“Promises IN policy” and “policy AS participation”: Equity and language in and across the wilderness of contemporary human life

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Abstract

While promises of equity mark (inter)national declarations and laws that contemporary democratic societies subscribe to, accessibility and participation for-all continues to remain out of reach for increasing numbers of people and “named-groups” across the global-North/South. Going beyond issues regarding gaps between progressive policies and people’s accounts of their experiences, this paper illuminates the mundane nature of participation by putting the spotlight on people’s everyday lives in and across different societal sectors. By doing so, it illustrates the mundane nature of processes that constitute the “policies of equity and language as participation”. Issues of promises in policies in contemporary democratic societies like Sweden are discussed as framings that need to be decentered and troubled through a multi-scale analytical gaze at the mundane, messy and wild nature of human life. The study draws on data from three projects where data generation has and is taking place through (n) ethnographic fieldwork and cross-scale policy sourcing. Drawing inspiration from the entanglements of two theoretical framings of significance to participation and equity – sociocultural integrationist perspectives and decolonial Southern theories, this paper maps human geographies and performative co-agencies, and illustrates how practices intrinsic to one arena are disrupted or maintained through practices in others. The study also discusses representations of “named-language”, “named-modality” and “named-identity” through a Southern analytical aperture that calls for acknowledging the roles of different types of semiotic resources when human meaning-making is made salient.
Keywords

trans-methods – languaging – sociocultural – southern theory – SWaSP – policies – WPR – participation – deaf – minority languagers – identity – equity

Introduction

While promises of equity are marked in (inter)national declarations and laws that contemporary democratic societies like the nation-state of Sweden subscribe to, accessibility and participation for-all continues to be an utopia for large numbers of people and named-groups marked by older and newer displacements, functionality issues, etc. (UNESCO 2020; WHO 2020). The study presented in this paper adopts a specific approach to policy that goes beyond issues regarding gaps between policies and people’s accounts of their experiences. Instead of taking utopian or dystopian views attached to policy refinement efforts, it takes a multiscale approach and aims to illuminate the mundane nature of marginalization and participation processes by unpacking what institutions and people do in and across different societal sectors. Following Canale (2019) and others, it explicates ways to go beyond mono-causal and unidirectional views of policies. A focus on banalities decenters and complexifies “promises in policies” – in particular, those that pertain to equity and language – by engaging with the nature of processes that constitute “policies (of equity and language) as participation”.

Promises in policies in contemporary democratic societies like Sweden are discussed here as framings that need troubling through a multiscale analytical gaze at the mundane, messy and wild nature of human life, and in particular by turning this gaze across and in-between the spaces that constitute different societal sectors. Furthermore, this paper is guided by an entangled sociocultural integrationist southern theoretical stance regarding ontologies and epistemologies wherein the nature of entities like peoples, collectives and language itself, are conceptualized in terms of being named and imaginary, rather than essentialist, bounded and static (Andersson 1996; Hawkins 2006).

Given that languaging or doing language constitutes a meaning-making context that cannot be seen as existing outside human practices and that is (and has always been) in flux, a term like “named-language” (or “named-modalities”, “named-groups”, “named-communities”) draws attention to the fallacy of demarcating “a” language from another language, including demarcating “a” language from other semiotic resources in peoples meaning-making enterprise. This constitutes a key guiding tenet. Thus people, collectives and the meaning-making enterprise of languaging need to be recognized as named and imaginary; how
these are labelled is contingent upon both people’s interactions in and across arenas, and the scholarly naming practices that are brought to bear on these entities (Bagga-Gupta 2018). Thus, analyzing meaning-making across scales and settings of policy creation, implementation and enactment, constitutes an approach that draws on an “empirical turn” (Johnson and Stevens 2018) wherein policy is seen as playing out and being accepted, challenged, (re)interpreted, discarded, etc. by “policy actors and consumers” (Canale 2019).

Given that single project reporting tends to curtail the spaces (for instance, institutions, societal sectors) and identity- positionalities (for instance, functionality, gender, ethnicity/race, class, etc.) that are attended to in a given study, my gaze is intentionally on parallel analysis of datasets from three projects at the multidisciplinary research environment ccd (Communication, Culture and Diversity):\(^1\) **PAL** (Participation for all. School and post-school pathways of young people with functional disabilities; since 2017), **DoT** (Delaktighet och Teater; English: Participation and Theater, 2012–2015) and **EL** (Everyday Life, since 2010).

Project **PAL** is, and has been, mapping the school landscape of Sweden, analyzing the scholarship and shadowing individuals from two named-groups in and across different societal arenas. The latter include 18+ year old individuals who have a neuropsychiatric diagnosis like ADHD\(^2\) or those who are deaf (including deaf with other functionality issues). Data generated from shadowing deaf individuals in **PAL** are included in the present study. Project **DoT** began as a societal developmental initiative that aimed to contribute to a more inclusive theater where hearing and deaf individuals with different named-language experiences and competencies participated in the positions of actors, producers, technicians, public, etc. Deaf and hearing researchers and assistants – all of whom are experienced users of the named-language Swedish Sign Language (henceforth **STS**, Svenskt TeckenSpråk) – generated a wide range of data during various productions in this project (see Weckström and Bagga-Gupta 2020).\(^3\) Datasets available in projects **PAL** and **DoT** that are drawn upon in the present study have a (n)ethnographic nature and include field notes, video recordings in different settings (analogue and digital) as well as texts used by participants, policy documents, archival data, self-reports, researchers reflections, etc. Project **EL** includes datasets from many physical and digital contexts including the mass-media, primarily from the nation-states of Sweden and India. These data focus upon, as the project

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1. At Jönköping University, Sweden (www.ju.se/ccd).
2. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
3. I use **STS** in my private and professional life.
name indicates, dimensions of peoples and institutional enactments of communication, culture, and diversity in the course of everyday life.

