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A tutorial @ AAMAS, IJCAI 2019

2009 DARPA Red Balloon Challenge

- The \$40,000 challenge award would be granted to the first team to submit the locations of 10 moored, 8-foot, red weather balloons at 10 previously undisclosed fixed locations in the continental United States.

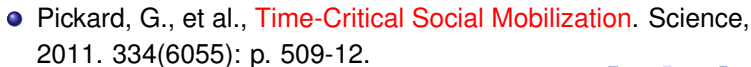


2009 DARPA Red Balloon Challenge

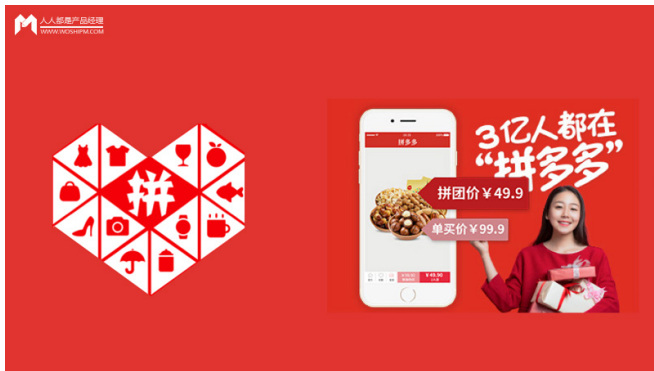
MIT Crowdsourced Solution (The Winner):

- "We're giving **\$2000** per balloon to the first person to send us the correct coordinates, but that's not all – we're also giving **\$1000** to the person who invited them. Then we're giving **\$500** whoever invited the inviter, and **\$250** to whoever invited them, and so on ..."
- got over **5,000** of participants, won the competition in under 9 hours.

MIT Crowdsourced Solution (The Winner):



PinDuoDuo (like Groupon)



More participants, higher chance to win!!!

- 2009 DARPA Red Balloon Challenge
 - Inviting more friends has **higher chance to win** (higher utility)
- PinDuoDuo
 - Inviting more friends has **higher chance to get cheap items** (higher utility)

What if it is a competition?

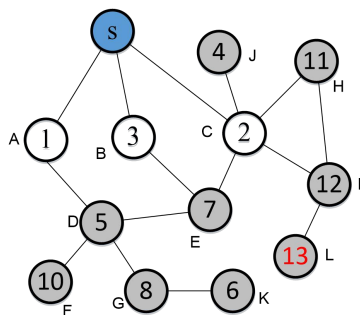
- Resource allocation (auctions)
- Task allocation (crowdsourcing)
- Information propagation with budget
- Social choice (voting)

More participants means lower chance to win!!!

Mechanism Design on Social Networks

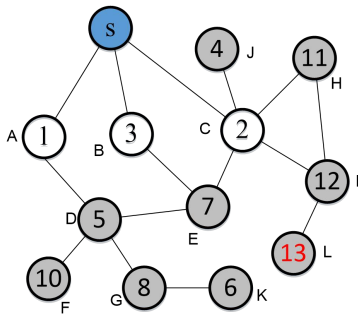
Design mechanisms/markets under competitive environment such that **participants are incentivized to invite more participants/competitors** to join the mechanisms.

Starter: Promote a Sale via Social Networks



- The seller (**blue node**) sells one item and has only three connections/neighbours in the network (A,B,C).
- Each node is a potential buyer and the value is her highest willing payment to buy the item (**valuation**).
- The seller's revenue of applying second price auction (VCG) without promotion is **2**.
- but the highest willing payment in the network is **13**.

Starter: Promote a Sale via Social Networks



Question

How the seller could do to increase her profit?

Traditional Sale Promotions

Traditional sale promotions:

- Promotions via agents
- Keywords based ads via **search engines** such as Google
- Ads via **social media** such as WeChat, Facebook, Twitter

Traditional Sale Promotions

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Challenge

- The return of these promotions are unpredictable.
- The seller may **LOSE** from the promotions.

