

Creating new knowledge with migrant entrepreneurs

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The abstract is based on an on-going qualitative PhD project which deals with migrant entrepreneurship in the South Tyrol of Italy. The paper concentrates on the generation of new knowledge within minority research. Self-organization among migrants is perceived as a bottom-up strategy, which secures not only the material basis for existence, but also promotes active participation in the community and the capacity to become actors of their own development. It is argued that migrant economies cannot be defined neither as capitalized arenas nor as a pocket of resistance, but that they have to be realized in their hybridity at the borderline between „Life-world and System“. The research project is based on a qualitative approach which makes use of expert interviews, narrative interviews, participant observation and document analyze. Moreover, the research is following a vision of the nature of humanity which sees the individual not as passive being, who is entirely formed by society, but as an active human being who is certainly able to influence society. This argumentation line is based on the assumption that every person is capable of shaping their own life. The research process is perceived as a participate one, which is based on the assumption that migrant entrepreneurs become active co-constructors of new knowledge. This argumentation follows the principle of transformative science where a new understanding of the relation of science and society is center staged. In order to develop more real opportunities or positive freedom of choice there is a significant need to rethink migrant's role in society. In addition, increasing awareness of the positive part that migrants can play could contribute to a more sensible public discourse on the phenomenon and lead to recognize migrant economic activities as an important part of territorial development rather than a personal struggle and as a survival strategy.