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# Voices from the margins: Khat-chewing, devotional leisure and ambivalence in the British-Somali diaspora

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## Introduction

Leisure represents a site in daily life where understandings of self and community are constructed and expressed in a variety of ways (Spaaij, 2011; Spracklen et al., 2017). However, this area of cultural life can also generate division, signifying who belongs within communities, the types of identities expressed, and understandings of one's place within the wider world (De Martini Ugolotti, 2015; Fletcher and Swain, 2016; Ratna, 2019). Such divergence represents a site of critical insight within migration and diaspora studies, resonating with Fanon's (1967) concept of 'double consciousness', through exposing the complicated relationship experienced by those living at the intersections of migration and citizenship. Moreover, this dichotomy explores how migrants find themselves in a state of constant negotiation, centred around cultivating a connection to their country of origin as well as the host society (Anthias, 2012; Gilroy, 1993).

Here, leisure plays an ambivalent role in challenging such marginality by forging a sense of social capital that can empower, liberate, and connect migrants with others (Mohammadi, 2019). While also exposing division (Lewis, 2015; Stone, 2018), instigated around conservative understandings of tradition that clash with the syncretic values cultivated in multicultural societies (Massey, 1994). This fault line politicises leisure by unmasking tensions in the way tradition is used to maintain conventional hierarchies,

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designed to shelter users from external threats in the form of racism, but also internal changes brought about by the lived experiences of forced migration. In direct antithesis to this conservative ethos is a more progressive view of identity, built around the values of syncretism that seeks to challenge traditions that undermine personal freedoms by incorporating a mentality that looks to the future, as well as the past (Back, 1996). It is through the clash of such affiliations that migrant communities find themselves internally divided, with some seeking to recapture lost positions of status, power and identity. While in contrast, others contend with the difficulties of the present and the need to adapt to a future in the host society.

It is through this lens that the chapter introduces the reader to khat-chewing (*Catha Edulis*), and its place within the broader consciousness of Somali culture and diaspora. In this context, khat exemplifies the complicated relationship between leisure and identity politics (Hopkins, 2010), given the activities position as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity within Somaliland<sup>2</sup> (Carrier and Klantschnig, 2018; Osman and Soderback, 2010). The contours of which denote status as a cultural identity marker used to convey knowledge, wisdom and importance to others (Harris, 2005; Swain, Spracklen and Lashua, 2018). In the diaspora, this image helps shield older and middle-aged Somali men from the harsh realities of racism and a changing sense of Somaliness (Swain, 2017a). However, not everyone perceives khat in such a positive way, with many younger second-generation British-Somalis and women's groups viewing the substance as a symbol of domination used to exercise patriarchal and patrilineal hierarchies. Here,

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Somaliland is a semi-autonomous region located to the North of Somalia. The region has been seeking international recognition as an independent state since the 1980s.

conventional understandings of Somaliness cultivated in khat-chewing environments run in contradiction to the lived experiences of such groups who challenge the patriarchal and conservative views associated with such leisure (Borrell, Rask and Warsame, 2014; Hopkins, 2010; Mason, 2018).

The chapter starts by documenting khat-chewing's position within Somali culture, exposing its symbolic association with traditional readings of masculinity and its antagonistic relationship with the lives of women and the young. Here, khat-chewing is explored as a nexus of stability for users, forging a sense of security and belonging. An insight that connects with contemporary debates regarding leisure's place in liquid modernity, as a site in life that provides users with a sense of constancy in an otherwise uncertain and ephemeral world. This perspective links with the concept of 'devotional leisure', a term used to explain how khat-chewing has come to represent a site of devotion, helping to provide khat users with a sense of purpose, identity and communal solidarity. The chapter concludes by problematising this sense of unity by introducing the views of those within the community who oppose the practice. Through this lens, the chapter explores how khat-chewing has come to divide the very same community it desperately seeks to unite.

