The inclusion and exclusion of Somali communities as seen through the publicness of space in Nairobi and Stockholm

Ett perspektiv på inkludering och exkludering av Somaliska migranter sett genom rummets offentlighet i Nairobi och Stockholm

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ABSTRACT

The neighborhoods of Eastleigh in Nairobi, Kenya and Rinkeby in Stockholm, Sweden are both home to Somali populations that have burgeoned over the last 25 years. While situated in vastly different urban contexts, the Somali communities in each location have needs related to public space, particularly when considering their status in both places as a minority group that is often marginalized by Kenyan and Swedish societies. By examining the experiences of each of these two communities in public space and the level of publicness they experience, we can see how the Somali community can be made to feel included or excluded within each city. Using Setha Low’s framework of categorical activities that contribute to a flourishing society, the publicness of spaces in each location is investigated. In addition, the study explores the ways in which publicness is under threat in both places through the means of technologies of control. The resistance to such technologies is argued as symbolic of the fight for inclusion within Kenyan and Swedish society.
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INTRODUCTION

Background

Public space is widely acknowledged to be an essential and integral part of human settlement. Public spaces offer a wide range of functions, and while the specific activities of different segments of society may differ, the underlying needs that public space ideally fulfills do not. The extent to which these needs are addressed can be interpreted as the publicness of a public space, which may be determined on a deliberate basis in order to cater to certain groups and discourage the presence of others. This publicness therefore serves as a physical manifestation and symbol of the level of inclusion or exclusion of certain groups within broader society in a given context. The range of ways that are acceptable for a public space to be used is a reproduction of who is accepted within society at large.

There is abundant academic debate about the definition and meaning of public space. For the purpose of this thesis, public space is qualified by a degree of publicness as determined by Setha Low’s framework of how public spaces can support or threaten a flourishing society. The categories of function and activities she proposes offer a baseline against which the experiences of community members can be measured. Low defines public space that supports a flourishing society as allowing: securely gathering, moving freely, express collective memory and heritage, engaging in political discourse, and participating in leisure activities, among other activities (Low S., 2018). Low offers a similar framework of ways in which public space can be threatened, either incidentally as part of societal structures or in a targeted way. Targeted threats to specific groups of people can be wielded through what Meghan McDowell and Nancy Wonders call technologies of control. The deployment of these technologies of control take a variety of forms that elicit acts of resistance from the communities upon which they are imposed. This resistance is not simply in reaction to physical limitations to accessing public space; rather, it is symbolic of a battle for inclusion in society. Public space and its range of publicness can therefore be understood as a physical manifestation of who is included and excluded from society.

Eastleigh, Nairobi and Rinkeby, Stockholm are areas in the urban peripheries of their respective cities in which substantial Somali communities reside. Within both Nairobi and Stockholm, Somalis are a minority community and one that is frequently marginalized by the larger societies within which they exist. This marginalization is spatialized in the push of these communities to urban peripheries, and then reproduced on a smaller scale by the lack of
inclusion, or deliberate exclusion, of people of Somali ethnicity from public spaces. The neighborhoods in which Somali communities congregate, though, such as Rinkeby and Eastleigh, are places in which members of these communities can partake in the benefits of public space in meaningful and symbolic ways; they can participate in functions of public space that contribute to a flourishing society as described by Low.

Since the 1990s when the Somali government collapsed, Somali nationals have sought out more stable homes for themselves and their families. They have moved to places close, such as Kenya where they join the Kenyan-Somali community, and far, such as Sweden, where they are considered a foreign and exotic minority. Similar to many other displaced or marginalized groups, Somali individuals often gravitate toward larger Somali communities in urban centers for the economic and social benefits of city living. Though the Somali communities of both Eastleigh and Rinkeby have individually been the subject of academic study in the past, the present study appears to be the first to apply a comparative framework that examines the relationship of these communities to their social context in terms of public space. The publicness of the public spaces in these two communities becomes a litmus test for the level of inclusion or exclusion. Publicness does not happen equally across Nairobi and Stockholm, nor across spaces within each of the two cities.

The deliberate exclusion of Somali communities from the dominant definition of “public” in Kenya and Sweden that sometimes takes place is part of broader global trends regarding how societies are constituted and defined, especially in the context of migration. Within the discussion of migration is that of forced migration and forced migrants. Sociologist Stephen Castles defines forced migration as including “refugee flows, asylum seekers, internal displacement, development-induced displacement” (Castles, 2003). Considering the governmental collapse and protracted state of crisis in Somalia from 1991 to the present day, members of the Somali diaspora should be understood as forced migrants. Paralleling the trade and investment policies that ensure that underdeveloped countries remain so, more economically powerful countries attempt to prevent migration and often only accept forced migrants as an act of benevolence. This establishes a social hierarchy in which forced migrants and subsequent post-migrant generations occupy a low position and are construed to be perpetually indebted to their host country. Concomitantly, they are pressured to accept substandard treatment and constant reminders of their outsider status as a way of performing gratitude for the permission to be there or to access services (Healey, 2014). Such substandard treatment can include, for example, accepting exclusion from public spaces in the form of technologies of control.
Purpose and research questions

If the publicness of a space is defined by the extent to which it fulfills the categories of functions proposed by Low (social, cultural, and economic relations; community and individual well-being; play and recreation; and social justice and democratic relations), to what extent are the public spaces of Eastleigh and Rinkeby public? Conversely, in what ways is the publicness of space in these two places threatened?

Through interviews and observation, I aim to convey the experiences of the Somali communities in Eastleigh and Rinkeby and situate their experience of publicness within a broader dialogue of how the “public” is defined in Nairobi and Stockholm. The experience of the Somali community is further situated in the academic discourse of the inclusion and exclusion of migrants, particularly forced migrants, in public space.

Methods and structure

To understand the experience of Somali communities in Eastleigh and Rinkeby, I gathered data with a combination of interviews with members of these communities and observation of the spaces they use.

The literature review covers topics that contextualize the research presented, addressing both theory and the academic examination of experiences of public space, and the specifics of the Kenyan and Swedish contexts. Relevant literature and the frameworks they provide for this study are elaborated in the next section, Theoretical Base.

To investigate the specific experience of Somali community members in Eastleigh, Nairobi and Rinkeby, Stockholm, I spent time in each location. In the Context section, the necessary background information about Kenya, Sweden, and the history of Somali communities there can be found. In each location, I conducted ten interviews with members of the Somali community, both male and female, ranging in age from the age of 20 to 43, and in a range of occupations. The majority of these respondents intentionally engaged with social justice issues, working as journalists, social workers, job placement officers, lawyers, or running nonprofit organizations on the side of full-time jobs. The questions used in the interviews with them (found in the annex) owe much to those developed and employed by Marluci Menezes, Judith Allen, and Lia Vasconcelos for their investigation of the experience of Brazilian immigrants in public space in Lisbon, Portugal (Menezes, Allen, & Vasconcelos, 2009).
Additionally, accompanied by my respondents, I engaged in participant observation of public spaces. I attended events, frequented popular restaurants and hangouts, visited workspaces, and traveled to different parts of each city with respondents. In Eastleigh, my presence as a light-skinned person of European descent affected my ability to spend extended time in public spaces, as it held the potential for attracting police presence and threatened the ability for anyone to continue using the space peacefully. Accordingly, many of the observations performed in public spaces in Eastleigh were done swiftly and as a non-participant. This was not the case in Stockholm, where there were less constraints on my presence. The summary of my interview and observations, as well as comparisons between the two contexts are found in the Case Studies section of this document.

In the Discussion section of the document, using the theoretical framework, literary precedents, and recommendations from my respondents working on a day-to-day basis of improving the Somali community member experience, I present findings yielded by the evidence gathered. Lastly, I provide the ultimate findings from my study and recommendations for further research in the Conclusion.
THEORETICAL BASE

This study seeks to explore the publicness of spaces in Rinkeby and Eastleigh as symbols of inclusion and exclusion of Somali communities. To understand the meaning of public space and forms of publicness, I first look in detail at the elements of what supports or threatens _flourishing society_ as described by Low. Subsequently, I turn the lens toward theories about and experiences of exclusion by migrants, both forced and voluntary, in public space. Lastly, I provide justification for the comparative framework and the methods used in this study.

Public space

While definitions of public space vary and there is some debate around whether or not any definition can be universalized, I sought a characterization that could be broadly applied to both the Kenyan and Swedish context. Rather than focusing on physical characterizations of space, this definition needed to focus on functions and speak to the symbolic value of public space. Setha Low’s definition of a public space that supports a _flourishing society_ does just that; her framework also provides corresponding ways in which spaces that are labeled public can, in fact, undermine and threaten _flourishing society_ (Low S., 2018). Low identifies specific categories of activities that take place in public space can actively contribute to this _flourishing society_: “social, cultural, and economic relations”; “community and individual well-being”; “play and recreation”; and “social justice and democratic relations”. Within each one of these, Low designates specific activities that take place across all contexts. Within “social, cultural, and economic relations”, activities include informal economic activity, the communication of cultural identity, the development of social capital, and the expression of collective memory. Under the category of “community and individual well-being”, residents should be able to look after their physical health, mental health, in a way that is safe, accessible, and secure. Similarly, in the category of “play and recreation”, the socialization of children, relaxation and reflection, retreat from everyday life, and creative expression should be possible. Lastly, within “social justice and democratic relations”, occupants of a given space should be able to address social inclusion and belonging, political representation, recognition from larger society, and practice contestation and resistance. The publicness of public spaces hinge on their ability to deliver in these categories. It is, of course, impossible for all public spaces to fulfill all of these functions. This study seeks to examine to what extent the public spaces on offer in Rinkeby and Eastleigh are able to achieve a measure of
publicness according to this ideal as a measure. Low argues that the provision of public space that meets these criteria allows for public space to be socially, culturally, economically, and politically productive.

Correspondingly, Low also looks at what threatens the publicness of space: “privatization”, “securitization”, “social injustice”, and “lack of representation”. As alternatives, Low proposes alternative activities to each of these threats that can contribute to a flourishing society. The opportunities under “privatization” include providing open access to spaces, filling them with free events and activities, while enforcing a minimal amount of regulation through cooperation and collaboration. As alternatives to “securitization”, Low proposes community policing, people watching, flexible and porous boundaries, and respect and understanding. To counter “social injustice”, Low identifies the fair distribution of space, procedural justice, social and political recognition, and interactional justice for all. Lastly, to address “lack of representation”, Low suggests the identification of local history, retaining of cultural symbols, restoration through social functions, and the allocation of adequate territories for desired activities.

