

Trinity Term 2008

CABDyN SEMINAR SERIES
Saïd Business School, University of Oxford



Convenors:

Felix Reed-Tsochas, *James Martin Institute, Saïd Business School*

Jukka-Pekka Onnela, *Physics Department & Saïd Business School*



Our meetings intend to provide a forum for rigorous research (in a broad range of disciplines) focusing on complex adaptive systems, using methods and techniques such as agent-based modelling and complex network analysis. Since potential areas of application for such approaches can be located across the social, natural and engineering sciences, our aim is to involve participants from a wide range of departments in Oxford. We welcome talks which focus on particular areas of application and associated technical issues, but also encourage contributions which address more fundamental conceptual or mathematical problems. The CABDyN Seminar Series is one of the activities of the CABDyN Research Cluster (<http://sbs-xnet.sbs.ox.ac.uk/complexity/>).

Tuesday 3rd June, 12.30 – 2.00 pm

Seminar Room A, Saïd Business School

Dr Quentin Atkinson
Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology
University of Oxford

Tempo and Mode in Language Evolution

ABSTRACT

Stochastic models of biological evolution are crucial to our understanding of the general processes that have shaped and continue to shape the diversity we see in the living world today. Like species, languages evolve via a process of descent with modification and we can model this process in much the same way as biologists have modelled species evolution. Such an approach holds the promise of identifying nomothetic laws of language change, laws that may also apply to other features of human culture. In this talk I will discuss how stochastic models of language evolution can be used to test hypotheses about the factors affecting rates of vocabulary replacement. These findings suggest that the tempo and nature language evolution is determined in part by the way we use our vocabulary, both as a tool for communication and a marker of group identity.

Sandwiches and drinks will be provided

For further information contact info.cabdyn@sbs.ox.ac.uk

Seminar webpage: http://sbs-xnet.sbs.ox.ac.uk/complexity/complexity_seminars.asp