Build promotion inside the market mechanism such that

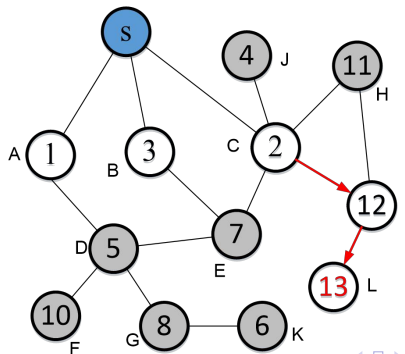
- 1 the promotion will **never bring negative utility/revenue** to the seller.
- 2 all **buyers** who are aware of the sale **are incentivized to diffuse the sale information** to all her neighbours.

"Diffusion Mechanism Design"

New Challenges

Why a buyer would bring more buyers to compete with her?

- only if their **diffusion** are **rewarded**, *but the seller doesn't want to lose!*
- we **cannot** just **pay** each node a **fixed amount** to incentivise them to diffuse the information.



Outline

1 Mechanism Design Review

- The History
- Second Price Auction (VCG)

2 Diffusion Mechanism Design

- The History

- Second Price Auction (VCG)

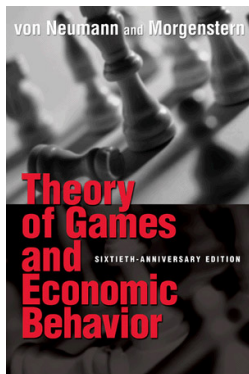
- Resource Allocation

- Task Allocation
- Information Propagation

What is Mechanism/Market Design?

- it is known as Reverse Game Theory

- **Game theory** is the study of mathematical models of **conflict** and **cooperation** between intelligent rational decision-makers (wiki) [von Neumann and Morgenstern 1944].

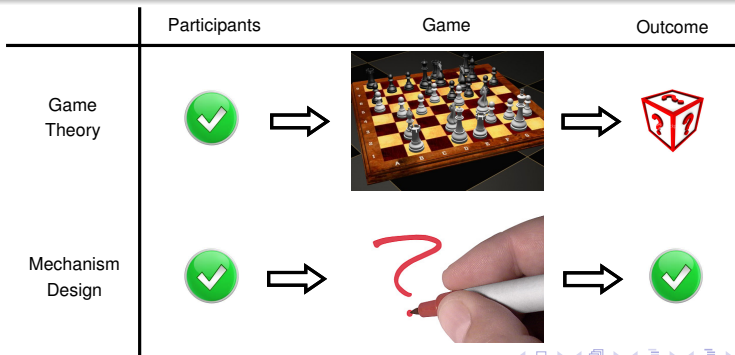


- **Non-cooperative games**: Go, poker, rock-paper-scissors
- **Cooperative games**: coordination games

Mechanism Design is to answer...

Question

How to **design** a mechanism/game, toward desired objectives, in strategic settings?



Mechanism Design is to answer...

Question

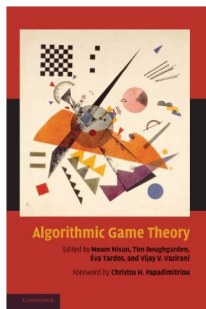
How to **design** a mechanism/game, toward desired objectives, in strategic settings?



Roger B. Myerson (born March 29, 1951, University of Chicago, US)

- **Nobel Prize** for economics (2007), for "having laid the foundations of **mechanism design theory**."
- *Eleven game-theorists have won the economics Nobel Prize.*

- **Algorithmic game theory** is an area in the intersection of **game theory** and **algorithm design**, whose objective is to design algorithms in strategic environments (wiki) [Nisan et al. 2007].



- *Computing in Games*: algorithms for computing equilibria
- *Algorithmic Mechanism Design*: design games that have both good game-theoretical and algorithmic properties
- ...