### **Khat-Chewing and identity: A changing sense of Somaliness**

The appearance of khat varies depending upon its origin, with the most popular type chewed in Britain being a variant known as *Miraa*, cultivated in Meru county in Northern Kenya (Carrier, 2007; Hansen, 2010). This type of khat is cut shorter than its Ethiopian counterpart, *Harari*, and is sold as a piece consisting of four separate bundles, each

housing fifteen to twenty khat sticks. These sticks measure roughly eight to nine inches long and are bound together with a banana leaf to keep the contents fresh and secure for consumption, as khat that is not fresh does not have the same effect on the user (Anderson and Carrier, 2011; Carrier, 2007). During khat-chewing sessions, participants peel the tender parts of the khat stalks as well as the soft leaves, depositing the materials into the side of their mouth along with a small amount of chewing gum to bind the contents into a ball (Osman and Soderback, 2010). It is the process of continuously chewing that releases the chemical dopamine into the body (Kalix, 1987), causing the user to experience a mild feeling of euphoria, leading to intense conversation and debate (Hansen, 2010).

The sociality created by the effects of *marquan* (getting high), signifies the popularity of khat-chewing and the repeated habit of frequenting the *mafrish*<sup>3</sup>. This recognition stems from the communal togetherness experienced in such spaces, built conspicuously around expressions of traditional masculine behaviours such as debating communal matters and reciting personal stories about Somaliland (Carrier, 2007; Hansen, 2010). Suggestively, the use of such cultural expressions also serve to reinforce patriarchal and patrilineal hierarchies, subjugating women to men, and young to old, helping to uphold traditional social values that are commonplace in Somali culture and the broader diaspora (Markussen, 2018). This image conforms to conventional understandings of khat's place in Somaliland, namely its use amongst tribal leaders in the *Shir*, a male-only council convened to decide political issues and resolve communal disputes (Hansen, 2010; Lewis, 1998). Moreover, the symbolic overtures of this emblematic relationship with men of

importance serve to enhance the masculine identities of those who frequent the *mafrish* (Abdullahi, 2001; Carrier, 2017).

However, this masculine image is under attack within the diaspora (Fangen, 2006; Hopkins, 2010), causing Somali men to have their traditional role as central pillars within their communities questioned. One of the reasons for this stems from the emasculation of Somali men in the West, brought about by high levels of unemployment (Mason, 2018), cultural differences in the form of language barriers, and racism characterised by intense Islamophobia that has served to portray many as terrorists or vagrant delinquents within the cultural psyche of western countries (Fangen, 2006; Harris, 2005). Appreciably, such diminished status contributes towards strained relationships with others in the diaspora, namely younger Somalis, who for the most part, have grown up in the West and as a result become more adept at navigating these syncretic cultural landscapes than their elders (Kallehave, 2001; Markussen, 2018). Here, research undertaken documenting perceptions of Somali identity amongst second-generation teenagers in the diaspora has shown how such groups are more likely than their elders to mix with other cultures. This social mixing has contributed to younger Somalis expanding their knowledge of both the language and cultural norms of host societies (Mason, 2018; Valentine, Sporton and Nielsen, 2009), in turn, forging a disparity in knowledge between old and young. Consequently, the knowledge cultivated from such syncretic experiences has served to reverse the traditional patrilineal relationship of younger members of the community being reliant on older men for advice, causing many elders to feel redundant and out of touch (Markussen, 2018).

Similar disputes also emanate from Somali women, with many mobilising collectively to challenge what they have come to see as deviant behaviour (Hopkins, 2010). At its core, this discontent stems from a lack of male responsibility within the domestic sphere, communicated through the vernacular of neglect regarding scarce economic provisions to help many households function and prolonged absences from the family home. This fallout has culminated in growing pressure being placed upon Somali women and young girls to contribute to the day to day running of family units as well as managing household finances (Fangen, 2006). Such research exposes the changing gender roles within the domestic sphere, with women replacing men as the primary breadwinner within many family units, representing a direct challenge to male authority and entitlement (Hopkins, 2010). In part, these changes are driven by access to formalised education, a development that has seen many women who have grown up in the West surpass their male counterparts in the fields of academic attainment and employment. This sense of enlightenment, allied with higher financial capital, has caused younger women born in the diaspora to reject a lifestyle guided by traditional gender hierarchies (Borrell, Rask and Warsame, 2014).