These actions being taken would indicate a proactive approach toward inclusion. However, in reality, it is common that there is a proactive approach to exclusion that falls into similar categories. In other literature, Low has also identified ways in which exclusion of communities at the cultural scale manifests in public space in sinister and deliberate ways (Low S., 20011). Such spatialized systems of exclusion include: physical enclosure, surveillance, privatization, financial requirements of entry or occupation, legal and governance restrictions on entry, aesthetic restrictions tied to certain groups, discursive strategies such as signs or media, and political decisions about what is built and not built. As the case of the Somali communities of Eastleigh, Nairobi and Rinkeby, Sweden includes a substantial portion of migrants, next I turn to how specific restrictions are imposed on similar groups.

**Minority groups and migrants in public space**

Different degrees of publicness are provided to different groups based on their level of inclusion in societal definitions of who “the public” is. The threats described by Low to public space that supports a flourishing society are frequently mobilized particularly against migrant communities in a way that symbolizes their exclusion from “the public”. Meghan G. McDowell and Nancy A. Wonders document technologies of control (as defined by Pickering
and Weber) deployed by authorities in Arizona, USA with the express purpose of identifying and deporting of “illegal immigrants” (Pickering & Weber, 2006) (Wonders & McDowell, 2009). As McDowell and Wonders elaborate, these technologies of control include “racial profiling, immigration raids, neighborhood sweeps, detention, and the intimidation and harassment of communities of color.” These practices constrain the ability of any individual who shares visible characteristics of the targeted communities, specifically race or ethnicity, to occupy and use public space. Fundamentally, it means that regardless of what public spaces offer, members of targeted groups cannot partake in them or contribute to the spaces’ productivity toward a flourishing society. Their exclusion from public spaces based on a series of superficial characteristics tied to narratives of criminality or security threats is symbolic of the societal exclusion of anyone with those characteristics, undermining the publicness of space. These narratives are amplified through the media, which acts as a discursive sign to discourage the presence of individuals in this group in public spaces. The indiscriminate condemnation and toxic narratives of people of Somali ethnicity in Kenya and Sweden not only shows the same pattern of institutional behavior identified by McDowell and Wonders in Arizona but similarly extreme consequences: members of the Somali community have been killed by police on more than one occasion in Kenya (Dahir & Kuo, 2017). It is essential to examine the role of law enforcement and technologies of control in discussing the violence that occurs within Eastleigh and Rinkeby, including the violence perpetuated by state authorities and community members. Uses of technologies of control and the violence associated with them are one of the most significant threats to the publicness of public spaces within these two communities.

Technologies of control have become broadly socially acceptable elements of the discussion of migration, particularly when these technologies are exerted upon forced migrants. Stephen Castles points out in his call for expanded sociological study of forced migration that “Following the events of 11 September 2001, refugees have been branded as a sinister transnational threat to national security”. The policies in the countries in which forced migrants settle are generally geared toward maintaining the nation-state, with the result that the social and cultural assimilation of newcomers is framed as a security measure rather than one of enforcement of a global sociocultural hierarchy. Forced migrants are thus faced with choosing between assimilating and denying their culture(s) of origin or being seen as a threat to social cohesion if they elect to maintain linguistic, religious, or visible ties in their self-presentation to their culture of origin. Regardless of the level of assimilation, forced migrants are also expected to feel indebted to their host country and accept their outsider status,
regardless of the fact that the very same structures that buoy the more powerful host nations are often the ones causing the protracted crisis triggering forced migration in the first place (Castles, 2003). Furthermore, in order to be perceived as integrating and to have access to basic services and employment, forced migrants and refugees are expected to be grateful for the opportunity to be present, occupy space and pay back what Ruth Healey calls *asylum debt*, referring to the experience of Tamil refugees in the United Kingdom (Healey, 2014). According to this logic, migrants should accept *technologies of control* and decreased publicness of space. While signs may not be posted in public spaces demanding this from members of migrant and other marginalized groups, the behavior of law enforcement officials and other citizens in public spaces serve to reinforce these messages. It also means that capitalizing on the opportunities identified by Low to make public space productive, such as the display of a migrant’s culture of origin, can be interpreted as a security threat; if a migrant’s culture of origin is tied to security issues, its display can be seen as a posing peril to public safety. Diversity and its signifiers in public space are framed as obstacles to publicness.

There are also expectations imposed on minority members of a society such as migrants when occupying public space to conform to a standard of behavior set by the host society. This phenomenon is documented by several researchers: Carrie A. Benjamin in the Goutte D’Or neighborhood of Paris, France, where North African migrants often are at odds with local business owners and new neighbors as the neighborhood gentrifies (Benjamin, 2015); and Nicholas DeMaria Harney, who documents the harassment and regulation imposed upon migrants of sub-Saharan African, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Eastern European, and Tamil backgrounds occupying public spaces as street vendors, residents, and users of public transportation in Naples, Italy, as well as the *ritual activism* of resisting some of these impositions (Harney, 2015). Harney defines *ritual activism* acts of everyday living that challenge the status quo in a given place, using the daily routines of migrants in Naples, Italy as evidence. The examples of *ritual activism* described by Harney are the daily “habits” of migrants around Naples, such as participating in informal economies, using forms of public transportation, and occupying vacant spaces for recreational and sport activities. *Ritual activism* can be interpreted as both the active resistance of threats to the publicness of space, as well as helping greater levels of publicness emerge.

As city centers globally gentrify and wealth becomes concentrated in these areas, minorities and vulnerable populations are relegated to urban peripheries, signifying the “uneven capital investment” identified by David Harvey (Harvey, 1993). Ali Mandanipour describes an inverse relationship between the increased financial attention lavished upon
central spaces and the neglect and decline of marginal spaces in the cases of several European cities. Mandanipour explicitly notes that this exclusion is beyond spatial, and is in fact symbolic exclusion from society itself, including access to the labor and housing market. Investments in space can be seen as corresponding to a spaces’ intended publicness on behalf of authorities. This further supports the argument that publicness symbolizes differential inclusion of specific groups; those which receive lower investment are simultaneously being declared unwelcome, or at least less welcome than other citizens.

The subordination of minority and immigrant communities within a dominant or host society is one part of the story, because the inverse dynamic is also important. It is also essential to acknowledge the ways in which such communities resist these forms of subordination in ways ranging from subtle to radical, altering both the built environment and the activities taking place within public space. These studies and stories are ones of expanding publicness. Ali Aslankan discusses this process for Greek Muslims resettled in Turkey in the first half of the 20th century and how this reclaiming of space was an essential part of resettlement, even in the face of forced integration (Aslankan, 2017). The ability for migrants to adapt the programming and appearance of the built environment, including that of public space, is an important part of adapting and enacting a home. This is directly in the service of the opportunity Low puts forward for public space to support “social, cultural and economic relations”. Related to this, David Harvey discusses the importance of “place-bound identities… in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement, and communication”, examining the relationships both between space in place in constructing “home”, as well as place-based identity as a ground for exclusion and exclusionary politics. The politics of otherness is not only expressed in how the “other” is expressed contextually in a given space, but it is also produced “through the simple logic of uneven capital investment”, Harvey argues (Harvey, 1993). My research seeks to build on this work by focusing in on how this exclusion, and resistance to it by members of the Somali community, migrants and non-migrants, manifest in the publicness of spaces of Eastleigh and Rinkeby.

**Study framework**

It is clear that the exclusion of minority and migrant members of society is neither rare nor accidental. There are many lenses through which the experience of this exclusion can be examined, yet my study takes a comparative view, looking at members of the Somali community in vastly differing locations. Irene Bloemraad outlines the benefit (and some pitfalls) of comparative research design in the study of migration, noting that comparative
study offers an enhancement in migration studies in multiple ways. The comparison of a
group in differing urban contexts in regard to their access to publicness can help determine
the importance of policies or resources within the identifiable boundaries of the urban level. It
also allows for prioritization within each context of the elements that constitute publicness
according to Low.

In the present study, the comparative platform permits a look at how members of
Somali communities fit in as minorities in a majority-dominated society in two very different
urban contexts. Furthermore, it examines how the different contexts inform the outcomes of
publicness for this group. The comparative structure of the present study is an opportunity to
highlight the similarity in levels of marginalization, the challenges specifically to the black,
Muslim-majority Somali community, as well as the ways in which Somali community
continues to thrive in both contexts. In his questioning of the ubiquity of the concepts of
“place” and “placelessness”, Aseem Inam suggests flexibility and a critical perspective in the
interpretation of dominant theory when applying particularly to informal urban settings and
cities beyond the United States and Europe (Inam, 2016). The understanding of how “place”
is constructed, one form of ritual activism as described above, in Nairobi and Stockholm,
respectively, cannot necessarily be expected to take the same form. The comparison of the
two places is an opportunity to examine the similarities in how members of the Somali
community construct “place” or “home” as the result of a shared culture, as well as how
different expressions are shaped by the local contexts in which place is expressed.

The research presented mobilizes a case study method, which has been used as a
research strategy to make casual inferences by researchers such as Yin (Yin, 1981) and others.
Buroway expands on the benefits of the case study in his description of extended case method
as a compliment (or alternative) to positive approach of scientific data collection, which seeks
to “suspend our participation in the world we study”. Ethnographic case studies are a
reflexive way to gather social science data rooted in theory, while acknowledging the role and
power dynamics at play between researcher and respondent rather than feigning an
unattainable level of objectivity (Buroway, 1998). The principles of positive science are
impossible to live up to in almost any study, as pointed out by Buroway, as inherent in any
study are the power dynamics between research in respondent. The case study can function in
acknowledgement of these dynamics, employing a reflexive approach in which the researcher
seeks to understand situational experiences as a participant, going beyond the oft-sanitized
perspective gained through positive approaches. Furthermore, as a comparative study of a
partially migrant population each case, context, and society are not looked at in isolation but
rather as connected through interlocking forces, such as that of global capital. In line with the case study methodology, rather than seeking to present these findings my own product, I seek to amplify the voices of respondents as seen through the lens of theory and with the understanding of my own situated perspective.
The circumstances of present-day Somali communities, including Somali diaspora, are best understood within the context of the recent history of Somalia. After outlining this recent history, I will sketch out a description of the Somali communities in Nairobi and Stockholm, together with an overview of their urban contexts more generally.

**Somalia and the Somali diaspora**

Present-day Somalia does not have an internationally recognized centralized government. This has been the case since 1991, when the central government collapsed, and a civil war began. Today, Somalia is ranked the world’s second most fragile state. Approximately 1.5 million people or 15% of the Somali population are living outside the Somali region in search of greater security and stability (Kleist, 2018). Often, global media coverage of Somalia and the Somali diaspora highlights the presence and roots of the international violent extremist group al-Shabaab.