Shadowing individuals and mapping practices inside, outside and across institutional analogue-digital settings in all three projects relates to a research gaze that builds on a “mobility turn” (Sheller and Urry 2006). This implies that understanding participation and equity necessitates recognizing that in addition to institutions and people, the researcher zirself⁴ is mobile across physical-digital settings, not least in an onto-epistemological sense (Bagga-Gupta 2018, forthcoming; Bagga-Gupta and Messina Dahlberg 2021; Bagga-Gupta, Messina Dahlberg and Gynne 2019). Such mobilities can be seen in the proliferation of methodologies that go beyond programmatic data “collection” through interviews and surveys and fixed analytical pathways. Recent developments that enrichen the nethnographic tool-kit include linguistic landscaping (Shahomy and Gorter 2008), online scraping (Marres and Weltevrede 2013) and go-alongs (Kusenbach 2018) wherein “slowing down and thinking deeply” is called for (Bressers, Brydges and Paradis 2020). “Careful engagement with theory and deliberate choice of methods” (ibid) that are curiosity-driven enable a “naturalistic inquiry” (Lincoln and Guba 1985) that attends to engagement with multiscale complexities wherein institutions and humans navigate what is transparent for them, but that can easily evade the researcher’s attentional gaze. Such methodological-theoretical framings also imply that researchers construct data, rather than “collect” them. Such co-situated-distributed knowledge-creation is contingent upon “deep hanging out” (Geertz 1998) in physical and digital spaces where the researcher is complicit and is tasked with directing zir gaze towards the flow of everyday happenings, including something specific in the lives being lived and to which zir has access (see also Bagga-Gupta and Messina Dahlberg 2021).

These introductory analytical-methodological ideas guide my attempts to contribute to ongoing epistemological shifts in policy studies generally and the field of Language Policy (henceforth LP) research specifically. Bonacina-Pugh (2017), Canale (2019) and others mark this shift by privileging practice-based approaches. Building upon the terminology that Spolsky (2004) used to unpack LP i.e. management, beliefs and practice, Bonacina-Pugh (2012) discusses LP in terms of text, discourse, and practice. The significance of such a shift lies in a call that differentiates between the hegemonies of accounts of practices – which is framed as LP in practice, from research that focuses everyday practices themselves – which Bonacina-Pugh frames as practiced LP; in the present

⁴ I use the gender-neutral pronoun zir/zirself or they instead of he/she, him/her, etc.
study I explicate this as policy as participation (in practices i.e. pASpa). Such a stance goes beyond a focus on LP alone and maps onto analytical attempts in the research that I have been engaged in with students and colleagues since the 1990s. This engagement has called attention to the different units-of-analysis in play when scholars engage with what people say they do in contrast with people's enactments as members, co-producers and co-participants of practices. Such efforts relate in part to gaps between progressive policies i.e. declared policies and people's accounts of their experiences, i.e. perceived policies, on the one hand, and policy enactments in the mundaneness of daily living.

Bacchi's (2009) gaze on policy conceptualized in terms of “what’s the problem represented to be?” (henceforth WPR) constitutes another interesting contribution to this overarching shift. Building on the premise that governance is enacted in everyday life and that policies are instituted to fix or change an issue that is implicitly understood to be a problem, it is the presuppositions that underlie the very representation of what is seen as problematic that WPR draws attention to. This puts the spotlight on what institutions do, what people’s everyday lives in and across different societal sectors looks like and “the possible silences in the understanding of what needs to change” (Bacchi 2009:x).

These developments, I argue, together offer potentials to illustrate the multi-scalar nature of policy enactments, including the banal nature of processes that constitute “policies (of equity and language) as participation” (henceforth pASpa). pASpa can at first glance appear to contrast with “promises (of equity and language) in policy (for participation)” (henceforth prINp). As the analysis of multi-scalar empirical data from different sites of engagement discussed in Sections 2 and 3 indicate, pASpa and prINp constitute a “complex meshwork” (Ingold 2015), rather than a binary. Both are relevant to issues of access and participation in that they are embedded in understandings regarding the role of language and identity-positions broadly. I bring these into conversation with the entangled tenets of sociocultural integrationist southern positions more explicitly that are framed within a Second Wave of Southern Perspectives, i.e. a SWaSP framing (see Figure 1).

A SWaSP framing (see Bagga-Gupta 2018, 2021, forthcoming; Bagga-Gupta and Carneiro 2021) brings together two theoretical clusters that are relevant to the language and diversity/identity scholarship. Bringing together tenets

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5 In addition to my previous and ongoing writings, studies by scholars who contribute to this CCD framing include Gynne, Bagga-Gupta and Lainio (2016), Haueland and Holmström (2019), Holmström (2013), Messina Dahlberg (2015), Rosén (2013), Tapio (2013) and others.
primarily from sociocultural perspectives (Linell 2009; Wertsch 1998) and integrationism (Makoni 2011; Pablé 2011) on the one hand, and decolonial/southern framings (Maldonado-Torres 2011; Savransky 2017) on the other, SWaSP draws attention, as highlighted earlier, to the imagined boundary-marked nature of languages and communities, highlighting that these are brought into being through naming practices. Thus, named-language/-modality/-group or -identity, calls attention to the roles of different types of co-interacting semiotic resources that need acknowledgement when human meaning-making is of salience. While the central concept language is itself seen as needing problematization in a SWaSP framing, it is also recognized as a key cultural tool in human existence. The irreducibility of naturalistic data constitutes a fundamental unit-of-analysis since languaging, rather than language, is the key irreducible dimension of social interaction IRL or textual contexts (Bagga-Gupta 2017; Linell 2009; Makoni 2011). Languaging, or the ways-of-being-with-words (Bagga-Gupta 2014, 2018) are involved in the meaning-making, the transactive and performative enterprise of this thing we call language. In Ingold’s conceptualization, “to human is a verb [...] where there is human life there is never anything but happening” (2015:117).

