**Making Spaces: The Natural, Cultural, Cognitive and Social Niches of Human Activity**

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A niche is, roughly speaking, an environment in which an organism or group of organisms can live and act. Drawing on the ecological psychology of J. J. Gibson and Roger Barker, and especially on Barker's theory of behaviour settings, I will explore different kinds of niches for human activity, and then show how they become variously combined together in reflection of different kinds of human activity. One important category of combined niches are the spatial contexts which serve as niches for different kinds of conversational activity -- for instance in a queue, in an art gallery, on a railway platform, at a party. I will use examples of such combined niches in order to illustrate some of the reasons why machine emulations of human performance in conversation are faring so poorly when compared to some of the more impressive recent achievements in the field of artificial intelligence.