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Affective Arrangements

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Abstract

We introduce the working concept of "affective arrangement." This concept is the centerpiece of a perspective on situated affectivity that emphasizes relationality, dynamics, and performativity. Our proposal relates to work in cultural studies and continental philosophy in the Spinoza–Deleuze lineage, yet it is equally geared to the terms of recent work in the philosophy of emotion. Our aim is to devise a framework that can help flesh out how affectivity unfolds dynamically in a relational setting by which it is at the same time modulated in recurring ways. With this orientation, this article contributes to the interdisciplinary study of situated affectivity and to the theoretical and conceptual unification of distinct strands of research from several disciplines.

Keywords

affect, affective arrangement, relationality, situatedness

Introduction

In what follows, we propose "affective arrangement" as a working concept for the philosophical and interdisciplinary study of affect and emotion. This concept—and the broader perspective it engenders—can help theorists and researchers come to terms with the ways in which affect is prompted, modulated, and specifically formatted in sociomaterial settings.[1] Among other things, we hope to make a contribution to the recently emerging interdisciplinary perspective on *situated affectivity* (Colombetti & Krueger, 2015; Griffiths & Scarantino, 2009; Stephan, Wilutzky, & Walter, 2014). More generally, the concept of an affective arrangement can help to connect work in the field of cultural affect studies with other recently productive areas of scholarship on affective phenomena. In cultural theory, affect is often not understood in terms of individual mental states, but rather in terms of interactive dynamics between multiple actors and actants in sociomaterial settings (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Massumi, 2002; cf. Wetherell, 2012, for critical analysis). There are many pretheoretical examples of presumed instances of

"transpersonal" affective dynamics—for instance, in infant–caregiver interaction, in situations of engaged dialogue, in quarrels or arguments, in crowd behavior such as protests or riots, or in the immersive practices of interactive media. Yet, it is difficult to grasp the precise modes of affective relatedness in a given environment, the triggers and conduits, the situational framings, and settings of these scenes of mutual affecting and being affected. Likewise, the ontological import of proposals describing such relational affect is often unclear. Is it *individual* affective states that get embedded or even "extended" *in addition* to their being experienced by individual subjects? Is a stronger claim warranted, for example that individual affective states and relational affect are *co-constitutive* and thus ontologically on the same footing? Might one even hold that affective *relations* are prior to and constitutive of the entities or "agencies" related, as some posthumanist approaches seem to suggest (see Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010)? The concept of an affective arrangement will endow us with a framework to approach these

issues. It provides an angle to focus on the ways in which putatively "transpersonal" affect unfolds in the sites and settings of social life.

In our understanding, affective arrangements are heterogeneous ensembles of diverse materials forming a local layout that operates as a dynamic formation, comprising persons, things, artifacts, spaces, discourses, behaviors, and expressions in a characteristic mode of composition and dynamic relatedness. Our approach facilitates microanalyses of affective relationality as it furthers both an understanding of the entities that coalesce locally to engender relational affect, and also the overall "feel," affective tonality or atmosphere that prevails in such a locale. The proposed concept is an analytical tool—provisional and open-textured yet sufficiently determinate—to help researchers get a grip on complex inter- or *intra*-actional settings in which affect looms large.

We set the stage by providing an overview relating relevant ideas from cultural affect studies to recent developments in interdisciplinary work on affect and emotion, especially to the "situated affectivity" debate. We then characterize the gist of the concept of affective arrangement in some detail and develop it further by way of discussing the example of *teamwork* arrangements in contemporary work cultures. In the remainder of the article, we discuss further characteristics of affective arrangements in a condensed way: their potential idiosyncrasy or "crankyness," their multi-track historicity, and various modes of individual involvement. In closing, we provide a brief outlook towards possibilities for putting the concept to work in empirical research on affect and emotion.

To get our perspective articulated in the space of a single article, we can focus only on the bare contours of approaches to affect in cultural studies, in relation to some core ideas from the situated affectivity literature. Inevitably, we will create a somewhat straightened outlook, omitting detail, and bypassing some contested issues. Our hope is that our working concept, once articulated in a compact way, will provide a backdrop against which controversial issues might subsequently be addressed.[2]

Setting the Stage: Affect, Emotion, Situatedness

In this section, we briefly run through some recent strands of work at the intersection of the philosophy of emotion and interdisciplinary emotion research and relate these approaches to work on affect in cultural studies. As our proposal draws on all these perspectives while aspiring to inform and endow them in turn, this part sets the stage for what is to come. In our subsequent elaboration we give a prominent role to ideas from cultural studies and continental philosophy, yet our working concept will be generic and versatile enough to be adaptable to different theoretical settings. The goal throughout is to develop our points in a way accessible to emotion experts not familiar with cultural affect theory.

An important point of contact between our proposal and the existing literature lies with recent approaches that have put forward situated, social-relational, enactive, embedded, or even "extended" accounts of affectivity. The seminal article by the

philosophers Paul E. Griffiths and Andrea Scarantino "Emotions in the Wild" (2009) has crystallized key aspects of this development—combining evolutionary, ethological, and social psychological considerations with naturalist philosophy of emotion. Griffiths and Scarantino align emotion theory with work on situated cognition, undertaking a move of dismounting from assumptions of psychological internalism similar to what authors such as Hutchins or Clark had previously done in the field of cognition research (e.g., Clark, 1997; Hutchins, 1995). In particular, they stress social relationality, skillful engagement with the world, environmental scaffolding, and dynamic "coupling" of emoting organism and environment, pointing to existing work in psychology emphasizing such features (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Parkinson, 1995). We share the interdisciplinary spirit of this article and of the debates it ignited; however we want to expand the scope of these perspectives further by taking up impulses from cultural studies and continental philosophy.