The khat ban, implemented by the British Government in June 2014, exemplifies this challenge towards traditional understandings of patriarchy. Whereby, concerns relating to the stimulants impact on the social harmony of households and the broader community were put forward as viable reasons for banning the substance (Swain, 2017a). The effects of the ban have instilled yet more division within communities in Britain, with many women and young people being supportive. While at the same time pushing for greater punishments for those caught using the substance, that extend beyond the current

three-stage caution system that many see as not being strict enough to make any significant difference to the habits of users. Conversely, many older male khat users, see the ban and its support within sections of their community as a vindication of their marginal position in British society and the dilution of traditional Somali values that they see as being caused by their presence in the liberal environment of the West (Thomas and Williams, 2013). Subsequently, a feeling of distrust has emerged, characterised by two mentalities. One that seeks to use tradition to reestablish conventional understandings of identity and community, and another that seeks to challenge this narrative by exposing its adverse impacts. The dynamics of which act as a wedge that serves to bitterly divide members of the diaspora (Swain, Spracklen and Lashua, 2018).

### **Liquid modernity, the fear of freedom and ‘devotional leisure’**

Zygmunt Bauman’s (2000) writings on liquid modernity provide a useful lens for exploring how leisure can ferment the type of cultural dissonance articulated above. Here, Bauman’s (2000; 2006) work charts the metamorphosis in modernity, that has seen society transition from a state of solid modernity characterised by industrialism, a class-centred division of labour and the legislative guidance of the welfare state. To a fast-moving and ephemeral form of liquid modernity, based around consumerism, individualisation and private enterprise. Through this lens, Bauman (2001; 2006) and other contemporary social theorists (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991), attribute this shift to changes that occurred in the geopolitical sphere in the late 1980s. The first of which relates to the increased interconnectedness of the world economy, brought about by technological advancements that have compressed the dimensions of time and space, allowing commerce and goods to

move at a faster rate around the world. These changes, documented through the rubric of globalisation, signalled the end of production-based economic growth in the West, due to the inability of such economies to compete with cheaper exports from newly industrialised countries. This lack of competitiveness, allied with automation and increased unemployment, have fragmented the communities that once serviced such industries (Bauman, 2001).

The second change relates to the re-emergence of classical economic theory that arose out of the work of Milton Friedman (1992) and Friedrich Von Hayek (1944). Together, these thinkers provided the blueprint of New Right economic theory that influenced the neoliberal revolution spearheaded by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Bauman (2000; 2005) explains how this ideology promoted the principles of free-market economics, built around the values of consumption, privatisation, and individual responsibility. The dynamics of which encourage citizens to rely on their intuition to consume, increasing personal autonomy and reducing the role of the state as a paternal mediator and safety net in people's lives (Bauman, 2006; Swain, 2019). This system contrasts significantly with solid modernity, through emphasising individual liberty centred around consumerism, rather than a top-down bureaucratic system used to order citizens around the task of production (Swain, 2017b).

This shift towards individualisation and consumerism as the engine of economic growth has not come without its problems, most notably in the distinct pitfalls associated with excessive individual liberty over the security provided by communal solidarity. Bauman (2006) explores this problem by looking at the perils of freedom as a social relation, engaging with the writings of the German philosopher Erich Fromm (2001) to explain

how freedom without security can be daunting, leading to insecurity and uncertainty. Through this paradigm, he explains how the shift towards individualisation brought about by consumer capitalism, has served to erode personal freedoms, leaving individuals searching for frames of reference through which to make informed decisions. In this context, excessive consumer freedom conforms to Fromm's (2001) understanding of 'negative freedom', in the way such liberty causes people to flee from individual decision making by seeking sanctuary in social groups that provide instrumental rationalities around which a sense of security can be constructed (Bauman, 2001; Maffessoli, 1996).

