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## Interaction rituals and co-presence – linking humans to humans in space syntax theory

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**Abstract**

*There are two fundamental theoretical links necessary to make for a robust foundation of space syntax methodology. The first concerns the link between humans and their environment, where space syntax has contributed to the development of what can be called a cognitive geometry for the analysis of spatial form. The second is the link between humans and humans, that is, the generation of social processes, where space syntax has highlighted the idea of co-presence as critical in such processes. However, these issues are far from exhausted in space syntax theory or even always convincingly argued. It is therefore the aim of this paper to further contribute to the second of these issues and in a parallel paper to contribute to the first.*

*The ability of spatial configuration to support critical relations between humans and humans is essential to space syntax theory where it already in the early texts of space syntax theory is argued that space, far from simply constituting a background to society is a social material in itself (Hillier & Hanson 1984). More specifically this is argued with reference to Durkheim's theory about different forms of social solidarity (Durkheim 1984). Further attempts to link space syntax methodology to sociological theory has been made (e.g. Hanson 2000; Hillier & Vaughan 2007). However, these attempts have also been criticized from within sociology, notwithstanding strong recognition of the potential contribution of space syntax (e.g. Liebst 2014).*

*This paper aims to contribute to a more robust theory on how spatial configuration supports the link between humans and humans, that is, social phenomena, based on earlier arguments by Liebst, that also can be accepted from within sociology, which, it will be argued, is essential for the further development of the field. First, in supporting a stronger understanding of space syntax itself as not being sociological theory proper, but rather a theory and, not least, a methodology in what Durkheim called social morphology. Second, open for stronger rapport between space syntax with the social sciences in general and sociology in particular by presenting a socio-spatial foundation based on established sociological theory.*

*This theoretical contribution will be based on the central sociological micro-tradition from Emile Durkheim's later work on rituals (2001), over Ervin Goffman's micro-spatial analysis of interaction rituals (e.g. 1963), to Randall Collins attempts to form a broad general sociology based on the micro-scale study of interaction ritual chains (2004). A similar contribution, however with different emphasises, can be found in Legeby (2013). It will be argued that this tradition presents a most appropriate sociological framework for space syntax claims to sociological relevance that is highly recognised within sociology in itself.*

**Keywords**

*Space syntax theory, co-presence, interaction ritual, situation.*

## 1. Introduction: Durkheim and the material substratum of social process

All forms of urban modelling are based on some idea or theory about interaction between humans and humans in the environment, that is, between spatial form and social processes, whether made explicit or not; the issue is how appropriate and well founded it is. It is therefore essential to space syntax theory and already in the early texts it was argued that space, far from simply constituting a background to society is a social material in itself (Hillier & Hanson 1984). More specifically this is argued with reference to Durkheim's theory about different forms of social solidarity (Durkheim 1984), which, according to Hillier and Hanson, is one of few sociological theories with truly spatial foundations and implications:

"This theory was profoundly spatial: organic solidarity required and integrated and dense space, whereas mechanic solidarity preferred a segregated and dispersed space. Not only this, but Durkheim actually located the cause of the different solidarities in spatial variables, namely the size and density of populations" (Hillier & Hanson, p. 18).

Further attempts to link space syntax methodology to sociological theory has been made (e.g. Hanson 2000; Hillier 2007), but space syntax has also been challenged from within sociology, not least by an unusually proficient reading by Lasse Liebst (2014). Most important in his criticism is the paradox that space syntax research, while developing such a powerful and accurate micro-spatial model, does so with one-sided claims of support in sociological macro-theory. Liebst generally agrees that the Durkheimian tradition is the most apposite for fruitful links to spatial theory, primarily due to the importance given by Durkheim to *social morphology* and *dynamic density*, the same variable as identified in Durkheim by Hillier and Hanson: "the size and density of populations". His concern, as we shall see, is that one in space syntax theory has chosen the wrong end of Durkheim's social theory, the macro-end based in broad social categories such as mechanic and organic solidarities instead of the micro-end based in concrete co-presence among people in, for instance, religious ritual.