Another line of work with important resonances to our approach is contemporary work at the intersection of phenomenology and cognitive science, where there is a focus on the enactive embeddedness of sense-making organisms in their environment (Froese & Fuchs, 2012; Thompson, 2007; Thompson & Stapleton, 2009) and likewise on embodied interaction and corporeal "interaffectivity" (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007; Fuchs & Koch, 2014). These lines of work have informed efforts to radicalize the philosophical understanding of situated affectivity into accounts of "extended emotions," where the token emotional state is said to *constitutively* involve parts of the emoter's environment (Krueger, 2014; Krueger & Szanto, 2016; Slaby, 2014). So far, however, little interaction has taken place with this work and the likewise highly productive scholarship on affect within cultural studies (partial exceptions are Colombetti & Krueger, 2015; Protevi, 2009; Slaby, 2016).

In order to get a sense of how these philosophical approaches might be brought in resonance with work in cultural studies, some clarification on the particular understanding of affect and on affective relationality within cultural studies is in order (see e.g., Clough & Halley, 2007; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Massumi, 2002). Most of these approaches assume a version of a dynamic, non-categorical, and relational understanding of affect that aligns with the philosophical tradition of Spinoza, although these links are often not developed in detail.[3] In the Spinozist process-ontological perspective, affect is construed as dynamic, relational, and thus primarily "transpersonal"—as opposed to something that goes on in the interior of an individual subject. Affect—which Spinoza construes as: *relations of affecting and being affected* in the immanence of the one "substance"—is what unfolds between intra-acting "bodies" whose potentialities and tendencies are thereby continuously modulated in mutual interplay.[4] On the most radical construal, this means that affective relations are ontologically prior to individuated actors and actants—they are, as Karen Barad puts it in a different context, "relations without pre-existing relata" (Barad, 2007, p. 139).[5] Accordingly, Barad's term *intra-action* can be used instead of "interaction" to mark this distinction linguistically (other philosophers have adopted this way of speaking, see, e.g., Rouse, 2002).

With this orientation, the Spinoza-inspired perspective on affect is not too far off from what gets theorized in philosophy under the label of "enactivism," where relational processes of organism–environment coupling are taken to continuously shape and reshape—"enact"—the boundaries between organism and life-sustaining ambient. Dynamic processes of organism–environment intra-action take precedence over individual corporeal and mental states (see Colombetti & Thompson, 2008; Di Paolo, 2009; Thompson, 2007). Likewise, in this perspective, processes of formation and development are prioritized over their transient "products," for example, affective states or dispositions.[6]

This understanding of affect as dynamic transindividual processes implies that affect is different from emotions as usually understood. Yet, there is a place for emotions within this perspective, namely as recurring sequences of affective intra-action that have come to be culturally coded, that is, categorized, narrativized (e.g., in terms of "paradigm scenarios"; see De Sousa, 1987) and subjected to normative regulation with regard to communal "feeling rules" (see Hochschild, 1979). Thus, one need not assume a sharp rift between affect and emotion. In effect, proponents of cultural affect studies adopt what resembles a developmental constructivist approach that takes relational affect to be primary and emotion, including "subjects" of emotion, to be derivative. Yet once emotional dispositions and repertoires have consolidated, they play important roles in how communal and individual affectivity plays out—a potent approach is thus well-advised to have "affect" and "emotion" among its central concepts.[7]

In light of this, the distinction between affect and emotion can be treated as a pragmatic contrast between research perspectives with different emphases. Where the focus is on emotion, the interest lies with consolidated patterns of affective relatedness viewed from the perspective of persons or collectives and their articulated self-understanding (e.g., in terms of established emotion concepts such as anger, shame, fear, or sadness, and the discursive practices that draw on and further stabilize these categories). Where the focus is on relational affect, the research interest concerns dynamic situatedness and processes of becoming: ontogenetic dynamics that are formative of subjects and their emotional orientations, yet often escape reflective capture by those involved, at least initially. It is here where the present proposal makes its specific contribution: The goal is to develop a working concept that can help theorists and researchers grasp the unfolding and local modulation of relational affect in a way that allows "zooming-in" to local constellations of elements that give rise to specific relational domains of affecting and being affected. The concept of affective arrangement enables researchers to approach complex orchestrated formations of affective intra-action beyond the ambit of individual emotional awareness.[8]

Affective Arrangements: General Characterization

By "affective arrangement" we mean a material-discursive formation as part of which affect is patterned, channeled, and modulated in recurrent and repeatable ways. Key to such arrangements is that they bring multiple actors into a dynamic, orchestrated conjunction, so that these actors' mutual affecting and being affected is the central dimension of the arrangement from the start. Accordingly, the concept does neither pertain to sociomaterial settings nor to affective relationality *alone*—but to both in their mutually formative combination.