Bauman (1998) describes how incessant consumer freedom significantly impacts the poorest in society, highlighting how a lack of financial resources hinders citizens from managing their life projects. Through this line of thinking, the poor find themselves demonised, as cutbacks to the welfare state have seen the safety net designed to guard against such inequality diminished, leaving many isolated and impoverished. Such an environment highlights the moral question of collective responsibility, a line of reasoning that finds itself subverted by the process of adiaphorization, in the way increasing levels of inequality are deflected onto the individual as being brought about by irrational decision making rather than the injustices of the political and economic system (Bauman, 2000). The contours of which expose the 'hyper-precarious' environment that many migrants face, revealing uncertainty in regards to citizenship, poverty brought on by high unemployment rates, and a lack of sympathy through attributing such marginality to poor personal choices, rather than the perils associated with forced migration (Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson and Waite, 2015).

In order to combat such inequality and the inability to forge consumer-based identities, marginalised groups can create a semblance of identity through connecting themselves with traditional culture, to form symbolic sentiments that act as a cultural marker around which people can unite (Bauman, 2006; Castells, 1996). Recent studies have highlighted the role of leisure in this context by looking at the intersections of migration, cultural expression and identity. Here, Lewis (2015) explored the role of dancing in helping to empower migrant identities, creating a sense of connection with others who shared similar passions. Such collective effervescence, in turn, helped forge a sense of togetherness that connected migrants navigating the British immigration system with others experiencing similar uncertainty. Similarly, Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2005) have examined how the wearing of traditional clothing has helped Bosnian migrants maintain a sense of connection with both their homeland and others living in the diaspora. Through this display of cultural identity, those traversing such spaces experience an emotional connection with others built around a frame of reference around which an identity, sense of community and feeling of pride can be established. This insight connects with Blackshaw's (2016; 2018) concept of 'devotional leisure', in the way leisure can offer a sense of security, stability and connection in a world characterised by the ephemeral and uncertain environment of liquid modernity.

In this context, 'devotional leisure' is understood through the Weberian (1992) notion of a value sphere, in the way such activities formulate a distinct and autonomous realm of human activity, constructed in isolation from other areas of social life. This idea exposes the importance of leisure environments in contributing towards a renegotiation of understandings of community and identity, that can help shield those who occupy such

spaces for the period in which such activities last. Blackshaw (2016) builds upon this understanding by explaining how value spheres are built through the act of ‘devotion’, enabling users to commit themselves to a particular activity or passion that in turn can provide them with a sense of cultural capital in the broader network of others who share similar passions. The confines of which create a sense of collectivism that for the time in which such leisure is undertaken can provide users with a unified sense of values and purpose (Blackshaw, 2018). However, given the distinctiveness of the values formed in these unique spaces, ‘devotional leisure’ activities must also be understood as hastening a sense of cultural dissonance. The reason for this is that the rationalities guiding such spheres can run in direct contrast to the values constructed by others in a community or cultural setting, thereby causing certain leisure activities to become viewed with suspicion and even ridicule (Blackshaw, 2016). This point is something that will be discussed later in the chapter when examining negative perceptions of the *marfish* by those living in Brampton.

