

## **From Statelessness to “Placelessness”: The Emergent Challenge to Place-based Security Mechanisms**

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Just as the peripheral issue of forced displacement forces its way into the centre of world politics, the forcefulness of human mobility has emerged to imply an ontological disruption. The emergent challenge to the political ontology of state, this paper argues, cannot be subordinated to the juridical epistemology of citizenship. The investigative focus is therefore not so much on statelessness than it is on ‘placelessness.’ Specifically, it pertains to the ways the placeless refugee crisis undermines the territorial ‘place’ within which it is hoped to be resolved juridically. Accordingly, the field of investigation extends beyond the state-based problems of discrimination and inequality, into the conditions under which such systemic crises as climate change and economic collapse prevail. The term crisis conveniently foregrounds a *de jure* failure in containing the ensuing humanitarian catastrophe. But, moreover, the *de facto* irrelevance of the territorial anchor in regulating human mobility reflects the prevailing challenge to the conventional conception of a world that is ordered into discrete places. That human mobility is increasingly linked to ontological disruption, raises not just the futility of territorial containment but, above all, acknowledges the limits of normalised spatial conventions in anchoring security mechanisms. Statelessness, as a juridically circumscribed issue, solicits (whether at the national or international level) territory-based mechanisms of protection. By contrast, taking effect at the holistic level of human population, ‘placelessness’ stands for an open-ended security problematic that emanates precisely from that territorial basis. At the heart of this arguably biopolitical problematic lies, in the words of Deleuze & Guattari, a ‘radical exteriority’ that eludes the epistemological capture of the territorial apparatuses of security. The problematic does not deny the consequential gravity of the state-based problem of stateless subjects; it rather draws attention to the besieged status of state-based subjectivity. Thus, the emergence of human mobility into the ‘world’ of territorial politics, notably as a persistent and holistic phenomenon of human mobility, invokes biopolitical security. Where the legal/epistemological basis of subjectivity is challenged, recognising that ‘placelessness’ refers to a sub-legal/emergent form of subjectivity, could be the first step in harnessing the exteriority/interiority dualism. Whereas ‘placelessness’ challenges by invoking the impending decoupling of population from territory, biopolitical security responds by bringing up the inseparability of human security from open-ended spatial (re)imagination.

**Key words:** Placelessness, human mobility, place-based security, biopolitical security