While we do find references to space, albeit to varying degrees, in the texts of all the founding fathers of sociology, it is only Durkheim that addresses this entity in a consistent manner and conceives of it as a foundational part of sociology. Moreover, we find in his texts a very specific position and role for space, it is not just another strand in sociology, but one of the two pillars upon which sociology were to rest. On the one hand, there was *social physiology* by which he means the study of social functions and processes, such as sociology of religion, sociology of law, sociology of crime etc., that is, exactly the kind of research fields that we have come to identify in 20<sup>th</sup> century sociology. However, such study was to be supported by a second pillar: studies in *social morphology*, that is, the study of demographic statistics, topography and, not least, the built environment and its spatial form. Durkheim's description of social morphology is nothing short of remarkable, given the aims of space syntax:

"Social morphology concerns the study of the 'material substratum' or foundation of society, that is, to be understood in the broadest possible sense as including the size of the social territory, the nature of the geographical space that society appropriates, the form of the territorial and spatial boundaries, and the population volume, density and distribution in societal space [...] the disposition of streets and squares, the architecture of the houses, and the structure of things made vary from village to town and from the large city to the small one, and so on (Durkheim 1960, p. 361)."

Given its central position and Durkheim's extensive influence on 20<sup>th</sup> century sociology it is curious what a negligible role spatial morphology in the end came to play. Liebst explanation, supported by Toneboe (1993), is that the pillar of social morphology actually was lost to sociology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, simply because there never emerged a methodology whereby it could be properly studied. Instead we may say that this field was overtaken by the, at the time, equally expanding discipline of human geography. However, such a shift in the study of the material substratum of society from sociology to geography, does not only imply a simple sorting under a new heading but a different conceptualisation of the field, with decisive consequences for both what is studied in its domain and, not least, how it is studied.

## 2. Durkheim's macro-approach: the idea of dynamic density

In brief, what we have called Durkheim's macro theory, developed in *The Division of Labour in Society* from 1893 (1984), is an answer to the most fundamental question in sociology, that is: What holds society together (Collins 1994). Interestingly, his answer is that what holds society together is the structural relationships among people, that is, exactly the notion of *social morphology* introduced above; where the essential laws of sociology, according to him, show how it is variations in the patterns of social interaction that determine variations in people's behaviour and beliefs. Durkheim means this, furthermore, in a most concrete sense, that is, the physical pattern of who is in the presence of whom, for how long, and with what distance to each other. The link between social life and its material substratum was predicated on the supposition that "social life can be affected only by the number of those who participate effectively in it" (Durkheim 1960, p.114), and the social cohesion in the form of solidarities in societies was classified: "according to the degree of organization they present" (Ibid, p. 86). This is what Durkheim calls *social density*, and variations in such density, he argues, has profound effects not only on social processes but on people's ideas and moral sentiments; it is what conditions different forms of *social solidarities*, the more direct manifestations of what holds society together.

Therefore, behind, or rather, below the more recognised ideas about variations in social solidarity, we find variations in *dynamic density*, the most critical concept in Durkheim's idea of social morphology, upon which variations in social solidarity depends. In small and spatially dispersed societies more or less everyone has by necessity to do labour of a great variety of kinds, while in more densely populated societies the opportunity for division in labour opens up. But this is not in itself what holds societies together; a change in the form of social density creates new opportunities, but it also creates a change in the form of solidarity, which is what more directly holds society together; in the dispersed society, where people have similar roles and skills and, therefore, do not need to interact as much, we find a mechanical solidarity, that is, society is kept together by authority or the sharing of particular cults that reaffirms identity among its members, while dense societies, with developed specialities and intense interaction, are held together by organic solidarity, that is, the mutual need of exchange due to differences among its members. Moreover Durkheim understands societies to naturally evolve from mechanical to organic solidarities, where the key determinant in such a transformation is a change in dynamic density, which as we have seen, basically concerns the amount and spatial relations between people, which in extension needs support by spatial form.

However, Liebst contests to what degree Durkheim is able to make space an integrated part of his theory about social solidarities: "the problem is that the dynamic density – which Durkheim points out as the principal cause or the moving power of any historical progress – remains *in itself* causally unexplained" (Liebst 2014). The implication is that while Durkheim in his theory on social solidarities clearly invokes space as a necessary substratum for societal change, he never analytically elaborates how this actually comes about. Liebst here argues vigorously how space syntax can fulfil a longstanding caveat in Durkheim's sociological project. As a kind of ex-disciplinary social theory, distinctly limited by its specific subject matter space, space syntax cannot count as a proper sociological theory. However, exactly due to this characteristic limitation, space syntax theory extraordinary well fits the part of *social morphology*, given such profound role in Durkheim's program. It is exactly as such that Liebst finds space syntax so exciting and promising for sociology: "On the level of theory, Durkheim showed, despite his flaws, considerable, attention towards space, but he succeeded in no way to translate these spatial aspirations into operational methods" (Ibid., p. 14). Liebst conclude:

"the space syntax approach has, for the first time, made it possible to measure the 'non-discursive regularity' of space as a Durkheimian 'social fact', that is, as an exterior and restraining 'thing' that mechanically affect the movement economy of the city." (Ibid., p. 14)

However, there remains a sense of unfinished business here. Paradoxically, we may say that space syntax presents a methodology that can explain both *how* and *where* dynamic density is generated by way of spatial form, hence supporting Durkheim, but Durkheim does not really, at this macro-

level, support space syntax in explaining how the simple proximity of individuals can generate such a social force as dynamic density.

### 3. Durkheim's micro-approach: the emotional effervescence of the ritual

To better understand this we need to turn to Durkheim's later writings on religion eminently manifested in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* from 1912 (2001); a book that also forms the origin to micro-studies in sociology more generally. He begins by offering a distinction of critical importance: "religious phenomena fall quite naturally into two basic categories: beliefs and rites. The first are states of opinion and consist of representations; the second are fixed modes of action" (Durkheim 2001, p. 36). This leads up to the definition:

"a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions – beliefs and practices that unites its adherents in a single moral community called a church." (Ibid., p. 46)

The essential point for Durkheim is the latter part concerning the fact that religion is beliefs and practices shared by a community. Again, Durkheim is looking for the social dimension of things and in the end he finds not only that religious life is a social thing, but also that the very object of religion, that is, what is worshipped and deemed sacred, is society itself. Religious beliefs, hence, concern certain ideas, norms and truths shared within a community that are so essential for the cohesion of this community that they are regarded as sacred and become the object of particular procedures and rites with the end to sustain these beliefs as an inherent part of the individuals of the community. However, the social is not brought forth in the rite, on the contrary, it is the experience of the social, felt by every individual, that is the very source of religious beliefs. We all experience, according to Durkheim, alien forces within ourselves that not directly are of our own making but rather belong to society: "we are constantly forced to submit to rules of thought and behaviour that we have neither devised nor desired, and that are sometimes even contrary to our most basic inclinations and instincts" (Ibid., p. 154-155).

Now, the critical issue here becomes how the social, incarnated in religious feeling such as the veneration of the sacred, is transmitted and sustained both between individuals and over generations. Durkheim emphasises how the imperative of this force of society owes far less to its physical supremacy than to its moral authority. The reason is that the source of this authority is found in the force of the collective. Therefore, when we hear this authority: "we hear society speak and the collective voice has a resonance that a single voice cannot have" (Ibid., p. 155-156). This can be an internal sensation but it can also be a concrete external voice: "Within a crowd moved by a common passion, we become susceptible to feelings and actions of which we are incapable on our own" (Ibid., p. 157). However, Durkheim is quick to stress that: "this stimulating action of society is not only experienced under exceptional circumstances; there is no moment in our life without some rush of energy coming to us from the outside [...] Thus our moral being is perpetually sustained" (Ibid., p. 159). So, according to Durkheim, we are continuously reminded and made aware of the greater forces that flow through us and which he identifies as the society of which we are part. Given that the source of this effervescence is the shared community, Durkheim also concludes that: "the worshipper is not deluding himself when he believes in the existence of a higher moral power from which he derives his best self: that power exists, and it is society" (Ibid., p. 170), and, in extension: "that is why we can be sure that the acts of worship, whatever they might be, are not futile and meaningless gestures [...] they really strengthen the ties that bind the individual to his society" (Ibid., p. 171). If we let go of the label religion, it is not difficult to identify such processes, tying all kinds of communities together, going on all over the place also in our contemporary societies.

Now Durkheim can return to his central issue of concern: What holds society together, and identify rituals, or expressed more generally, situations of emotional energy due to gathered individuals, as an essential elementary form, not only of religion, but of society itself: "All this leads us back to the same idea: that rites are, above all, the means by which the social group periodically reaffirms itself." (Ibid., p. 287) It is in such gatherings of spatial proximity between individuals that society is reproduced and that ties over space and time are established. We also see why a discipline of

sociology simply is impossible to Durkheim's mind if we not are able to handle its spatial dimension, typically expressed in rhythmic variations in proximity among its constituent individuals. Durkheim's masterly summarises: "Society can only revive its sense of itself by assembling. But it cannot remain perpetually in session" (Ibid., p. 259).