### **Marginality, emasculation and change: Traditional Somali masculinity in crisis**

The forthcoming data originates from thirty-five un-structured interviews conducted in one of the largest Somali communities in Britain. Due to the issue of confidentiality, both the names of those who took part in the research, made up of a broad cross-section of the diaspora, including elders, women, community leaders and the young, as well as the neighbourhood (Brampton) where the study took place are anonymised for ethical reasons. Many older and middle-aged Somali men recounted how they felt excluded from British society (Markussen, 2018), narrating a sense of disempowerment that emanated

from the inequalities they faced. Here, issues relating to unemployment, racism and questions surrounding citizenship served to demean many as vagabonds, based around people questioning their contribution to society. A situation that led to many recounting experiences of being labelled as scroungers whom those in broader society saw as being too lazy to work but cunning enough to draw benefits. This prejudice led to a feeling of marginality, belittlement, and helplessness amongst many of the men interviewed, something that felt uncomfortable to them after holding positions of influence and authority in Somaliland before migrating. Khalid, a community elder and former Seamen, explained the underlying causes of this problem:

A lot of older men who migrated here do not feel valued here. Many cannot get a job, they struggle with the language, and people do not understand them. It is hard; all they want to do is go back to their old lives in Somaliland, where they had a life.

Similarly, others communicated how changing gender hierarchies within the domestic sphere added to their sense of emasculation. Here, issues pertaining to scarce financial resources, strained family relationships and high rates of domestic abuse, contributed to increased family breakdown (Hopkins, 2010). David, a local authority drugs policy officer, who had researched views on khat in Brampton before the ban in 2014, attributed such problems to changes in the conventional patriarchal power structures that had emerged post-migration:

What I found was that a lot of Somali men felt isolated in the city, but also their community and the home. They did not have anywhere near as much standing as what I expected. Many of the women were scathing about them, saying how they

were lazy and did not work, not interested in their family and kids, all that kind of thing.

These challenges to traditional hierarchies were not solely the preserve of relationships in the domestic sphere. A point exposed through anxieties surrounding the identities of younger members of the diaspora, whom many elders saw as ‘turning their backs’ on Somali culture (Mason, 2018). Such accusations centred around second-generation British-Somalis ‘losing their culture’, and sense of connection with Somaliland, a situation that caused a rift to emerge between young and old (Valentine, Sporton and Nielsen, 2009). Ahmed, a local youth worker, gave his insight on this issue:

Something that a lot of elders are worried about is the way the younger generation is behaving. They tell me that every year their children are becoming less and less Somali. You see this in the way they dress, their inability to speak Somali and their lack of interest in events back home. This causes real friction and worry.

The culmination of these personal anxieties exposed the hyper-precarious (Lewis et al., 2015) lives that many older and middle-aged Somali men found themselves navigating, characterised by social and economic inequalities that led to a feeling of emasculation, as well as challenges to their authority from inside Brampton. These anxieties exposed the need amongst many older and middle-aged Somali men to find an escape in order to re-empower their perception of identity as well as to cultivate a feeling of community and solidarity.

### **Khat-chewing and ‘devotional leisure’: Finding security in an insecure world**

Khat-chewing’s position as a prominent staple of masculinity and cultural identity (Carrier, 2017; Hansen, 2010) served to represent a symbolic conduit around which a

powerful, and dominant reading of Somaliness could be reconstructed. This perspective was commented upon by Ismail, a middle-aged man, who had lived in Brampton since the early 2000s after making a secondary migration from Sweden:

Ismail: Khat is what Somalis are known for, everyone back home chews khat; it is very popular. So as a Somali man, chewing khat is something that is a normal part of every day, at least to me it is.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Ismail: Because it keeps me in touch with my roots, when I chew with others, I feel like a Somali. It is why so many people chew, to feel Somali.

The dynamics of this relationship between khat and masculinity was commented upon repeatedly by many of the male participants and served to highlight the importance of such leisure in creating both a symbolic connection to Somaliland and an empowered sense of masculinity. Interestingly, such thoughts exposed how the *mafrish* represented a value sphere; in the way, that such a space symbolised a prominent connection with hegemonic masculine values that allowed users to create a dominant reading of Somaliness. This symbolic display of identity was on prominent show inside the *mafrish*, with many khat users using such leisure to reaffirm their connection with Somaliland. Abokor, a frequent khat user, provided an insight into the logic of such behaviour:

In the *mafrish*, people are always talking about back home. It could be about the house they plan to build, clan politics, or the current political climate. The more you know, the more you feel part of the session. If you cannot talk about Somali culture, or you have no idea about your, home (Somaliland), then you have no place in the *mafrish*.