Migration at the worldwide level has been increasing in the past several decades, rising from 101 million people (2.3% of global population) in 1980 to 243 million (3.3% of global population) by 2015 (International Organization for Migration, 2018). Globally there is a growing backlash to migration taking place under the purported umbrella of security concerns. Margaret Walton-Roberts and Jenna Hennebry examine this phenomenon in Europe by pointing to the European Union’s approach to border control as intrinsic to good governance. Walton-Roberts and Hennebry discuss how these policies extend beyond the borders of the EU states and into the realm of foreign policy via attempts to stem immigration at its source (Walton-Roberts & Hennebry, 2014). They also examine how these policies are translated to the neighborhood level. This echoes McDowell and Wonders’ point about how security concerns of the border play out at the neighborhood level where people of non-European ancestry live. The combination of these two studies supports the notion that *technologies of control* are being deployed by the state and citizens alike toward groups easily identified as minorities in European cities, including Stockholm. There is a symbiotic relationship between these policies and the publicness of space, if the publicness of space is understood to be a symbolic representation of inclusion and exclusion from broader societal contexts. Such policies are not isolated to Europe, as the EU takes a “carrot and stick” of granting non-EU states and actors’ access to certain resources in exchange for supporting restrictive migration policies to the EU in the name of security (Geiger, 2014).
harassment and xenophobic treatment in Kenya and Sweden by both law enforcement and non-Somali community members often seems to be justified by security concerns and can come to be considered acceptable by society at large. Manifestations of this in public space could mean a stop-and-frisk of a young man of Somali ethnicity by law enforcement officials, warranted simply by this young man’s existence in a public space, or the discomfort and bag-clutching of fellow riders on public transport upon the entry of an ethnically Somali woman in hijab into this shared space. The comparative nature of my study adds evidence to the claim that the deployment of these technologies is not one that is isolated to a single continent or hemisphere – they are clearly present globally.

The Somali community in Kenya

Eastleigh is situated in the Nairobi metropolitan area, as part of Nairobi County. Nairobi’s crime rates in past years has earned it the nickname “Nai-robbery” but the reality of life on the ground does not fit the stereotypical image of a crime-ridden, underdeveloped sub-Saharan metropolis. Many of Nairobi’s roads, including some in Eastleigh, are paved and have sidewalks, making both driving and walking safe means of transport in many areas, though there are still numerous sprawling slums and informal settlements within the city. The city – and country – are often associated with corrupt government practices, which often manifest or occur in public spaces and threaten their publicness; Kenya is ranked 143 out of
180 on the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency Index, 2018). While policy-makers may have the law on their side when it comes to providing and maintaining public amenities, including public space, corruption remains intractable and “land grabbing” of public spaces is a recurrent issue.

The Somali population in Nairobi is not in many ways foreign at all to Kenya overall. In fact, Somali-Kenyan is one of the over 50 ethnicities officially recognized by the government of Kenya (Lochery, 2012). The Northern Frontier District of Kenya, just alongside the border with Somalia, is the historical home of an ethnically Somali population; their residence there is the product of a colonial division of territory in the 1963 by the British rather than an ethnic or geographical division inherent to the region (Respondent 1, 2018). The people from this district share much with their Somali-born counterparts, including language and culture. Nonetheless, Kenyan-Somalis may or may not feel connected to Somalia and the Somali nation. My Kenyan-Somali research consultant in Nairobi explained, “Who would be proud to be associated with a country that is almost a failed state? Just who?” (Research Consultant, 2018). The second primary origin of Somali community members in Kenya is Somalia itself. Since the outbreak of civil war in the 1990s, many Somalis have left their country in search of stability and security and have settled in Kenya. The routes this
group has followed vary greatly, with some crossing directly over the border with Somalia, others coming from via other countries in the region such as Ethiopia and Sudan, many passing through the refugee camps within the country near Kenya’s borders such as Kakuma and Dadaab (which currently holds the status of being the world’s largest refugee camp). Many Somalis of Somali origin in Kenya hold tenuous legal status in the country. Even with legal asylum or refugee status an individual’s identification may disregarded or confiscated by law enforcement authorities outside of camps as one-off results of frisking on the street, or as the result of larger raids by security forces One of the places best known for its immigration raids and harassment of Somalis in the name of border control and security is the neighborhood of Eastleigh, Nairobi (Respondent 1, 2018).

Socially recognized ethnic distinctions – as well as prejudice – are certainly present in present-day Kenya and there can be a distinct stigma associated with Somali ethnicity. Despite being Kenyan citizens, there are often reports of Kenyan-Somalis being deported from the Northern Frontier District to Somalia, indicating that the central government of Kenya treats Kenyan-Somalis as cultural or ethnic outsiders in their own country. This is compounded by a world-wide wave of Islamophobia directed toward Somalis among other Muslim-majority ethnicities (Gallup, 2016). Negative media coverage of people of Somali ethnicities has stoked ethnic prejudice in the wake of attacks on both Kenyan military and civilians by al-Shabaab, a Somalia-based fundamentalist militant group. Attacks by these violent extremists have had repercussions for the entire ethnically Somali population living in Kenya, whether Somali by birth or Kenyan-Somali, including harassment by law enforcement authorities, non-Somali Kenyans, and the media.

Since the 1990s, Somali-born Somalis seeking improved security and economic opportunity have been moving to Eastleigh, now nicknamed “Little Mogadishu” (Carrier & Lochery, 2013). The Somali presence in this suburb of Nairobi dates to the 1920s, but it intensified rapidly in the wake of the collapse of the Somali central government. Not only have Somali people congregated there, but so has Somali capital too: as Mogadishu ceased to be a safe or profitable place to invest, Somali investors looked elsewhere, and found in Nairobi an attractive option that offered proximity to their home country and a growing economy of its own. Today, Eastleigh houses over 40 malls and commercial centers and a residential population estimated to be near 330,000, with another approximate 120,000 individuals who visit the neighborhood to shop during the day (Respondent 6, 2018). It is estimated that the area’s economy brings in around US$200 million a week, according to a member of the Eastleigh Business Community (Respondent 6, 2018).
Eastleigh’s popularity as a commercial destination has fluctuated over the last five years or so in the wake of multiple al-Shabaab grenade attacks that al-Shabaab in 2013 and 2014. The fallout from these attacks has resulted in immigration raids conducted by Kenyan security forces, compounding the atmosphere of mistrust and fear. The terrorist attacks in this sense had two-fold consequences for the community: there was the fear of public spaces related to the potential of terror attack, and then also the fear of law enforcement authorities who target the community in the name of responding to these attacks. Positive measures of publicness were unimaginable, yielding a highly marginalized and excluded community. Eastleigh has managed an incredible recovery and today is crowded and busy. However, there are still traces of the diminished publicness resulting from the terror attacks and subsequent security measures taken afterwards. Their specific manifestations within the terms described by Low are outlined below.

The Somali community in Sweden

Rinkeby, part of the Rinkeby-Kista District, sits in the outskirts of Stockholm, Sweden’s capital. Stockholm is known as being extremely safe and ranks 7 out of 180 on the Corruption Perception Index. The nation is considered both legally and socially rule-driven.
Like Rinkeby, some of its surrounding areas have reputations as enclaves of foreign-born populations, though Rinkeby is the area known best for its Somali community in particular.

People of Somali ethnicity have been coming to Sweden to pursue economic and educational activities since the 1970s. However, the majority of ethnic Somalis came to Sweden following the year 2006, 15 years after the start of the civil war in Somalia. The Swedish government’s official refugee resettlement policies focus on curbing the development of ethnic ghettos and concentrations and so the settlement of Somali asylum seekers and refugees was initially dispersed to smaller cities and towns. As one respondent put it, moving to these smaller towns is an asset since it allows newcomers to Sweden to develop Swedish language skills and “learn that you have nothing in common with the others there” (Respondent 14, 2018). Starting in the early 2000s, the Somali community has clustered in Sweden’s urban centers as well as in a few smaller towns such as Borlänge (Respondent 14, 2018). The place best known in the public sphere as a Somali stronghold is Rinkeby, which has also earned the nickname “Little Mogadishu” (Respondent 17, 2018).

Rinkeby, initially its own entity before being incorporated into Stockholm City, is the product of a Swedish mid-century construction push known as “miljonprogrammet”, or the million-home program. The lifestyle and dimensions required by the average Swedish family
was rigorously examined to develop ideal measurements for a household, looking at everything from the size of a bathtub to the layout of the kitchen to the number of rooms needed. Essentially, these towns were predicated on specific ideas of equality, behavior in public spaces, and how one should act as a Swedish citizen (Mack, 2017). They became physical manifestations of Swedish culture and welfare state. The trappings of a mid-century Swede life are not entirely aligned with the reality of miljonprogrammet residents today. Even from the outset, the apartment blocks failed to attract the native-born Swedish masses; instead, they attracted and became associated with immigrant populations. The physical and social constructs underpinning miljonprogrammet developments have made it awkward for expressions of residents’ culture of origin to not be seen as threats to Swedish identity.

Since many of these areas are located on urban peripheries, their public spaces are not granted the same amount of attention and resources as those more central, following the trend in other European cities (Mandanipour, 2004). Crime is recorded as being higher in some of these urban peripheries, with Rinkeby garnering special attention in the media due to a leaked police report draft identifying it as one of the most dangerous areas in the country, leading the media to falsely report it as a “no-go zone” for emergency responders and public services (Sveriges Radio, 2017). Rinkeby does, in fact, have significantly higher than average gun crime, mainly targeted violence between individuals and groups or gangs of young men.

