

# The effect of discreteness and inhomogeneity on cosmic flows

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## Abstract

Gravity is the dominant force shaping the spatial distribution of galaxies in the Universe. Under the assumption of homogeneity and isotropy of the Universe beyond a certain physical scale one can usually approximate the local kinematic evolution of galaxy by the matter distribution below that homogeneity scale. In this letter we show that if the matter distribution is composed by a discrete set of points then, due to statistical fluctuations, the influence of matter has a measurable effect at all scales. Our results are based on straightforward analytical considerations, monte-carlo realizations and the analysis of cosmological N-body simulations. We discuss the implications of these results in the interpretation of the peculiar motion of our galaxy. We suggest possible cosmological tests of these ideas for future observational facilities.

1. Of all the fundamental forces gravity plays the dominant role in defining the large scale structure of the Universe. From very homogeneous conditions gravitational instability drives the emergence of a web-like pattern. The influence of matter beyond that scale can be discarded on the grounds that the net gravitational force inside an homogeneous spherical shell is zero. In classical newtonian mechanics it is possible to show that the net force inside an homogeneous and continus shell of matter is exactly zero. The same is valid in general relativity. That result receives the name of the Birkhoff's theorem.

2a. The observational advances in the last two decades have allowed us to measure the distribution of galaxies on very large scales. The spatial pattern they follow is highly structured. It resembles a large network of interconnected filaments and sheets crossing large underdense regions. This is why the community referes to this structure as the cosmic web. At the same time the concept of statistical homogeneity is a fundamental assumption to various theoretical aspects in cosmology.

2b. Quantitative tests of homogeneity seek to measure the indipendent volumes of the Universe and test whether they have similar mean densities of matter. Therefore, ine commonon way to estimate this scale is based on counting the number of massive galaxies inside a sphere of radius  $R$ . Also the variations of number density for different values of the radius  $R$  is used as a quantitative test to measure homogeneity[?]. Similar comoslogical tests aim at using

measurements of large scale structure to estimate the peculiar acceleration of the local group that is induced by the surrounding matter [1, 2]. These two measurements can be then compared against the predictions of theories of large scale structure evolution and serve as a cosmological probe.

Once the scale of statistical homogeneity is well determined one might be tempted to make the approximation that, due to Birkhoff's theorem, it becomes, a good approximation to neglect the influence of matter beyond that scale on the dynamical influence of matter located in a sphere centered in a sphere of radius equal to the homogeneity scale. In this letter we show how the effects of discreteness on a statistically homogeneous matter distribution can have a dynamical effect. We extend these results to the case of the large scale structure of the universe by means of N-body simulations that presenting the effect of matter distributions beyond the assumed homogeneity scale of  $70 - 200h^{-1}\text{Mpc}$ .

3. We consider first a simple phenomenological model where matter is homogeneously distributed over the surface of a sphere of radius  $R$ . This distribution consists of a set of  $N_p$  point masses with mass  $m$ . Under these conditions the total force,  $F_T$ , at the center of that spherical distribution can be expressed in terms of the force  $F_m(R)$  produced by a single point mass located at a position  $R$  as follows:

$$F_T = N_p^{1/2} F_m(R), \quad (1)$$

a result that can be explained analytically [3, 4]. In Figure 2 we show the results of a simple Monte Carlo simulation where  $N_p$  particles are located over the surface sphere of radius  $R$ , the total force per unit mass on a test particle,  $F_T$ , is then expressed as a multiple of  $F_m(R) = Gm_p/R^2$ . This shows how the analytical expectation is a good approximation to the results obtained through MonteCarlo simulations.

We can now extend this result for an statistically homogeneous distribution of points. We run again a simple Monte Carlo simulation to find that the total force per unit mass produced by the particle distribution is twice as the of a single mass  $m$  located at a distance  $R_s$  equal to the average interparticle separation, independent of the total number of particles.

$$F_T = 2F_m(R_s). \quad (2)$$

Figure 2 presents the results of a MonteCarlo realization of this experiment. It shows that the peak of the distribution of values for  $F_T/F_m(R_s)$  is located at values of  $\sim 2$ . The distribution is broad and allows values one order of magnitude above/below the maximum.

5. In the case of the actual large scale matter distribution in the Universe, galaxies are found to have two distinct characteristics with respect our toy model. First, the galaxies are not randomly distributed, but clustered. Second, the galaxies span a wide range of masses, with less massive galaxies being more common than massive galaxies. In order to test the influence of these two characteristics we use a large cosmological N-body simulation. We have used a

simulations that allows us to build spheres of  $500h^{-1}\text{Mpc}$  in radius and include halos with masses spanning a range from Milky Way to galaxy clusters.