Hence, we can summarise the profound contribution that Durkheim offers space syntax theory. First, Durkheim in the *Division of Labour* produces a formidable argument about how concrete spatial situations, such as the variation in the concentration of people, represent necessary conditions for major macro-social changes, such as the transformation of our western societies into a decisive increase in the division of labour and a new form of cohesion based on organic rather than mechanic solidarity. Here the critical entity pointed out by Durkheim is what he calls dynamic density, an intensified spatial proximity between people, something he, however, never is able to analyse in any detail. Second, in his later works, especially the *Elementary Forms*, Durkheim presents a minute analysis and theory about the inner workings of social gatherings in the creation and reproduction of social ties among human individuals at the micro-scale that complements his earlier macro-scale theories. Thus, he presents exactly the kind of sociological explanation to the vital importance of spatial proximity of people that never is fully developed in space syntax theory. However, the micro-social theories of Durkheim are only the beginning of a micro-scale tradition within sociology.

#### 4. Goffman: interaction rituals as the elementary unit of social life

It is the more mundane side of Durkheim's micro-sociological work where: "there is no moment in our life without some rush of energy coming to us from the outside" that the American sociologist Ervin Goffman picks up. His research program is based in the idea that all social phenomena are situated – eloquently summarised in the well-known phrase: "Not, then, men and their moments. Rather moments and their men" (Goffman 1967, p. 3). From this Goffman's develops his basic terminology where a *gathering* is: "any set of two or more individuals whose members include all and only those who are at the moment in one another's immediate presence" (Goffman 1963, p. 18), and the broader term *situation* that also includes the physical setting of the gathering, that is: "the full spatial environment anywhere within which an entering person becomes a member of the gathering" (ibid., p. 18). Another central distinction of Goffman's is between gatherings generated by chance, as for instance in public places such as streets and those generated by some particular event (Ibid., p. 18), which he calls social *occasions*. His main interest are gatherings that happen by chance, which of course also are the ones of central interest for the social dimension of public urban space.

A more general term for gatherings used by Goffman is *co-presence*, also frequent in space syntax theory. Importantly, similar to space syntax theory and even to a greater degree than Durkheim, Goffman does not conceive of physical space as something external to social phenomena, but as an inherent part of them. Where Durkheim spoke of the emotional energy dispersed between individuals in proximity, Goffman notes how these individuals become so intertwined with each other that their very behaviours become conditioned by each other. What we start to see, according to Goffman, is how the behaviours of individuals actually become interlocked:

"By virtue of being in a social situation that is itself lodged within a social occasion, individuals modify their conduct in many normatively guided ways. The persons present to one another are thus transformed from a mere aggregate into a little society, a little group, a little deposit of social organization." (Ibid., p. 243)

In these situations of co-presence, Goffman continues, there seem to be one rule more general than any other, that is: "the rule obliging participants to 'fit in'" (Ibid., p. 11). The central object of Goffman's studies is more precisely based on: "the fact that when persons are present to one another they can function not merely as physical instruments but also as communicative ones" (Ibid., p. 23). An important qualification here is that such communication must be considered in two steps: "The first deals with *unfocused interaction*, that is, the kind of communication that occurs when one gleans information about another person present by glancing at him, if only momentarily". Hence: "Unfocused interaction has to do largely with the management of sheer and mere co-presence" (Ibid., p. 24) Next we move closer to what more generally would be

acknowledged as sociology, that is: “focused interaction, the kind of interaction that occurs when persons gather close together and openly cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention, typically by taking turns talking” (Ibid., p. 24). We have to stress how Goffman here identifies objects of concern for sociology that generally have been considered too ephemeral and inconsequential to play any critical role in social processes – an argument later picked up by Anthony Giddens (1984). Goffman, in contrast, deems them essential. It is these situations rather than the individual, as classical sociology presumes, that forms the truly indivisible unit of sociology.

