

Approaching geography classes differANTly: Frictions, fractions and socio-material performances

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Pedagogic and didactical approaches are quite clear in defining the protagonists of formal learning: there is the teachers who teach and the students who learn. Materials or artifacts of learning have mostly been considered neutral transmitters that help to improve the clarity of certain topics or concepts.

However, media, things, people and geographical issues are far more complex than that. Particularly the frictions and fractions going along with the production of knowledge are interesting fields to take more notice of. Similarly, although with a different focus and audience, Horton and Kraftl (2006) expressed their discontent when they asked for some more ways of thinking and doing children`s geographies. So, which geographies might be interesting to study? In which ways can we actually do and learn geography differently?

As recent scholarly work within ethnography and sociology of education (e.g. Fenwick and Edwards 2010; 2013, Roehl 2012, Sørensen 2009, Verran 1999) has shown, an approach to school that is inspired by STS or (post-)ANT studies can offer a new perspective on processes of knowledge production that concentrate on the socio-material. Consequently, this approach challenges not only the hegemonic production of geography, but also the ways geography is being performed by humans and non-humans at school.

This paper considers schools not only as places of learning that transcend the material walls of school buildings and reach out to other real/virtual/imagined places. In addition to this, classrooms are approached as vital assemblages drawing in all sorts of different human and non-human actors as network effects that are participating in co-producing knowledge.

The results of my fieldwork at a secondary school in Zurich show that these forms of knowledges full of frictions and fractions challenge the existing regimes of truth dominating curricula, schoolbooks and proficiency tests. It is through ANT`s radically different views that we are invited to approach and perform geography together with students entering an open space of critical network-learning full of exciting im-/material traces to follow.

Literature cited:

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