

Young Somalians in Kristiansand, Norway: Transcultural Lives in the Diaspora

Øyvind Økland¹

¹Gimlekollen Media College, Intercultural communication, Kristiansand, Norway

oyvind.okland@mediehogskolen.no

Arjun Appadurai describes our transnational society by using five so-called *-scapes*, in which *ethnoscapes* and *mediascapes* are two of them (Appadurai 1996). By this he means that ethnicity and the media no longer are bound by space nor time, as they cross borders more frequently than before. The world has never seen more migration than today. In this situation the traditional concept of culture is challenged, and other concepts such as *transnationalism* and *diaspora* become central as well as *transculturalism*. This study discusses some of these concepts on the basis of recent fieldwork among young Somalians in Kristiansand, Norway and how they use media in navigating between media in the host country and media in their homeland.

Because of modern media, it is possible to hold the contact with their relations in their home country and other Somalians in other diasporas. This transnational flow of meaning has been in focus in recent research, and shows the significance of the homeland media.

This study focus on the young Somalians in Kristiansand, Norway. Due to the colour of their skin, their way of dressing, their muslim religion, they are distinct from the majority culture, and they have also been very much focused in the national media, very often in a negative way. This study builds on previous research, and looks at the communicational aspect of their lives. A main question is *how young Somalians in Kristiansand Norway communicate in a local setting, either as active participants or actors between the local society and their homeland and/or other Somalians in the diaspora*. The methods are basically in-depth interviews and focus group interviews.

Some of the results show that they are living in a tension between adopting to the Norwegian culture, and they use the Norwegian media to orient themselves in this landscape and, on the other hand, they orient themselves to the Somali culture. There are many factors that restrict them to fully be a part of the Norwegian society, be it language, religion or skin color. The media constantly reminds them that they are outside the good company.

In such a *transcultural* situation something new is created, and it is on such a complex media situation that the Somali youth must be understood.