Accountability and Participation: Time-space bound language practices with material-discursive effects

Pirkko Raudaskoski
University of Aalborg, Denmark

The paper discusses 1) the layered simultaneity (Blommaert) and complicatedness (Latour) of interactional situations and 2) analytical methods or ”practices of observation” (Barad) that produce certain cuts with effects (inclusion/exclusion). The first part mostly concerns a theoretical understanding of language practices as time-space bound (and shaping) phenomena, whereas the second relates to the unavoidable influence of the research design on the research results.

With Blommaert and Latour we can orient to the relevant aspects of the material and discursive situation that are not as such interactionally present (i.e. not necessarily oriented to in local interaction) but that can be analysed as having an impact on ”why this now”, and from a wider perspective than that of Conversation Analysis, though still with a focus on emergence.

Therefore, the past experiences of the participants, the history of the interaction order (Goffman) and the material surround as a reminder of past actions (frozen discourses, Scollon) can also become foci of research. However, in the paper I will concentrate, with the help of Latour’s interobjectivity, on how anticipations of future effects will have an impact that can lift here-and-now participation into more meaningful Participation. I also discuss how the ethnomethodological accountability as a local, other participant -oriented answerability could be extended to Accountability with an emphasis on the material environment. With this move, for instance, the global trajectory of man-made crises could be better studied, and maybe even changed, as local action trajectories.

If local material environments and action trajectories are seen as central for Participation and Accountability, then the research methods should follow the non-representational turn in understanding how a researcher always is of the world (Barad). I will discuss some preliminary ideas about how our Accountability could be not just researched, but increased through carefully planned participatory or other type of interventions.

Keywords: material-discursive practices, Accountability, Participation.