Here, it was better understood how the etiquettes associated with khat-chewing served to forge a particular reading of identity, built around a devotional loyalty to Somaliland. Such displays of devotion were also observed in the embodiment of traditional khat-chewing techniques, the demonstration of knowledge about the socio-cultural fabric of Somali culture and reciting personal experiences of Somaliland. Here, the embodiment of such behaviours served to portray a Somali identity to others, that in turn, enabled users to feel a traditional identity based on conventional displays of masculinity and sentiment.

This behaviour explicitly highlighted the role of the *mafrish* as a sanctuary for users, in the way such localities allowed Somali men to embody behaviours that enabled them to experience a sense of appreciation and respect by others. The benefits of which rewarded users for their devotional connection to Somali culture, allowing them to receive recognition and approval for projecting a traditional form of masculinity. Moreover, the embodiment of this identity shielded users, providing a sense of togetherness in the confines of the *mafrish* that created a form of communal solidarity. This sense of community permitted older and middle-aged men to find a nexus of stability, forging a site of comfort around others who shared similar values to them. Consequently, the *mafrish* came to symbolise a space where users could subvert their marginalised position on the periphery of British society as well as internally within their community by allowing those who frequented such localities to project a dominant and robust notion of Somaliness.

**Community! But at what price? Khat-chewing and cultural dissonance**

However, not everyone in Brampton saw khat-chewing in such a positive light. Somali women, in particular, were eager to express to the research how the practice was causing significant problems within the community. This point that was documented by Nayma, a volunteer at the local community centre:

Khat causes lots of problems because the men are out all night chewing and spend most of the day asleep. This places a lot of strain on women to run the house and look after the children. But also, their health, I know women who have to Hoover and clean at night so that they do not wake their husbands during the day when they are sleeping.

Fadumo, a mother of three in her mid-thirties, built upon this assertion by recounted her own experiences of how khat-chewing severely impacted the social dynamics of her family when she was growing up:

Khat causes a lot of men to forget about their responsibilities as fathers and husbands as well as members of the wider community. When I was young, my father was out chewing with his friends all the time. I never saw him. That is why so many people wanted the ban, to stop situations like that from happening. It needs to be taken seriously, that these men are giving up on their responsibilities to their wives and children.

These perspectives exposed a more sinister side to khat-chewing, framed around selfishness and irresponsibility that exposed an underlying feeling that portrayed khat users as giving up on their duty of moral responsibility towards others. Views that exposed a feeling of cultural dissonance surrounding the topic of khat, and in turn, poignantly symbolised how the value sphere of the *mafrish* was viewed with suspicion by Somali

women. In this context, khat-chewing had come to represent a fork in the road, signifying both the unifying potential and divisiveness of leisure within liquid modern societies. At its core, this perspective is seen in the rationality of tradition cultivated in the *mafrish* that helped users shield from their marginalised position in British society by allowing them to reconceptualise a positive image of Somaliness. However, at the same time, this value sphere instilled a feeling of division and distrust amongst many women in Brampton who saw such leisure as undermining the liberal values of equality they aspired to, by forging what many had come to understand as a culture of neglect. Through this lens, the majority of Somali women who contributed to this research communicated how they saw the *mafrish* as a space that promoted values that ran in direct contrast to the more progressive lives they were trying to establish for both themselves and their children.

