

*The Politics of Constructing Belonging in Interaction.*

*Examples from Young Muslims Living in Zurich and Vienna.*

Presentation and Workshop

In contexts characterised by the problematisation of Muslimness through media, politics and in personal encounters, the construction of belonging of Muslims becomes an inherently political act. Based on the analysis of qualitative data (narrative interviews and photo-interviews) with young, self-identified Muslims in Zurich and Vienna conducted in 2017, I will highlight the strategic deployment of narratives of belonging in the context of exchanges with a researcher. As this analysis is based upon a social constructionist reading (applying Narrative Constructionist Analysis), I perceive the speakers primarily as conscious agents and users of discourse. From this perspective, the focus lies on the deliberate and implicit choices inherent in the production of narratives in conversation with a specific audience (the interviewer). Rather than focusing solely on the material content of the narratives, it is the interview situation, context and interactions between interviewee and interviewer (e.g. the co-construction of narratives) which constitute the centre of analysis. By way of contrasting the findings from young Muslims socialised in Austria or Switzerland and living in Zurich or Vienna, it will be possible to see how specificities of those contexts influence constructions of belonging.

Apart from presenting solely preliminary findings, I will also address my own positionality and contextual influence on the narratives and the interview situation. Finally, this presentation will also reflect on the research process and discuss some of the difficulties I had in accessing the field and how those obstacles were overcome.