Rather than looking at systematic divestment, the problems arising in these areas are associated with the residents themselves. Miljonprogrammet areas are conceived of as “problem areas” in the Swedish public sphere. In the name of greater security for residents and the nation, technologies of control are deployed. The spatial ghettoization of immigrant communities, and the resistance by these communities to imposed expectations of behavior and culture have notably converged in Sweden. Previously, being from orten (literally meaning “the place”, but abbreviated from förorten, which means “the suburbs”) was seen as a negative marker, but in the hands of many residents of these areas this formerly derisive term is being destigmatized and reclaimed. This is exemplified in Aleksandra Ålund and Réné Léon Rosales’ case study of how post-migrant youth are channeling their frustration at systems of social subordination and cultural stigmatization into platzkamp (literally meaning “place struggle”), an activist struggle for greater self-determination and recognition within Sweden (Ålund & Rosales, 2017). And, in an echo of Low’s cautions about the threats to a flourishing society, privatization of space in has come to be seen as such a threat that it has ignited and bonded activists as documented by Nazem Tahvilzadeh and Lisa Kings (Tahvilzadeh & Kings, 2015). These multicultural miljonprogrammet areas and their means
of resistance might hold the key to a successfully multicultural Sweden, despite the stigma. As one respondent explains, “I applied for a job once where they asked me ‘What is your greatest asset?’ I said ‘That I am from Rinkeby. I have been trained to communicate and to understand people from every part of the world. I have that ability.’” (Respondent 16, 2018)

Somali people have grown to form nearly a third of the community in Rinkeby (Stockholmstad, 2011). Unlike Eastleigh, Rinkeby is primarily a residential area, though its center and a few popular streets contain businesses reflecting its diverse community, including a Somali butcher and grocer that attracts members of the Somali community from around the Nordic region. Some members of the Somali community have lived in Rinkeby for decades, others have been born and raised in Rinkeby, and others reside there temporarily with family or friends, experiencing it only by passing through. Regardless of the duration of their stay or familiarity with the Swedish context, all members of the Somali community in Rinkeby are subject to the expectations and norms around use of public space, and arguably, Swedish culture at large. These expectations, by and large, are negative and oppressive, though. A respondent who has lived in Sweden since he was an infant explained,

“If you are a refugee, you don’t have to get used to just a new language or justice system or new ethnicities. You have to get used to a new culture and it is very different. Sweden is the type of country where you will be a refugee and you will never become Swedish for the rest of your life.” (Respondent 16, 2018)

Though their experiences are not as often fatal or violent as in Kenya, Somali populations in Sweden certainly face ethnically and religiously motivated reproach and harassment as well. In Sweden too the media scapegoats people of Somali ethnicity, fostering prejudice toward them by fellow Swedish residents as well as by law enforcement authorities. Such treatment is not triggered by attacks by religious extremists (which would not justify the poor treatment of an entire ethnic group anyways), but is part of a larger wave of racism, xenophobia, and islamophobia in Sweden somewhat linked to political polarization and a swing toward the right (UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2018). McDowell and Wonders make the compelling argument that the technologies of control being deployed are effectively an extension of the border control in public space in Sweden as they carry out their everyday lives. Respondent 16 explained the position of Somalis in current Sweden by saying, “If you are a populist or radical politician, the best thing you can do is attack Somalis. With Islamophobes, you get points. You get Afrophobic points. You get
capitalist points.” (Respondent 16, 2018) The exclusion of Somali communities from public spaces is explicitly part of a campaign to exclude them from society at large in Sweden.

**Shared features across Somali communities in Nairobi and Stockholm**

Based on my onsite observation and background research in both cities, much of the day-to-day life of individuals in the Somali communities of Nairobi and Stockholm obviously differs based on the location and host country. Nevertheless, a significant portion of the Somali culture is common between these two locations, and there are even Somali individuals who move back and forth between them.

Both locations share Somali culture, including language, cultural heritage, cuisine, and social conventions. Many people in the Somali community that I met were also very mobile and well-traveled, with the diaspora providing abundant opportunity to visit or live in other areas of the world where members of this network and community can be found. This movement is partially in pursuit of safer and more comfortable living conditions than those found in Somalia or refugee camps, but others are simply out diasporic conditions. More precisely, an individual may have moved between areas of settlement by other members of the Somali diaspora, such Sweden, the US, the UK, Kenya, and the Middle East. Many respondents had lived in several neighborhoods, cities, or countries before their present residence in Eastleigh or Rinkeby, or casually traveled between these and other areas of Somali diaspora settlement (Respondent 1, 2018). Additionally, members of both communities, particularly those born in Somalia or whose parents were born in Somalia, spoke often of the ties to Somalia and the grief that accompanies having loved ones in areas still undergoing conflict. Respondent 16 said, “When I was growing up, my mom talking on the phone every day back with people in Somalia…Our elder generation – basically they are in Sweden, but mentally they are in Somalia, Baghdad or somewhere else.” (Respondent 16, 2018)
CASE STUDIES

The empirical evidence collected is a combination of interviews and observation, including participant observation. In order to perform interviews as well as to view and experience the public spaces of Eastleigh firsthand, I went to Nairobi from 12 to 24 May 2018. At the time of the research, I was based in Stockholm and visited Rinkeby between one and five times a week to perform interviews, attend events, and observe spaces from 25 April to 25 June 2018 (with the exception of the time I was in Nairobi). Through my interviews and observations, I developed close personal relationships, particularly with the two people who acted as my guides to Eastleigh and Rinkeby, respectively, and my time spent with them exceeded what was necessary to support my research. All spaces described in this section are as I experienced them and as they were described to me.

My observations are organized geographically by Eastleigh and Rinkeby, and sub-organized into the categories proposed by Low, with specific spaces in each location that seek to fulfill that opportunity: social, cultural, and economic relations; community and individual well-being; play and recreation; and social justice and democratic relations. Then threats posed to these opportunities by Low are then examined: privatization, securitization, social injustice, and lack of representation.

How methodology was applied

My time in Nairobi began with trying to find a research consultant who could assist in arranging interviews based on their own relationship to the community, as I did not have any personal connections to Eastleigh. Through a series of connections, I was introduced to two individuals, a researcher specialized in violent extremism and journalist, respectively. The researcher became my primary research consultant and the journalist agreed to be a respondent as well as to arrange one additional interview for my study. On 16 May, I visited Eastleigh for the first time and interviewed the journalist at Nomad Palace Hotel, after which we went for a short 30-minute walk around the neighborhood. The commercial nature of Eastleigh was abundantly clear, with shops lining the streets and four to six lanes car, motorbike, and hand-pulled cart traffic clogged the streets transporting stacks of goods, from mattresses to textiles to cleaning products. As a mzungu (the Swahili word for “lost traveler”, meaning an affluent, usually white foreigner), I received many curious stares and a few solicitations to buy goods at ground-floor shops in the neighborhood’s abundant malls. I did
not see any other mzungus the rest of my time there, though other mzungu researchers were occasionally referenced by respondents and others I encountered.

The next day I met my primary research consultant at Kilimanjaro Café, just down the street from Nomad Palace Hotel. In addition to arranging interviews with his Kenyan-Somali contacts living in Eastleigh, he provided transport around the city for our meetings, security, and even invited me to join him and his friends in the evenings. Our first day, we met one respondent at Nomad Palace Hotel, another in the Central Business District, and the last one at a gas station, where we did the interview from the car. Afterwards, I joined him and his friends at a hookah/shisha lounge, which was mainly some plastic furniture in an unpaved parking lot. The venue was illegal, in the wake of legislation six months prior banning hookah/shisha, but part-owned by a member of the police department, and an ideal location for unwinding from the day and being introduced to khat, the bitter leaves of a shrub that grows on the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula that is popularly used as a stimulant.1

The following day my interviews that day took place in the Nomad Palace Hotel, a radio station called Midnimo Studio located on the top floor of Nomad Palace Hotel, the BBC News Studio in Westlands, and law offices in the Central Business District. The next day was Friday, mosque day, and in lieu of interviews and working with Abdi, I went to the National Library, National Archive of Kenya, and Nairobi City Records Office to research some of Eastleigh’s history. The research consultant and I met again the following day for a tour of different public spaces. We started with the 11th street indoor football pitch, the Eastleigh Fellowship Centre, Eastleighwood, Awjama Arts Centre, and the Staerhe Boys School and Centre outdoor football pitch.

I met my research consultant the next evening after dark at Nomad Palace Hotel, where he picked me up his car to go look at popular post-mosque hangouts for drinking tea (the beverage of choice among members of the Somali community). I had thought that we would drive to the areas he suggested and get out of the car for tea, but he assured me that the appearance of a mzungu at this hour in Eastleigh would be unusual and possibly unsafe. Between the two streets we planned to see, 12th and Kipande Athumani streets, we drove down an unpaved road that was flooded with sewage water and at its far end, the car became stuck. The next 15 minutes as my research consultant, his friends, and passersby attempted to remove the car safely, was the only time I felt potentially unsafe in Eastleigh, but my fears

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1 Khat, while mild in its effect, is known to be abused and can create powerful psychological dependence, wreaking havoc and debilitating communities (Respondent 20, 2018).
were unfounded as the car was safely dislodged. As it was my last evening with the researcher and his friends, we celebrated by going back to the hookah/shisha lounge afterwards. My last day in Nairobi dedicated to research involved visiting areas outside Eastleigh including Nairobi’s public parks before flying out.

Unlike in Nairobi where my time was highly constrained, my research in Stockholm took place over the course of several months, from 25 April to 25 June. In addition to performing the 10 interviews, particularly toward the end of my study, I spent much of my free time with the people I had interviewed. Between interviews and events, I visited Rinkeby to observe daily life there and familiarize myself with spaces. This included a visit with my advisor, Dr. Aseem Inam, and KTH urbanism professor Dr. Elahe Karimnia. As a collective inquiry, we walked around different parts of Rinkeby.

My research began with an introduction to Respondent 20, a demokratikinnovator (the Swedish word for “democratic innovator”, an individual who broadens democratic political participation in a community) at Folkets Hus Rinkeby, the state-sponsored community center, by my advisor Nazem Tahvilzadeh. Respondent 20 and I first met on 9 May 2018 to discuss the direction of my research with her colleagues. Prior to my departure for Nairobi, Respondent 20 organized for me to meet with a Kenyan-Somali woman from Eastleigh and prominent member of the Somali community in Stockholm. This woman was the first of many connections I would find between these two sites and provided guidance on how the two communities might be compared.

Following my return, I set up interviews with Respondent 20 and friends of the woman to which she had introduced me. One of respondents I met at her workplace in Rinkeby. Another met me at an iftar (the break of fast at the end of the day during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan) event with at Folkets Rinkeby that included a meal to break fast and panel discussions with local politicians. The woman hosting this and two other iftar events at Folkets Rinkeby during Ramadan was a friend of Respondent 20’s and program manager at a large nongovernmental organization who allowed me to interview her offices outside Rinkeby. Two more of their friends agreed to be interviewed, with each one spending additional time with me in Kista Galleria and Rinkeby Centrum, the public spaces in and around Rinkeby where they spend time. Respondent 20’s colleague and fellow demokratiksinnovator broke fast with me one night during Ramadan for his interview and his friend, also a program manager at Radda Bärnen, met me at his office in Folkets Rinkeby. One of the young women I interviewed who had grown up in Rinkeby spent the day with me
walking around the neighborhood, stopping in local Somali restaurants and shops, where I met another respondent, a shop owner, who I interviewed in his business.

**Summary of respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location of birth</th>
<th>Location of residence</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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<td>Respondent 20</td>
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<td>Djibouti (city), Djibouti Region, Djibouti</td>
<td>Solna, Stockholm County, Sweden</td>
<td>Democratic innovator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eastleigh, Nairobi

As mentioned above, Eastleigh is known as a commercial zone. With dozens of malls, the prospect of profits when investing in commercial real estate, and poor regulatory enforcement, public space is hard to come by within the neighborhood. What public space exists may be a dangerous space for refugees or undocumented migrants (or those who resemble them) to occupy due to high levels of surveillance by law enforcement officials. Greater Nairobi is accessible by private auto or public transport, and those who are able and comfortable doing so often elect to leave in order to spend leisure time in public spaces. However, there are also grassroots efforts and organizations that are carving out public spaces for the community to serve often specific, vital functions.