- Algorithmic game theory research in AI:
 - **Game Playing**: computation challenges, AlphaGo, poker
 - **Social Choice**: preferences aggregation, voting, prediction
 - **Mechanism Design**: the allocation of scarce resources, ad auctions
- Many IJCAI Computers and Thought Award (outstanding young scientists in artificial intelligence) winners had worked on AGT:
 - Sarit Kraus (1995), Nicholas Jennings (1999), Tuomas Sandholm (2003), Peter Stone (2007), Vincent Conitzer (2011), and Ariel Procaccia (2015)

- The History

- Second Price Auction (VCG)

- Resource Allocation

- Task Allocation

- Information Propagation

A Mechanism Design Example

Design Goal

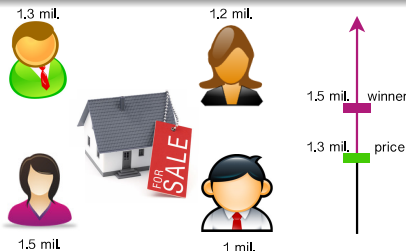
How can a house-seller sell her house with the "highest" revenue?



- **Challenge:** the seller **doesn't know** how much the buyers are willing to pay (**their valuations**).

Design Goal

How can a house-seller sell her house with the "highest" revenue?



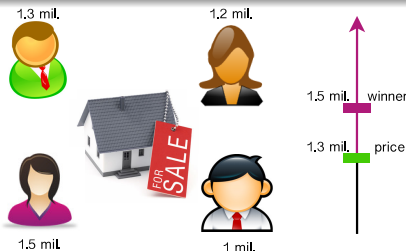
Solution: Second Price Auction (Vickrey Auction/VCG)

- **Input:** each buyer reports a price/bid to the seller
- **Output:** the seller decides
 - *allocation:* the agent with the highest price wins.
 - *payment:* the winner pays the second highest price.

A Mechanism Design Example

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Solution: Second Price Auction (Vickrey Auction/VCG)

Properties:

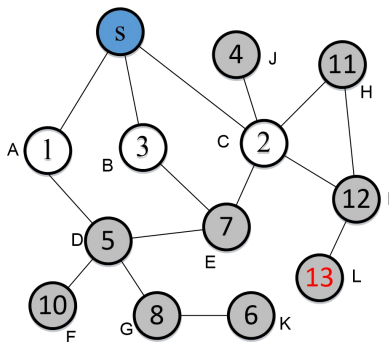
- **Efficient**: maximising social welfare
- **Truthful**: buyers report their valuations truthfully

What can the seller do to FURTHER increase her profit?

- estimate a good **reserve price** [Myerson 1981]
 - *requires a good estimation of buyers' valuations*
- **promotions**: let more people know/participate in the auction

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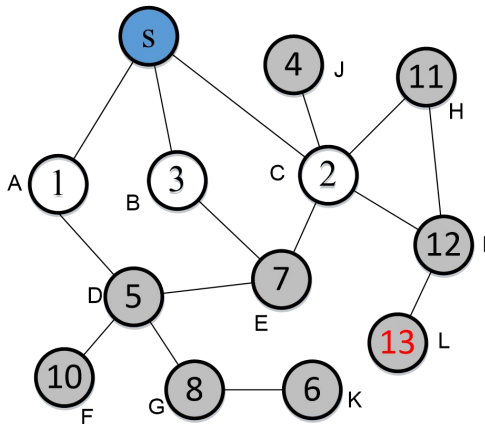
2 Diffusion Mechanism Design

- Resource Allocation
- Task Allocation
- Information Propagation

- 1 Mechanism Design Review
 - The History
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- 2 Diffusion Mechanism Design
 - **Resource Allocation**
 - Task Allocation
 - Information Propagation