Affective arrangements are not sharply demarcated from their surroundings. Yet often there is an acutely sensible difference in *affective intensity* between a discernible inside and an outside. Affective arrangements are *performatively open-ended*, capable of expanding into their ambient by extending the range of participant entities and agencies.[9] On the face of it, though, what gives affective arrangements their contours is thresholds of intensity. There is more going on in terms of relations of affecting and being affected in the region of the arrangement than is beyond that region. If we may hint at a psychological factor at this point already, affective arrangements often exert a "pull," a kind of active allure, potentially drawing individuals into their ambit by offering them occasions for immersion within a sphere of resonance and intensity.[10] One might speak of affective arrangements as *affective affordances* as they present "prepared occasions" for getting affectively involved or immersed in specific ways.

Given this broad characterization, it is not surprising when we say that affective arrangements are nearly ubiquitous in social life. A great number of sociomaterial constellations can come to function as an affective arrangement and might thus be analyzed in the way outlined here. An instructive class of examples for our purposes are corporate work environments, from the classical factory and ordinary offices to stock market trading floors. Other examples can be found in everyday sites of interaction such as public transportation, street corners, commercial environments such as shopping malls, or sport stadiums, and also in many other organizational settings such as in school classrooms or seminars of higher education. Another class of affective arrangements, which might be called "ritualistic," are found in the vicinity of ceremonial regimes such as Christmas, Ramadan, election campaigns, birthdays parties or funerals, and so on.

Beyond their many differences, analyzing these diverse examples from the one conceptual perspective of "affective arrangements" promises to shed light on the way affective interactions between individuals are a *defining component* of what these constellations actually are. A workplace, a public site, or a ritualistic space are not just there and *then* get somehow filled up with affective interactions between people. The concrete nature of established affective dynamics—be they relatively spontaneous (such as in public spaces), partially orchestrated (such as in corporate offices), or passed on by traditions (such as in rituals)—is instead an essential aspect of these arrangements. The analytic perspective of affective arrangements envisions heterogeneous ensembles of dynamically intra-acting elements as a local operational space for affectivity, foregrounding a register of intensity and relational dynamics.

We have chosen the term "arrangement" not least because it is an apt English translation of Deleuze and Guattari's terms

agencement and *agencement machinique* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1986, 1987; see also Buchanan, 2015; Nail, 2017).[11] In Deleuze and Guattari's work, the concept of *agencement* does not refer to an organically integrated unity of parts—as would be suggested by the English term *assemblage*—but to a specifically composed layout of heterogeneous elements that are brought together according to a mode of composition that is *not homogenizing* (see Nail, 2017, p. 22). While one can easily think of compositions that flatten their parts into a seamless whole, an *agencement* is a fragmentary, open-textured formation: a concatenation of components that keep their distinctness (even their "individuality") no matter how densely they are entangled. Still, in an affective arrangement there is a characteristic mode (or multiple such modes) of relatedness that holds the elements together: a *specific* tangle of relations of affecting and being affected. In their dynamic interplay, the elements of the arrangement sustain a local sphere of affective intensity and thereby both trigger and structure characteristic affective relations as well as agentive routines.[12]

This means that affective arrangements are not merely spatial or material configurations or set-ups—not heaps of matter in a place that then, *in addition*, gets somehow infused with affect. Rather, affect—in the form of dynamic tangles of affective relations—is the vital core of an affective arrangement, it is what links all participant components and agents and what provisionally demarcates the overall formation from its surroundings. An affective arrangement is always in operation, always "on." It is the ongoing, "live" affective relations within the arrangement that constitute zones of higher relative intensity compared to what is outside. Thus, affect neither comes before nor after the other elements but inheres in the immanence of the whole. One might say, again with a nod to Deleuze and Guattari, that the concept affective arrangement pertains primarily to the *event* of a simultaneous affecting and being affected in a setting, yet part of the point of the concept is to make salient a layout of contributory elements that *enable* such events to unfold in the way they do (see Nail, 2017).

It is key for our purposes that affective arrangements can be approached from two prima facie distinct vantage points, namely (a) that of an organizational set-up (a number of concrete elements specifically arranged so as to approach a certain functional architecture), and (b) that of its intensive processuality, its ongoing affective dynamics, sometimes approaching a kind of "flow"—played out either as an overall atmospheric tonality or as characteristic patterns of affecting and being affected, offering potential for immersive absorption and displaying a drive towards transformative rearrangement of elements, operations, and boundaries.[13] Part of the point of our approach is that these two perspectives are the two sides of the same coin—they need to be approached together, on pain of losing the point of the concept of "affective arrangement." What we have in mind is neither merely a concatenation of elements arranged in line with an organizational blueprint, nor just a zone of affective intensity, but an in each case unique and local combination of both.

