

**Dr. Tamar Arev**

---

**The Hebrew University of  
Jerusalem**

# Consumption of Ethnic Goods:

The case study of Eritrean women in Israel

“The refugee consumer: paradoxes of integration in Everyday Life”  
International Conference at the University of Siegen

# Research aims

**1**

The place of the consumer goods in preserving / challenging existing social order

**2**

The manner in which object serves as a social mediator in refugee mobility between different circles of belonging at the host society

**3**

The use of the object as a political instrument that undermines rigid national-class demands.

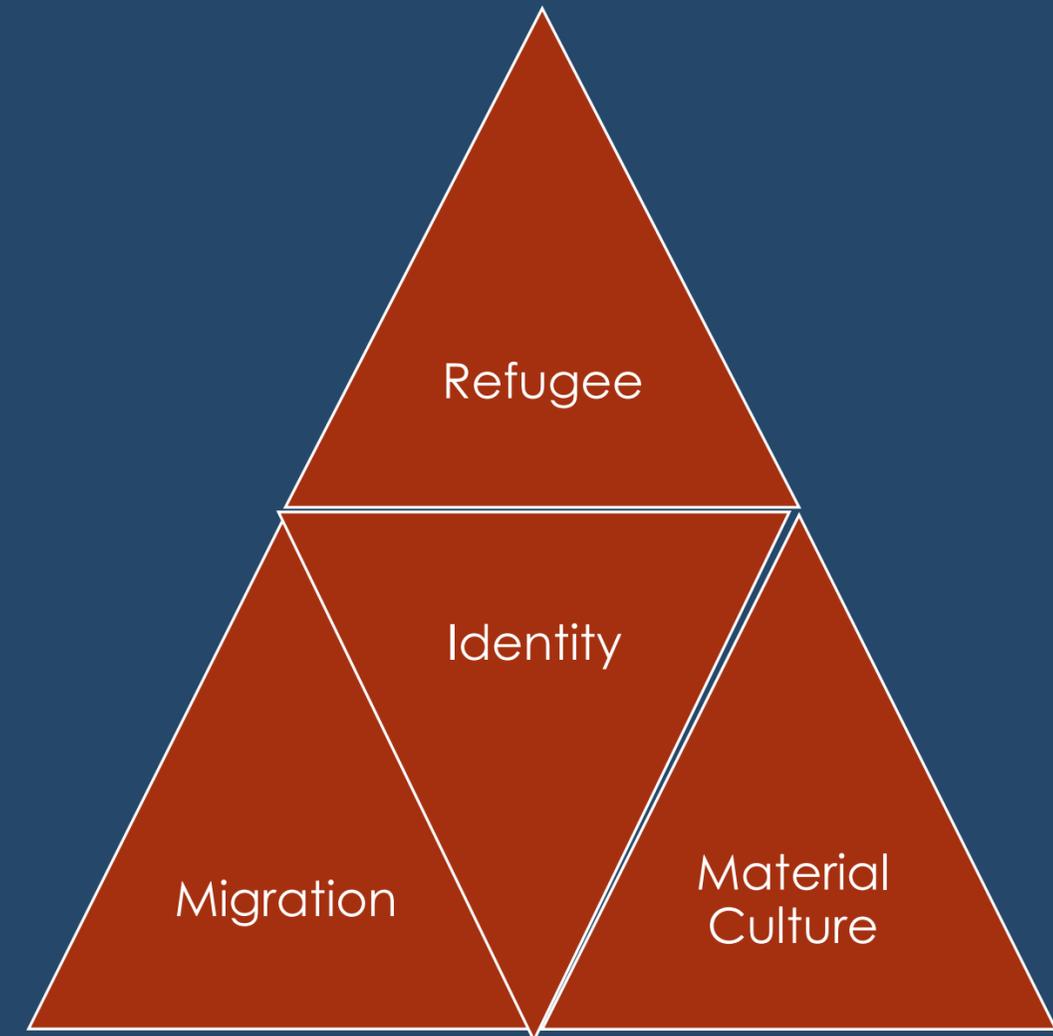
# Field of research



.. “In Eritrea I did not work and the little money we had belonged to the whole family. Now I earn money myself and want to spend it on things for me too. For the first time I'm buying new and beautiful things for myself”  
(Tzegereda, 2016).

➤ **Ethnographic Field Work**

➤ **17 in-depth semi-structured interviews**

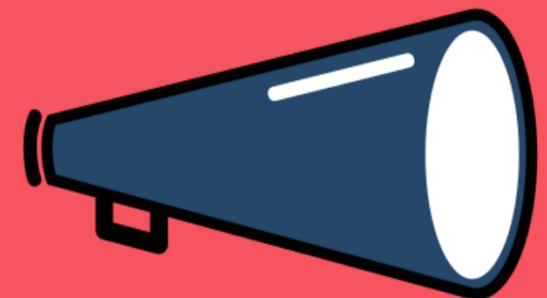


**Theoretical Review  
And methods**



## From a dress to pants and a shirt – a change in code style

- “The first time that I wore pants was on the way [from Egypt] to Israel. I didn’t manage to walk well in the [chiffon] dress and then somebody gave me pants. He said that they would help me make progress on foot... it felt very strange, that they were pasted onto my body. But today I **only wear a dress when I have to**. sometimes I really forget that I am wearing clothes” (Kedesty, 2016).
- “I wear pants and a shirt because it suits my job here [Israel]. In Eritrea I would wear a chiffon dress all day but **pants are more comfortable** for me “ (Zayet, 2016).
- “I like tights because they are the most comfortable to wear. At times I also wear jeans. I buy long shirts with the tights; I feel that is the best. I can go everywhere in them, to work with them; **they don’t get caught up, like a skirt does**” (Tarhat, 2017).

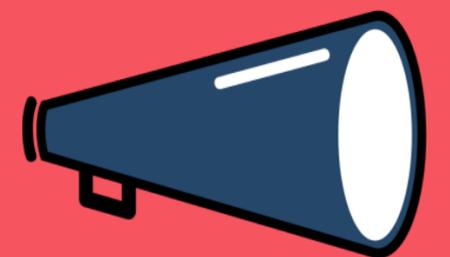




# Consumption of Ethnic goods



- “Here, in Tel-Aviv, there is a small community and many festivities. A child is born, a wedding – a celebration... it is impossible to come to each one in the same dress, it doesn’t look good. I have one Tilfi dress. I brought it here. In Eritrea, there wasn’t time to deal with clothes, but here, (I) want to buy more... **sometimes it is more important than paying for other things**” (Miriam, 2017).
- “At times, I pay nearly 200\$ for an Eritrean hairdo, and sometimes, less. **I work hard**, and it is important to me. In the village (in Eritrea), I couldn’t allow myself, so I did my hair only for weddings” (Kadesty, 2016).
- “life is hard here and we have almost no money, but it is a tradition and everyone has at least one Tilfi dress ... If it is good for you then you have to pay a lot of money. It's fun, because **in Eritrea we couldn't buy it**” (Yehudit, 2017).



❖ Consumer Culture and the ethnic identity are not necessarily separate

❖ Forced migration provides an opportunity to become active economic actors and new consumer power in the emerging urban space

❖ produce and reproduce the material world in order to support a certain type of lifestyle and social status

# Thank you for listening!



[tamararev@gmail.com](mailto:tamararev@gmail.com)