Below, I will detail various public spaces and the experiences recounted to me by my ten respondents. As seen through the description below, my observations in Nairobi were constrained by time, to some extent, my demographic as a white female.

Social, cultural, and economic relations

As a highly commercial neighborhood, Eastleigh excels in economic relations. This is seen as a positive by many community members because it highlights the positive contribution of the Somali community to the Nairobi and Kenyan economies. For example,
Respondent 4 says, “Eastleigh is a business hub that generates income for the local government.” (Respondent 4, 2018) This refrain was common among respondents who hoped for the Somali community to be framed in the public imagination differently than past narratives that focused on al-Shabaab (Respondent 7, 2018). Business has also had the secondary effect of giving the Somali community leverage in political affairs as the result of their sizable economic contributions to the region. The business community has used this clout to address issues related to the quality of space, such as public garbage collection, and has even pooled funds to add green touches to the neighborhood. Respondent 7 said, “If [Eastleigh business owners] aren’t happy… they close their businesses and go to the streets with placards.” (Respondent 4, 2018) Another effect of Somali business owners’ prominence is the literal visibility of their businesses – the streets of Eastleigh are lined with a variety of goods, among which items specifically for the Somali community are proudly and prominently displayed.

There are obviously drawbacks to this level of commercialization with implications for publicness, which are further discussed in “Privatization”. One particular site that highlights the grey zone between the positive and negative parts of this commercialization is the **Social Hall Mall and Business Centre**, which sits on top of land that formerly belonged

![Social Hall Mall and Business Centre](image1)

![The community space inside Social Hall Mall](image2)
to a social hall (i.e. community center) that the developer “grabbed”, according to multiple sources within the community (Respondent 4, 2018). While this type of land appropriation is reportedly common in Eastleigh, but in an unexpected twist, the government acted in this particular case. The solution was agreed upon between the government and developer that a social hall needed to be provided within the mall and so the fourth floor on the mall’s top an open space about 500 square meters, punctuated by 20 to 30 columns. In the southwest corner, there are bathrooms and in the northwest corner, a radio studio for a station called Key FM. The space also has access to a wraparound balcony that overlooks Eastleigh’s main shopping. During my visit, there were community members of Somali and non-Somali ethnicity using it as a passage, a backdrop for a photo shoot, and a hangout. I was informed that the space formerly included a weight-lifting gym but fights continually broke out, possibly in linkage to amphetamine use, so it was removed. The space is used as a mosque on Fridays, as many of the mosques are too small to accommodate the large groups of worshipers during popular prayer times.

One respondent, a former member of the formal Eastleigh Business Community, brought up Social Hall Mall as an example both of the problems that plague Eastleigh in the face of corruption, such as unpunished land grabbing, as well as a “dynamic model that can be replicated” (Respondent 6, 2018).

Places with noncommercialized representations of Somali culture and collective memory are hard to come by. However, there are two organizations with dedicated spaces – both located within malls – that seek to change this. One is Eastleighwood, a youth- and media arts-focused community center. Sadly, it was closed the day I visited, and the staff were unable to accommodate my visit during the rest of my time there. However, it was referred to by my respondents frequently as an important resource to the community, both as a physical space in which Somaliness is celebrated, but also as a vehicle for representing Somali culture positively to the outside world through its media products. A second space that offers resources to
the community on Somali culture, as well as additional creative programming, is **Awjama Arts Centre**, a small non-governmental organization dedicated to preserving and educating the community about Somali heritage by hosting events, programming, and publishing materials. Its motto is “Inspiring culture and creativity” and has been open to the community since 2013 (Respondent 10, 2018).

The space is about 200 m² and located on the third floor of Tansim Mall on 1st Avenue, though occasionally it hosts events in larger spaces, mainly outside of Eastleigh. Regular programming includes a Somali language and arts for children during school holidays, twice weekly English classes for adults, and an elderly-youth bridging social event once a week. The reading room is open and is regularly used by students as a quiet place to study – at least when the summer camp is not taking place. The Centre additionally supports events, such as the annual Somali Heritage Week which takes place in Nairobi’s Central Business District. When asked for visibility of Somali culture and heritage in Eastleigh, nearly all respondents mentioned Awjama, though few of them had spent meaningful time in the space, with the exception of the volunteer I interviewed there on-site. Nonetheless, it was cited as an important cultural resource to the community; for instance, one respondent said, “[At Awjama], you can get every answer about Somali culture.” (Respondent 9, 2018)

The young volunteer at Awjama, Respondent 10, gave me a tour and elaborated on his introduction to the Centre through a photography class. When talking about other Eastleigh residents his age group (late adolescence), he said “Usually in the mornings they go to play football. During the day they work at shops. Others, they idle around. I have seen so many of my classmates [become] drug addicts idling around. I think Awjama kept me from that.” He explained that nonetheless the Centre has a mixed reputation in the community:

> “When I started volunteering here, my cousin said, ‘Why are you working for them? You know they are getting a lot of money and not giving you anything.’… a lot people believe wrong ideas about the Centre. They believe that you volunteer, [Awjama] will gain a lot of profit and you will not be given anything.”
He has high hopes in Awjama’s future “I think if [Awjama] had a bigger space and was on the ground floor, maybe it would be more popular” (Respondent 10, 2018).

**Community and individual well-being**

There are few places dedicated to community and individual well-being in Eastleigh according to respondents. For adults looking after their physical health, there are some private gyms to select from and some male respondents also reported using the streets to run or jog in regularly (Respondent 1, 2018). However, it seemed that prospects of spaces to pursue physical well-being were reduced for women in particular, as dedicated “women’s hours” at gyms were restricted and using streets to exercise is not considered a socially and culturally appropriate option for them.

One space dedicated to community and individual well-being, as well as developing cross-cultural understanding, is the **Eastleigh Fellowship Centre**, a Kenyan Mennonite-sponsored project founded to foster better relations between the Christian and Muslim communities residing alongside one another in Eastleigh (Bobo, 2014). It is gated, but not locked, and charges an entry fee of 50 Ksh (5 SEK) which is paid to administrative staff upon entry and which significantly compromises its publicness. The physical barriers to entry speak to the lack of safety and security offered in the open spaces and streets in Eastleigh, further discussed below. The Centre holds many spaces: a recreation hall for events, a library, classrooms, mirrored exercise studio, an open gymnasium, a weight-lifting space, offices, and classrooms. It offers classes and seminars and the recreation hall is open to the community to rent for events. While it is the closest thing to what one might traditionally consider a community center that offers resources for community and individual well-being, it was not mentioned by any respondents as a significant landmark in the domain of public spaces in Eastleigh.

The sign for Eastleigh Fellowship Centre

The view onto Eastleigh 1st Avenue from a mall
As a highly commercial zone, there are not many dedicated spaces for play and recreation, particularly for children. The main street, Eastleigh 1st Avenue, is largely devoid of children apart from those who are held on to by a parent or guardian. On parallel streets and those that offshoot from the main street, children can be found playing outside, though play spaces are not particularly safe and offer no specialized accommodation for children. These spaces offer some reprieve from the hustle and bustle of Eastleigh 1st Avenue, but most respondents reported leaving Eastleigh when looking for relaxation, reflection, or retreat.

However, no neighborhood in Nairobi would be complete without a few football pitches. The first one I visited is the 11th street indoor football pitch, a government-sponsored space. When I visited, it was the first week of Ramadan and 10 male players were on the field accompanied by one referee for a 30-minute scrimmage match. The building is ware-house style, with all doors and ventilation openings covered by nets and metal bars. The front entry for players is padlocked as well, with a fee charged to each team that plays by a person managing the property. The space includes an elevated viewing area and administrative office, reachable by stair. The space is open to all community members to
watch matches, though players using the field must pay Ksh\(^2\) 1000 per team (approximately 100 SEK\(^3\)).\(^4\)

Another option within Eastleigh is the **Starehe Boys Center and School Football Field** is an outdoor football pitch located on the property of the government-sponsored Starehe Boys Center and School. However, the school leases the field to a private developer, who has enclosed and locked the space, renting it to local teams that are willing to pay 1500 Ksh per team (150 SEK). The field is removed from the busy center of Eastleigh and is synthetic turf rather than grass. When I visited, the field was staffed by two friendly men who remove the padlock to let me look around in exchange for a small fee.

Next door to Starehe is a girl’s field at Pumwani Girls Secondary School, where a tournament was being held the day I visited. This field is open, though surrounded by a fence, and appeared to host several matches possibly as part of a tournament. My escort was not sure if the field is usually open to the public or only to students or for pre-arranged matches.

While popular with youth, these spaces did not figure significantly into the daily experiences described by the respondents I interviewed in Nairobi, who were all over the age of 20. Problematically, these locations are also reportedly target sites of drug sales to youth, diminishing the ability of the spaces to contribute positively to the community (Research Consultant, 2018).

For adults, a popular pastime for both men and women of Somali or Kenyan-Somali origin that came up repeatedly throughout interviews was going for tea at “hotels”. “Hotels” is a term that covers both restaurants and establishments providing overnight accommodation, which often have restaurants within them. **12th street** is popular among all respondents,

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\(^2\) Kenyan Shillings

\(^3\) Swedish Kroner (crowns)

\(^4\) I was requested to leave by the manager of this space, who said that saying a British researcher had come to his workplace with youth before and police raided it the next day shutting it down for a month. My research consultant speculated that the request to leave may have been prompted by illicit business that takes place there, such as the sale of drugs to youth.
though particularly among Kenyan-Somalis, who frequent it throughout the week and especially on weekends or around prayer times, as there are several mosques in the adjacent streets. Ground-floor cafes can be found all up and down the street with awnings and plastic chairs facing the street placed outside. With only one of my exception, the respondents I spoke with all spent a substantial amount of their free time here.

**Kipande Athumani Street** is known for being more popular among Somali-born neighborhood residents and is more popular during the day and has a few cafes, though they are mostly indoors with little visible presence from the outside. It is less crowded during the evenings as the result of plainclothes police presence and the threat of harassment of people with refugee or undocumented status by law enforcement officials.

**Social justice and democratic relations**

While Nairobi more broadly has a history and several important legacies of protest culture, congregating for collective political action is not common in Eastleigh. Though it is not a place where the public generally goes to seek redress of grievances, Awjama Arts Centre also offers political workshops for youth around election time. Public political protest in Nairobi, though, is frequently met with violence from opposition groups and law enforcement authorities. A few respondents suggested that around election times, some political events take place in Eastleigh’s public high school, though it was not available to visit. One notable exception to this was the reports of business owners taking to Eastleigh 1st Avenue to protest, protected by their status as important economic contributors, though their interests are not always aligned with other residents of the neighborhood, as explained later. Some respondents said the streets are where political rallies and meetings take place, though this only during election cycles (Respondent 3, 2018).