Example: Workplace Arrangements

For the purpose of further illustrating our working concept, we now take a detailed look at the example of *teamwork*, especially in the so-called "knowledge work" sector. Developed in response to the influence of early cybernetics and group dynamic research, teamwork is a management paradigm designed to foster a-hierarchic and self-regulatory collaboration in small groups of employees. Increasingly, teamwork is facilitated by a full spectrum of technological devices such as email, instant messaging, group ware, and real-time collaboration tools. Teamwork is often connected to project-orientated workflow; it aims to hold each individual accountable for contributing to a project as a whole, instead of having each employee pursue a separate task in a chain of specialized functional roles (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2006, pp. 115–116). To this end, teamwork operates by engaging the individuals not as functional agents within the confines of a certain work station but as full persons—and that is, as *affective* agents, be it in direct or in remote communication. As Melissa Gregg puts it in her 2011 ethnographic study of work cultures, there is an increasing degree of "intimacy" in current white-collar work relations, as work extends to involve an affective and psychological register of one's own social behavior while also encroaching upon the private realm of homes and family life by means of full-time connectivity. According to Gregg's analysis:

> [T]he social bonds developed between co-workers in the office are a contributing factor in extending work hours. Loyalty to the team has the effect of making extra work seem courteous and common sense . . . The "team" is an accommodating signifier. It helps to express engagement and commitment when loyalties lie not with the organization or even necessarily the job, but with the close colleagues who are the main point of daily interaction. (Gregg, 2011, p. 85)

This highlights a crucial point about affective arrangements: They are local set-ups that work by targeting and harnessing the domain of personal and affective relations between individuals. Affective arrangements—such as teamwork settings in corporate offices—both generate, stabilize, and exploit affective relations; relational affect is what these constellations "run on."

We now take a closer look at how exactly the affective interplay in a work team unfolds to produce such effects. With respect to this question, the approach developed here does not single out one particular explanatory mechanism of interaffectivity, be it emotional contagion, entrainment, or rhythmic attunement. All these mechanisms might be involved in the concrete dynamics of a particular team—for instance, panic in facing an unforeseen complication might spread in a team by contagion, as panic cues are transmitted through the team's communication channels. For a new team member it might require practice and take some time until they get entrained with the group's culture and affective style; and indeed, the pace and timing of routines, interaction rituals, and the daily flow of work, meetings, reports, small talk, socializing, etcet-

era, might be a result of mutual rhythmic attunement that often unfolds preconsciously. While all these mechanisms are likely involved in the unfolding and stabilization of a teamwork arrangement, we consider it a strength of the approach outlined here that it allows covering a spectrum of phenomena of inter- or intra-affectivity. Instead of settling on one single mechanism, the aim is to make visible a relatively closed domain of mutual co-constitution and stabilization of affective relationality—a local set-up capable of recruiting multiple types of affect-generating, affect-intensifying processes.

Along these lines, the Spinozean conception of affect as relations of affecting and being affected allows us to emphasize one salient qualitative phenomenon of affective intra-action that is vital to teamwork: The mutual balancing of (asymmetric) "affective roles," filling differential "affective niches" in a team. In many team formations, one or several individuals for instance might be seen to adopt the role of "alpha players" or "leaders," while others seem to be framed into a role of following and reassuring others' decisions and opinions. Some might be performing as "go-to guys" for problem solving or hard decisions to take; others might find themselves in the role of a "general drudge," always feeling responsible, always being available online, but never being approached as leading expert. Some might be framed into the role of an "organizational talent" or of an easy scapegoat, some might seem quick-tempered and attention-seeking, while others turn out as altruistic, or quickly feeling guilty, or finding themselves framed into a mode of self-sacrifice, displaying a sensibility for mitigating conflicts and keeping team spirit up. To further complicate matters, all this interferes with overarching regimes such as gender roles, cultural habits, and common sense behavioral expectations. Yet in all these examples, the perspective of affective arrangements suggests that the contouring of these affective roles within the interactions of a concrete team is the result of subtle forms of a reciprocal affective interplay: who can speak more, concentrating attention on himself?; who will be the leading figure in a meeting?; who has a hard time to be listened to?; who is making jokes, whose jokes are really laughed at?; who is rolling their eyes or sighing on certain comments or certain topics, who is— on the level of such subliminal affective resonances—able to resonate with others so as to influence and control group decisions and implicit norms?

The point of looking at such microdynamics from the perspective of affective arrangements is to take the emergence of (affective) roles and character traits not as a result of individual psychology (such as it is in fact operationalized by modern human resource management and psychology) or societal encoding (such as, e.g., in deterministic theories of gender roles), but as the dynamically stabilized product of a process of relational coconstitution, which builds on individual traits, but not in a deterministic way.[14] Which role an individual plays is only in part due to their individual affective disposition, to another part it is a result of the relational framing and arrangement within the context of the particular group. This mutual balancing effects a nonsymmetric distribution of affective roles within a group, which is usually not detrimental to the functioning of the team.

To the contrary, the coherence of a team results from a heterogeneous but yet mutually codependent topology of affective niches, filled by actors performing certain affective roles which are thus always to some extent self-alienating and group dependent. This is a point where Karen Barad's conception of "intra-action," in the way we are applying it to the context of relational affecting and being affected, is an apt term to highlight how within a group—which is primarily a processual whole—different individuals manifest secondarily as results of patterns of intra-action. This perspective also allows for the same individual to assume different affective roles in different affective arrangements.

Here, our approach is less geared towards an explanatory but rather towards a critical purpose: It is less about explaining why a certain individual is playing a certain affective role in a certain team, and more about providing a way to conceive of the team as a dynamic form of individuation, running between full determination (e.g., by societal or managerial arrangements) and full contingency (e.g., as a result of the random configuration). As a long tradition of post-Marxist critique of knowledge work highlights, teamwork is the default "plane of organization" in many dominant management paradigms. It is actively and intentionally arranged by a whole dispositif of techniques, from "team building" workshops and "group retreats" to new communication technology and specific architectural designs of contemporary office spaces (see Berardi, 2009; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2006; Bröckling, 2016; Gregg, 2011). From our perspective, these techniques of arranging and orchestrating professional interactions at work are only half of what needs to be addressed by an effective critique of capitalist production in the knowledge work industry. For a structural and organizational set-up only works when it is taken "live," when it turns into an intensive milieu of affective relatedness that unfolds to some extent spontaneously and unpredictably—*hic et nunc*.

