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## On studying peoples' participation across contemporary timespaces. Disentangling analytical engagement

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### **Abstract**

*This paper presents critical reflections regarding entangled relationships between access, communication and inclusion and illustrates how these play out across multiple analytical scales, ranging from interactional data analysis to engagement with policy data. The study draws on our ethnographic fieldwork from two large projects where roughly 45 18-50+ year-old people have been shadowed across settings. The study aims to illuminate dimensions of analyst's participation in terms of the flow of the everyday lives of people they track within and across physical-online spaces and within and across education, workplaces, cultural settings, homes, leisure-time, governmental agencies, health services, social media, etc. Such a stance acknowledges the mobile yet situated, partial and limited nature of contemporary existence and that of knowledge generation within the*

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*research enterprise. By engaging with what we call a “second wave of southern perspectives” (SWaSP), the access that scholars have and the identity-positionings of people they track can be understood in terms of (non)support i.e. (non)affordances of different settings for human beings’ possibilities to engage in social practices. In addition to bringing into dialogue different theoretical clusters within a SWaSP framing, the study goes beyond essentialized ways of understanding methodologies or single project reporting, and attempts to shed light on the chained entanglements, intersections and enactments of policy and practice, artefacts and humans, including the ways in which such relationships seldom present themselves in an intuitive manner for the analyst (or project participants). A SWaSP framing is attended to as dimensions of doing multiple-scale ethnography, in terms of being positioned as scholars who are mobile across contemporary physical-online spaces, are reflexive about their mobile gaze and who follow individuals, tools and inscriptions as they emerge across online/physical/private/institutional spaces. Where someone is, how and when people meet, what such meetings offer in terms of positionality, opportunities, meaning-making and learning, are riddled with continua and disruptions that not only create analytical and methodological dissonance in mainstream scholarship but, more significantly, emerge as challenges for scientific enquiry by taking onboard the very theoretical and methodological implications of such continua and disruptions.*

Keywords: Participation, access, non-programmatic methodologies

“‘umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’: a person is a person through/because of (other) people”<sup>1</sup>

## **1. (introducing) Our theoretical-methodological mobile gaze**

Where someone is, how and when people meet, what such meetings offer in terms of positionality, opportunities, meaning-making and learning, constitute both continua and

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/umuntu\\_ngumuntu\\_ngabantu](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/umuntu_ngumuntu_ngabantu)

disruptions that create analytical and methodological dissonance in mainstream scholarship. More significantly, such disruptions emerge as challenges for scientific enquiry by taking onboard their very methodological *as well as* ontological implications. Thus, and in light of contemporary existence, we ask (see also Leander, 2019) how new technologies and practices shape our – i.e. the researchers' – imagination, methods, and metaphors for illuminating social practices? Furthermore, what visible/invisible (theoretical) gaze do we as scholars bring to the research enterprise and what ideologies are embedded in (mainstream) epistemologies and academic thought? (Bagga-Gupta, 2020; Bagga-Gupta & Carneiro, 2021, Sabino, 2018)

This paper presents arguments regarding access and participation in and across different settings by approaching empirical data from two ethnographic projects (see section 2) where our explicit interests relate to illuminating processes glossed as widening participation and marginalization processes. It presents critical analytical reflections regarding contemporary research methods for the study of communication across analytical scales. Our overarching focus is on the investigation of these phenomena in the *wilderness of everyday life* where individuals and groups understood as being in need of support navigate different societal arenas (e.g., culture, education, work). While the projects focus upon two specific named-groups – deaf people and individuals who have received a neuropsychiatric diagnosis like Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (henceforth ADHD) – our aim is to discuss these specificities primarily as illustrative of what is glossed as participation and utopian agendas of democratically framed societies that aim to include all people within its territories. We attempt to represent the doing of participation in the messiness of everyday life while cognizant of the need for an analytical robustness of our work. Disentangling the chained and intersecting entanglements of our conceptual imaginations, methodological explorations, and analytical descriptions are done for heuristic purposes: these are presented

in sections that point towards “theory” (this section), “method” (section 2), “analysis” (section 3) and “result” (final section) in this paper. Our attempts at *going beyond* the demarcations that are upheld in research reporting can be noted in the overlap of focus in each section. Thus, for instance, this opening section does more than “merely” present our theoretical stance – it can be understood as chained/trans/entangled “method/theory”.

There is growing awareness that the overwhelming volume of scholarship in the disability domain both focuses on global-North spaces, and more specifically concepts, theories and methods from these spaces (Grech & Soldatic, 2016a). Taking cognizance of the need to open up to alternative onto-epistemological stances in theorizing issues of access and participation, that have by and large been framed in universalistic Anglo-Eurocentric narratives, we draw inspiration from *two* primary theoretical clusters made up of terms like Southern/Decolonial,<sup>2</sup> and Sociocultural and Integrationism.<sup>3</sup> Together, these clusters can be conceptualized in terms of what we call a “Second Wave of Southern Perspectives/Theories” (henceforth SWaSP). A SWaSP framing – that we explicate in the final section – calls for troubling universalistic narratives (see for instance Bagga-Gupta, 2018, 2020, Bagga-Gupta & Carneiro, 2021) and attempts to challenge intersectional analysis, the conventional doing of research and ideological assumptions underpinning mainstream conceptual framings.

The Zulu introductory quote brings home the indivisible nature of humans and of communication, calling attention to the *connections* between people, practices, tools and other living creatures. Khanyile (2011) highlights that “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” constitutes the philosophy of “Ubuntu” that translates to “I am because you are, and you are because we are [it] is a way of life, a life characterized by values such as compassion, caring, sharing and tolerance”. What is salient for our purposes is that Ubuntu philosophy highlights

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2 The epistemological heritage of this cluster can be found in the writings of Bhabha, Comaroff and Comaroff, Fanon, Mignolo, Santos, Spivak.

3 The epistemological heritage of this cluster can be found in the writings of Harris, Linell, Makoni, Säljö, Vygotsky, Wertsch.

the futility of considering individuals, including researchers, separated from social practices or separated from their engagement with cultural tools (like language) or physical tools (like paper, pencils, calculators, smartphones, etc.). From this, it follows that the theoretical-methodological framings outlined in this section inevitably imply data-creation wherein the researcher attempts to learn about the learning – or the communication – that people are engaged in during the course of meaning-making *in situ and across settings*. SWaSP framings attest also to the need for going beyond simplistic pitfalls wherein the South is geographically positioned and seen as the source of new truths and/or as in opposition to the geographical North. Furthermore, the non-universal stance that a SWaSP framing enables (see further Bagga-Gupta, 2020), envisages

- (i) people as “community of interacting beings”, rather than as (a community of) individuals, and
- (ii) language as *non-entity*, rather than as being independent of people or social practices.

The Ubuntu philosophy of the indivisibility and the interdependence of humans relates to an analytical stance wherein the study of languaging taken outside the *community of languagers* is understood as problematic. These conceptual ideas have a bearing upon what is glossed as “data” and how such data can – and should be – generated. Data is never collected; it is created in symbiosis between researchers and their theoretical-analytical agendas that may or may not be explicit for a scholar. In other words, following our conceptual gaze, data is not something lying “out there” for us to gather – data is something we generate actively, irrespective of whether we are aware of this analytical issue or not (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Taking such framings and exploring peoples (including our own) navigations across different settings “expands our framework of research [...] by redefining what counts as

language (and thereby data) from a more communitarian and solidarity perspective, helping us to understand how language (and thereby data) can emerge as a product of a sense of community and belonging” (Severo & Makoni, 2019, p.5). This sense of community is also contingent upon the doing of research where a concerted effort is made to not just focus people’s accounts of an issue or merely map the trajectories of humans in situ in one arena or across settings, but also to problematize research endeavors based upon researchers’ positionalities as well as their access to contemporary fields (see Bagga-Gupta, 2020; Bagga-Gupta, Messina Dahlberg & Gynne, 2019; Haraway, 1988).

