



4th Culture Conference held in July at the University of Stirling

From 12th to 13th of July, social learning researchers of different disciplines and levels of career gathered again for the annual Culture Conference.

BY EVA REINDL

For the first time in its young history, this year's Culture Conference was not held in Birmingham, but in Stirling, organised and hosted by Christine Caldwell's research group (many thanks to PhD students Charlotte Wilks and Donna Kean, who were mainly in charge of organising and who can be very proud of having organised another very successful Culture Conference!)

This year's conference topic encouraged attendees to think about 'the role of complexity in culture'. For example, how is complexity defined and measured in the different disciplines researching cultural evolution? Is an increase in complexity of a cultural trait a fundamental criterion for the definition of cumulative cultural evolution – and if not, which other measures should be used? As became evident from pre-conference tweets and comments of some of the presenters, thinking about these and other questions was perceived as a challenging but rewarding task for the presenters.

Other debates that came up repeatedly and that

reflected current discussions in the literature included questions on the definition of cumulative cultural evolution (see the recent article by Mesoudi & Thornton, 2018) as well as on the design of appropriate asocial control conditions in experimental studies on cumulative cultural evolution (several speakers referred to the recent paper by Miton & Charbonneau, 2018).

The conference included 4 keynote talks and 7 talks, which consisted of both theoretical and empirical work, as well as a poster session and a concluding panel discussion. The atmosphere was positive and constructive and surely most people took home quite some food for thought and some new connections. Plans for the next Culture Conference are already underway.

And of course, there was also another pre-conference meet-up of our Society on the evening before the conference. Around 10 people came together to enjoy some nice pub food, catch up, network, and watch football together. □