When dynamic affective patterns emerge and stabilize provisionally, we might speak of them as the "plane of consistency" of the affective arrangement, always going beyond what was planned and orchestrated by measures such as team building. So it is not that teamwork per se—in the abstract—is making for the arrangement, rather, in each case it is the specific team, with its in each case concrete affective bonds, interaction routines, use of remote communications technology, and typical patterns of affective reciprocity in a setting. These patterns are in part stimulated, orchestrated, and arranged by the overarching formation (the managerial set-up, by technological infrastructure, i.e., "plane of organization")—but at the same time they also arrange themselves in processes of reciprocal balancing and accommodation, in creative adaptation, and in lived spheres of affective resonances and dissonances (Mühlhoff, 2015) within the setting at hand ("plane of consistency").

Accordingly, the affective dynamics involved in teamwork are not a mere dimension of subjective experience or an epiphenomenon of the actual collaboration, neither are they a product of an "affective labor." Much rather, they are a vital register fueling work itself. In teamwork, affect is performative in the sense that work is increasingly performed by affecting and being affected—be it because the group dynamic unleashes

creativity, commitment, and a higher level of energy, or be it because the group dynamic creates, for each individual, a specific "affective niche" where he/she is addressed according to their specific affective dispositions. At this, the affective arrangement of a workplace comprises the full history of each of its individuals—sedimented into individual dispositions and repertoires—but also that of the team as a whole and of the various architectural, organizational, and technical features that contribute to the arrangement's operations.

Further Characteristics: Crankyness, Historicity, and Individual Involvement

In this section, we sketch several further relevant aspects of affective arrangements in order to round out our exposition and prevent misunderstandings. First, we discuss the potentially "cranky" character of affective arrangements in order to counter the tendency to assume too much in the way of orderly organization. Second, we hint at the dimension of historicity to counter the impression that our concept might refer predominantly to the *synchronic* scaffolding of affect. Third, we approach the issue of individual involvement and discuss the ambivalence between an outward allure and a potentially draining, exploitative "backside" of affective arrangements. In this context we also take up the theme of individual affective dispositions.

Strange Compositions

Researchers approaching putative affective arrangements might be inclined to focus on "purposes," "intentions," or "strategies" that are presumably at work in—or stand behind—the constellation at hand. Such an orientation, while potentially insightful, risks molding affective arrangements in a too linearly rational direction. This orientation should accordingly be counterbalanced, which might be done by elaborating upon another central feature of affective arrangements. In fact, as Deleuze and Guattari have stressed repeatedly, their *agencements machinique* are usually not smoothly functioning, literally "well-oiled" machines, but potentially cranky, deranged, partly out-of-joints, in one word: *strange* compositions (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1986, Chapter 9).[15] They often are the result of tinkering, deliria, pathological processes, historical drift, or accidental encounters. This crankiness might be part of their affect-generating potency, and it might also in part account for their robustness, that is, a given affective arrangement's capacity to absorb or accommodate mishaps and accidents.[16] For a mundane example, think of a workplace that has found an awkward balance between its coworkers (or coworkers and machinery, office space, customers, etc.) that might be utterly elusive or even "mad" to outsiders or novices, yet "works" well enough for those on the inside.

In a related context, Ian Buchanan has pointed out that Freud's concept of a "Komplex" (as in "Oedipal complex" or "castration complex") is a terminological precursor of Deleuze and Guattari's term "agencement" (Buchanan, 2015, p. 383). Conditions resembling Freudian "complexes" are

often played out as idiosyncratic "lived arrangements" that might include fetishes, tics, or other extravagant components. In working with the concept of an affective arrangement, theorists and researchers should reckon with such local antics and idiosyncrasies (see also Guattari, 1995). It is part of the descriptive power and scholarly excitement of cultural affect studies that it actively seeks out constellations in which affect is "machinated" in unruly, surprising, sometimes manifestly crazy ways—by arrangements whose characteristic might be that they don't quite work in previously intended ways (Buchanan, 2015, p. 384). This imposes further limits on the degree and reach of theoretical elaboration. It is mandatory that affective arrangements be specified locally, grounded in the observation of concrete affect-intensive sites and domains. Concepts from practice theory—for example, agency, practice, performativity, normativity, field, habitus, etcetera—are helpful to approach affective arrangements and chart their salient characteristics.[17] Yet, given this potential strangeness of the compositions in question, theorists must reckon with limitations in the potency of these concepts, as they might incline one to expect more in the way of structure, meaning, strategy, or rationality than is actually there. While useful, these concepts should be employed with caution to prevent local specificities and antics from being blocked from view.[18]

Multi-track Historicity

This potential "messiness" helps direct attention to another important dimension of affective arrangements: their multitrack historicity. Affective arrangements are usually not formed ad hoc, but they emerge out of multiple formative trajectories, for example, histories of fine-tuning, of combining and recombining of components, of accommodation to various forms of resistance or failure, histories of reform, of expansion, of transformation, but also sheer historical accident. The components of an arrangement follow their own developmental trajectories—including the historical developments of various registers of forms, modes of expression, regimes of signification, or artistic genres—but the arrangement itself has likewise a history, or rather: multiple strands of becoming.[19] Accordingly, affective arrangements might be cautiously considered as "conservation devices" in which histories of interaction and of collective habituation have become sedimented, so that the ongoing affectedness that transpires within the arrangement is a differential reenactment of past processes.