**Privatization**

While the commercial success of Eastleigh offers some benefits, it also comes with a myriad of drawbacks that threaten the publicness of any and all spaces. The commercial nature of Eastleigh doesn’t always make it a pleasant space to recharge, as Respondent 7 explains: “When I have a day off, I go to other places… Mostly because I’ve been here the whole week. The environment here is so crowded. I would rather go to an open place with nature and trees.” (Respondent 7, 2018) Respondent 9 agrees, saying, “If you go to Eastleigh, business has taken over. You don’t even get people walking. There’s no walk path. The traffic and matatus block the road… There is no public space.” (Respondent 9, 2018) In addition, the
value of land has increased dramatically in recent years, resulting in “land grabbing” or the illegal occupation of land by businesses. Respondent 7 says, “Land grabbing is very rampant… It is not ok. Usually the land that has been grabbed belongs to a poor individual or to the government.” (Respondent 7, 2018) Respondent 5 echoes this, lamenting that, “In Eastleigh, all our public spaces were grabbed. All we have now are school grounds.” (Respondent 5, 2018) Not everyone believes this story, though, and Respondent 9 offered a dissenting opinion: “The land grabbing is very minimal. Kenyans have been very active on social media… Not any land developer can come in and grab land because he knows there are forces to face.” (Respondent 9, 2018)

Regardless of the truth behind “grabbed” lands, it is clear that there is little public space available, and what little there is has had its publicness compromised, as the result of Eastleigh’s hyper-commercialization.

**Securitization**

In Eastleigh, there are some high-profile threats to public safety. One is that posed by al-Shabaab in the form of terror attacks, which were once common in the neighborhood several years ago. Another is the gangs whose rivalries can result in violent crime and who are guilty of organizing petty crime against residents. However, what loomed most in the mind of respondents was the state’s response to these threats in the form of a security apparatus that imposes greatly on residents. While the positive impact of security measures in the wake of the terrorist attacks cannot be negated, the continued deployment of *technologies of control* and the limitations on publicness they have generated is essential to acknowledge.

The particular *technologies of control* used in the name of securing public space are often tied to police corruption, and even violence. Specifically, many respondents felt that police target people of Somali ethnicity without cause, demanding identification and attempting to solicit bribes from those who are undocumented or unaware of their rights, such as newly arrived refugees from Somalia. This makes the occupation and even passing through
of public space a potentially hazardous activity, though the police have also been known to carry out more extensive immigration raids throughout the neighborhood in people’s homes. The premise of one fatal encounter between the police and a member of the notorious Superpower gang was questioned and even labeled a potential “extrajudicial killing” (RT, 2017).

According one respondent, the relationship with the police has shifted in a positive direction more recently, though, as the approach to security has changed. Respondent 5 explains, “Before, police came to source [bribes]…They used to come and extort money, but now 90% has changed. Even police have changed – they are now in plainclothes and they don’t harass refugees.” (Respondent 5, 2018) He even says the legacy of the terrorist attacks is that Eastleigh is “safest place in Nairobi” due to the number of undercover law enforcement officials on the streets (Respondent 5, 2018). This is partially due to multiple efforts by Respondent 5 and others who are working within community organizations to improve the relationship between residents and the police. Another respondent leading one such initiative offered a sympathetic perspective: “Of course, there are a few officers that are good, but then a lot of them are corrupt. I don’t blame them that much… Corruption is something very deep rooted and that comes from their poor pay and welfare.” (Respondent 9, 2018)

His nongovernmental organization is collaborating with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on improving the relationship between the police and residents as part of an project to address the root causes of violent extremism in the region.

One of the alternatives Low offers to securitization is community policing, which has been explored in Eastleigh. At one point in a particular area, a Tanzanian model for community policing on the scale of every 10-households called “Nyumba Kumi” was piloted (Respondent 3, 2018). Another respondent said the exploration of community policing was short-lived, though he hopes similar initiatives can be taken up in the future (Respondent 7, 2018).

Social injustice

There are many layers of social injustice in Eastleigh and many are inextricably linked to one another. One cross-cutting factor that was repeatedly mentioned was targeted exclusion of members of the Somali community through cultural, social, and bureaucratic institutions,

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5 Kenyan police make as little as 18,000 Ksh (approximately 1,800 Kr) per month, on which it is extremely difficult to support a family (Bizna Kenya, 2018).
which manifest in the publicness of space; this was described in relative terms to other ethnic groups in Kenya that do not have such “foreign” appearances, as described by Respondent 1 (Respondent 1, 2018); they feel excluded from being able to take on Kenyan identities based on the treatment they receive in public space.

Kenyan-Somali Respondent 8 says, “I feel Kenyan all the time.” (Respondent 8, 2018). Respondent 7 proudly claims, “This is my country, this is where I am from. This is where my grandfather was born, my great-grandfather was born. I am not asking for permission [to be here].” (Respondent 7, 2018) However, not all Kenyans projected this same view and were often ignorant of Kenyan-Somalis, assuming that all ethnically Somali people are from Somalia and treating them as foreigners in public spaces such as on transportation. Respondent 7 says she has often had to explain to people, “I’ve never been to Somalia. Even my mother has never been to Somalia.” (Respondent 7, 2018) Another specific way in which many respondents mentioned experiencing this kind of exclusion was through encounters with law enforcement authorities soliciting bribes or singling them out for harassment. Similar treatment may take place when seeking government services, where one respondent claims Somali refugees face longer waits for services such as identity cards as the result of intentional exclusion (Respondent 1, 2018).

Corruption is another barrier to social justice that was a concern of respondents all the way up the chain of authority, though they did not feel that this necessarily targets the Somali community. Generally, respondents were not optimistic about the prospect of public space being provided or the publicness of existing spaces being expanded so long as bureaucratic corruption prevents the application and enforcement of laws, regardless of ethnicity.

**Lack of representation**

As mentioned previously, dedicated spaces of democratic expression and protest do not really figure into the current landscape of spaces in Eastleigh, and those that are used for this purpose only do so during key points of the election cycles. The one exception that was mentioned is when the political interests at stake are those of the business community. This can problematic when the interests of the business community are at odds with more marginalized groups within the neighborhood. One element of public space that the business community of Eastleigh took issue with was the informal economy taking place outside their doors through street vendors. The business community framed informal vending as compromising the quality of public space by overcrowding it. Ultimately, informal vendors
were cleared forcibly and not without controversy within the Eastleigh community (Respondent 1, 2018).

The lack of platform available for street vendors is not a unique instance in Eastleigh and there remains the important opportunity for publicness of space to expand to offer functions related to political representation on an ongoing basis.
Rinkeby, Stockholm

Rinkeby is a mainly residential area, thought its main square Rinkeby Torg is known for its commercial and social activity. There are other public spaces scattered throughout, including playgrounds between buildings and a ring of open fields surrounding the high-rise housing complexes.

Social, cultural, and economic relations

The main way in which the Somali community of Rinkeby creates visibility around its cultural identity is by occupying space. Whereas in many parts of Stockholm, it is unusual to see people, particularly adults, “hanging out” without partaking in some sort of commercial consumption, the opposite is true in Rinkeby. Additionally, unlike Eastleigh, where commerce is king, it is much harder for newcomers to Rinkeby (or even well-established residents) to start businesses. However, this is changing, and more establishments are opening by and for the Somali community in the neighborhood.

In regard to commerce offering a form of cultural visibility, Respondent 12 explains,

“The laws set in place are super tough [in Sweden]. You can’t start a business without going through bureaucracy and the atmosphere for new business owners is super difficult… Somalis cannot do what they usually do. But I am seeing a change now,
like on Rinkebystråket. Many businesses are Somali-owned. We are seeing progress, but we are not even near the goal.” (Respondent 12, 2018)

Business owners such as Respondent 18 have found business ownership to be an accessible means to transitioning into residency in Sweden. He and his brother co-own several shops in Rinkeby. The one I visited was adjacent to a residential parking lot, but he was proud to tell that another had recently opened on the higher-profile Rinkebystråket. Beyond shops, there is little visible in the built environment that indicates the cultural origins of Rinkeby’s residents, though there are some more ephemeral expressions. For example, Respondent 15 says, “Except at weddings, there are not [places where Somali culture is visible]…I’ve seen a lot of events where people are creating spaces for Somali culture to be celebrated. Almost all of them are in Rinkeby or Kista, because that’s the center of Somali culture in Stockholm.” (Respondent 15, 2018) She also laments the lack of spaces dedicated to Somali culture:

“In England or America, the Somali community is ahead of us, doing things before we even think about them… In Minnesota, there’s a museum for Somali culture and there’s a Somali Independence Day celebration. We don’t have that here. It’s because the differences of the [host] countries too.” (Respondent 15, 2018)

Respondent 19 concurs, saying, “It would be good if there were a place where people from outside who hear about Somalis only through the media could learn.” (Respondent 19, 2018) Respondent 20 in her capacity as an employee at the Folkets Hus has specific ambitions to increase the publicness of the space she works with in this respect: “In the Folkets Hus, I want to create interfaith rooms and a world space where we can celebrate each other’s differences in Rinkeby.” (Respondent 20, 2018) The Folkets Hus is the center of public life in many ways in Rinkeby and will be discussed further later.

Rinkeby’s centerpiece and main public center of culture, Rinkeby Torg, has already been the subject of master’s theses at KTH and is the first thing many Stockholmers bring up when the subject of Rinkeby arises (Fagerberg & Ziakouli, 2016). Stockholmers often comment on the conspicuous gender segregation of Rinkeby Torg, as the cafes lining the square are often

Locals spending time in Rinkeby Torg
dominated by men, while women generally use the square as a passage or congregate in less noticeable groups. One corner of Rinkeby Torg is also a common hangout area for Romani people.

