

The Integration Challenges of Women Refugees in Sweden from Socio-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract : One of the major current societal issues of Swedish society is to integrate newcomer refugees well into the host society. The cultural integration issue is one of the under debated topic in the literature, and this study intends to meet this gap from the Swedish perspective. The purpose of this study is to explore the role and types of cultural landscapes of refugee women in Sweden and how these landscapes help or hinder the settlement process. The cultural landscapes are referred to as a set of multiple cultural activities or practices which refugees perform in a specific context and circumstances (i.e., being in a new country) to seek, share or use relevant information for their settlement. Information plays a vital role in various aspects of newcomers' lives in a new country. This article has an intention to highlight the importance of multiple cultural landscapes as a source of information (regarding employment, language learning, finding accommodation, immigration matters, health concerns, school and education, family matters, and other everyday matters) for refugees to settle down in Sweden. Some relevant theories, such as information landscapes and socio-cultural theories, are considered in this study. A qualitative research design is employed, including semi-structured deep interviews and participatory observation with 20 participants. The initial findings show that the refugee women encounter many information-related and integration-related challenges in Sweden and have built a network of cultural landscapes in which they practice various co-ethnic cultural and religious activities at different times of the year. These landscapes help them to build a sense of belonging with people from their own or similar land and assist them to seek and share relevant information in everyday life in Sweden.

Keywords : cultural integration, cultural landscapes, information, women refugees

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