We may give an example of the low intense phenomena that catches Goffman’s interest. The most rudimentary is what Goffman calls *civil inattention*, where “What seems to be involved is that one gives to another enough visual notice to demonstrate that one appreciates that the other is present [...] while at the next moment withdrawing one’s attention from him so as to express that he does not constitute a target of special curiosity or design” (Goffman 1963, p. 84) Goffman here clearly is talking about actions of the very lowest level of social intensity, even so he states:

“we have here what is perhaps the slightest of interpersonal rituals, yet one that constantly regulates the social intercourse of persons in our society. By according civil inattention, the individual implies that he has no reason to fear the others, be hostile to them, or wish to avoid them. (Ibid., p. 84)

This also opens up an individual behaving in this way to similar treatment, it: “demonstrates that he has nothing to fear or avoid in being seen and being seen seeing, and that he is not ashamed of himself or the place and company in which he finds himself” (ibid. p. 84) However rudimentary this may seem, we have to comply with Goffman that for any social process between individuals to take place, this forms a kind of ground zero on which most other social constructions between individuals are built, however complex they in the end may turn out.

In summary we may say that Goffman extends Durkheim’s theories about rituals as an essential part in constituting and reproducing society but now applied in much more mundane and ordinary settings and with a more low-key version of the emotional effervescence central to the theory of Durkheim. We also see how the situation, including its physical setting, in Goffman’s conception becomes the atomic unit of society. But even if we thus find the spatial settings of social interaction accentuated to an even higher degree in Goffman, he shares with Durkheim the lack of methodology to actually analyse this component, why it never really becomes an active parameter in his analysis. The closest he comes to this is his famous theatre-metaphor (1959), where he discusses how social interaction is conditioned by being either front-stage or back-stage. However, this is far from a consistent analysis of the spatial component of situations, why he is in need of a spatial morphology as much as ever Durkheim was.

## 5. Collins: connecting situations of co-presence into interaction ritual chains

Randall Collins is the sociologist that in recent decades most distinctly has continued the Durkheimian micro-sociological tradition and expanded it into a broad social theory; a radical micro-sociology as he calls it (2004, p. 1). The critical point of departure here is the fact, continuing the trajectory set by Goffman, where nothing adhering to human affairs really happens outside a situation. Apart from enriching and solidifying Goffman’s ingenious yet theoretically often unstructured observations as well as reconnecting them to the, in this context, often forgotten Durkheim, Collins makes two essential additions.

First, he expands the idea of situations of interaction rituals into a theory about how such situations over time concatenates, as he appositely puts it, into series of such situations, creating a more life-like context for them, that he calls *interaction ritual chains*. Hence, he acknowledges the fact that we carry into every situation the experience of a series of former situations, which naturally conditions our experience of the new situation. Second, he unpacks the potential inherent in Durkheim’s theory that rituals do not necessarily only create solidarity among people, but potentially also conflict. A ritual seldom includes everyone in a given society, why it not only creates solidarity among the ‘insiders’, but potentially also varying degrees of conflict with its ‘outsiders’. Moreover, it is natural

to see, especially in Goffman's more mundane interpretation of rituals, that there are rituals taking place all over the place with all kinds of solidarities and 'sacred' values being created, which are unlikely to add up to a coherent consensus among its many parts. What we see in Collins interpretation of Durkheim's model is a more life-like model of how solidarities and conflicts are both created and changed over time.

Collins reaffirms Goffman's approach of defining the situation rather than the individual as the central building block of society; the individual is only an ingredient of the situation: "not the determinant, because a situation is an emergent property" (Ibid. p. 5). The critical unifying force in social relations and, in extension, society as a whole, according to Collins, is the kind of emotional energy generated in situations of interaction rituals (Ibid., p. 102). It is essential to note here that his theory not only is micro- in contrast to macro-sociological, but a micro-sociology based on emotions rather than, for instance, cognition, values or simply structure. Naturally, there is always both a cognitive and structural dimension to any social theory (Ibid., p. 103), but by fore-fronting emotions we get closer to what we all can experience as the actual 'glue' in social relations. Moreover, we can also begin to understand the dynamics of social relations in a more realistic way (Ibid., p. 103); emotional bonds are typically both exceptionally durable and changeable at the same time. Again, Collins underlines how emotions typically have been overlooked and underplayed due to the fact that social theories, generally speaking have a: "macro-primacy, or at least deal with social life at a considerable abstraction and aggregation" (Ibid., p. 103). If we instead look at the origins of these abstractions or where they actually are played out in real life: "a grounding of macro-concepts in real interactions across the macro-dimensions of time and space – we are led to see the importance of emotional processes" (Ibid., p. 103)