This multi-track historicity obviously includes the (in itself multidimensional) habituation of the participating individuals according to the affective requirements and possibilities of an established arrangement. For example, theater-goers or football fans but also consumers have to deal with various requirements to express and enact affectivity in line with the demands and local specificities of the affective arrangements they enter into.

We are highlighting the historicity here also because the initial design of our proposal might suggest a prioritizing of the synchronic orientation, as the focus is on what unfolds *presently*, in "live" scenes of affective relationality. But while

it is true that an affective arrangement is impossible without ongoing processes of affecting and being affected, this does not preclude but rather *entails* a complex temporality. The momentary unfolding of a scene of relational affect is a process of becoming, that is, a temporal sequence in which past, present, and future are complexly entwined. Accordingly, even the study of *present* affective dynamics within an arrangement is inevitably also a "bringing to live" of a sedimented past, as this ongoing formative history is differentially reactivated in the scene at hand.[20]

At some remove from this focus on the liveness of an affective arrangement, the constellations in question might also be broken up into their elements for purposes of analysis. In this perspective, it makes sense to focus selectively on the different formative histories of various contributing elements of an arrangement. For example, one might study the history of a certain style of architecture in order to better understand how exactly it is implicated in present-day affective dynamics in a specific urban setting.

Individual Involvement and Affective Dispositions

The point about the multi-track historicity raises the issue of individual involvement. How exactly, and by virtue of what characteristics and abilities do individuals become (and remain) "part of" affective arrangements? In a significant number of cases, affective arrangements lure individuals into their positions by providing opportunities for attachment. For example: It feels good to be a spectator at a play or a football game, sitting in an audience can have a mesmerizing effect that captures attention and freezes one temporarily in one's place, immersive experiences such as in gaming or in the use of social media are often inherently pleasurable. In a teamwork arrangement, there is often an obvious element of pleasurable attachment or sheer fun on the surface, while the involvement has a backside where pressure is exerted or work-related processes get intensified to the point of exhaustion. Accordingly, the outward attraction of affective arrangements must not be confused with structural transparency. Beyond the superficial allure that draws individuals (in selective ways) into the arrangement, an affective arrangement's overall organization and strategy is usually more complex and might remain largely opaque to those in its sway. Relatedly, one must not underestimate the complexity and the individual idiosyncrasies that attachments within affective arrangements might encompass. Individuals attach in all sorts of ways, including ways that seem to bring more pain than pleasure. Berlant's work on "cruel optimism" presents instances of identity-constituting attachments to arrangements whose operations can over time be quite detrimental to the well-being or flourishing of the individuals that engage in them, even given substantial reflexive insight into these matters (see Berlant, 2012).

Furthermore, of systematic importance is the fact that individuals enter into arrangements with their own specific *affective dispositions*, that is, with their individual capacity to affect and be affected in concrete ways. In line with the relational understanding of affect, we understand these affective dispositions as the sedimented remainders of a person's prior history of being-in-relation (see Mühlhoff, 2015). Accordingly, these dispositions will likely share central characteristics with interpersonal affective arrangements, that is, their partly accidental, idiosyncratic (and thus not entirely predictable) character.[21]

Despite this potential uniqueness, an individual repertoire of affective relatability must be at least minimally compatible with a social domain's affective arrangements for the individual to be able to figure in the arrangement in adequate ways. In cases of gross discordance or misfit, an agent is either incapable of any affective involvement whatsoever—thereby, in some cases, putting the arrangement itself on the brink of breakdown—or will react with feelings of dissonance and displeasure upon coming close to the constellation in question.

Relatedly, it can frequently be observed that individuals develop their own "working arrangements" in order to better cope with the demands of socially prevalent affective arrangements (see Buchanan, 2015, p. 383). This adds a more active component to the picture, as individuals indeed "arrange" their immediate surroundings intentionally in response to an affective arrangement already in place. For example, if a workplace has a harsh culture of pressuring, measuring, and evaluating employees and publicly shaming those that perform poorly, individuals might cultivate their own protective arrangement in order to still be able to thrive in that environment—for example, by setting up their office or cubicle space in accommodating ways or by seeking the company of friendly colleagues during breaks. Families are another case in point, just think of kids' or adolescents' many ways of navigating around parental demands. These individual "working arrangements" slot into the overall affective arrangements in specific ways (cf. Ahmed, 2006, pp. 10–11, on affective place-making).[22] This points to a nested structure of interlocking arrangements, from individual dispositions and coping patterns via various micro- and meso-scale assemblages all the way up to larger cultural formations and even entire affective or emotional cultures at large. Though nested, these interrelations will rarely be linear, rational, and predictable, but rather specific, varied, and subject to frequent change.

