



Somali Women's Negotiated Access to City Space: Redefining Migrants Women's Identity

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The main aim of my paper is to provide understanding of how Somali refugee women negotiate their use of city spaces within UK's metropolitan communities, where they mostly reside. I will look at the how urbanisation impacts on race, ethnicity and citizenship, effecting minority women's use of space in their settlement area. City spaces create engaging neighbourhoods, boost local economy and sustain community developments. These spatial arenas enable government initiatives for refugees' and migrants' integration to be designed and promoted. For most minority women the need for public spaces is to foster social networks and create cultural identity. Through this they give expression to their historical and cultural values and beliefs. Therefore within the already designated city spaces, including shops and shopping malls, markets, leisure centres, park and gardens, parking spaces, office space, communal settings, community centres, civic centre, cafes, pubs, allotments, car boot sales they create alternative spaces that support their changing values and reinforce their social identity. This may include religious space, alternative community centres and often they re-define the use of such places to serve their perspectives and to give meaning to their purpose. Drawing on my interviews with 26 Somali women, I suggest that the women's use of these spaces is affected by a number of factors: a) the women's need to stay in the city to be near community members; b) the necessity of access to shops for culturally-specific material needs; c) the power of their community affiliation in their use of community centres' d) their understanding of cultural ideas of public/private spheres, in particular how this influences the way they participate in employment; and e) the importance of religious space. . By identifying and examining factors that influence the women's choices I will extend knowledge about the diverse and specific ways some minority women negotiate their use of such spaces, and how this expresses for their identity.