**Questoes sobre :** Em D. Fragaszy e S, Perry (Eds.) *The biology of traditions: models and evidence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Cap 1: Towards a biology of traditions

What strikes me most in this text is the importance of considering the same concepts between researchers, in other words “not using the same words to talk about or characterize different situations“. A clear delimitation also appears necessary in this objective.

Tradition is an abstract concept, meaning that it deals with representations of the world and ideas, and can be expressed in relation to virtually all existing behaviors. Therefore, it is obviously very challenging to measure and quantify such a concept not based on directly observable variations. The use of proxies seems an ineluctable way around. But then we reach a higher level of complexity by having to define and clearly delineate the proxies too. Besides, an ever higher level of complexity arises due to the spectral nature of proxies. As the authors showed in their tridimensional model, “tradition” would exist in a relative space of the model and derivation along the proxies’ continuum would generate derived tradition.

But how can we get from a theoretical and relative model to a pertinent and quantified one ?

The authors state that numbering the model would be a major step in studying social-biased learning and tradition but it raises the question of :

To which extent will the model scale be arbitrary ? And to which extent arbitrary range and limits can be pertinent ? What can help researchers in establishing a pertinent scale ?

The authors also question the need to consider differently and thus characterize the derivations of tradition in their theoretical model. It appears rigorously important to differently caracterize small duration traditions, low contribution of social context or low population proportion to the regular ‘tradition’ in order to avoid confusing scientific debates actually discussing two or more different situations. Yet, once more, these derivations of regular ‘tradition’ are difficult to delineate, and because of the continuous nature of the variables, the combinations can be infinite. An idea to set limits between the various concept’s derivations may be to consider relative thresholds such as traditions lasting less than a generation, or less than a part of the animal’s life, or less than a percentage of the population etc.

However, how can relative temporal and populational variables be pertinent across the whole animal kingdom ?

Considering a great ape and a bee, it seems like results based on lifespan and group size would not be comparable.

Consequently, how pertinent is it to force a general concept to fit the great biological diversity of life and wouldn’t science benefit from more adaptive theoretical models even if it won’t allow us to generalize at the globe scale ?