Offering an alternative paradigm in the mid-1980s, Lincoln and Guba highlighted the need to make visible assumptions inherent in any conceptual framing that a researcher deploys. They suggest that this “is a most difficult matter to grasp. We are all so imbued with the tenets of science that we take its assumptions utterly for granted” (1985, p.8). More recently Sabino (2018, p.4) highlights that “there are striking parallels between witchcraft, racecraft and western confidence in the existence of reified linguistic systems” when she attempts to unpack assumptions by debunking the *language myth*. The mythical creation of language independent of languagers, perpetuated through the *counting* and *marking* of “named-languages”<sup>4</sup>, is being increasingly highlighted (see also Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014; Finnegan, 2015; Harris, 1981).

In line with these discussions, we call for making visible assumptions of the theoretical framing’s researchers are inspired by and how these are related to the specific methodological stances that they deploy. By engaging with a SWaSP gaze, this paper interrogates why and how the identity-positionings of the people we analysts follow to create data, can be understood in terms of (non)support i.e. (non)affordances that enable/disable

4 We subscribe to the growing recognition in global-North scholarship that it is problematic to count languages in people’s language repertoires. Named-languages, like other concepts, too are riddled with issues, but enable pointing to the problems inherent in demarcating one language from another language, including demarcating “a” language from other semiotic resources in peoples – including analysts – meaning-making enterprise (see Bagga-Gupta 2014, 2018, 2019, 2020).

peoples' possibilities to engage in social practices. This means that identity-positionings that are non-conformist, including practices that are the result of "special" arrangements provided by institutions, (like student support services, public employment service, social insurance agency, etc.) themselves shape i.e. afford or obstruct accessibility, participation and transitions in and across different settings. The analysts intersecting entanglements in the complexities of peoples lived lives results in attempts to illuminate such complexities: disentangling and unknotting such processes is both a condition, and because of the knowledge creation enterprise itself. This calls for recognizing the need to trouble essentialized ways of understanding methodologies, including single project reporting. The significance accorded to social practices in our theoretical stance necessitates that our methodological gaze be aligned towards social practices that make up everyday life, rather than what people report about these practices (for instance, in fossilized programmatic methods like interviews and questionnaires). These framings are also in line with contemporary discussions regarding "nomadic subjectivity" (Roets & Braidotti 2012), and complexities inherent in peoples and groups "ways-of-being" (Bagga-Gupta 2013) across timespaces. Contemporary ways-of-being are nomadic in the simultaneity of complex and multi-layered identity-positionings that are open-ended, fluid and entangled.

It is this joint and constantly in progress effort of being and existing in the wilderness of everyday life, that is – and needs to be – in the focus of our methodological gaze. A second outcome of this conceptual stance relates to the language we deploy or our (analysts) own "ways-of-being-with-words" (Bagga-Gupta, 2013; see also Sabino, 2018). While we make an attempt at retaining the fluidity of the chained entanglements of our conceptual imaginations, methodological explorations and analytical descriptions, we shift our gaze towards how we as analysts study people's participation across timespace (section 2) after having presented our rationale for the indivisibility of theories and methods in this section.

## 2. (on) Data and doing *multiple-scale* ethnography

This paper focuses on our analytical engagement of navigating settings like workplaces, homes, leisure-time, governmental agencies, health services, social media, cultural settings, etc. in which individuals between 18-50+ years of age live their lives. We draw on a complex set of systematically generated data from two projects – *PAL*, Participation for all. School and post-school pathways of young people with functional disabilities (2017-2021) and *DoT*, Participation and Theater (2012-2015). At an overarching level, *PAL* aims to generate knowledge that can contribute to identifying successful criteria for transitions to adulthood for deaf people and those with a diagnosis ADHD, including issues of participation and functionality broadly. In *DoT*, in addition to issues of participation, we focus on how communities of interacting languagers – signers, speakers and writers, irrespective of their hearing levels – negotiate meaning-making in the mundane processes involved in theater production and consumption. People in *PAL* are being tracked in two different ways in Swedish spaces: their mundane lives across different arenas and across time through institutional archives (from childhood onwards).

In these projects, data-generation has been and is taking place through ethnographic fieldwork, including cross-scale policy sourcing. Ethnographic fieldwork, for our purposes, implies that our data includes video/audio/picture-recordings of social activities in different physical-online settings (including social media arenas), fieldnotes, texts used by participants, digital and analogue policy documents at local, regional, (inter)national levels, archive data regarding our cases across time from different institutional settings and conversations with participants. While securing project funding for the two projects (from the Swedish Research Council [*PAL*] and the Ministry of Culture [*DoT*]) was contingent upon highlighting specific named-groups that are considered marginalized in specific ways, the people we are shadowing emerge as being very heterogenous, defying essentialized labels



and intrinsic notions such as marginalized named-groups. This enablement – as we discuss in this study – is itself contingent upon our theoretical-methodological gaze. These processes are chained and entangled. In other words, methods, theory and findings are not hermetically sealed stages during the research process.

In the data-creation enterprise, our gaze is both on the data generated and our experiences of *the doing of* research from a reflective mobile stance. This means that the focus on access, communication and participation broadly is attended to as dimensions of doing multiple-scale ethnography, in terms of being positioned as scholars who are mobile across contemporary physical-online spaces and by following individuals *as they navigate such spaces*. Far from stable, such a mobile gaze enacts an unpredictable, fluid and non-linear analytical process that ethically intersects with the communities of interacting beings our participants engage in. This also means that if and where our participants deploy semiotic resources from different named-languages, then our positionalities and experiences of those named-languages are contingent on the nature of data we can generate and what affordances and constraints we meet in the journey of analysis and further fieldwork. Thus, Swedish Sign Language (henceforth STS, “SvensktTecken Språk”) – becomes significant, given that it is a key part of the languaging repertoires of one of the named-groups in focus – deaf individuals. Being users of named-languages STS and Swedish, including sociolects, bureaucratic languages, etc. is a salient dimension of our studying people's participation across settings. In addition to being a key aspect of our own positionalities,<sup>5</sup> it is also key for enabling access to the field. Another important dimension relates to navigating the bureaucracies of institutions to enable data-generation.

The explicated project design in PAL has, for various reasons, gone through a number of adjustments after we were awarded funding and during the actual work in the field, where

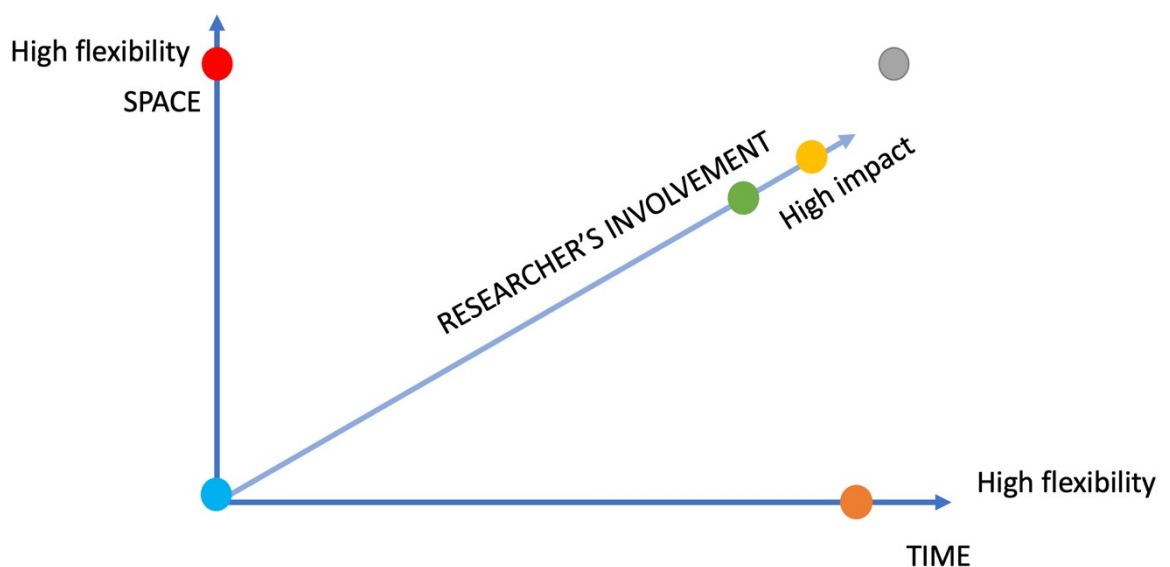
5 For instance, of being users of a number of named-languages in the oral, written and signed modalities.

the field turned out to be, and various laws and regulations that enabled/disabled certain dimensions of data-generation. The entanglements of data-generation are represented in the inter-related Figures 1 here and 6 in Section 4. Data, in such a line of thinking, is created through an inquiry that aims to disentangle analytical engagement that, at first, seems to occur in siloed, mutually exclusive, activities (eg. school time is not leisure time and vice versa). Such inquiry, we argue, also means processes of data-creation that are difficult, if not impossible, to plan and implement in a programmatic fashion.

