects on the significance of his late father's driver's licence:

My father was someone who kept documents and records of everything in his life. He was a professional driver. This particular document is a renewal of his taxi driver's licence and was made in 1990, when he was 29, around the same age as me. I found it while looking through his belongings after his death and found it fascinating – it really speaks to the fact that citizenship is very much bound up with identification, as the means through which members of a state enjoy their rights and privileges. My dad wanted to be a driver but he could not until he got this ID document.

In essence the information it records is just like what is used for biometric documents today, but in paper form instead. It captures my father's age, complexion, colour of hair, eyes, his stature. And even his right thumb print! It really shows how long modern states have engaged in biometric identification practices, even long before these systems were digitised.

A fuller version of this interview with Isaac Owusu Nsiah, undertaken by Alice Troy-Donovan, will appear later [on the CERTIZENS webpage](#).

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

Controversy over possible use of Ghana Card as digital passport

A recent claim by Ghana's Vice President that appears to suggest that the country's national biometric ID card (the Ghana Card) will soon be accepted as a digital passport for travel around the world has stirred keen debate in the country. [Biometric Update reports here](#).

Ghanaian fishermen demand biometric ID cards

An association of fishermen and fishmongers in Ghana's Central Region has called on the government to issue biometric ID cards to canoe owners, with the aim of facilitating their business and preventing fuel fraud. [Read the full story by Business Ghana](#).

Phone SIM cards and salaries to be linked to Ghana Card

[Modern Ghana](#) reports that all SIM cards must now be re-registered with a Ghana Card by March 2022 – or be deactivated.

[GhanaWeb reports on](#) calls for flexibility in the system from civil society groups, who highlight that many people still do not possess a Ghana Card. The government has also announced that employees without a Ghana Card will not be paid their salaries from December 2021 – a worrying development covered by [My Joy Online](#).

E-passports in Zimbabwe

An interesting development with Zimbabwe's plan to initiate e-passports and to improve decentralised national registration. The government is working with a private Lithuanian company to develop the passports, according to a report by [The Herald](#).

And more...

[Still no national plan to ensure access to vaccines for 'the undocumented'](#), *Daily Maverick (South Africa)*, 13 December 2021

[Census night 2021 Ghana: Nigerians with disability become part of 'Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census'](#), *BBC Pidgin*, 28 June 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

[Nathalie Raunet-Robert-Nicoud, Elections and Borderlands in Ghana](#)
African Affairs Vol 118 (2019)

In brief: This article draws on nationwide debates in the build-up to Ghana's 2016 elections, when a controversy broke out regarding the voting rights of people resident in the Ghana-Togo borderlands. Focusing on a group of people who are identified in both the Togolese and Ghanaian voter registers, this article explores recurrent debates in Ghanaian contexts on identification documents and the nation, asking: Who is the electorate, and who decides who belongs to the nation?

Books

[Legal Identity, Race and Belonging in the Dominican Republic: From Citizen to Foreigner](#), Eve Hayes de Kalaf, UK and USA: Anthem Press 2022

In brief: This book provides a cautionary tale regarding legal identity practices as wrought by the World Bank, UN and Inter-American Development Bank. It warns that policies encouraging the en masse registration of native-born, migrant-descended populations can also force the thorny question of nationality, unsettling long-established identities and entitlements.

Reports and Analysis

The World Bank's **Identification for Development** (ID4D) programme has produced a new [report on the barriers faced by women and other marginalised groups](#) in Nigeria's ID system. This in-depth, qualitative read aims to provide 'evidence-based advice to policy makers'.

Researchers from India's **Centre for Internet and Society** (CIS) are behind a new evaluation framework for digital IDs and have taken India's Aadhaar ID system as their first test case. Read more here, including how the framework can be adapted to diverse developing countries, [according to its creators](#).

We're also keeping an eye on the rapid growth of digital ID systems in African contexts – including [this interview with the owner of Flexintx](#), an African start-up claiming to be able to help millions of Africans verify their identity through decentralized "blockchain-based" IDs.

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 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

Blog: Privacy & Surveillance in Africa

This blog, curated by PhD student Smith Oduro-Marfo (University of Victoria, Canada), is a hugely helpful collection of journalistic and scholarly resources and materials covering surveillance, data protection, identification systems and privacy – as they play out in Africa.

Bibliography: The Statecraft of Digital IDs

A resource for those interested in digital IDs and their impact on both state- and citizen-making processes – [this annotated bibliography](#) collated by data scholars based in the US, provides a substantial list of must-reads.

Call for Papers: Digital Technologies in Developing Countries

The Program on Democracy and the Internet (PDI) at **Stanford's Cyber Policy Center** is soliciting papers for a new initiative which seeks to explore the implications of new digital technologies on developing economies and societies, focusing on their political impacts. [Read more here](#).

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