



SAID BUSINESS SCHOOL, University of Oxford

SEMINAR SERIES / TRINITY 2011

Convenors: Felix Reed-Tsochas, Institute for Science, Innovation and Society,
Saïd Business School
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Seminar webpage:
www.cabdyn.ox.ac.uk/complexity_seminars.asp

Sandwiches and drinks will be provided

Please note: although the seminar programme detailed was correct at time of printing, seminar arrangements are subject to change - for the latest information, please check the seminar webpage.

Tuesday 14th June
(12.30 - 2.00pm) James Martin Seminar Room

Professor Matthew Salganik
Department of Sociology, Princeton University

'Wiki surveys: Open, adaptive, and quantifiable social data collection'

ABSTRACT

Research about attitudes and opinions is central to social science and relies on two common methodological approaches: surveys and interviews. While surveys allow researchers to quantify large amounts of information quickly and at a reasonable cost, they are routinely criticized for being "top-down" and rigid. In contrast, interviews allow unanticipated information to "bubble up" directly from respondents, but are slow, expensive, and hard to quantify. Advances in computing technology now enable a hybrid approach, "wiki surveys", that combines the quantifiability of a survey with the openness of an interview. We draw on principles undergirding successful information aggregation projects, such as Wikipedia and the GNU/Linux operating system, to propose several theoretical criteria that wiki surveys should satisfy. We then present results from www.allourideas.org, a free and open source website that we created which allows groups all over the world to deploy wiki surveys. To date, more than 1000 wiki surveys have been created, and they have collected over 45,000 ideas and 2 million votes. We describe some of the methodological challenges involved in collecting and analyzing this type of data, and present case studies of wiki surveys created by the New York City Mayor's Office and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The talk concludes with a discussion of limitations and how some of these limitations might be overcome with additional research. (Joint work with Karen Levy)