Augmenting the discussion on the researchers theoretical-methodological gaze, Figure 1 illustrates the complex intersecting, chained entanglements of data-generation processes with the help of three specific dimensions: the degree of flexibility i) of time, ii) of space, and iii) the researcher’s involvement in how, when and why something specific, rather than something else, gets created as data.

**Figure 1**

*Researchers engagement. Complex and chained entanglements during data-generation*



*The three axes in this figure index degree of flexibility in space, researcher's involvement and time spent during data-generation.*

Colored dots in Figure 1 represent different parameters. Their position illustrates the degree of flexibility in data-creation. The blue dot represents physical fieldwork data wherein we are (for the most) passive participants observing social life (e.g., a classroom activity or an offline meeting). The blue dot's placement indexes low flexibility vis-à-vis time and space and the (relatively) low degree of the researcher's impact in this data-creation process. The yellow dot, with its position further up on the impact axis, represents data-created during recurrent scheduled conversations with participants during which the researcher is the primary interlocutor, while the green dot, with its slightly lower degree of impact, could represent, for instance, active participation during observations in offline settings. The orange dot, with its high degree of temporal flexibility, indexes an activity in a physical space that the researcher can continuously access, for instance during archival/fieldwork data-creation offline. In contrast, indexing high spatial, rather than temporal flexibility, the red dot represents archival/fieldwork data-creation online (as in the case of policy data available digitally) as well as real time conversations with participants (via telephone or online). Finally, the grey dot illustrates data-created during asynchronous conversations via Messenger, WhatsApp, SMS, etc. between researcher(s) and participant(s).

Accessing the field in different settings is contingent upon where we – the researchers – live and work. Having access to research fields in different parts of the nation-state of Sweden builds partially on the fact that we live and work in this geopolitical space, and partially – as discussed earlier – on our communicative repertoires. We live in one region and work in institutions of higher education in other regions in Sweden. Disruptions that participants encountered vis-à-vis physical spaces during the Pandemic, implied that while we could continue meeting participants in digital spaces, the 2020-21 disruptions shaped our temporal-spatial access and engagement in the field. The very enactments of our research work were disrupted, in that we were required to work primarily in the geographical spaces

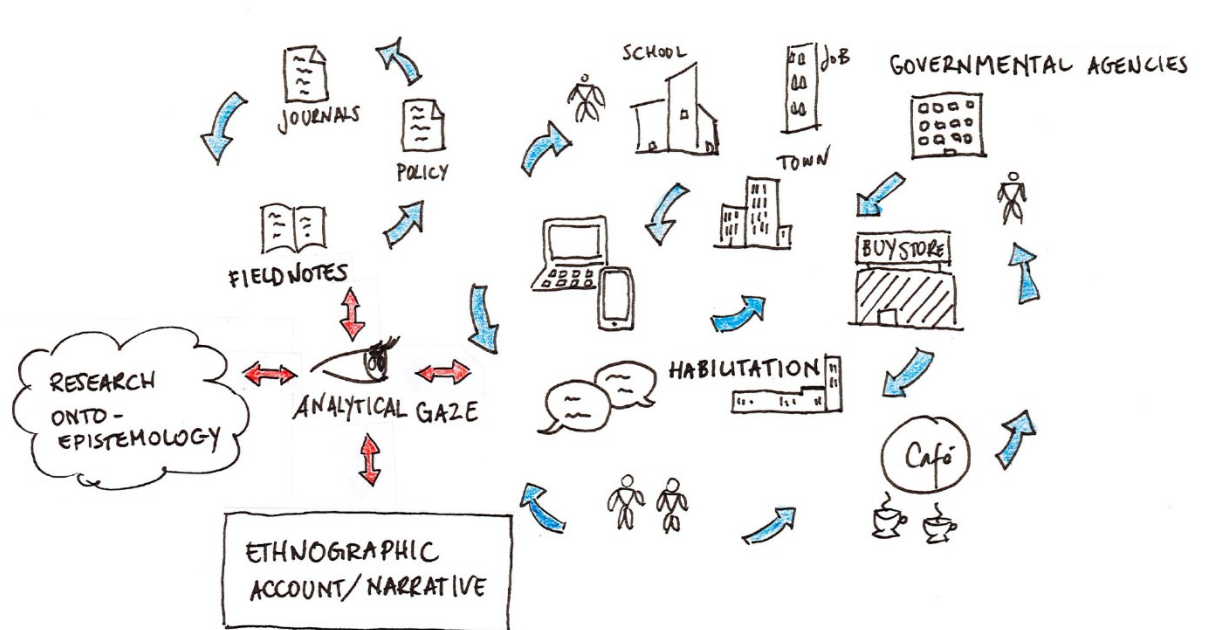
where we live, rather than travel – as was the case previously – to our university cities. However, given that Sweden did not impose any strict lockdown during 2020, we were able to access our physical field sites, and continue our online fieldwork which was scarcely disrupted. Thus, issues of field access, where the field is and when a space becomes a field, constitute shifting dimensions that are entangled with our intrinsic theoretical-methodological gaze, including our extrinsic circumstances within academia.

While Figure 1 illuminates dimensions that constitute an integral part of the data-creation process, it obscures issues of the degree of access to the field that researchers have at specific times (like during the Pandemic). What does high flexibility in time and space (or lack thereof), imply for fieldwork and the ethnographic narrative that can emerge from it? Access to (parts of) the field online, and thus to some parts of the peoples' lives we are following, may open up for the creation of interesting data, but could also imply other challenges regarding the robustness of the project design and its very relevance. Figure 1 can nevertheless function as a mapping tool during different phases of planning, data-creation and evaluation, enabling a reflective stance to different parameters and how these collate.

Drawing inspiration from, but also going beyond, Braidotti's (2010, 2013) work on the tool of cartography in researchers embodied and embedded work in the field and during analysis, we highlight the importance of recognizing the scholar's "mobile gaze" (Bagga-Gupta, 2020) with the intent to make visible their positionality and what we call "non-data". Reiterating our earlier point, data is not merely tangible material that exists in our fieldnotes, the video/audio/pictorial recordings, etc., the theoretical/analytical gaze (see Figure 2) we bring to tangible data is also crucial. Thus, knowledge production necessitates that we as scholars participate in and are reflective about its production. While this can be seen as a truism, it is an issue that is invariably taken-for-granted in the epistemological enterprise.

