

# ILLEGALITY REGIMES AND THE ONGOING TRANSFORMATION OF CONTEMPORARY CITIZENSHIP

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*[W]e can think of citizenship as a type of natural experiment for observing how a highly formalized institution can undergo significant transformations without going under.<sup>1</sup>*

## *Introduction*

This paper argues that the creation, enhancement, and strengthening of strong illegality regimes has a transformative, and perhaps even a corrosive effect on the meaning and value of citizenship itself. Much of the political and scholarly attention in the context of illegality is focused on how illegality regimes affect migrants and refugees, how these regimes weaken their human rights, and generally run contrary to liberal principles such as equality before the law and non-discrimination. However, it is my objective to indicate how it is not just the undocumented migrant that is directly affected by the illegality regimes, but also regular migrants, asylum seekers, and finally full citizens themselves. The ways in which this happens is by a progressive transformation of what it means to be a citizen, and a re-accommodation of the relation between the citizen and the state. As globalization unleashes migratory processes, the state adapts. Citizenship adapts along.

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<sup>1</sup> Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, 2006, at 319.