This sense of dissonance was not restricted solely to older Somali men and women, a point exposed by younger second-generation British-Somalis who contributed to the research. Here many of those born in Britain or within other European countries on route to Britain explained how a significant proportion of people their age did not partake in khat-chewing, with many highlighting how younger generations felt a lack of connection with the practice. This point was commented upon by Abdi-Aziz, an eighteen-year-old who was born and raised in Brampton:

Khat is not massively popular amongst guys my age; it is seen more as being for those born in Somaliland or who have just come. I know many people don't find the thought of sitting around talking about Somaliland for hours on end fun, many people my age have better things to be doing than talking about clans and the past.

Interestingly, this view and others like it exposed a break with traditional notions of Somali masculinity associated with the *mafrish* and instead highlighted how a growing swathe of second-generation British-Somalis was moving towards a more syncretic understanding of identity (Mason, 2018). This narrative exposed how this group did not share their elder's conventional reading of Somali identity, that many saw as being rooted in the past, and out of touch with the future they envisaged for themselves. It is essential to mention here, that opinions on khat were divided amongst the youth, with individual young members of the community chewing khat. However, this association with the practice was not as pronounced as in the case of older and middle-aged men, with these younger khat users hiding their association with the practice for fear of being openly ridiculed as being 'uncool' or a 'freshie'<sup>4</sup>. The use of such derogatory comments and labeling of khat in such a dismissive manner, exposed how the younger generation in Brampton did not, for the most part, share their elders' affinity for the practice. The reason for this stemmed from a lack of personal affinity with Somaliland and the perceived irrelevance of adhering to such traditional gender markers when constructing their identity.

## **Conclusion**

The views expressed above highlight the complexities surrounding leisure and its relationship with migrant communities, exposing to researchers and policymakers the complex internal dynamics influencing leisure in such settings. In this context, it has been shown how the value sphere of the *mafrish*, based around the mores of tradition can help

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A term used to refer to newly arrived migrants

unite older and middle-aged Somali men struggling to adapt to life in the diaspora. Through this lens, the research has shown how devotional acts of leisure such as khat-chewing have the potential to disrupt demeaning stereotypes surrounding Somalis living in Britain, by helping older and middle-aged men portray a dominant reading of Somali-ness. However, it has also been shown how khat-chewings connection with conventional Somali customs and traditions also serve to isolate these men from others in their community. In this context, the cultural sphere of the *mafrish* is seen by others as being representative of a narrative that seeks to reimpose traditional patriarchal and patrilineal hierarchies onto others. The contours of which highlight the unique social conditions of liquid modernity, by exposing how the use of tradition to reestablish a dominant reading of identity, ferments clashes with others who view such leisure as demeaning and repressive. In this case, the devotional loyalty shown to traditional Somali values and masculinity undertaken by khat users clashes with the more progressive values of Somali women, who are committed to forging a better life for themselves and their children in British society. Similarly, the romanticised vision of one day returning home to Somaliland that is held in such high esteem inside the *mafrish* fails to connect with younger members of the community who do not share this same vision.

These findings expose how older and middle-aged Somali men attempt to navigate the uncertain and ephemeral landscape of liquid modernity by finding a sense of security and solace by romanticising the past. However, this act of devotion undertaken within the cultural sphere of the *mafrish* serves only to isolate further those who frequent such localities by cutting them off from both broader British society and their community in Brampton. Through this lens, khat-chewing can be seen as a unique value sphere-based

around a reading of Somaliness that shelters users from the harsh realities of life in British society by promising them a return to the glories of the past. The problem is the idea of identity and community forged inside such settings no longer exists, leading to a situation where khat users find themselves becoming more and more reliant on such spaces to escape the world they find themselves living in. Such findings serve to expose the complexity of life within migrant communities by highlighting the role of tradition in providing a sense of security in a fast-changing, ephemeral world. It is hoped that this theoretical perspective into khat-chewing can provide a useful lens for other researchers exploring leisure in migrant communities, by helping them better understand internal divisions that cause such forms of recreation to become politicised issues. The lessons of which help to show how migrant communities are not monolithic but instead complex and syncretic, incorporating many different voices and perspectives.

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