**Figure 2**

*Messiness of mapping relational, socially embedded, intersecting lives*



*This figure illustrates the complex and dynamic nature of a researcher's analytical gaze (indicated in the double-red arrows), its entanglements with data, the research ontoepistemology and the ethnographic account or narrative; the blue arrows indicate the complexities of people's lived lives that researchers follow.*

Figure 2 illustrates<sup>6</sup> the scholars analytical gaze, the kinds of places, activities and agents that constitute our field/s in the two projects. The blue arrows illustrate fieldwork processes, rather than causal relationships in the data-generation process. By following people across sites, both online/offline and in their lives as they are depicted and constructed in archival data, as well as in their interactions across activities with other people and tools, our analytical gaze becomes mobile both in the sense that fieldwork is multi-sited, i.e. in the actual movement from one place to another, but also in time and across data, before the creation of a coherent ethnographic account is possible. It is also mobile in that our gaze is contingent upon our positionalities in global-North/South epistemological framings (Bagga-  
6 Illustrations (for instance, this figure) can at best merely hint at the complexities that are being raised. They are far from devices that “capture” the complexities of lived lives or of analyst’s “holistic” understandings of these complexities.

Gupta, 2020). Our nomadic positionalities are non-essentialist in that they are not contingent “only” on where we are born, where we live and work, where we do fieldwork or what citizenship allegiance we have. Neither are the South and North – as highlighted earlier – hermetically sealed places. It is here that the concept of non-data becomes relevant, in terms of the scholar’s own agency and their “presence” in the narrative. In fact, the very presence of the “research project” in itself, always entails some impact in the what and the how of the observed practice. Without acknowledging the researcher’s gaze, the analytical engagement with data risks instrumentality.

In addition to engagement with specific documentation regarding the lives of our cases from childhood onwards (what for heuristic purposes can be conceptualized as another dataset), both projects also enable an engagement with different types of policy data – *declared, perceived and practiced* policies (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012). In addition to taking cognizance of explicit and implicit policies, rules and regulations that are purported to support the participation of named-groups (for instance, policies of employment agencies, insurance agencies, interpretation services, etc.), our analytical gaze focuses upon what Bacchi (2009) calls WPR or what’s the problem represented to be in policies.

The participants in the two projects have complex intersectional positionalities. They include men and women, who are born in Sweden of Swedish parents or of immigrant parents, have moved to Sweden during their growing up years or have recently arrived in Sweden, have received one or more diagnoses, are deafblind, have a range of sexual orientations, etc. Four participants are presented in this study with the intent to *illustrate* how our theoretical-methodological gaze enables studying people’s participation across contemporary timespaces. Table 1 represents the participants from a mainstream essentialist gaze wherein traditional characteristics of age, nation-state affiliation, gender, disability, etc. are taken up. While these ontological dimensions play a heuristic role in our analytical

accounting, the messiness of the chained entanglements and intersections of lived lives are problematized through our epistemological-methodological gaze. A caveat of the reflective research enterprise here is that disentangling our analytical engagement is curtailed through the languaging we analysts (like all humans) are bound by.

We use the pseudonyms names used in Table 1 or the initials – A, B, P and Y, or zir when we point to the participants lived lives in our analytical engagement with our project data. Given that our theoretical-methodological gaze is focused on individuals' chained intersecting entanglements of their lived lives with others and tools in social practices across settings, research ethical framings call for changing or disregarding some personal parameters in an explicit attempt to anonymize their real-life personas. Deploying fictive names, the participants initials and the gender-neutral pronoun zir makes the narrative clumsy at times. However, reiterating the point that, from our theoretical-methodological gaze, it is not ontological interests that are key here and furthermore, given ethical concerns when research focuses on vulnerable individuals or named-groups, there exists a tension between focusing on the ethically framed analytical task at hand, and making the ethnographic narrative accessible for readers (of this paper). Naming participants in different ways is not a neutral issue, but rather constitutes a balancing act.

**Table 1.**

*Demographic characteristics of the participants*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age (during the project)</b>	<b>Born in and passport holder of</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Diagnosis</b>	<b>Primary language of engagement</b>
<b>Andrea</b>	Late-20s	Sweden	Female	ADHD, high functioning autism, language impairment	Oral/written Swedish
<b>Yara</b>	Late-20s	Sweden	Female	ADD (Attention deficit disorder)	Oral/written Swedish
<b>Bettina</b>	Late-30s	Sweden	Female	Deaf	STS/written Swedish
<b>Peter</b>	Late-30s	Sweden	Male	Deaf	STS/written Swedish

*This table provides programmatic details regarding the participants age, nationality, gender, diagnosis and primary language of engagement.*

The four participants, we illustrate our narrative with, have diverse educational backgrounds, some are graduates from compulsory school and some have higher education degrees. Some are employed while others are not. They have diverse family compositions, some live independently while others have partners and/or children. This mapping illustrates their relational trajectories of their socially embedded existence across timespaces and of their analytically constructed lives in the scholarly enterprise of knowledge building. This enables shifting the focus from essentialized mainstream demographic parameters enumerated in Table 1 to explorations in situ across settings where the social, relational, situated-distributed nature of being and becoming in contemporary lives is of interest.

We have been tracking all four participants across contexts and practices for a few years (home, school, work, meetings, interactions with family, friends, partners, etc.). Data generated includes a posteriori data in the form of our reflective notes on the data-generated and fieldwork experiences. The fieldwork dataset includes informal scheduled and spontaneous conversations with the participants and key persons in their lives. The participants' life situations have shifted in different ways across the time we have been shadowing them. For instance, P has changed work, become a parent and has moved. Similarly, A has attended courses in adult education, while Y has been transitioning between adult education and (searching for) paid employment. B has become a mother again. Such complexities with regards to changes in participants lives highlights the need for a reflective theoretical-methodological gaze on when data is created, why some parameters (need to) become fixed in a research narrative, what consequences such fixations have, etc. The heterogeneity of the four cases boxed into mainstream demographics, as displayed in Table



1, can also be noted in secondary portraits here, including the illustrations that are presented in the next section.

A and Y were in their mid-20s and B and P in their mid-30s when we started shadowing them. While B and P were born deaf, P come from an all-deaf family and B from a hearing family. B has a hearing partner and hearing toddlers and P has a deaf partner and a toddler who was recently diagnosed as being deaf. Both B and P have attended deaf schools and signing pre-schools in Sweden. B has a professional degree and works as a schoolteacher, and P has a vocational training degree from High school and works as an assistant for multiply disabled individuals. More specifically B works at a school for deaf children and P has worked in a number of support services for deaf people and, despite having obtained governmental clearance for establishing a private company, has not been successful in establishing it. All four participants have a white ethnic Swedish background.

Y was diagnosed with ADHD, high-functioning autism and language impairment across her adolescence years. Y holds a vocational training degree from municipal adult education and is looking for employment as a nurse assistant. During this process, Tanja, the special teacher at the school, became a key support person for Y. Tanja has helped Y access and participate in the educational program that also includes periods of workplace practicum and build contacts with different governmental agencies for economical support. Y lives alone in an apartment in a medium-size town, practices Karate and is a member of the local Dojo where zir also leads group training. A was diagnosed with ADD as an adolescence and attends municipal adult education courses to qualify for university studies. A participates in the courses via “närdistans” (Sw: close distance), a flexible study-mode in which students can participate from home and regularly meet a tutor/supervisor who is physically located at a school. A lives with a partner in an apartment owned by A's mother in a medium-size town. A has weekly meetings with a therapist at the psychiatric ward in the local hospital.

Going beyond accountings or mapping the life trajectories of individuals or describing our own positionalities merely in terms of our etic accounts, we have attempted in this section to both highlight the nature of data, its generation, the choices available for engagement with them and what it means to conduct multiple-scale ethnography wherein the focus is upon being in the field long-term (rather than only doing interviews that may or may not be in-depth or may or may not take place more than once). Attempting to understand people's participation across contemporary timespaces, our focus has been on *the doing of* participation, inclusion and/or exclusion and transitioning – our own and the communities of interacting beings we attempt to track. Here our experiences of this shadowing – in terms of the movements and relations in and across a variety of spaces, tools, inscriptions and representations as well as societal arenas – are entangled. Taking an Ubuntu perspective, we unpack contemporary social practices in an attempt to understand how these shape our imagination, methods, and metaphors when we attempt to understand communities of interacting beings (ourselves included) or people's ways-of-being in communities. An Ubuntu perspective critically scrutinizes our own positionings in the world of the participants we shadow across analog-online spaces and across time, not least in relation to the kinds of data we generate (and the kinds of data that are possible to generate).