Paying heed to the plurality of spaces within and across the global-North/South, through a SWaSP lens, also calls for according visibility to Southern spaces in Northern territories and vice-versa. While data in project EL covers physical sites and events in digital spaces pertaining to primarily Sweden and India, data and fieldwork in projects PAL and DoT primarily focus on physical-digital sites in the spaces of Sweden. Sweden can here be understood as constituting a Northern place that includes Southern spaces and in this...
sense is part of the global-South. The relevance of such a stance lies in the analysis presented in Sections 2 and 3 that are marked by understanding prINp and pASpa in relation to access and participation of marginalized named-groups. It is in this manner that established global-North-centric ideas regarding what language and identity are, where, when, why and for whom language and identity are central in contemporary human existence, including in academic explorations, can be troubled (Bagga-Gupta, Hansen and Feilberg 2017; Finnegan 2015). Following Maldonado-Torres (2011) and others, such a stance focuses upon the “larger task of the very decolonization of knowledge, and being, including institutions such as the university” (2011:1).

SWaSP furthermore reinforces the need to understand data and methodologies in symbiosis with onto-epistemological framings related to access, language and participation. The next two empirically pushed sections illustrate what the study’s analytical gaze can imply in the research enterprise. Drawing data from projects El and Pal, Section 2 presents policies that are explicated in terms of “recommendations”, “requirements” and “guidelines” related to issues of equity, languaging and participation during the 2020 pandemic year. Drawing on data from projects Pal and DoT, Section 3 focuses on dimensions of “practiced policies”, “wPR in policies” and how participation promised for-all plays out in the wilderness of contemporary human lives. The paper concludes by bringing together this entangled theoretical-empirical gaze, explicating through an overarching discussion the ongoing shifts that this study contributes towards.

**Equity, Languaging and Participation in Pandemic Existence**

In a comparative gaze, Sweden is generally understood as a democratic, inclusive nation-state where its citizens are viewed as being law-abiding, as having access to equitable resources and faith in polity and government. The unorthodox decisions made during the spring of 2020 at the start of the pandemic by FHM, Folkhälsomyndigheten (English: Public Health Agency of Sweden) meant that citizens were not locked down and schools were not shut through top-down policy decisions. Instead, citizens received “recommendations” to maintain physical distance and not travel or visit elderly relatives both in general, and during the week-long sports vacation that shuts down different parts of the country during different weeks in February6 or the Easter week break.

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6 To allow skiing resorts to cater to the influx of visitors from across the county.
in April or the summer break. The exceptional circumstances at the start of
the pandemic in 2020 led to daily mid-afternoon press-conferences by FHM,
and extra press-conferences organized by governmental bodies, ministries,
and the prime-minister’s office (see Vignette 1). In addition to broadcasting
information digitally to citizens and other people living inside and outside its
nation-state boundaries, these recurring events aimed to present updates, rec-
ommendations and comment other issues related to the pandemic.

At an extra press-conference on 27 March 2020 when nation-states across the planet had established policies that created lockdown situations of their entire populations, the Swedish prime-minister Stefan Löfven and the Public Health Agency of Sweden decreed that no more than 50 individuals could come together in any public event (bringing down the previous number from 500). While gyms, restaurants, bars, schools and work-places were not included in this new policy, it was “recommended” that it would be good if these establishments could “respect the policy regarding a maximum of 50 individuals”.

Vignette 1. On recommendations and policies in pandemic times in Swedish
spaces in late March 2020

The shift in recommendations and policies presented in Vignette 1 raise
several issues that are interesting from my epistemological stance and the
empirically-pushed illustrations I represent in this and the next section. Some
of these relate to the ways in which we – both within scholarship and in more
commonsensical terms – understand policy, others are concerned with issues of
equity and languaging i.e. people’s-embedded-language-use broadly. Yet
others relate to the doing of research in what is being discussed in terms of “in
the wild” in and across digital-analogue spaces of the 21st century.

Before analytically unpacking issues of legally established or declared pol-
icies and recommendations, a focus on the prime-minister’s formulations in
March 2020, in particular his use of the word “folkvett”, points to an interesting
dimension of how policies are perceived (see Extract 1a). The Swedish term
folkvett can translate into good manners, common sense and literally means
what people “know” or good public sense. The use of this term, embedded in
recommendations presented to the press and broadcast digitally, led to discus-
sions about what the prime-minister could have meant by it, what it can mean

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7 This phrase, borrowed from social cognition (Hutchins 1995), has recently become popular
in the domain of “second language learning” in the Language Sciences/Studies context and
implies interactions outside classrooms (Eskildsen and Theodórsdóttir 2017; Wagner 2015).
The assumption being that interactions within classrooms are structured/tame in contrast.
Such assumptions are analytically problematic, since analysis of life in classrooms has across
timespaces established the “wild” complexities therein also (see for instance, Megan and
Cazden 2015). In the present context, in the wild points to the complexities of all human
interactions.
in pandemic times, across social media, mainstream media, office spaces, dinner tables, etc.

“It is a very difficult situation all over Sweden. But it is also the case that all of us as individuals must assume our responsibilities. We will never be able to legislate on everything or ban everything. It’s a matter of good public sense”

Extract 1a. Folkvett-1 (SVT, Sveriges Television; English: the Swedish public TV)8

[the prime-minister] “has urged Swedes to behave ‘as adults’”

Extract 1b. Folkvett-2 (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/30/catastrophe-sweden-coronavirus-stoicism-lockdown-europe, accessed 20 March 2020)

Leaving decisions to citizens and people living inside the physical spaces of Sweden on how to deal appropriately with an invisible virus, that had in comparison led even the neighboring Scandinavian nation-states to institute very strict lockdown policies, by saying that policy-makers cannot legislate or ban everything and that dealing appropriately with the exceptional situation had to be done through folkvett, was picked up by the international press. The British newspaper Guardian, for instance (see Extract 1b), discussed its use by the Swedish prime-minister in terms of “behaving as adults”. Such a recommendation constitutes an instance of both declared and perceived policy. In the instance of folkvett, the recommendation illustrates government placing the responsibility on the shoulders of citizens. A WPR gaze here sees a shift in responsibility – from policy makers to policy performers.

A unique feature of both the daily press-conferences, and the extra press-conferences was the presence of STS-Swedish interpreters located, during the initial phase of the pandemic, in the physical spaces of the press-conference setting and later in a studio at a distance. Thus, STS was being made available to audiences in the physical spaces of the press-conferences and through online streaming services of various media outlets like SVT, Expressen, etc. By early April 2020 the STS interpreting at the locality of the press-conference was being streamed directly to various media outlets (see Figure 2) and was being accessed by citizens (in principle anywhere on the planet) through internet enabled technological devices.

