Object of Research – Methodological and Methodical Implications of Empirical Research on Body Presentations of Young Migrant Women

Even though the human body can only be captured in its social appearance, its allegedly 'natural' materiality seems to function as evidence of social division. Concerning migration, the body plays an important role in the question of cultural, ethnical, and national belonging. In this area, there appears to be a gap between the importance of the body in the interaction of every day life and the research done on the topic of body and migration in the social sciences. My research focuses on gaining more information about this topic by analyzing body presentations of subjects placed in the center of bodily ascriptions of supposedly belonging and non-belonging: young migrant woman.

In order to grasp the verbal and gestural notions of the body and bodily experiences (connected to migration), I combined biographical interviews with young migrant women with photographic self-portraits of the interviewees. Based on the Grounded Theory Methodology, the verbal and visual data was triangulated in a circular process of data collection and analysis. Hence, methodological and methodical questions on how and when to combine text and visual data in the research process were of great importance for my empirical work. The approach used, gives the opportunity to on the one hand consider the specific logic of the research material and on the other hand to conduct a systematic triangulation of perspectives on the body.

My talk will explore the opportunities and limitations using this empirical approach in order to capture the means by which migration – as an experience and bodily ascription – shapes body presentations of young women.

Keywords: body, migration, visual qualitative research, triangulation