### **3. (illustrative) Analytical themes that emerge from our mobile gaze**

In addition to making visible entanglements of epistemologies and methodologies, the study presented in this paper attempts to illuminate the entanglements of peoples' and researchers' *participation* in terms of the flow of everyday life within and across different settings, including physical-online spaces. Doing this acknowledges, we have argued so far, both the mobile yet situated, partial and limited nature of contemporary human existence and that of knowledge generation itself. We illustrate two specific analytical themes in the

mainstream sense of “showing” examples, but also continue our discussion from the previous sections on how access to the field and data is contingent upon our theoretical-methodological gaze. We furthermore highlight how this access allows/impedes us to learn about issues regarding participation. In other words, we illustrate issues of access for scholars, and also in part issues of access as entry-points for our participants, how access is performed, how communication and participation play out, how researchers and participants get framed through enactments in everyday life. This stance allows us to take seriously identity-positionalities that are enabled, offered, erased, endorsed, taken up in and across communities of interacting languagers and to face the challenges of how we language about these positionalities – i.e. attend to our own epistemological gaze – in our writing.

The two sub-sections present different representations of data that focus on issues of access and participation and highlight the nature of entanglements in and across physical-online spaces wherein we zoom in and out across scales of analysis. Sub-section 3.1 looks at the entanglements of communicative repertoires across timespaces, where a range of modalities and named-languages are used in tandem. Sub-section 3.2 illustrates methodological issues and dilemmas related to a potentially unlimited access to the research field.

### **3.1 Researchers access (24/7) and communicative repertoires**

Following participants in our projects across timespaces in contemporary societal settings, has meant gaining access to their lives in *both* physical and online spaces. The meaning-making of communicative repertoires are increasingly being understood – in the global-North scholarship (as highlighted in Section 1) – in terms of chained and interlinked use of named-languages, named-modalities, that is, named-semiotic resources in an overarching sense (Gynne & Bagga-Gupta, 2013, Holmström, 2013, Messina Dahlberg, 2015, Tapio, 2019). This gives recognition to the fact that we *name* languages (Swedish,

English, STS, etc.) and modalities (oral, written, signed, etc.) and semiotic resources (meaning potentials) *for heuristic purposes* and that their nature and life-span is (and needs to be recognized as) fluid, temporary and in flux (Bagga-Gupta, 2013; Bagga-Gupta & Carneiro, 2021; Boyd, 2007; Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2004).

Figure 3 and Transcript 1 illustrate the entangled nature of the meaning-making resources deployed in mundane languaging. Pointing to an advertisement on their shopping cart, B and zir partner initiate a discussion in STS about what the fingerspelled word “feeling” could imply in the context of the written text, “Ta med lite feeling hem!” (Sw: take home a little feeling). B turns to us researchers and asks in STS (line 3, Transcript 1) if we know what the fingerspelled term “feeling” means. Caught off-guard, we respond in STS with a request for clarification (line 4). Turning their gaze, B (line 5) points to the advertisement on the shopping cart, and asks how the fingerspelled word “feeling” can be signed. We smile and respond in STS that the written term implies a tasty sensation which is fingerspelled as “feeling” in the named-language English and as “känsla” in the named-language Swedish (line 6). All fingerspelling in this exchange deploys STS hand alphabets.

### Figure 3

*Feeling – känsla. Chaining and meaning-making in normal-languaging<sup>7</sup>*

#### 7 Key to Transcript 1:

Line a. original STS communication. Line b. translation into English.

ABC (STS communication), abc (English translation of STS), A-B-C (fingerspelled words), (text within brackets provides other relevant information, for instance, gaze direction).

1. B's partner (looking at B):  
a. F-E-E-L-I-N-G TECKNA HUR  
b. (fingerspelled word) how to sign

2. B: (looking at partner)  
a. (shrugs – both hands wide open)  
b. don't know

3. B: (turns to researcher)  
a. VET F-E-E-L-I-N-G  
b. do you know (fingerspelled word)

4. Researcher: (looking at B)  
a. (looks puzzled)  
b. don't understand your question

5. B: (looks at, points to shopping cart advertisement)  
a. F-E-E-L-I-N-G HUR TECKNA  
b. how to sign (fingerspelled word)

6. Researcher: (looking at B, initially smiles)  
a. GOTT KÄNSLA ENGELSKA F-E-E-L-I-N-G K-Ä-N-S-L-A  
b. tasty feeling, in English (fingerspelled word) (fingerspelled word)

Transcript 1. Feeling - känsla

*The upper left-section presents a picture of an advertisement on a shopping cart, the lower left-section presents translations of the words/phrases in the picture, and the right-half of the figure presents a transcript of the signed communication between us and our interlocuters.*

Looking at one's interlocutor, pointing to key features in one's setting, and signing are dimensions of "visual orientation" (Bagga-Gupta, 2004) – an important element of the communication repertoires deployed in situations where deaf-deaf and deaf-hearing individuals, users of a Signed Language, interact. Two hearing individuals and one deaf person – all languages who deploy STS and different modalities of Swedish (written and oral) – participate in the shopping activity that frames the communication represented in Figure 3. The meaning-making represented here includes at least three named-languages (STS, Swedish and English), including named-semiotic resources of pointing, gaze direction, pictures and fingerspelling. Padden (1996) and others suggest that fingerspelling is a semiotic resource that belongs to both a Signed Language and a majority (oral and written) language. In other words, fingerspelling constitutes semiotic resources that *link* two named-languages and named-modalities. Chaining of resources across named-languages, named-modalities

and named-semiotic resources constitute dimensions of meaning-making, that we have previously – in our empirically focused studies from other projects – called “normal languaging” (see for instance, Bagga-Gupta & Messina Dahlberg 2018). Being able to *see* this chaining and meaning-making – in our role as analysts – is contingent upon being able to use these resources. While this may seem to be a self-evident issue, it needs to be explicated not least given the (i) dichotomized nature of the field of Deaf Studies where communication has long been framed prescriptively, and (ii) the etic ways in which bi/multilingualism is engaged with when scholars do not share the communicative repertoires of participants they are studying.

Access to such subtleties about participation framings across scales are made possible in that we, the researchers, are users of named-languages engaged in by our participants and their interlocutors, the fact that we have shadowed them across settings over time and have identified this pattern across project settings. These are highly relevant dimensions of our theoretical-methodological gaze without which we would not have been able to *identify* chaining as a key pattern that is contingent on the ability to engage with STS (and other semiotic resources), rather than audiology. Identifying this communicative repertoire or genre, in terms of a dimension of normal-languaging, is thus contingent upon the researcher being a user of the named-languages deployed in the settings that participants traverse.