The square is a well-maintained space and includes a permanent fountain and space for two street vendors, one of produce and the other of household goods. It is also used for temporary events when weather permits, such as local youth employed by the City of Stockholm setting up an informal hangout space, or a large screen showing World Cup games. There are many people having informal conversations, milling around, smoking cigarettes, talking with one another, letting their children chase pigeons, and passing through on their way to and from the stores and the underground metro. While it is clearly a popular hang-out among Rinkeby residents on the whole, only one of my respondents reported spending time here regularly (Respondent 16, 2018). This is partially due to the fact that many of my respondents are female and Rinkeby Torg is a largely male-dominated space. Respondent 20 explains, “The patriarchal structure of Somali culture is very visible in Rinkeby, especially in public spaces. It has become acceptable and normalized.” (Respondent 20, 2018) Respondent 15, another female respondent, echoed the sentiment, saying, “I like going to Kista if I want to have a coffee or a shop. I’m not a person who is afraid of going into these coffee shops [in Rinkeby], but I choose not to.” (Respondent 15, 2018) These variations in access based on gender speaks to the situated perspective through which publicness is experienced; different dimensions of one’s identity generate different relationships with the space, so publicness cannot be universalized even within a single ethnic community.
Community and individual well-being

Sweden’s welfare state includes generous financing for community and well-being spaces and activities relative to most other places in the world. The infrastructure of public spaces in Rinkeby caters to a range of ages, interests, and abilities, but according to those working within state-sponsored structures, it still fails to meet the standards of publicness required by the Somali community and other residents of Rinkeby.

The heart of publicness and community and individual well-being is arguably the **Folkets Hus**, a state-sponsored community center that was initially established in the 1980s. The last 10 years, it became a space where not all community members were welcome in the spaces, even when requested and under supervision. This is reportedly due to the person who was the chair of the board during that time who recently departed, making room for a regime change that is more open to the Somali community of Rinkeby (Respondent 20, 2018). There are several new staff who joined in the last year, many of whom grew up in the neighborhood and/or are part of the Somali community. At this point in time, the staff are trying to rebuild trust with the community within the limited constraints of their budget. They are holding regular events and meetings, such as parent support groups, sports event viewings such as World Cup games, panel discussions with local politicians, and religious-associated events such as breaking fast during Ramadan. It also houses local offices for Radda Bärnen (the Swedish branch of Save the Children), nonprofits, a family resource center, and cultural associations in the area. It offers more in terms of mental health resources than ones for physical health, though it also has some programming in that area as well.

Multiple of the study’s respondents work here every respondent reported coming to the Folkets Hus, many regularly. The respondents working at the Folkets Hus think it could to more for Rinkeby’s residents, enhancing its publicness, but that it is limited by its financial resources. As Respondent 20, a “democratic innovator” at the Folkets Hus explains, “The [main public space amenity] that exists today, Folkets Hus, doesn’t have the finances to deliver the ideas and vision that the people of Rinkeby has. Another public space wouldn’t make a difference because the space that exists is difficult to finance.” (Respondent 20, 2018)
Play and recreation

Another element of the Swedish welfare state’s sponsorship of outdoor recreation areas. Rinkeby is surrounded by Spångadalen, an expansive network of open spaces. It is split in some places by highways, whose expansion has been controversial among residents who feel encroached upon. Respondent 12 explained that the green areas are an essential feature of Rinkeby and might not be under threat in other parts of Sweden, saying, “That wouldn’t be a problem in a white area, but this is Rinkeby.” (Respondent 12, 2018) In addition to the highway expansion, some of this space is planned to be occupied by new housing, though there is an attempt to increase housing supply across many areas of the city and this is not specific to Rinkeby. It is common to see kids of a range of ages playing or mothers walking with strollers in the paved pathways through the fields during the day. Some areas of Spångadalen are where Romani people sleep at night and, according to Respondent 17, where kids go to do “bad things” beyond the view of watchful parents and guardians. She described occasional violent assaults, some of which target Romani community members, taking place in these areas (Respondent 17, 2018). Nonetheless, the green areas serve an important function to the community. Respondent 12 says, “I hope they keep the green areas… For the sake of the kids in Rinkeby and the sake of their health.” (Respondent 12, 2018)

Social justice and democratic relations

The Folkets Hus, yet again, is the locus of publicness in this area. Respondent 12 said that the orten are the most engaged segment of the population, with Rinkeby and its surrounding neighborhoods being some of the most active participants in politics from the local to national scale. Prior to the September 2018 elections, the Folkets Hus employed two community organizers as demokratikinovatör or democratic innovators. Both of them were respondents to this study, as were many people in their personal and professional network in Rinkeby who are interested in politics. On multiple occasions during my study, the Folkets
Hus hosted politicians and political candidates in events such as panel discussions and question-and-answer sessions. Additionally, Rinkeby Torg was also used for political events.

**Privatization**

As many of the services and spaces in Rinkeby are publicly provided and financed, privatization of space does not currently have an impact on the publicness of space. However, some respondents expressed concern about the private providers used to supply public services or fill gaps where the public sector is strained, such as in the domain of housing. As the public housing stock of Sweden requires renovations or new additions, private developers are increasingly being brought in who increase rents in a typical cycle of gentrification. This has happened in other areas similar to Rinkeby, as illustrated by Tahvilzadeh and Kings, and looms as a possibility in Rinkeby according to some respondents (Respondent 12, 2018).

**Securitization**

In Rinkeby, violence within the community has a toxic cyclical relationship with the securitization of space. Rinkeby is a known within Sweden for gang violence and is where many of the 245 shootings related to gang violence in Stockholm took place between 2015 and 2017 (Abdullahi, 2018). Multiple respondents, such as Respondent 16, brought up that no convictions were made after these killings, despite the identity of the perpetrators being common knowledge. He says, “Everyone from the community knows the names of who did it. They are outside. They are with us, walking among us. Eventually you start to feel unsafe because you start to think ‘Something can happen to me and nothing will happen to the person who did this.’” (Respondent 16, 2018). Like in Eastleigh, the gun violence of Rinkeby is targeted: “It’s very much if you’re in [the gang] world then you can get shot.” (Respondent 15, 2018). These acts are far from clandestine and happen in broad daylight and in public spaces such as Rinkeby Torg.

This is because the police are not seen by everyone in the community as an enhancement to
public safety. One respondent explained, “The police should be someone you can trust. In Rinkeby, it is the opposite. It’s very sad… [I feel] less safe when they are around… I feel like it’s not very safe to tell them anything. I don’t feel comfortable.” (Respondent 13, 2018). Some community members have had negative encounters with the police and word spreads. As Respondent 19 points out, “If you meet a good cop and a bad cop, you don’t remember the good cop.” (Respondent 19, 2018)

Respondent 14 pointed to the role of the media in stoking the fear of Rinkeby in Swedes from other parts of the country who ultimately become police in Rinkeby and other orten, who seek to protect themselves more than the areas’ residents; he asked, “Where are the immigrants’ police?” (Respondent 14, 2018). Respondent 16 notes that the poor relationship is not necessarily the responsibility of individual police officers: “I think it’s not their fault. This is a legislation issue.” (Respondent 16, 2018). Others blame the internal social dynamics of the police, such as Respondent 19, who says: “[The police] do their job. … You start a job with the intention of affecting the area you work with in a good way, but you meet coworkers who are tired and don’t give a fuck anymore and over time, you will be exactly like that coworker.” (Respondent 19, 2018)

Police brutality has effects beyond the fear of being its victim. Respondent 15, for example, says, “I’m worried more about witnessing police violence than being a victim myself… I get nervous when I see the police in Rinkeby. I think ‘Who is going to get harassed now?’” (Respondent 15, 2018). Rather than creating an aura of safety, securitization is a trigger for alarm, evidence of decreased publicness: “The more police officers in the area, the more unsafe people feel. Parents, young men, young sisters that feel like their brothers are being watched, or stopped, or searched.” (Respondent 20, 2018). Respondent 20 goes further, explaining that the police unconsciously posit themselves in a way that is antagonistic to the community:

“Instead of them walking around and creating dialogues, they are driving around in vans, which is keeping them at a distance from the people that live here. I’ve noticed every time a police van drives in, people’s body language changes… If they came by
foot or by bike and sat down with people to ask them how they are, the relationship would be stronger.” (Respondent 20, 2018)

As in Eastleigh, there are new conversations happening with the support of community organizations such as Förorten mot våld. One if its co-founders explains this organization’s multi-pronged approach:

“We have access to a conference room [Jarva Islamic Centre] and that’s where we usually meet and plan things. We have meetings, we have seminars, we have ‘folkbildning’ – translated into English, this is like trying to enlighten people. We give lecture on how [residents of places like Rinkeby] can affect decision-makers on the local level here in Rinkeby-Kista… We try to mix these things with poetry, music to fill the whole place.” (Respondent 12, 2018)

Förorten mot våld and other grassroots organizations are working alongside the Folkets Hus to create meaningful dialogue and action between the community, the police, and policymakers to improve this key relationships and stem future violence.

Social injustice

As in Eastleigh, there are many layers of injustice face by the Somali community in Rinkeby. Much of the indignation expressed among respondents regarding limitations on publicness and feelings of exclusion centered on the treatment of members of the Somali community compared to ethnically Swedish members of society. Multiple respondents brought up how they feel that they have hybrid Somali-Swedish (or Swedish-Somali, for example) identity, which they feel Swedes do not accommodate for culturally.

The behavior of ethnic Swedes in public place is an important indicator of this perceived irreconcilability between cultural identities. Respondent 15 says, “There’s a lot of staring in public spaces. After a while, you either get used to it or you stick to places where you don’t stand out.” (Respondent 15, 2018) Respondent 16 says, “I feel uncomfortable [around] Swedish people. I just don’t get them, and they become afraid when they see me… You can tell by how they look at you, how they speak to you, how they ask questions.” (Respondent 16, 2018) As a result, Respondent 16 says he is reluctant to leave the neighborhood, saying, “In Sweden, you will always feel that you are not Swedish… I like Rinkeby because I am someone here.” (Respondent 16, 2018) Respondent 20 echoed this sentiment, saying, “In Rinkeby, I don’t have to look behind me. In the rest of society, yes, because of white men. My clothing might ‘provoke’ them. My skin color might ‘provoke’
them. My gender might ‘provoke’ them because I choose to dress in a non-Western way.”
(Respondent 20, 2018)

**Lack of representation**

Despite the measures to promote democratic and political inclusion, many residents of Rinkeby, including many respondents to the study, feel like their voices are going unheard and that politicians negate to internalize their input and experiences. Rinkeby may have high levels of publicness in terms of ways to provide feedback on Swedish political processes and decisions, but what does it mean for publicness when that information is not considered?
DISCUSSION

Many of the experiences described to me were not specific to one particular space and were rather characteristics of the general experience of public space in Eastleigh or Rinkeby. There is no single truth about Eastleigh nor Rinkeby and the perspectives on issues are highly situated, intersectional, and multilayered, even contradictory. But, despite the many differences in the contexts of Nairobi and Stockholm, Low’s categorical functions and threats to the publicness of space retained significance across the two settings and, more importantly, they help limn critical ways in which publicness of space in imperiled for Somali migrants in both locations. The importance of each category, though, did fluctuate between Eastleigh and Rinkeby, and I would like to discuss the significance of these variances. Additionally, I put forward some areas of respondents’ experiences that this definition struggled to capture.