8 Swedish (I have transcribed verbatim from the live broadcasts on SVT and then translated the examples presented in Section 2): “Det är ett väldigt svårt läge i hela Sverige. Men det är också så att alla vi som individer måste ta vårt ansvar. Vi kommer aldrig att kunna lagstifta om allt eller förbuda allt. Det är en fråga om folkvett"
The presence of the named-language STS through real-time simultaneous interpretation in these daily public events constitutes a new, rather than a routine feature in Swedish physical-digital spaces. Such interpretation services aim to create accessibility for STS-users in Sweden. The quality of the real-time subtitling services in the streaming portals from the press-conferences is lamented by both hearing and deaf individuals. While subtitling provides access to people who cannot hear oral language, in particular those who are not familiar with STS, it also creates access for deaf individuals who are adept with STS.
Access issues for languagers i.e., language-users, who are not familiar with or not comfortable with the named-languages Swedish or SMI, was initially not catered for by public media service providers like SVT or commercial providers like national newspapers or tabloids, including their digital editions. Civil societal organizations started – in early March 2020 – providing daily translations and subtitling of these press-conferences for these latter groups, with the intent of making the important information from these daily events available for-all (see Figure 3a). Mainstream media service providers followed suit and started providing textual translations in increased numbers of named-languages by the end of March 2020 (see Figure 3b).

The interesting issue for present purposes is that while declared policies related to access and all citizens rights to equitable information and participation in all arenas of society have long existed in the nation-state of Sweden,9

9 See for instance, Convention on the rights for persons with disability that Sweden signed in 2007 (https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/crpd_svedish_corrected.pdf), Discrimination Act (2008:567), Prop. 2001/02:15 “The Open University”.

FIGURE 3A NGO’s early provision of Corona information – translations for languagers not prioritized by authorities or mainstream media

FIGURE 3B Mainstream media providing information in multiple named-languages during late March 2020
relaying information, live or soon afterwards, from mainstream events in different named-languages constitutes a first mobilization and a unique provision that is inclusive of non-mainstream named-group languages. Such mobilization and provision of interpretation services, and information in multiple named-languages can be understood in terms of practiced language policies of equity and participation, i.e. policies on the ground (or in the wild) that open up for the participation of all and not just mainstream Swedish languages.

The spread of the Corona infection in some immigrant dense areas of Stockholm was reported in March 2020 as very high and non-access to information in multiple named-languages was seen as one contributing factor. In addition, the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s recommendation regarding “taking care of the elderly” (Swedish: Värna om äldre) by isolating them was experienced as not being clear-cut for many non-mainstream languages.

During a national TV discussion, an invited minority group leader Jihan Mohamed responds with the following when the anchor points out that caring of the elderly meant isolating them:

“It is important that the information distributed by authorities is both understood and interpreted in the manner that it is intended. … In this instance the possibility to misunderstand is wide-open … This [type of caring] is difficult to carry out for groups that are not used to having their elders in old-people’s homes. What does it mean to care? In our groups taking care of our elderly perhaps means to be there for them. They live as neighbours or inside our homes. In such a scenario it is difficult to protect them. There is thus a need to make explicit what one should do, what one ought to do, what one is required to do from the perspective of the authorities, so that information is interpreted in a correct manner. … One thing can mean different things for different people”.

Vignette 2: Värna om äldre – isolating the elderly or being there for them (29 March 2020, https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/stockholm/x-16, accessed 30 March 2020)10

While the rapid spread of the Corona virus in some pockets in Stockholm was attributed to information not being accessible to the citizens in these areas in non-mainstream named-languages, Vignette 2 represents what can be meant by language access. Here understanding an issue – related to life and death – goes beyond making information available in different named-languages: the meaning-making people engage in i.e., of the perceptions related to the recommendations made by authorities. Understanding what it means to take care of the elderly, “can mean different things for different people”: keeping them safe by keeping away from them or keeping them safe by being there for them, constitutes a binary tussle as the invited minority group leader stresses. Thus,

10 Swedish original: Det är väldigt viktigt att budskapet både förstås och tolkas som det är tänkt. I det här fallet finns det väldet mycket möjligheter att missförstå. … Hos grupper som inte har som vaner att ha sina äldre föräldrar på äldreboende blir det svårt att applicera det. Vad betyder värna? Hos oss det kanske betyder att ta hand om sina äldre, vara där för dem. De bor som grannar eller inneboende hos en. Då är det svårt att skydda dem. Då behöver man förtydliga vad man inte ska göra, vad man bor göra, vad man istället för göra från myndighetsterritorium, så att information tolkas på rätt sätt. … En sak kan betyda olika saker för olika människor.
following recommendations and policy is fuzzy and needs explication. Taking care of elderly – like the case with folkvett – is an issue regarding perceived policy. Furthermore, a WPR gaze here relates to how citizens can and should take care of the elderly, rather than an issue of information that needs to be translated from one named-language to another. These examples highlight both complexities of prINp vis-à-vis equity and language and how they differ from practiced policies on the ground or in the wild. The latter need to be seen, I argue, in terms of pASpa.

The examples discussed so far also illustrate the hierarchy of language policies and the boundaries that are maintained between named-languages in policies – declared, perceived, and practiced. For instance, information is primarily made available during the exceptional timespaces discussed in this section, in the mainstream named-language Swedish, which is then interpreted into STS and later complemented by a few other named-languages associated with the named-groups of older and newer migrants. These examples also illustrate how policies create boundaries between named-groups. For instance, identities that are contingent upon peoples hearing levels and/or nation-state allegiances or where they or their forefathers moved from and into Swedish geographical spaces. Thus, some citizens are conceptualized as mainstream users of Swedish and others are not, either because they are deaf or because they are positioned as users of other non-mainstream named-languages. WPR here is non-usage of Swedish.