Let us take a closer look at another example of the mundane nature of chaining of resources where we the researchers (and perhaps Y) are not familiar with some parts of the communicative repertoires involved in a leisure activity where Y is a member. In addition to Tanja, the special teacher at Y’s school, Y has a network of support in different communities where zir is a member. Y holds a yellow belt and participates regularly in local and national Karate Dojo activities. This includes travelling to different cities and participating in training camps. The training is organized as moments of instruction-for-practice and moments of

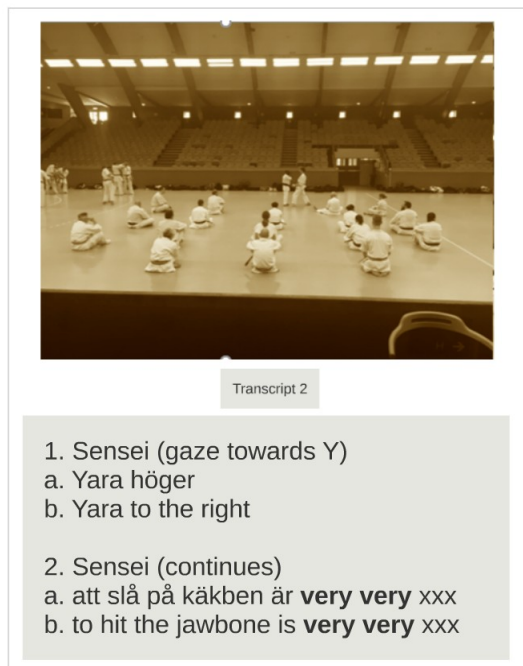
instruction-for-explorations (see Figure 4). The training builds upon specific elements that follow established routines that the participants are familiar with. Linguaging in such an activity includes uttering sounds that are semiotically meaningful and consequential for the participants performance of correct postures and moves. The named-language Japanese is, in this context, not necessarily related to the explicit meaning of an utterance, but to the performance related to it. Utterances thus become iconic, symbolizing a move, a pattern, a rhythm. Y takes part in such complex performances in meaningful ways. Y's participation here contrasts strikingly with zir participation in other activities (for instance, workplace practicum), including expectations key others and institutions have of Y.

Figure 4 and Transcript 2 highlight the normal-linguaging that is a dimension of communicative repertoires of people's everyday lives where gaze, oral (and/or written) language in one or more than one named-languages, and one or more than one named-modalities and one or more than one named-semiotic resources are deployed. What the Sensei says to Y, during the course of their instructions, deploys at least two named-languages – Swedish and English (see Transcript 2). The Sensei, furthermore, gazes towards Y admonishing the latter to be careful with their moves: the “very very” (line 2) uttered in English is related to a move that perhaps needs to be adjusted (line 1) to avoid contact with the jawbone (line 2). What is said in oral linguaging is intimately entangled with the setting, the activity in focus – training Karate – and the teacher-student relationships among the interlocuters. This activity sees the routine use of at least three identifiable named-languages: Swedish, English and Japanese. Given our lack of experiences with the named-language Japanese – both in its oral and written renditions – we can only claim to identify it in our data on the basis of our experiences with the other two named-languages. Given the character of the activity, our casual understanding of Karate, coupled with what we have learnt from Y

and zir's Karate interests, enables us to piece together the sense-making of the communicative repertoires in this exchange and activity.

#### Figure 4

*Normal-languaging in a leisure time activity*<sup>8</sup>



*The upper-half part of this figure shows a picture of people sitting on the floor at a karate camp, and the bottom-half presents a transcript of oral communication between two key participants in the activity.*

Our being in the field, being languagers who are users of *or* are aware of the meaning of the semiotic resources the languagers are deploying is contingent thus on our being able to identify their relevance for the ongoing meaning-making in social practices. While Figure 3 and Transcript 1 illustrate that analyst's knowledge of named-languages STS, English and Swedish is complicit in what can become data and get analyzed, Figure 4 and Transcript 2 illustrate that a detailed knowledge of the participants engagement in an activity – when one

<sup>8</sup> Key to transcript 2:

Line a. original communication. Line b. translation into English.

**abc** (oral communication in English), (text within brackets provides other relevant information, for instance, gaze direction).

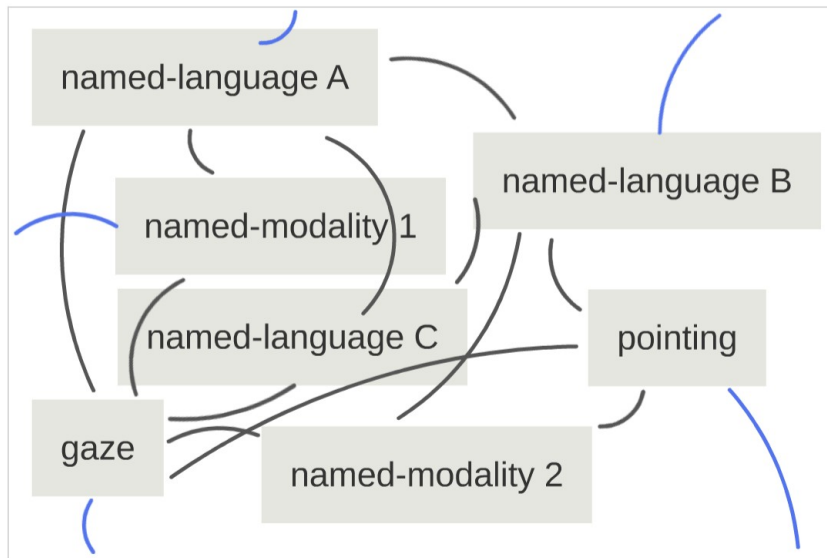


of the three named-languages deployed in the activity is unfamiliar to us – is necessary for making sense of the nature of normal-languaging that the activity is framed by. In both illustrations, analyst's presence across timespaces and familiarity with settings and activities are key.

Building upon the illustrations of the complexities inherent in the communicative repertoires of languagers we have discussed so far, Figure 5 represents a generic view of chaining where meaning-making is central. Reiterating a key issue, all representations of human actions – analysts as well as participants – are reductions. This applies to any representation of normal-languaging too and we suggest that temporarily calling a specific resource as something (a named-language or a named-modality, etc.) serves illustrative heuristic purposes. The empirically grounded concept chaining, enables us, the researchers, to make visible or sound out “naturalizations” embedded in normal-languaging. While some resources may be clearly linked to one another in a given specific activity (grey lines in Figure 5), others maybe hazy or unobservable/invisible for the researcher (blue lines in Figure 5). Furthermore, participants in an activity are – for the most – rather oblivious of the resources they deploy in the meaning-making enterprise they are invested in. It is the analyst's business to tweeze out these intricacies and their possibilities of doing this are contingent upon their multiple-scale access to their fields of engagement.

**Figure 5.**

*Representation of resources in play in normal-languaging*



*This figure represents semiotic resources that interlocutors deploy in mundane communication.*

The point that is relevant is that named-languages and named-modalities are highly inter-twined in social activities. They need to be understood in terms of their meaning-making agendas, rather than through the trap of reductionisms such as “mixing”, “switching”, etc. pushed by the language myth. This is evident in both the ways in which our cases live their lives in and across communities of interacting beings and in how our data-generation gets enabled/disabled.

### **3.2. Physical-online spaces and technologies. 24/7 being here and there**

Our second theme arises from a dimension of data-creation that is salient in both projects wherein we track our participants across physical-online spaces (and in the documentation from different institutional settings), and across the 24/7 nature of lives – ours and that of our participants. Characteristics of “24/7 being here and there” across physical-online spaces necessitates that analysts are both members of physical settings and online forums where the project participants are engaged. This issue intersects with the routine

nature of people's – framed at the onset as marginalized in some way – engagement with contemporary technologies. We disentangle such tensions through illustrative examples here.

Deaf individuals in Swedish spaces have been very interested in visually-oriented technologies related to communication across time (Holmström & Bagga-Gupta, 2013). Both B and P are active members of various online platforms and participate as members of the web to different degrees as consumers and producers of content, for instance, by posting pictures of their children and pets, from their holidays, vlogs, thankyou messages, responses to others' messages, etc. Both feel that digitalization has, as B puts it, “revolutionized” the lives of deaf people, enabling membership in settings and accessing information through automated subtitling and in communities of signers (and writers). We are, in our role as researchers, members of both closed and open groups like “Deafhood behövs i Sverige!” (Sw: Deafhood is needed in Sweden), “Teckenspråkslexikon” (Sw: Sign Language Lexicon), “DEAFGAIN”, etc. where B and P are members. We are also members of forums where A and Y are members. While we choose to use our regular social media accounts, we primarily remain passive participants in these online field sites, where our membership in our field sites of engagement is – as highlighted earlier – contingent upon our access to visually-oriented communicative repertoires. Engagement in these spaces has both broadened and deepened our understandings of the access/non-access that deaf people have to societal resources and both their precarious and collective positionalities.<sup>9</sup> We have – through such engagements – received access to larger cohorts of signers, speakers and writers, and have become cognizant of concerns that have local, regional, national and global flavors.

