

**OBERSEMINAR - VORTRAGSREIHE DES INSTITUTS FÜR ETHNOLOGIE
WINTERSEMESTER 2023/24
LEITUNG: PROF. DR. MARTIN SÖKEFELD**

Institut für Ethnologie
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Understanding the Performativity of Touch in an Embodied
Ethnography

Abstract

As an ethnographer who cannot rely on her eyesight to perceive the surroundings, this presentation seeks to elucidate certain aspects of the embodied approach that I have subconsciously developed over time and continued to exercise during the course of my fieldwork. Doing ethnography with the Afghans who migrated to Pakistan following the Taliban coming to power in Afghanistan in August 2021, my (dis)ability often played a significant role, from establishing the initial contacts to being connected to prospective interlocutors. It was frequently demonstrated how my research partners catered to these 'special' circumstances and adapted accordingly. Moreover, my '(im)partial' sight facilitated me in sharing a more intimate (physical) space with many of my research partners. Coming into physical contact, which was often not necessary, altered the notions of (in)tangibility in our routine interactions. Hence, the performativity of touch not only contributed to strengthening my relations with my research partners through their depiction of empathy towards me but also was indicative of the depth of our relation(s). Additionally, going into the field as an 'embodied ethnographer' allowed me to acquire some material details through perception by the skin, in the form of active as well as passive touch. This also enabled me, at instances, to feel and know beyond the visual. In a nutshell, this presentation encompasses my reflections on the role 'touching' and 'being touched' played in my understanding of the field as well as in establishing and sustaining a connection to field and the ones who constituted it.

Der Vortrag ist öffentlich – Interessierte sind herzlich willkommen!