Low’s framework within a comparative structure

The framework of public space that supports a flourishing society is an appropriately flexible tool which provides useful a useful set of tools with which to measure the publicness of space.

In examining social, cultural, and economic relations, both formal and informal commerce is one way for a community gain visibility and social currency. Eastleigh demonstrates the perils of this going too far, by turning any potential publicness into a commodity, leaving very little behind and illustrating the type of privatization described as a threat by Low. However, Low’s definition falls short of recognizing the value of formal economy as a means of generating visibility and cultural capital particularly for marginalized groups. The struggle of residents in Rinkeby to own and operate small businesses, and their current success in surmounting bureaucratic obstacles is clearly an asset for the community. It is also a risk, though, that their commercial success ends up grooming the neighborhood for gentrification in the coming years, something residents are already cognizant of.

Community and individual well-being are highly valued in both Eastleigh and Nairobi, though Sweden’s welfare state and well-oiled bureaucracy clearly lends itself much more toward providing support systems for its residents in this area through means such as the Folkets Hus. It is critical that the Government of Kenya provide more spaces, services, and programming for community and individual well-being in the future, and ones that specifically address the needs of the Somali community (Mutiso, et al., 2018). While on a superficial level it may appear that Rinkeby’s community and individual well-being are fully
addressed, it is essential that the quality of programming be examined. Respondents in Rinkeby professionally and personally engaged with community issues continually brought up that what is being offered may not done so in a way that residents are receptive to or that substantively enhances their well-being; that which is being done may also not be enough or may face financial challenges in scaling to the level of demand at the community level.

The organized state apparatus in safeguarding the public safety in the name of community and individual well-being is the sometimes-extreme level of securitization imposed on residents, which seems to undermine its own objective of safety. Public safety means are conflated with an extension of border control and media narratives of Somali criminals and menaces in both locations support the use of technologies of control to the detriment of publicness and the community’s well-being. While the issue of corruption may confound some of the ways these technologies are deployed, it is essential that levels and means of securitization be addressed in the future for residents of Eastleigh and Rinkeby to be able to contribute to and be part of a flourishing society. Use of security measures to protect society at large from the Somali community rather than supporting the safety of the Somali community itself clearly has damaging and profound effects among individuals and at the community level across both Eastleigh and Rinkeby.

The publicness of play and recreation spaces is similarly important across both settings, but its value is more effectively demonstrated in Rinkeby where an abundance of play and recreation space is provided compared to nearly zero in Eastleigh. Respondents of Eastleigh are highly aware of this with one even choosing to send her daughter back to her home province elsewhere in Kenya and others declaring that they would certainly move outside of Eastleigh if starting a family (Respondents 3, 7 and 8, 2018). A neighborhood housing hundreds of thousands of people such as Eastleigh needs to offer more playspace for its children, something that the business community seems well-positioned to address by providing or leaving open playspaces and financing maintenance. Spaces where people of all ages can retreat, relax, and reflect in Eastleigh are also scarce, with all respondents leaving the neighborhood in search of greenspace. Even in Rinkeby, while play and recreation spaces are available, respondents highlighted the quality of programming as an area needing improvement.

In regard to social justice and democratic relations and the corresponding threats of lack of representation and social injustice, these measures must be highly contextualized to apply fairly. Kenya’s democracy is emergent and its existence is even debated, whereas Sweden has long claimed to be a frontrunner of democracy. When it comes to the inclusion
and political representation of Somali communities, though, both Eastleigh and Rinkeby have opportunities to improve. Eastleigh could use more dedicated spaces that embody publicness to nurture political participation in an ongoing way beyond supporting the goals of the business community. In Rinkeby, the physical structures and some institution support are present. However, respondents in Rinkeby brought up several times that, despite their participation and the publicness of the platforms provided to them, politicians do not substantially consider their input.

One thing in common across both places, though in different forms, are societal and institutional barriers preventing the full inclusion of Somali communities in accessing social justice. As mentioned before, there is a worldwide trend toward islamophobia which is weaponized against the Somali communities and manifested in a variety of ways in public space. In Eastleigh, the complex landscape of ethnicities in Kenya makes Somali one of many that is marginalized. However, respondents mentioned that many other Kenyans are ignorant of there being a Kenyan-Somali community and so often xenophobia toward Somali nationals is projected toward anyone of Somali ethnicity, including those who are Kenyan nationals. Regardless of the roots of prejudice, exclusion of Somali communities based on ethnicity in Kenya is a significant barrier to accessing social justice. Within the Swedish context, ethnicity is one layer of separation between Somali and ethnically Swedish communities, but race is another highly important variable in the perceptions that the Somali community are subject to and upon which their access to publicness is determined. As explained by Respondent 12, a Swedish-Somali respondent born to Kenyan-Somali mother and Somali father who has spent time in both Sweden and Kenya said, “Discrimination [in Sweden] is a lot worse than discrimination [in Kenya]. The Islamophobia, the Afrophobia [in Sweden] are super crazy.” (Respondent 12, 2018). Non-Somali occupants of public space behave in ways that serve to highlight the racial differences between themselves and members of the Somali community, the effects of which are reported by respondents to be psychologically damaging.

**Shortcomings and areas for further exploration**

The framework Low created in supports and threats to a *flourishing society* still left some areas of publicness and public space unexplored.

One physical construct that was difficult to fit into this structure is public transportation. Though it usually has a financial barrier to access, public transportation is also an essential element of creating publicness in any urban context. It serves a variety of the functions mentioned by Low, but perhaps was also difficult to include because of the
neighborhood-level focus of this study. Many respondents in both Eastleigh and Rinkeby mentioned public transportation in particular as an arena for their exclusion to be highlighted through the subtle and explicit behaviors of other passengers.

A less tangible construct that has a strong impact on the publicness of space is media representations. While bureaucratic structures were easy to fit into Low’s framework, the media plays an indispensable role in shaping ideas about space and creating hierarchies of publicness across different types of spaces serving different functions. Respondents in Eastleigh and Rinkeby alike continuously brought up how media representation impacted them personally and affected their access to public spaces.

In applying Low’s framework, it is also key to consider that each category she presents can be a box ticked by those in positions of authority over a space. This study attempts to capture the individual- and community-level experience of publicness; the quality of space and of its programming speak to the divergences in top-down perceptions and bottom-up experiences of publicness. In future studies, it is important to ensure a variety of vantage points are considered in applying this framework.

The factors Low outlines in this framework and the way they are experienced can be better evaluated by more comprehensive, systematic, or extensive research programs carried out over time.
CONCLUSION

Through this study I attempt to convey the level of publicness experienced by Somali communities in Eastleigh, Nairobi and Rinkeby, Stockholm through Setha Low’s framework of what supports and threatens a flourishing society. This framework is applied and situated in the discourse around migration, considering that many, though not all, members of the Somali communities in these two locations are part of a diaspora of people displaced by violence, conflict, and poverty in Somalia. Challenges faced by this community must therefore be understood as being related to Somalis as a minority group in both contexts, but also as a migrant group whose identity is tied to ideas about security and border control manifested in technologies of control. Prejudice against marginalized communities such these takes many forms, tangible and intangible, but this study attempts to clarify its manifestations in public space through community and individual experiences of publicness.

The findings of this study are that the spaces members of the Somali community use in both Eastleigh and Rinkeby do not meet the high standard of publicness put forward in Low’s framework and their needs related to public space are not met in full. There was also a notable trend among respondents of feeling that Somali communities experience less publicness in the spaces of Eastleigh and Rinkeby – and other areas of Nairobi and Stockholm– as compared to the general populations of these cities. Without a close study levels of publicness experienced by other groups in these cities, though, that is not possible to determine. This subject would be worthy of future study.

Through use of Low’s framework, this study has uncovered also that in the contexts of both Eastleigh and Rinkeby publicness is enhanced by spaces fulfilling a variety of functions for different groups. Despite their shortcomings in delivering publicness, the safety and comfort of Eastleigh and Rinkeby for members of the Somali community relative to spaces in greater Nairobi and Stockholm emerged as an important theme that merits further exploration. Further studies should also take a closer look at the intersectional nature of identities within the Somali community that nuance their experiences, including factors such as age, gender, sexuality, nationality, or income. I believe also future studies done on this subject could be carried out with greater efficiency and depth by members of the Somali community who can offer more situated insights based on their own experience and relate to research subjects in a different way than I am able to as an outsider.
Works Cited


Annex: Interview Questions

Socio-demographic profile

- What sex/gender? Age? What is your civil status?
- What is your locality of origin? Ethnicity?
- If foreign-born, what was the occupation in your country of origin? And what is it in your current country of residence?
- What is your level of education? Where did you study? Are you studying currently? What are you studying?

Socio-migratory profile

- How long have you lived in Kenya/Sweden? And in this neighborhood? What other places/neighborhoods have you lived and for how long?
- If foreign born, for what reason did you come to live in Kenya/Sweden? And to Eastleigh/Rinkeby?
- How long do you intend to live in Kenya/Sweden? And in Eastleigh/Rinkeby?
- Do you live with family members in Kenya?
  - Who? Family/spouse/children/cousins/others? How many? Did they come with you (at the same time or after)?
  - Do you live with acquaintances or friends in Kenya/Sweden? Are your friends of the same ethnicity? Did they come at the same time as you? Or are they from other places? (Where from?)

Social representations

- Are you often aware of being a person of Somali origin living in Kenya/Sweden? What types of things make you aware of this and how does it make you feel?
- What do you think Kenyans/Swedes think about people of Somali origin living in Kenya/Sweden?
- How do you feel about media portrayals of Somali people in Kenya/Sweden or of Eastleigh/Rinkeby? Are these portrayals accurate?

Time spent in public space

- What do you do in your non-working time? Do you spend it in Eastleigh/Rinkeby?
- In Eastleigh/Rinkeby, where do you usually spend your leisure time?
- How frequently do you go there? Do you usually go alone or with company (acquaintances/friends of the same ethnic origin/others)?
- Do you spend any free time outside of Eastleigh/Rinkeby?
- Do you ever feel uncomfortable in these places? What would make you feel uncomfortable in these places?
With whom do you usually spend your free time: People of your ethnic origin? People of national origin in this country? With both? With others?

**Additional questions (developed following first interview):**

- Are there free or public events that take place in Eastleigh/Rinkeby?
- What amenities are missing in Eastleigh/Rinkeby?
- Where do people express political protest?
- Do you feel secure in this neighborhood? Equally at home and on the street?
- Are the police helpful or harmful to Eastleigh/Rinkeby? Do they keep people safe?
- Is there enough space to “hang out” in public here?
- Are there spaces where Somali (and Kenyan-Somali) history is celebrated or visible?
- Do people care about the space around their business and homes in Eastleigh/Rinkeby?