The illustrations of this theme furthermore highlight the entanglements of timespaces in our own fieldwork enactments. Generating data while commuting or after one's family has retired for the night are dimensions of the nature of where one's contemporary field is and

<sup>9</sup> Studies from these projects where these issues are discussed in further detail include Bagga-Gupta (2019a-b); Bagga-Gupta and Holmström (2015), Bagga-Gupta, Messina Dahlberg and Vigmo (2020), Bagga-Gupta, Messina Dahlberg and Winther (2016), Holmström and Bagga-Gupta (2019).

also one's onto-epistemological gaze. This illustrates methodological challenges that arise from scholars' access to our participants' documentation across institutional settings and their social media sites. Through mutual membership in a social media group, we are privy to A's updates and live broadcasts there (often when zir feels lonely). This included a live video broadcast session which we got *chance access* to, when returning home by train at the end of a day at our university city. This chance access later included updates on a group site. While we, as members on this site, have access to all other members' updates, we are not in a position to monitor and plan how and when specific data-generation, related to our participants' activities in and across specific online settings, can take place. Checking or creating updates on our social media profiles immediately opens up engagement in our projects irrespective of whether we are prepared to shift into a professional researcher positionality for creating potentially important data. We are not in a position to create data 24/7 even though we can potentially do so in contemporary times. Ethical dimensions related to data creation on social media spaces are, furthermore, fuzzy, not least with regards to issues of who is vulnerable and what is sensitive, etc. (see e.g. AoIR 2019, Tiidenberg 2018). For instance, while we have permission to shadow our cases both in physical and online spaces, issues arise regarding our commitments vis-à-vis the integrity of other members (in online spaces in particular) who may not be aware of our presence there as researchers.

Another boundary issue related to the analyst's engagement in the field relates to how their positionalities shift. B and P's communication with officials in different settings – employment offices, insurance offices, schools, the health sector, etc. – is contingent upon communicating via video-telephone or through mail and sector-specific web-portals. This necessitates that deaf people are adept users of various technologies and both STS as well as written Swedish. Some of our participants are not always comfortable with written languaging or the type of interpreting services offered in different sectors. For instance, P

attempted in vain to get qualified interpreters for their meetings with their employment office (instead of in-house employees who know STS). During health care sector visits some of our cases prefer to make use of interpreter services enabled through iPads and remind the physiotherapist or doctor to activate the iPad service wherein the patient and health care provider are physically in one space and the interpreter participates from another via a secure portal. We have been drawn in to interpret institutional oral language for our participants occasionally and have also been asked to translate bureaucratic written Swedish into STS at times. This example also illustrates participants' and researchers' engagement with policies, rules and regulations that are purported to support participation in terms of what has earlier been framed as perceived, declared or practiced policies. For instance, unable to access tax-funded interpretation services, P and zir partner harnessed their social network, including us researchers, to interpret in order to enable access to course materials in a program they were tasked to study and where the materials were not translated to STS or subtitled in written Swedish. Such instances of engagement highlight complexities of fieldwork – past and present – wherein scholars' positionalities shifts and/or is fluid between that of an independent professional and enabler for project participants.

#### **4. (disentangling) Analytical engagement in knowledge creation. Reflections**

Every historical age has exhibited some characteristic way of answering the eternal questions of what there is that can be known and how one can go about knowing it. Sometimes the answer has been mystical [...] Sometimes it has been magical [...] Sometimes the answer has been authoritative or revelatory [...] Today we live in the age of science. The eternal questions are best answered, it is asserted, by putting queries directly to Nature and letting Nature itself answer. This empirical approach is undoubtedly the most powerful dynamic

stimulating the emergence of what we are now pleased to call the Age of Enlightenment” (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p.7).

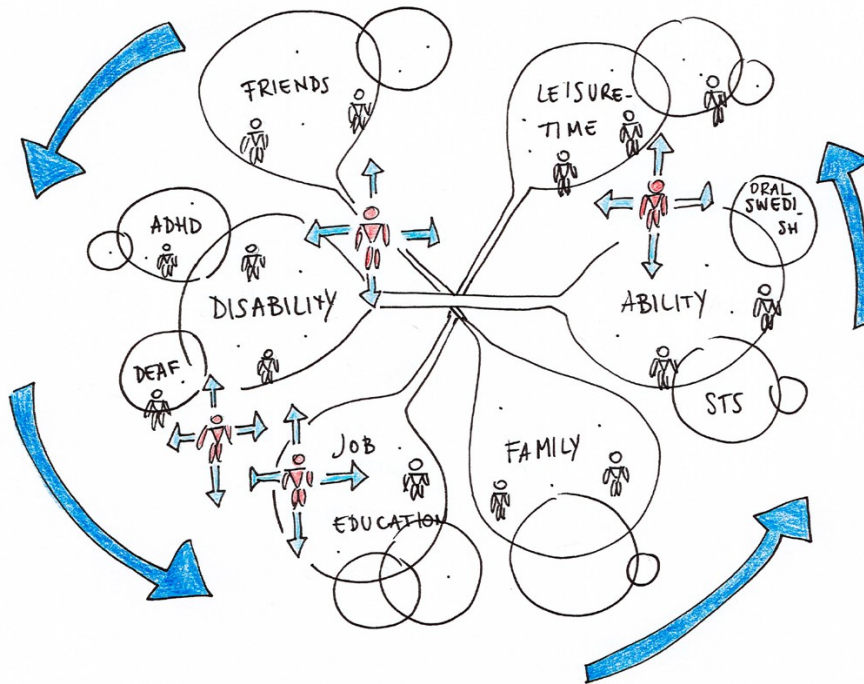
One of the key issues that has emerged in our explorations of people’s participation (ours included) in contemporary life relates to what access people (including we) have to different physical-online settings. Where someone is, how and when people meet, what such meetings offer in terms of positionality, opportunities (or lack of opportunities), languagers’ communicative meaning-making enterprise, learning, constitute the unmarked flow of everyday life and its disrupted, wild nature. The latter not only creates analytical and methodological dissonance in mainstream scholarship, but more significantly emerges as challenges for scientific enquiry by taking onboard the very theoretical and methodological implications of such disruptions. More specifically, this relates to how identity-positionings that are not in conformity with the mainstream and the norm themselves appear to shape accessibility, participation and transitions. This includes the ways in which such practices are the result of “special” arrangements provided by institutions, like health care settings, student support services in higher education, public employment services, social insurance agencies, workplaces, etc. Arriving at this type of understanding emerges from our theoretical-methodological gaze and calls for going beyond mainstream understandings of participation as a one-shot circumstance on the one hand, and identity positionality in terms of the ways in which identity markers – functionality, gender, age, race, nation-state affiliation etc. – “intersect” in creating interlocking patterns of marginalization, power (in)balance and oppression (see e.g Hancock 2016). Similarl to our SWasp gaze, intersectionality as an intellectual and empirical endeavor, has attempted to problematize Western/white hegemonies of knowledge and positionalities, and has put the spotlight on the fluid, performative and situated dimensions of identity work and the kinds of marginalization processes that different named-categories may entail for people. From such a line of thinking,

identity, doings and categories exist in that they are all bound together. One category owns its existence to another and, in language, they are perpetrated. They are also doomed to be questioned, endorsed, rejected, replaced. And yet, as our empirical examples clearly illustrate, the analytical endeavor to unknot the complexities of the lived lives of the participants in our projects, is inevitably bound to recycling the very categories that this endeavor seeks to depose. This is, we argue, also a concern with the paradoxical essentializing use of the term intersectionality by scholars, practitioners and policy makers, whereby it gets pinned as a “framework” for mapping and providing solutions to processes of exclusion, marginalization and systemic discrimination. A SWaSP theoretical gaze, in contrast, raises concerns regarding problems of the “holy trinity” (race, class and gender) and of the “unlimited etceteras” that are popular in intersectional analysis (see for instance Bagga-Gupta 2019, Hancock 2016, Grech & Soldatic 2016b).