Outlook

Our exposition of the concept "affective arrangement" has implicitly combined two distinct methodological orientations. Taken in its full complexity, "affective arrangement" is a philosophical concept that aims at bringing out the *unique* constellation of a particular affect-intensive site of social life. It drives toward disclosing the operative essentials of a given domain in terms of local "machinations" of relational affect. In this, the concept works somewhat like a diagnostic category in an endeavor that resembles personalized medicine—albeit not for afflicted individuals but for local segments of public life. The methodology associated with this employment of the concept is a qualitative, interpretive, and also a constructive procedure at

some remove from empirical investigation of social domains. Philosophy and cultural studies, in this emphatic sense, are not "underlaborers" assisting other, allegedly more empirical undertakings, but activities sui generis in pursuit of disclosing and articulating reality.[23]

On the other hand, much in the foregoing has pointed to aspects of potential empirical research methodologies. For instance, social scientists, ethnographers, or researchers of media who approach a social domain might use "affective arrangement" as an explorative concept that guides their charting of the material layout and functional design of social spaces, domains, or media platforms, focusing on those elements and their structured interplay that are presumably instrumental to the reliable production and/or continued circulation of affect. For example, the ethnographic study of ritual might map out elements of the material propping and staging instrumental to the unfolding of affect during the ritualistic performances. In the sociology of organizations, the design of offices and workplaces might be approached with an eye to those factors and arrangements which likely play a role in realizing the predominant forms of affective interactions or affective atmospheres in these settings. Even the study of individual experience by means of qualitative interviews can make use of the concept, as interviewees might be asked about salient elements of spatial settings and local arrangements and about these items' presumed roles in generating moods or atmospheres.[24]

What all these empirical endeavors have in common is that they do not have to assume the full notion of an "affective arrangement," with all its contributing factors in play, but might highlight selected dimensions, or focus on different elements of an arrangement sequentially during the research process. Accordingly, reckoning with an affective arrangement within empirical research can take the form of an orientating blueprint which might be coarse-grained and selective initially, with details being filled in as new data emerge. The research process can go back and forth between provisional arrangement sketches and their correction and elaboration in the light of new material.

The best case scenario for the interdisciplinary study of affect is that the concept of an affective arrangement keeps these two distinct methodological tracks in resonance with one another. Just as "plane of organization" and "plane of consistency" cannot be torn apart, despite presenting different analytical angles on a given arrangement, we suggest that conceptual and empirical work be closely aligned. Theoretical elucidation of complex affective arrangements will be more potent when it stays informed by empirical research of the presumed arrangements and their various components and modes of composition. Empirical work, in turn, will be less prone to reductionism or simplification when it keeps reckoning with complex and often-times unique constellations that may exceed whatever can be established by empirical methods—and sometimes also that which "makes sense" in conventional ways. With "affective arrangement" we have a complex working concept that has a foot each within the qualitative and the quantitative, without being split up artificially. We hope that it will be put to use productively in future research on affect and emotion.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Notes

1   This endeavor has been motivated by our work, as philosophers, in an interdisciplinary project on affect that combines social sciences, anthropology, and cultural studies (www.sfb-affective-societies.de). We have sensed the need for working concepts that can bridge the theoretical (phenomenological, hermeneutic) study of human affect and emotion with the empirical investigation of affective phenomena. The idea is to have a conceptual terrain on which theoretical and empirical perspectives can get entangled and be mutually informative, without undue imposition in either direction.

2   We will provide hints to relevant literature in many fields that touch on our concerns, yet it has to be noted that we can only present a relatively narrow selection of what has become a massively productive and wide-ranging area of scholarship and research—no longer can a single article cover all the ground that is relevant to the ideas presented here.

3   This philosophical background is of course highly complex and multifaceted, and notably thoroughly metaphysical as it includes the choice of a process-ontological instead of a substance-ontological framework (cf. Massumi, 2002). This has to be kept in mind when the impulse arises to critique affect theory for some presumed oddities on the surface level of its formulations. Leys (2011) is an example of how a critique of the turn to affect can slide into a mostly futile rebuttal that misconstrues what is at issue in the field. See Seyfert (2012) for a concise explication of the theoretical core of affect studies. Blackman (2012) has provided a detailed genealogical study of this line of work, including discussion of its sometimes conflict-ridden relation to more mainstream strands of emotion theory. Schaefer (2015) likewise attempts a balanced theoretical and genealogical reconstruction. Wetherell (2012) offers a rigorous elucidation and critical analysis of affect studies from a social science perspective.

4   Russ Leo (2016) has provided a lucid reconstruction of Spinoza's treatment of the conceptual field of affect (*affectus, affectiones, affectio*), especially by contrasting it with Descartes' treatment of the passions.

5   Barad's quantum-physics-inspired slogan can seem exaggerated from the viewpoint of analytical ontology. A weaker claim that suffices for our purposes is that there are *relations that do not supervene on intrinsic properties of the entities related*—non-supervenient relations, in short (Esfeld, 2004; see also Ladyman, 2014, for an overview of key approaches in the metaphysics of relations).

6   See Kwek (2014) for a reconstruction of Spinoza's conception of power as the capacity to affect and being affected (see Spinoza, 1677/1985). Kewk puts emphasis on the aspect of receptivity or sensitivity (*being affected*), so that it becomes clear that the potentialities of bodies—in the sense of power (*potentia*)—at issue always include their agentive and their receptive capacities. See also Balibar (1997), Gatens and Lloyd (1999), and especially the Deleuze branch in the Spinoza reception, Deleuze (1988b, 1968/1990).