6. We defined a fiducial scale of homogeneity of  $R_{\text{in}} = 50h^{-1}\text{Mpc}$  to measure the fluctuation of forces due to matter in a sphere below that scale and the outer matter distribution with halos located up to an outer radius of  $R_{\text{out}} = 500h^{-1}\text{Mpc}$ .

7. We also consider the variation in the direction of the net force when the positions of the halos are perturbed within  $1 h^{-1}$  which is the typical lengthscale that these objects are expected to travel in the age of the Universe.

8. The fact that our simple analytical model describes the result obtained by simulations strengthens our interpretation on the basis of fundamental point processes. [...]

9. The velocity of our galaxy in the rest-frame of the cosmic microwave background is  $627 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ . [<http://arxiv.org/pdf/1109.3856v1.pdf>]. It has been inferred that the  $382 \text{ km s}^{-1}$  are induced by the mass distribution within  $R = 30 h^{-1} \text{ Mpc}$ , we call this the local component. This gives a net result of  $382 \text{ km s}^{-1}$  that must be induced by the matter distribution from matter with positions beyond  $R$ , this is referred as the tidal component. Both components, local and tidal, are pointing in the same direction (??? SURE ??).[...]

10. The effects of the net force imposed by the matter distribution in the Universe is also in principle detectable in systems isolated from massive structures. The most interesting case would be the kinematic evolution of galaxies located in large scale voids. In these regions the dominant gravitational interaction would be provided by the tidal component and not by nearby structures. [<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2011IJMPS...1...41V>]

11. Possible effects on detailed methods that seek to infer local density distributions from peculiar velocity measurements.

12. The physics of this effect are very simple to interpret.

## References

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- [3] S. Chandrasekhar. Stochastic Problems in Physics and Astronomy. *Reviews of Modern Physics*, 15:1–89, January 1943.
- [4] A. Carati, S. L. Cacciatori, and L. Galgani. Discrete matter, far fields, and dark matter. *EPL (Europhysics Letters)*, 83:59002, September 2008.

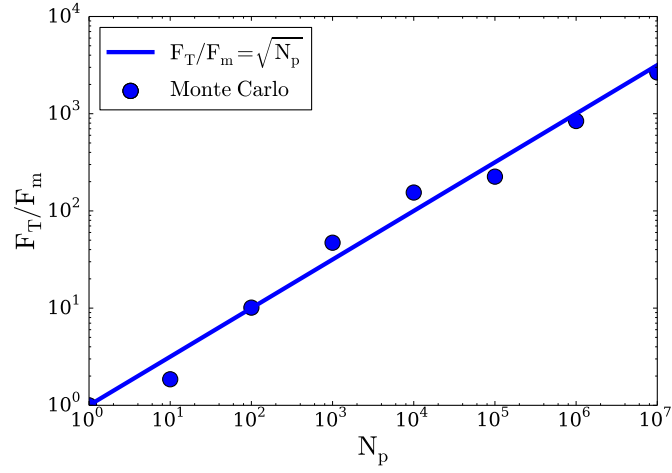


Figure 1: Norm of the total force per unit mass,  $F_T$ , produced by a distribution of  $N_p$  point masses randomly distributed over the surface of a sphere of radius  $R$ . The value of  $F_T$  is computed at the center of the sphere and is expressed as a multiple of the force per unit mass produced by a single point mass located at a distance  $R$  from the center.

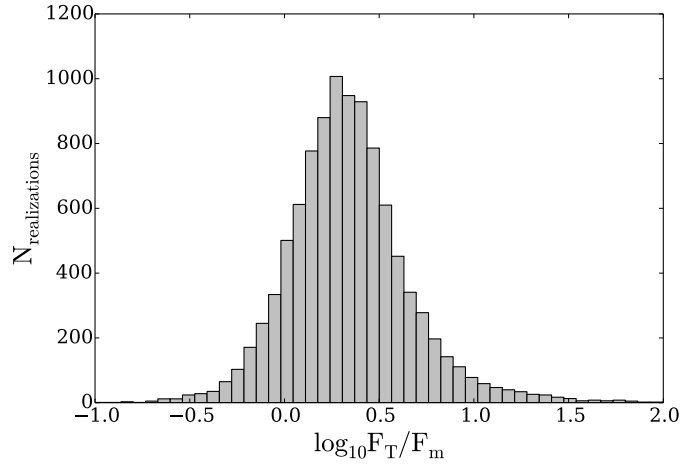


Figure 2: Frequency of the norm of the total force per unit mass produced by a set of identical  $N_p$  particles homogeneously distributed inside a sphere of radius  $R$ . This corresponds to  $10^4$  different realizations of  $N_p = 10^4$  particles. The values of  $F_T$  is normalized to the force per unit mass produced by a single particle located at a distance  $R_s$  from the center equal to the average interparticle separation. .