A critical qualification here is that what Collins speaks about is not the typical emotional outbursts that we normally recognise as emotional expressions, but a much more low-key version, perhaps better akin to moods: "emotions that are undramatic; they are long-lasting, underlying tones or moods that permeate social life" (Ibid., p. 106) Despite their restrained character, it is these long-lasting emotions that is of greatest importance for Collins:

"The outcome of a successful buildup of emotional coordination within an interaction ritual is to produce feelings of solidarity. The emotions that are ingredients of the [interaction ritual] are transient; the outcomes however is a long-term emotion, the feeling of attachment to the group that was assembled at that time." (Ibid., p. 108)

Moreover, it is these low-key but long-term moods that are carried into the next interaction ritual, by way of which interaction rituals are tied together into chains that (Ibid., p. 118), in extension, create an immensely complex system of interaction rituals that, according to Collins, is the true grounding of society and its many entities and processes.

Again, Collins stresses how this not necessarily is a system that only produces consensus, as in Durkheim's idealistic interpretation, but naturally also conflict. Actually drawing on Durkheim, Collins equates emotional energy with Durkheim's concept 'moral sentiment', that is, emotional energy: "includes feelings of what is right and wrong, moral and immoral" (Ibid. p. 109). What we see then is how not only emotions but also values are generated in Collins interaction rituals, which, furthermore, are transmitted through a system of interaction rituals; clearly forming a potentially explosive entity. It is here Collins clearly diverges, or at least expands, on Durkheim and Goffman by distinctly opening his interaction ritual theory for conflict and stratification. This does not only happen between rituals but also within them: "interactions are stratified: some persons have the power to control others through rituals, while others are passive or resistant; some persons are in the center of attention, while others are marginalized or excluded" (Ibid., p. 111-112) Naturally, such self-perpetuating and cumulative processes can be broken, and again, Collins argues, the particular configuration of people and other circumstances in specific interaction rituals may also present the explanation for change in social stratification. Throughout Collins remains true to his radical micro-sociological stance:

“My argument is that micro-situational data has conceptual priority. This is not to say that macro-data mean nothing; but amassing statistics and survey data does not convey an accurate picture of social reality unless it is interpreted in the context of its micro-situational grounding. *Micro-situational encounters are the ground zero of all social action and all sociological evidence. Nothing has reality unless it is manifested in a situation somewhere.*” (Ibid., p. 259)

## 6. Liebst: connecting theory of interaction ritual to theory of spatial form

Collins also constructs an elaborated model of interaction rituals (Figure 1). His model makes a distinction between the conditional ingredients of an interaction ritual and the main outcomes of such a ritual. There are four conditional ingredients according to Collins model: *physical co-presence*, that is: “Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not”; *barriers to outsiders*, that is: “There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of who is taking part and who is excluded”; *mutual focus of attention*, that is: “People focus their attention upon a common object or activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become mutually aware of each other’s focus of attention”; *shared mood*, that is: “They share a common mood or emotional experience” (Ibid., p. 48).

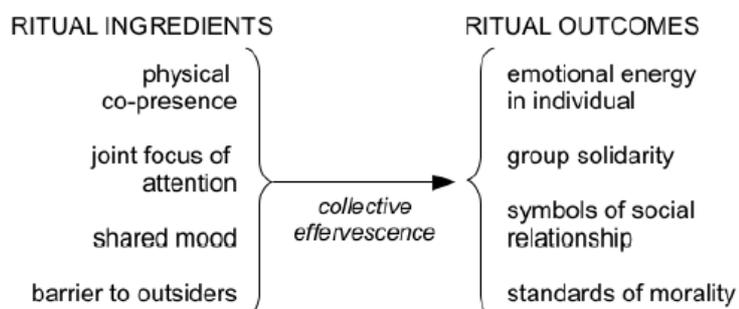


Figure 1: Collins’ model of interaction rituals (Liebst 2014).

While these four items form the conditions for any interaction ritual, according to Collins, he is eager to stress the interconnection and feedback loops between them. For instance, ‘mutual focus of attention’ and ‘shared mood’ typically reinforce each other: “As the persons become more tightly focused on their common activity, more aware of what each other is doing and feeling, and more aware of each other’s awareness, they experience their shared emotion more intensely, as it comes to dominate their awareness” (Ibid., p. 48). The common pattern here is a process that produces a shared emotional and cognitive experience; a collective effervescence in Durkheim’s words.