A final issue that the examples taken up in this first analytical section illustrate relates to the digital-physical interlayered wilderness of contemporary geographies. The localities of where people presenting recommendations and updated information and audiences that are potential policy/recommendation consumers (including researchers), for instance, calls attention to the mediation of such communication through digital tools and services. Furthermore, such information is available not only during press-conferences and in various play-services later on, but they are also interpreted, re-presented and re-cycled by other media service providers in the same and different named-languages both inside and outside the nation-state of Sweden (see Extract 1b, for instance). There is a relaying and chaining of both the content of the information and the medium and media-sites via which the same is re-presented and re-cycled to consumers – in print, through digital platforms, in news bulletins, in social-media settings, etc. (see also Bagga-Gupta and Rao 2018).

This, in the wild nature of how contemporary human lives are lived, is consequential for – as explicated in the Introduction – the doing of research. Contemporary researching requires “capturing a moving object empirically,
that is, a phenomenon occurring at the boundaries of different physical-virtual sites, requires particular analytical attention and methodological creativity” (Bagga-Gupta, Messina Dahlberg and Gynne 2019:332). This means that the generation of the data represented in this section has taken place across different named-language media, and across events and people’s lives in and across digital-physical settings and different politically defined nation-states. It has been created through digital nethnographic scanning at a time when I was at a strict lockdown far away from Sweden. Shifting the analytical gaze on empirical data from projects PAL and DoT, the next section, discusses equity and participation related to issues of functionality in policy enactments.

**Participation for-all in Contemporary Human Lives**

A dominant medically oriented compensatory gaze marks both handicap research and the ways in which resource allocations in different societal sectors continue to be guided through policy decisions for functionally-different individuals in the nation-state of Sweden. This contrasts with tenets of a critical perspective that has – at least since the turn of the century – theoretically challenged the assumptions of the former (Clark, Dyson and Millward 1998), and (inter)national declared policies that push for equity and anti-discriminatory agendas. A medically oriented oral/verbal language model continues to dominate the institutional fields of rehabilitation, education and research related to deaf people despite the emergence of a linguistic, cultural model that has challenged the former. This “great divide” (Bagga-Gupta 2007) maps onto a spectrum from “deaf as a defective” to “Deaf as an expected component of diversity” (Leigh 2017, 2009). These pendulum shifts vis-à-vis a gaze on deaf children and adults in terms of their communicative needs – either in terms of oral/verbal or manual/signing language-based models – have been noted worldwide across time (Bagga-Gupta 2007, 2004; Jankowski 1997; Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996).

In such a binary tussle, equity issues become framed in terms of different named-languages (Swedish or STS, American English or ASL i.e. American Sign Language, Finnish or Finnish Sign Language, etc.), including named-modalities (oral/verbal, written or signed). Access and participation in and across societal sectors become framed in policies in ways that are aligned to this binary tussle between named-languages. This means that language access (and thereby possibilities to participate) is enmeshed in heterogenous prINp that differ across different sectors in Swedish spaces where deaf-hearing people with different language abilities are members (Holmström and Bagga-Gupta 2021).
– In educational settings like mainstream schools: deaf children – with or without cochlear implants, CIs\(^{11}\) – are members in positions of learners; here STS is often not or is minimally available
– In educational settings like segregated schools: deaf adults are members in the role of teachers;\(^{12}\) here STS and Swedish are used
– In higher educational settings: deaf people are learners in all-hearing settings generally; here STS is made available through interpretation services
– In work settings: deaf individuals are members of settings where most members can communicate in STS or where very few or no one can communicate in STS; here STS and/or Swedish is made available through interpretation services

Deaf individuals’ participation in societal settings like health care services, employment agencies, leisure time settings, etc. are also marked in terms of interactions with professionals and acquaintances who cannot communicate in the named-language STS. This sector-specific heterogeneity is salient in that prINp and pASpa framings become salient and need to be made visible across sectors, if access and participation are to be attended to more broadly (rather than the single sectors that research tends to focus on). This is not an insignificant issue since people live lives by navigating different sectors. Such a methodological framing can, as we saw in Section 1, potentially decenter and trouble declared and perceived policies through a multi-scale empirically framed analytical gaze at the trivial, messy, and wild nature of human life.

In the nation-state of Sweden, declared policies in place and prINp clearly frame deaf adults’ access to settings where other participants cannot communicate in STS (see Vignette 3). This is enabled through the provision of tax-funded interpretation services (henceforth IS). Such a declared policy means that deaf people have the right to information through live IS (see Vignette 3), and that when a deaf person needs to or wishes to visit a dental clinic, a health care center, a bank, visit a restaurant with non-STS knowledgeable family or friends or participate in a housing society annual meeting, zir has the right to order and receive STS-Swedish interpreters. The task of the latter is to professionally, following ethical guidelines/policies, mediate interactions, and conversations in activities that zir is attending. These interpreters are called dövtolk, literally deaf-interpreters. A WPR gaze suggests that it is the

\(^{11}\) CIs are inner-ear technologically sophisticated hearing-aids that, in a prINp framing confer a normalizing identity-position on deaf children with CIs. Such a framing naturalizes the individual placements of deaf children with CIs in mainstream schools where the language of instruction is Swedish and where hearing classmates are not familiar with STS (see Holmström 2013).

\(^{12}\) Or other professional roles like psychologists, janitors, kitchen personnel, cleaners, etc.
deaf person’s inability to hear that is the de facto issue here. Framing the interpreters in terms of STS-Swedish interpreters, in contrast, places the onus on both partners, i.e., an interlocutor’s inability to use STS and a deaf individual’s inability to hear oral/verbal Swedish as the issue at stake (see also Bagga-Gupta and Messina Dahlberg 2021; Holmström and Bagga-Gupta 2019, 2021).

When a deaf individual has a key role in a specific activity – for instance, when zir leads a meeting at a work place or when zir is self-employed and needs to consult government service providers – then zir’s employer or company is tasked to pay for the interpreters (see Vignette 3). Such a pASpa framing illuminates envisaged policy i.e. pINP access and participation, on the one hand, and practiced policy access and participation, on the other hand.

