

Publication

Going to write: Embodied trajectories of writing of collective proposals in grassroots democracy meetings

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This paper offers a multimodal approach of writing as an embodied interactional action, prefigured by the movements of the entire body, projecting going to write. It considers grassroots participatory democracy meetings as an exemplary setting for studying issues related to writing in public, for the public and on behalf of the public. In this context, a facilitator is in charge of writing down the outcome of the participatory discussion, in a way that is public, transparent and intelligible for the audience. On the basis of extensive video recordings, I study the methodic embodied practices that precede and lead to public writing. The analysis shows that the writing of proposals is contingent on the establishment of an agreement about them: clear agreement is followed by a straight and brisk walk of the facilitator towards the board, projecting the inscription. By contrast, when there are problems in establishing the agreement, his walk is more discontinuous. Finally, in case of persisting disagreement, the walk deploys in very different manners. Thus embodied movements of the facilitator are reflexively related to the agreed upon vs. disagreed status of the proposal that the facilitator is going to inscribe. This demonstrates how writing is strongly projected by walking; and how writing is observably done in a public, transparent, and revisable way as the product of a collective action.

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