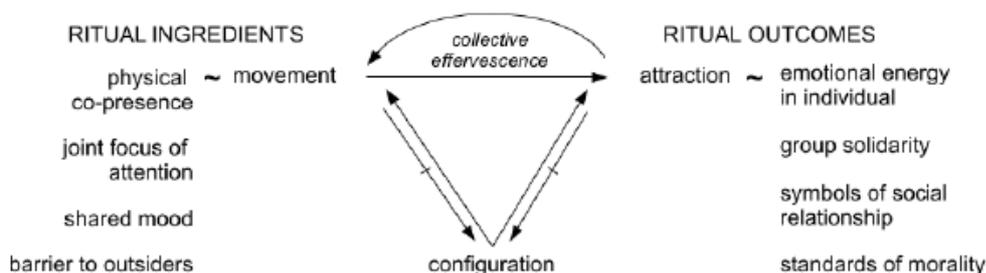
This shared experience of collective effervescence, or moment of intersubjectivity, also leads to more lasting effects, why we in Collins model also find the main outcomes of successful interaction rituals; these are also four: *group solidarity*, that is: “a feeling of membership”; *emotional energy in the individual*, that is, “a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm and initiative in taking action”; *symbols of social relationship*, that is: “emblems or other representations (visual icons, words, gestures) that members feel are associated with themselves collectively”; *standards of morality*, that is: “the sense of rightness in adhering to the group, respecting its symbols, and defending both against transgressors” (Ibid. p. 49). While the formal conditions in this sense are strictly limited, we realise the immense variation in potential outcomes that Collins’ model harbours; it concerns the formal frameworks for the everyday experience of people coming together in various constellations and degrees of intensity, something human history has demonstrated to be massively fertile.

We here return to the exciting contributions of Liebst (2014), who identified how contemporary sociology, including Collins, not only lacks a theory about spatial form, but often does not even see

the need for one – spatial turn or not. On the other hand, he found space syntax that is a theory about spatial form, but that remain wanting in a proper theory about social process – notwithstanding the Social Logic of Space. Liebst uses Collins idea that interaction rituals can be seen as markets for emotional energy to formulate quite exactly how Collins’ theory of interaction rituals and Hillier et al.’s theory of the movement economy (1993), central to space syntax, complement each other (Figure 2).

Let us first briefly recollect the basic ingredients of the theory of the movement economy. It argues based on empirical evidence that of the three variables spatial form (configuration), attractions and pedestrian movement, it is obvious that neither attractions nor movement can influence spatial form, unless we see things in extremely long terms. He also argues the general fact that pedestrian flows can have an influence on the distribution of attractions, such as retail and location of public transport, but also that the opposite is true, that is, that the location of such attractions also generate movement flows. More interestingly – and here is the original contribution of space syntax research in this regard – it is able to demonstrate that spatial form in itself structures both movement flows and, in extension of such flows, also the distribution of attractions.

We here see how spatial form is vital in both creating and distributing co-presence of people in space, that is creating varying conditions for *situations* to emerge, the essential social unit in micro-sociological theory from Durkheim to Collins, hence filling a critical deficit in this tradition. The fact that space syntax typically identifies the influence of spatial configuration on variations in urban buzz in Collins’ terms can be called the variation in intensity of IR-markets, opens for Liebst to eloquently summarise by way of Adam Smith: “the spatial configuration is the ‘invisible hand’ of the IR-market” (Liebst 2014, p. 32).



**Figure 2:** Liebst’s model, combining Collins’ model of interaction rituals and Hillier’s model of the movement economy (Liebst 2014).

## 7. Conclusions: Situations as both linking humans to the environment and humans to humans

We may thus summarise the theory about the relation between spatial form and social process that Liebst combined model produces. First, following space syntax it is possible to demonstrate how spatial form can play a decisive role in distributing movement in space, which in extension leads to a variation in density of co-present people in different locations. Second, according to Collins, these co-presences of people are not just amassed groups of people but constitute the conditions for interaction rituals that produce collective effervescence among its co-present individuals. Third, this effervescence has important and more long-lasting effects, such as emotional energy in the individual and the group solidarity among its participants, which is exactly the kind of thing that holds society together. Fourth, the highly spatial concept of situation is also central for Gibson’s theory of affordances (1977), why we here see an immediate link between the two fundamental relations necessary to make in space syntax, first, between humans and the environment, discussed in a parallel paper, second, between humans and humans.

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