From proselytism to secularization

the social conditions of Optimal Matching Analysis diffusion

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OMA diffusion

nb of publications

OMA diffusion

- **1986-2000**: "proselytism"
  
  *ie* use of OMA directly linked to Abbott

- **2000-now**: "secularization"
  
  *ie* autonomization from Abbott, by a growing set of scholars
OMA in Abbott’s career

• Criticism of "general linear reality" sequence analysis as a "narrative positivism"

• Position in the academic field: capital of scientific authority and power

• Tendency to subversion "methodological moves"
« Fractal » of methods

qualitative

quantitative (+)

descriptive (-)

causal

geometric

algorithmic (+)
A favorable agenda

• Drying up of the "variable paradigm"

• Life course and career studies…
  ... and then capillary action

• A third generation of data

• "Generational paradigm"
  OMA users are newcomers in the field
The social group(s) of OMA users

• A unique and comprehensive "social circle"
  ▪ *Abbott always mentioned*
  ▪ "OM-friendly" journals
  ▪ An informal leadership

• Some "invisible colleges"
  ▪ Closed seminars
  ▪ Open conferences
  ▪ Acknowledgements
Computer programs

1. Ad-hoc softwares

2. TDA

3. Stata

4. TraMineR package in R
A turning point?

- 2000’s special issue in « Sociological Methods & Research »

- A review by Abbott & Tsay, 2 (heavily) critical papers by Levine and Wu, a reply by Abbott

- A symbolic legitimation?
So now?

- OMA legitimate in the methodological toolkit for social science scholar

- Still an uncertain future:
  - few "blockbuster" applications
  - only individual trajectories
  - Abbott’s theoretical background seldom mentioned
  - asymmetric porosity → misuse?
  - standardization?
«It seems to me that this comes perilously close to using OMA as a sausage machine»

(Chan, 1999)