Week 7

* **What have I learnt this week?**

This week’s workshop focused mainly on segregation, coordination and culture and social learning. Upon reflection, the idea of segregation was common, however the ability to measure segregation was a concept and idea I previously did not know was possible. Moreover, as culture has various definitions, it was interesting to identify ways to measure cultural differences and also understand the reasons economic backwardness works. By covering a range of new models such as Granovetters Model, the Standing Ovation Model and the Schelling’s segregation model, it allowed me to learn how they can be applied to understand culture and various aspects of life.

* **What do I ‘now know’ that I did not before?**

After exploring Granovetters Riot Model, I was able to gain a deeper understanding on how the extremes on the tail of the distribution can often drive and influence what causes a riot or event to occur in the first place. It was interesting to put this model into the context of extreme events that occurred throughout the world such as the ‘Orange Revolution” in Ukraine. By focusing on key thresholds, I was able to observe how people require certain thresholds to start a riot or event, such as 50 or 100. However, I was evident that the extreme or outlying thresholds were the ones driving an event, highlighting that collective action was more likely to occur if thresholds were lower and there was variety in the scores of each. The importance of distribution was reiterated and was something I previously did not know, as it meant that we could better predict the possibilities of large and extreme events occurring in our world.

* **What insights have I gained?**

This workshop enabled me to gain a positive insight into what essentially creates culture and the differences we experience in our everyday lives. To understand this, the workshop explored how mathematical and visual models allow us to explore cultural practices and traits such as wearing shoes inside the house or whether we hug our friends. These traits all sum up to several coordination games which can be examined in the Axelrod’s model where it is clear to identify certain people with similar traits and thick dividing lines form to display cultural differences amongst certain groups of people. This model when put into play was insightful as it allowed for a visual representation on the reasons cultures do not merge and how each person and culture holds a unique identity, just like in the real world. After establishing that culture arises from multiple coordination games, it was insightful to further learn how other features such as consistency and heterogeneity can be explored. Heterogeneity was a term I had previously never heard, and when explained was particularly intriguing as it stated that despite the model showcasing individuals with the same culture, it does not necessarily mean they will behave the same. Personally, this got me thinking, as there is always variation between people who follow similar traits and that we cannot ever account for zero error.