Vignette 3: Employer costs for hiring deaf leaders in working life

pINP flags provision of support for enabling deaf individual’s participation in societal contexts. However, pASpa highlights that if deaf individuals are leaders of an activity where co-participants are not users of the named-language STS, then their access is curtailed. Neither does pINP encourage or support employers to employ deaf individuals, since the latter cost at least three times what a hearing employee would cost given the need to cater for interpreter costs in their own budgets (see Weckström and Bagga-Gupta 2020). Equity and participation are outrightly compromised through such declared and practiced language policies in important ways. These substantially marginalize deaf individuals’ opportunities in the mainstream labour market.

Furthermore, declared as well as practiced policies decree that two professionally qualified interpreters work in 15-minute shifts at lengthier and formal activities (for instance, at the Pandemic media briefings presented in Section 2 and in project DoT); at shorter meetings – for instance, at health care settings or leisure activities like a lunch meeting, one interpreter is deemed sufficient “for the communication needs of deaf individuals”. The salient WPR issue here – as we saw earlier too – is that it is the deaf individuals lack of hearing ability, rather than the non-STS experienced other participants lack of STS abilities that are focused in both pINP and pASpa. Furthermore, and increasingly, some societal contexts like governmental employment agencies
(Swedish: Arbetsförmedling), governmental insurance agencies (Swedish: Försäkringskassan), municipalities (Swedish: kommun) and private sector agencies prefer hiring people who are hearing or hard-of-hearing and who have some knowledge of STS. Such routines build on the tradition wherein hearing "helpers" mediated deaf individuals’ access to societal arenas (Holmström and Bagga-Gupta 2019, 2021). A WPR gaze illuminates this situation given the declared policy focus on formal accredited IS: it is the ease of oral/verbal communication with these non-professional mediators at the work-place in general together with the aim of taking care of the organizations interpretation needs that explains this trend (see Vignette 4).

Vignette 4: Disjointed support services and interpretation policies as practice

Perceived policies by different governmental bodies indicate how they interpret declared policies for organizing their specific support for their deaf clients (see Vignette 4). Furthermore, the support they provide deaf individuals does not always take into consideration support delivered by other governmental bodies to the same named-group. Such disjointed support services thus functions as gatekeeping mechanisms and imply that prINp become dots that deaf individuals are required to connect if they are to access the support promised to them for their own participation as full-fledged societal members (see Vignette 4). While access to societal sectors is guaranteed in prINp through IS, the use of people with varying degrees of STS knowledge but no professional

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13 See also other parallel studies from projects pal and DoT: Bagga-Gupta and Messina Dahlberg (2021), Bagga-Gupta, Messina Dahlberg and Almén (2021), Holmström and Bagga-Gupta (2019, 2021).
education to work as interpreters not only disregards deaf people’s rights and prINp, but also constitutes an instance of proxy participation. Hearing nonSTS knowledgeable participants in such settings automatically can be lured into believing that “hands waving in the air”, irrespective of what the mediator is languaging about or the quality of this languaging, is the equivalent of access to “communication in a named-language delivered through the mouth”. The quality of the interpretation and what is being mediated by professional interpreters or, as we see in Vignette 4, the work of non-professional helpers cannot be assessed by languagers who are not knowledgeable about STS. Proxy participation is a dimension of both prINp and pASpa. It is a dimension of perceived policies and enables non-STS knowledgeable individuals to entertain the belief that they are in an equitable communicating environment given the provision of mediators (even though these have a non-professional background).

Further complexities regarding declared policies relate to awareness about formal rights and curtailed access that many deaf people have to written Swedish that compromises their possibilities to make a claim in line with prINp. Digital spaces are used increasingly to mitigate such non-access through community efforts. Vignette 5 (and Figure 4, Extract 2) illustrate these complexities where some STS knowledgeable individuals raise awareness among other deaf individuals regarding key aspects of their marginalization in society.

Vignette 5: Community efforts in digital spaces to challenge executed policies

Such collaborative scaffolding attempts to raise awareness and support some languagers (in)abilities to individually challenge a new monthly fee

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14 This is akin to a situation wherein a hearing person who has no knowledge about another oral named-language cannot be called to judge upon the quality of the latter by “listening to oral interpretation” in itself.

15 See Weckström and Bagga-Gupta (2020) for a discussion about this issue.
though the affordances of social media spaces. Coming together with the intention of challenging declared and *executed* policies constitute dimensions of pASpa. The sudden clamping down of fees constitutes practiced policies that are decreed by and executed by authorities: they are binding for citizens and not open to negotiation. As such they differ from declared or perceived policies.

Figure 4 (left), a screengrab from a vlog, illustrates a group leaders systematic list that zir goes through step-by-step. Zir points towards and underlines each handwritten issue that zir has pinned to the fridge-door as zir elaborates these in an *sts*-written Swedish vlog. This type of languaging where two named-languages are deployed – here written Swedish and *sts*, including fingerspelling\(^\text{16}\) – constitutes chaining in the context of everyday meaning-making practices.\(^\text{17}\) This illustrates both a named-groups agency and the chaining of named-language semiotic resources in a social media site.

In contrast, declared and perceived policies, particularly in school settings and in language courses of teacher education in higher education, highlight the importance of keeping these two named-languages (*sts* and Swedish) and modalities (signing and written Swedish) “separated”. In addition, oral/verbal

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\(^{16}\) Fingerspelling draws upon semiotic resources from both *sts* and Swedish (or other named-language pairs in signing communication).

\(^{17}\) See Bagga-Gupta (1999, 2002, 2004), Gynne and Bagga-Gupta (2013), Hansen (2005), Messina Dahlberg and Bagga-Gupta (2016), Padden (1996), Tapio (2013) for previous studies that explicate the complex nature of chaining in signing and hearing educational settings.
Swedish has been downplayed in educational policies since the mid-1990s in the education of deaf children in segregated schools. Such prINp framings can, from a WPR gaze, suggest the importance of being able to “see” STS clearly distinguished from oral Swedish; thereby challenging the hegemonies of oral language prINp that had conferred, until the end of the 1970s, a weak status on STS in both school settings and society at large.

However, as Figure 4 represents and Extract 2 illustrates, the local-chaining inherent in the languaging by the group leader deploys semiotic resources from both Swedish (the written words in the first two lines of the poster – see Figure 4 left) and STS in an intricate manner: turning towards the camera, zir signs the written sentence (line 3) slowly, fingerspelling the Swedish word for challenge, B-E-S-T-R-I-D-A-N (line 1).

