

Decomposing Refugee Narratives: Exploring the Lives of Eritreans in Tel Aviv

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This paper takes as its starting point work that questions the very category of refugee as well as Ferguson's (2006) dictum on the aspiration for connection among populations of the global South and critically interrogates Agamben's claim that the refugee embodies the vanguard 'of a coming political community' (Agamben, 2003) of cosmopolitan subjects.

It presents an explanatory study based on personal narratives of Eritrean refugees in Tel Aviv. It is shown how their stories can be presented as a common refugee narrative in which people were made to flee an authoritarian regime that threatened their lives. But their stories can equally be read as personal journeys by patriotic Eritrean towards the realisation of modern aspirations in a global world, a journey where decisions were made each step on the way with this ultimate objective in mind. Both narratives are in important ways 'true' and show the refugee existence as a place of 'bricolage' and creative invention. They not only question common assumptions about the refugee existence but equally national and international policy agendas around refugees.