It is in this sense that we remain skeptical of the kind of participants' demographic characteristics that are represented in Table 1 (Section 2); instead, we have tried to opt for other kinds of representations (for instance, our efforts in Figures 1-5) that deploy analogue and digital creativity that is in better sync with our analytical/methodological stance. This does not mean that demographic characteristics are not important. It is their taken-for-grantedness and their ubiquitous naturalized use in scholarship that our analytical gaze asks us to be skeptical towards.

**Figure 6**

*Nomadic subjectivities and movements across boundaries*



*The figure illustrates participants' nomadic positionalities and their entanglements across different contexts and continua in relation to family-friends, leisure-time-job, ability-disability.*

Figure 6 attempts to illustrate a move away from both essentialist framings with mutually exclusive categories (i.e. away from represented in Table 1), as well as a simplistic intersectional perspective. Here, participants' nomadic subjectivities – as explicated through our explorations in section 3, are illustrated as bodies in perpetual mobility between named-categories (that are in themselves a heuristic construction), their ways-of-being and relationships to others and to situations. Named-categories, and thus also belonging to certain named-groups as legitimate members, are never fixed and permanent, but are in a constant flux in different intersecting continua.

The methodological approach we have outlined in this paper is attended to as dimensions of doing multiple-scale ethnography, in terms of our nomadic positionalities as analysts and scholars who are mobile across contemporary physical-online spaces and who follow individuals, tools and inscriptions as they emerge (at times suddenly or awkwardly)



across virtual/physical/private/institutional spaces. Nevertheless, the illustration in Figure 6 (as in all other figures used in this paper) has no ambition to make a clear and holistic understanding of the messiness of the everyday lives of participants or the research process. Such an attempt would produce an image that is all but sharp and could only partially become an expression of humans' lived lives, including that of the scholar's existence. The figures included in this study all entail analytical work and thus are the result of simplification through theory. Illustrations, as well as transcriptions, are analytical attempts to simplify a slice of life and to show trends and patterns from the data. As we have explicated in section 2, data in ethnographic work is the result of a creative process where theory plays a crucial role. Thus, Figure 6 constitutes only a snapshot of participants' perpetual carousel across timespaces, communities and the expectations therein. The "bulbs" in which participants have been positioned are at times closed, but most often their boundaries are all but hermetical: new bulbs may emerge in new contexts and situations, like a meeting with local government officials, a Karate camp, an appointment at a health care center, a practicum as assistant nurse, etc. Some categories are treated as fixed and inevitable in certain situations rather than others, and by certain agents rather than others. This calls for asking, what it means to embark on the research pathways of creating data, of doing analyses that have been illustrated in this study? Can we retain and indeed use and, more importantly, represent the messiness of everyday life in all its dialogic, relational power but also keep the theoretical/analytical robustness of our endeavor?

One important take-home message we have attempted to provide is that human life studied from the perspective of a "mobile (or nomadic) gaze" cannot be done as some sort of solo or singular performance, in terms of methods, theories and ontologies. A key challenge in both PAL and DoT projects has entailed learning to navigate the textures of social practices that our cases have not only already learnt to navigate, but are adept at navigating.

This is not a trivial enterprise. Even when the issue at stake (for instance, in other studies from the same projects), focuses on specific questions that have been designed as more mainstream research writing, we argue, for a range of reasons, that a multi/inter/transdisciplinary approach is required, and that academic disciplines and ontologies need to be revisited in line with the kinds of issues and challenges that we face in the contemporary complex and globally disrupted world. Far from being the oxymoron that it seems, global disruption is what makes the research endeavor so difficult to frame in terms of ready-made work packages that follow specific orders of linearity. Transmethodological approaches, like those outlined in this special issue where our study is included, is one important step in that direction, given the kinds of questions it raises and the methodological tensions that it aims to illuminate. This acknowledgement notwithstanding, and in line with Lincoln and Guba's quote above (start of this last section), we contend that attending to the wild nature of contemporary lives makes it highly challenging to sidestep linear descriptions of methodologies where one phase of data "collection" paves the way for data "analysis" (for instance, in ethnographic writings or procuring resources).

While accounting for a researcher's methodological approach calls for naming the types of data engaged with (fieldnotes, video documentation of mundane interactions, audio or video documentation of discussions with one's cases, etc.), analyses build upon deep diving into them in a creative entangled manner whereby it is instrumental to demarcate a specific dataset from another. The themes that emerge in the overarching analysis thus, necessarily transcend specific data types. This resonates with the four cases that we specifically focus upon in our reporting in this paper. These cases are used here as structuring devices and the larger volume of data from projects PAL and DoT inform the overarching themes that have been taken up, including the narrative regarding our work as researchers.

This constitutes an important dimension of a SWaSP mobile gaze wherein the following are salient:

- mainstream understandings regarding the doing of research are interrogated
- binaries are transcended by creating “visibility in terms of the what, who, why, when and how of the grey zones where alternative ways-with-words, ways-of-being and ways-of-knowing are explored” (Bagga-Gupta 2020, in press), and
- a global-centric (as opposed to a North-centric or South-centric) framing is approached (Bagga-Gupta 2020, in press).

While pointing to these complexities, we take cognizance of the conceptual difficulty at stake when embarking in the doing of science from the perspectives illustrated here. Our point is that the concept Ubuntu is particularly relevant because it brings to the fore three important issues: *first*, it foregrounds what has previously been relegated to the background, namely the centrality of the relational, of the becoming, rather than the fixed and static. *Second*, Ubuntu assists us in turning our gaze to participants' responses to hegemonies from alternative perspectives that go beyond, for instance, postmodern or other Western paradigms. *Third*, Ubuntu reinforces a mobile SWaPS gaze in that the spotlight is put on the intricateness of human life in the sense of mutual and collective becoming: a person is a person through/because of (other) people.

In conclusion: the aim of the present study has been to discuss the ways in which contemporary research methods enable or hinder analyses of complex phenomena like widening participation and inclusion and pay analytical attention to the fluid, multiscalar dimensions of such processes. This notwithstanding, there is need to go beyond an acknowledgment of complexity in the research endeavor. Here, we call for a collective reflexive stance wherein researchers are aware of the kinds of reductions and simplifications that they contribute to, in their analytical work. Thus, our concerns relate to the gaze that

scholars bring to bear in the construction of data and the need to transcend understandings of data, knowledge regimes and analysis, as distinct demarcated processes. Such concerns call for crafting and using methodologies that are entwined with (and pragmatically emerge from) the epistemological stance of the researcher.

Thus, a mainstream gaze risks skipping the analytical effort necessary to illuminate how support is offered, who it targets, when and why it gets framed in the way it is framed, and how professionals, *as well as* researchers are complicit in the *practiced policy* work of institutions. The possibility to refer to specific laws, policy and regulations that, in *declared policies*, discourage professionals to treat citizens and clients in ways that risk disempowering them irrespective of where the latter are positioned in the ability continuum, or gender positionalities, or nation-state affiliations, or religious inclinations (see, for instance Swedish laws like the Discrimination Act and the Equality Act) get used as proxy for “good” practices in different sectors (see e.g. Bagga-Gupta, Messina Dahlberg & Vigmo 2020). Our learning about the already-learnt navigation trajectories of our participants across sectors is what the doing of research is. Going beyond an evaluation mode towards the institutional settings that became part of our data, our onto-epistemological mobile gaze relates to the mainstream ways in which institutional support gets framed as a panacea of sorts. It is here that our focus on practiced policy becomes relevant. Practiced policy sheds light on what transpires when such laws and regulations are oriented towards by professionals and targeted participants, in particular when both groups identify the latter as being at the periphery – rather than belonging to the “mainstream” majority normal-diversity – in a range of practices across different institutional settings.

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