Extract 2. Chaining of resources from named-languages STS and (written) Swedish in meaning-making

The group leader also posts a picture of a printed letter where zir has highlighted, using red arrows, specific parts of the draft (see Figure 4 right), indicating what individuals, who intend to send in letters to the regional authority challenging the newly imposed fees, need to specifically attend to. Such languaging in the wild represents a pASpa framing where meaning-making is at the forefront.

This analysis indicates that while issues of access and participation lie at the heart of prINp, understanding people's access and participation in settings framed as being democratic calls for paying attention to methodological issues as well as to languaging which is an important component of peoples meaning-making. The final section of this paper explicates the relevance of a SWaSP framing for understanding the nature of policies related to equity and participation.

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1a. HAPP DU SKICKA B-E-S-T-R-I-D-A-N FÖR JANUARI FAKTURAN
1b. have you sent the [fingerspells word] challenge for your january bill
2. [underlines first two lines of poster with finger (left picture of Figure 3)]
3a. SKICKA BESTRIDAN FÖR JANUARI FAKTURAN
3b. [capitalized written text] have you sent the challenge for your january bill

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18 I have translated the original STS-Swedish to English.
On the Entanglements of Promises IN Policy and Policies AS Participation

While knowledge can never be total, the selections we make have consequences for its ordering. That ordering is always open to challenge in the light of different selections and re-orderings (Bhambra 2014:4).

Top-down conceptualizations of policy enactments by institutions and individuals and their (correct) implementations leading to desirable (positive) effects constitute a large part of both general policy and LP research (Canale 2019). Research that attempts to understand how institutions and individuals interpret, challenge, or accept recommendations/policies are emerging as dimensions of ongoing epistemological shifts that the present study contributes to. Furthermore, instead of assuming that policies unfold unidirectionally and monocausally, attending to multi-scalar and cross-sectorial datasets in the wild makes it evident that access and participation are complex phenomenon that cannot be attended to in normative ways, without stripping them of their flesh and blood. How institutions and individuals make sense of access and participation are key issues that need attention if we are to consider ongoing unfolding’s and recontextualization of meanings in the flow of peoples and institutional banal lives. Language here plays a key role – both when language is and is not in focus. This means that policy implementation and enactments by both institutions and individuals always takes place within the confines of languaging.

The nation-state of Sweden has numerous established laws and policies that explicitly recognize plurality and the equal worth of all its citizens; these constitute promises embedded in policy, i.e. prINp. Demographic heterogeneity – in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, race, functionality, sexual-orientation, etc. – has nevertheless become a contemporary concern across many geopolitical spaces, including those of Sweden. While human heterogeneity is itself not new, recent migrations into Swedish territories have, for instance, given rise to (new-old) societal and political tensions. Strengthening of national and regional policies, in such a scenario, risks becoming proxy participation support for named-groups that are envisaged as being peripheral. It is here that an analytical engagement with prINp and pASpa becomes relevant.

By taking a theoretically framed empirical stance, engagement with datasets from different projects has unpacked the complex nature of access and participation in and across the wilderness of contemporary human life in digital-analog spaces that constitute Sweden. This has been done primarily in three specific ways: Först, by taking cognizance of epistemological shifts
traced by Bonacina-Pugh (2012) from declared to perceived, to practiced LP, and Canale’s (2019) invitation to steer clear of monicausal and unidirectional policy stances, I have drawn attention to the usefulness of cross-sectorial and multi-scale data across digital-analogue spaces in this enterprise. Second, while issues related to equity and participation constitute fundamental ideas spelled out in sophisticated declared and perceived policies, drawing on Bacchi’s (2009) words, these constitute problem-solving paradigms. Thus, my analysis has shifted focus from solving issues related to participation that are seen as being key parts of prINp, to interrogating the issues themselves. This highlights silences related to what needs to be changed – for instance, deaf people’s access to critical pandemic information via STS interpretation (Figure 2), employer costs incurred for hiring deaf people (Vignette 3), mismatched support services that deaf individuals are required to handle (Vignette 4) or their need for scaffolded access to information about how to challenge a new charge that a regional authority has clamped down on them (Vignette 5). It also makes visible problems inherent in what can be meant by a leaders use of the word folksvett (Vignette 1, Extracts 1a, 1b) or what people need to do to take care of the elderly (Vignette 2). Third, these ongoing epistemological shifts are relevant to the entangled tenets of a Second Wave of Southern Perspectives, i.e. a SWaSP framing that have guided my multi-scalar analysis of equity, access, participation, and language (see Figure 1).

Going beyond a dichotomized linear understanding of policies in texts (declared) or policies in terms of how people and institutions interpret them (perceived) or policies in practices as peoples and institutions actions (practiced), the relevant issue, as Ingold (2015) succinctly puts it, is the need to admit all things “into the world not as nouns but as verbs, as goings-on” (p. 16) and recognizing that “the existence of a thing is indistinguishable from its activity” (p. 115). So how do lives of things like “policies” and concepts like “access” and “participation” look like from such a performative entangled stance? I maintain that prINp and pASpa cannot be considered a dichotomy and do not represent a binary tussle. Instead, their enmeshed nature (see Figure 4) enables making visible complex challenges that include openings, closures and shifts in interpretations, and practices in how institutions and people attend to resources envisaged as contributing to access and participation. Their enmeshed relationship is enabled through leakages in the porous boundaries between timespaces, settings, practices, etc. It is this that we as analysts can hope to “see” through an upfront scrutiny of multi-scalar data that we construct in the wild. For instance, mainstream media and press-conferences break the norm-based routinized hegemonies of monolingualism when STS (Figure 2) and multiple other named-languages (Figures 3a, 3b) start becoming available from March 2020 onwards. Or when citizens
understood as being in the peripheries scaffold one another’s competencies in social media spaces (Vignette 5, Figure 4, Extract 2) to challenge executed policies. These constitute agentic moves by individuals and institutions at specific points in time that attend variously to prINp and pASpa – they are not one or the other.