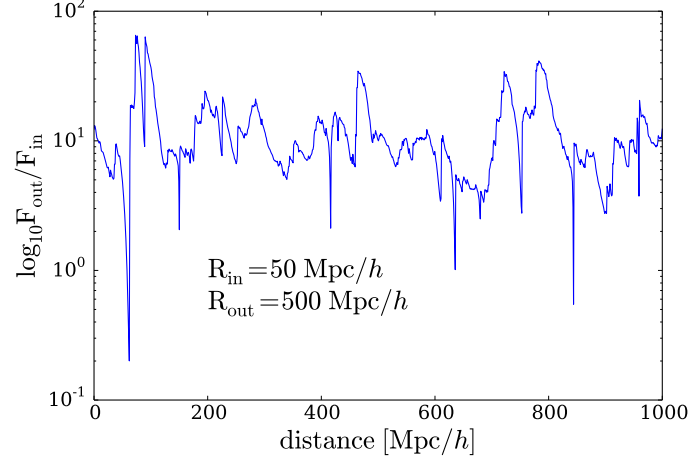


Figure 3: . Forces produced by dark matter halos in a cosmological simulation. The figure shows the ratio between the force produced by all halos within a spherical shell of halos with radial distances  $50h^{-1}\text{Mpc} < R < 500h^{-1}\text{Mpc}$  and the halos in the inner core with  $R < 50h^{-1}\text{Mpc}$ . This is presented as a function of the distance along a line randomly traced in the cosmological box.

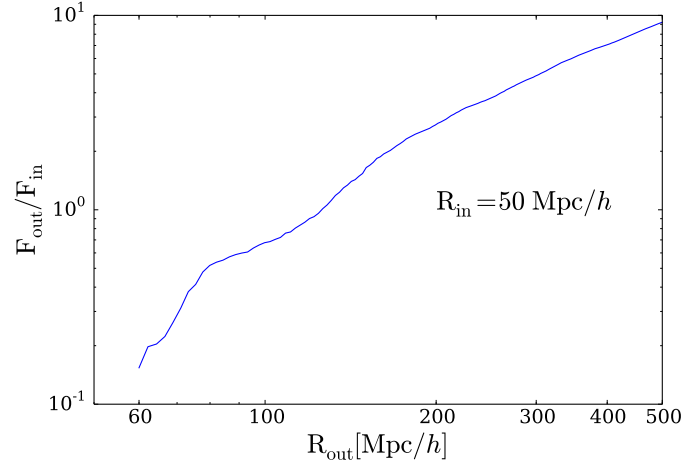


Figure 4: . Forces produced by dark matter halos over a random dark matter halo in a simulation. This figures presents the ration between the forces by all halos within a spherical shell with radial distances  $50h^{-1}\text{Mpc} < R < R_{\text{out}}$  and he halos within a spherical shell with  $R < 50h^{-1}\text{Mpc}$ .

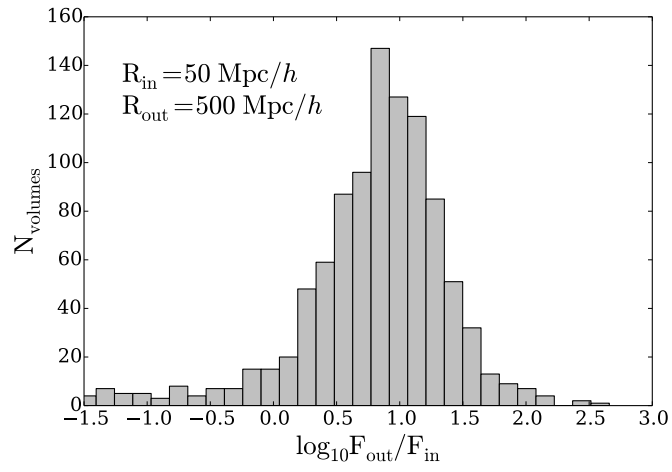


Figure 5: Frequency of the force ratio between the halos inside a spherical shell with radial distances  $50h^{-1}\text{Mpc} < R < 500h^{-1}\text{Mpc}$  and halos within a sphere of  $R < 50h^{-1}\text{Mpc}$ . The forces are measured at the positions of 1000 dark matter halos randomly selected in the simulated volume.