Paper presentation


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Abstract:
Randall Collins’ theory of the interaction ritual is one of the most important contributions within recent Durkheimian scholarship. The paper addresses the ‘micro-morphological’ perspective that Collins explicitly applies, but which, however, remains overlooked in the extensive literature on the interaction ritual theory. Yet the paper argues that this micro-morphological approach is a theoretical key to understand Collins’ original contribution and reassessment of Durkheim’s sociology of religion. Crucially, Collins’ micro-sociological linkage between social rituality and morphology counters the predominant reception of Durkheim that insists on the incompatibility of the socio-morphological ‘materialism’ of the early Durkheim and the ‘idealistic’ approach to religious life that, allegedly, characterizes the late Durkheim. According to Collins, the interaction ritual is fundamentally a micro-morphological phenomenon. Despite the originality of this neo-Durkheimian argument, Collins’ micro-morphological contribution appears, however, too theoretically narrow. This applies specifically to the question of the spatial forces of the ritual micro-morphology of which importance Collins seems to underestimate. Accordingly, the paper suggests a spatial corrective to Collins’ neo-Durkheimian model, which especially draws on the contemporary
spatial morphological approach of ‘space syntax’: what Collins describes as the ‘market’ for interaction rituals is reassessed as subject to the ‘movement economy’ of the spatial configuration. Following this spatial morphological suggestion, the paper applies space syntax methodology and multiple regression statistics to test the validity of this spatially reassessed model of the interaction ritual. Empirically, the paper draws on quantitative microdata of situational encounters at the Roskilde festival 2011. The statistical test suggests that the spatial configuration both holds a movement economical potential to constrain and intensify the micro-morphological dynamics of the interaction ritual market.