Figure 5 attempts to illustrate the entanglements or the meshwork relationships between prINp and pASpa. While the examples presented in this paper can be aligned more to either prINp or pASpa, they need to be understood as being entangled in the weaved meshwork of both. Thus, while recommendations presented by policy-makers to the press and citizens in pandemic times in a majority and minority named-language (Vignette 1), and through open-ended terms like folkvett (Extract 1a and 1b) or advice about “taking care of the elderly” (Vignette 2) can been clustered closer to prINp, they exist in the doings of people and institutions “as goings-on” and share dimensions of pASpa. Furthermore, a WPR framing calls for interrogating the issue of the access that citizens have to these recommendations beyond interpretation into minority named-languages – illustrations of which (Figures 1, 3a and 3b, for instance) can be aligned between the spaces of prINp and pASpa. While STS knowledgeable citizens (including members of CCD) were positive to the new live interpretations of the daily press-conferences convened by governmental
agencies in early 2020, they were both frustrated and clear about the size of the interpreters’ frame in the streaming (a little less than one-fourth of the screen). This dimension of access then can be said to constitute a proxy dimension of participation.

People’s engagement with guidelines and policies are always entangled with issues of languaging – how it is made available, but also what it is, where it is, who has access to it, who requires support to access it, who is tasked through policies to provide the economic resources for this support (Vignette 3), etc. This builds on the meaning-making dimensions of languaging, rather than the fixed meanings inscribed to words in a specific language, or its translation into STS or other named-languages.

Such a SWaSP gaze means that it is relevant to break the silences and make visible how, not just prINp, but also pASpa framings represent policy “problems” and the effects of these problematizations. In addition, the entanglements of the theoretical framings that constitute SWaSP are significant for equity and participation broadly, in that they contribute to co-situating languaging and identity-positioning in the spotlight. They enable mapping – as we have seen in this study – the performances of institutions and people across societal settings and analogue-digital sites. These epistemological framings furthermore illustrate how prINp and pASpa intrinsic to specific arenas (government directives in pandemic times – Vignette 1; regional health authorities decisions – Figure 4) are disrupted or maintained through prINp and pASpa in others (discussions regarding what taking care of elderly can mean – Vignette 2; challenging new charges levied for borrowing support technologies – Vignette 5).

Research that focuses on individuals and groups that are understood as being in need of support can, in a SWaSP framing, be seen primarily as illustrative of what is glossed as access and participation in societies that purport to include all. It is here that alternative onto-epistemological stances with regards to access and participation become relevant. SWaSP framings are made up of non-universalistic dogmas that also contribute to troubling the conventional doing of research and ideological assumptions underpinning mainstream conceptual framings. In such a framing identity-positionings are related to peoples and institutions simultaneity of multi-layered doings. This means that naming an elderly as belonging to the mainstream ethnic majority or a minority ethnic named-group in terms of multiple, open-ended and interconnected beings or collectives whose positionalities differ across spaces and times is based upon relationality (Roets and Braidotti 2012). Similarly, naming an entrepreneur who is deaf as the individual in need of interpreting support because zir cannot hear oral/verbal Swedish and not zirs’ interlocutors who cannot use STS deprives both individuals of agency, wherein the relational dimension of
meaning-making in communication is silenced. This means that peoples lack of STS competencies is equally in need of interpretation support. Interrogating recommendations of taking care of the elderly during a pandemic thus is contingent not on prINp in relation to access through minority named-languages per se, but on layers of meaning-making related to languaging and identity-positionings in non-mainstream named-groups. As Severo and Makoni (2020:5) highlight “what counts as language ...[helps] us to understand how language can emerge as a product of a sense of community and belonging”. The issue that is relevant is that non-mainstream identity-positionings are offered special arrangements by institutions (like interpreter services, technological aids, language translations, etc.) and these social practices themselves co-shape access and participation. The point being that language and identity here become boxed-in and taken-for-granted in the mundane ways in which they are essentialized through not only prINp and pASpa, but also in the scholarship.

SWaSP troubles conceptualizations regarding the bounded nature of language and identity wherein what is named-language 1 is not named-language 2 and what is named-identity 1 is not what is named-identity 2. Such boundary-marking is fictious (Vignette 5, Figure 4, Extract 2) and is anchored in “single grand stories”, i.e. conceptualizations that emerge from global-North framings and that continue to circulate as pre-theorized givens (Bagga-Gupta 2018). Problematizing prINp and pASpa (for instance, making STS available for all during the daily information broadcasts [Figure 2], tasking deaf people to pay for their own access to information [Vignette 4] and tasking employers who hire deaf people to pay for interpreter costs [Vignette 3]) calls attention to issues of proxy participation on the one hand, and what can be seen as normal-languaging and normal-diversity in the southern spaces of Sweden where people language using multiple named-languages and live lives in communities where a variety of differences (deaf, hearing, varying competencies of STS and spoken and written Swedish, for instance) are part of the normal-range of diversities. Bringing such epistemologies to bear is significant to the task of understanding WPR in language policy agendas for access and participation. This means that how boundaries – that create named-language and named-identity – are drawn in declared, perceived, practiced and executed policies play an important role for what becomes enabled and curtailed for people’s access and participation. One can say that naming someone or something as someone or something is highly relevant; framed differently, WPR or the ways in which contemporary diversity get envisaged is a key issue in both the wilderness of contemporary living and mainstream scholarship related to language and identity. Thus, while behaving as adults and knowing how to take
care of the elderly constitute key recommendations during a pandemic, these are not merely matters related to making information available through different named-languages. Not having live STS interpretation and qualitatively acceptable Swedish subtitling services available as routine dimensions for enabling access and participation for-all constitutes a dimension of pASpa even though declared laws and policies call attention to the hegemonies of prINp. Bringing a WPR gaze to bear on prINp enables understanding that “policies give shape to ‘problems’; they do not address them” (Bacchi 2009:x, italics in original). Recognizing how representations of problems are complicit in the work policies enable/disable, allows for troubling prINp while being attentive to pASpa. It is in this manner that the concerted efforts and focus on establishing more refined declared policies with the intent to take care of or rectify inequities in democratic settings can be interrogated.

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