7   There are echoes here of work in the psychological, sociological, and philosophical literature, for instance of the influential psychological constructivist approach by Russell and Barrett (1999), which likewise works with affect as a basic ingredient of cultural elaboration (albeit as an individual-psychological, not a relational ingredient). In sociology, symbolic interactionist approaches (e.g., Katz, 2001) stress the social situatedness of emotions, while work in social psychology takes emotions to be configurations of social relationships (Parkinson, Fischer, & Manstead, 2005). See von Scheve (2016) for an encompassing discussion of these and related constructivist approaches vis-à-vis cultural affect studies.

8   This does not preclude investigating *emotions* from this vantage point. As mentioned before, it is reasonable to assume emotions to be consolidated formations of relational affect that have come to be specifically coded and narrativized. It is an interesting question whether culturally prevalent emotion types might be analyzed as enabled and enacted by affective arrangements. Jack Katz's (2001, Chapter 1) work on road rage might be read in this way, as might be several other social constructivist or discourse analytic approaches to emotion (see, e.g., Wetherell, 2012).

9   Our understanding of performativity is derived from Barad (2003, 2007). A central concept of Barad's in this vicinity is "apparatus," a notion that is structurally similar to our concept of affective arrangement, only with less focus on affect (instead, Barad foregrounds agency as part of material-discursive practices; see also Rouse, 2002).

10 Here, our perspective resonates with Randall Collins's microsociological analysis of "interactional ritual chains" and the "emotional energy" presumably manifest in them (Collins, 2004). Collins tellingly speaks of human actors as "seekers of emotional energy." We concur, only that we would prefer to speak of "affective" instead of "emotional," affective arrangements instead of interaction rituals, and intra-action instead of interaction.

11 Another related concept is Foucault's "dispositif" (see Deleuze, 1988a).

12 We deliberately include *actions* among what gets locally instigated and modulated by an affective arrangement. We do not assume a sharp rift between affect and agency, and advise against affect theoretical proposals that sever these dimensions. Complicating matters, we also do not harbor a humanistic understanding of agency (that would allow only humans in the position of agent), but admit the possibility of nonhuman actants. It would go too far to explain this in more detail. As indicated, we draw on Barad's (2007) work to back our points on agency, performativity, apparatuses, and material-discursive practices.

13 Deleuze and Guattari make a related point when they distinguish the "plane of organization" from the "plane of consistency" in an *agencement* (see Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

14 Such a microsociological perspective on *situated affect* as a register of social role formation is also formulated by Wetherell (2012, p. 79) with reference to the conversation analytic investigations of peer behavior on schoolyards by Goodwin (2006).

15 We cannot do justice here to the theoretical background of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of an *agencement machinique* and related notions. Buchanan (2015) and Nail (2017) provide good overviews.

16 That this is true of machines in general, if properly understood, is part of the message of Simondon's work on the ways of being of technical objects. According to Simondon, an "open machine" which possesses leeway for integrating novelty possesses a higher degree of technicity than the closed system of a rigidly automated machine (see Simondon, 1958/1989).

17 Valuable recent approaches to affect and emotion from a praxeological perspective are Scheer (2012) with a focus on emotion and Wetherell (2012) with a critical focus on affect. Wetherell's work is less prone to the worry voiced here as she integrates several ideas from cultural affect studies into her account.

18 In this, our approach jibes in part with actor–network theory (ANT). We share the focus on the concrete aggregates of entities and factors that make up lived reality (see Latour, 2005). An important difference is that ANT remains comparatively neutral as to the concrete forms of interactions and modes of association between the "actants" that make up the networks under study, whereas the present proposal can specify various modes of relatedness in terms of affectivity. Likewise, the present account shares some aspects of its orientation with the field of "assemblage theory" (DeLanda, 2006), but not its flatly aggregative understanding of "assemblage" (see Buchanan, 2015, for critique of DeLanda's approach).

19 Again, Simondon is an important source on this conception of historicity, particularly his work on technical objects (Simondon, 1958/1989).

His distinction between *elements, individuals*, and *ensembles* can aid in breaking down the different strands of becoming that come together in an affective arrangement.

20 Henri Bergson, on whom Deleuze and Guattari draw extensively, and also Heidegger are important authors in this regard. See Slaby (2015) for an interpretation of the entanglement of temporality and affectivity in Heidegger.

21 Wetherell (2012, especially Chapter 7), in her effort to deflate some of the hype around cultural affect studies, has much to say about individually sedimented relational repertoires of affect or affectability; her view converges with ours in these relevant respects.

22 See also de Certeau (1984) on more general reflections on the strategies or tactics of appropriating social settings or domains of everyday life for individual purposes.

23 See Grossberg (1992, Chapter 1) for a valuable elaboration of the relevant understanding of "articulation" as a methodology for cultural studies.

24 We make moderate use here of the concept of "atmosphere" in order to speak of the forceful and holistically qualitative character of some forms of locally arranged affect (see Anderson, 2009; Griffero, 2014). We expect that on some, but not all occasions of affective arrangement, the overall affective dynamics can be aptly described as affective atmospheres. Of course, there is a vapid sense of the term atmosphere in which nearly every spatial location would be beset by atmospheres, so the concept requires further elaboration.

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