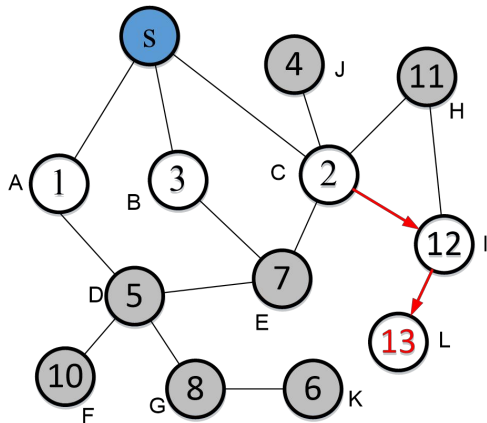
- Bin Li, Dong Hao, Dengji Zhao, Tao Zhou: **Mechanism Design in Social Networks**. AAAI'17.
- Dengji Zhao, Bin Li, Junping Xu, Dong Hao, Nick Jennings: **Selling Multiple Items via Social Networks**. AAMAS'18.
- Bin Li, Dong Hao, Dengji Zhao, Tao Zhou: *Customer Sharing in Economic Networks with Costs*. IJCAI-ECAI'18.
- Bin Li, Dong Hao, Dengji Zhao, Makoto Yokoo: *Diffusion and Auction on Graphs*. IJCAI'19.
- Wen Zhang, Dengji Zhao, Hanyu Chen: *Redistribution Mechanism on Networks*. AAMAS'20.
- Wen Zhang, Dengji Zhao, Yao Zhang: *Incentivize Diffusion with Fair Rewards*. ECAI'20.
- Bin Li, Dong Hao, Dengji Zhao: **Incentive-Compatible Diffusion Auctions**. IJCAI'20.

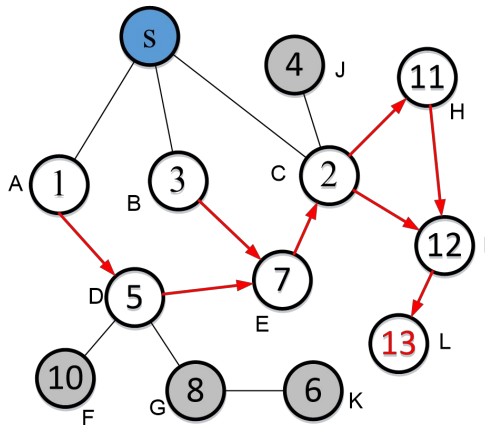
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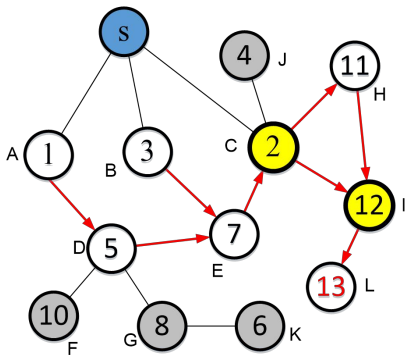
Information Diffusion Paths

An information diffusion path from the seller to node L:

$$s \rightarrow C \rightarrow I \rightarrow L$$


$$s \rightarrow C \rightarrow I \rightarrow L$$


Diffusion Critical Nodes



Definition

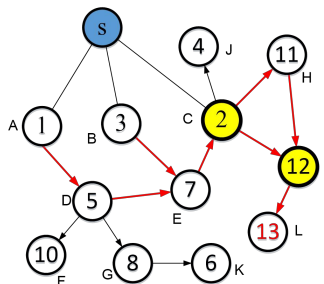
i is j 's **diffusion critical node** if **all** the information diffusion **paths** started from the seller s to j have to **pass** i .

- nodes **C** and **I** are L's only diffusion critical nodes.

Information Diffusion Mechanism [Li et al. AAAI'17]

The **payment** definition (second-price-like):

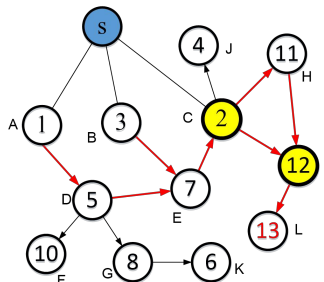
- If a buyer or one of her "*diffusion critical children*" gets the item, then the buyer pays **the highest bid of the others** (without the buyer's participation);
- otherwise, her payment is zero.



Information Diffusion Mechanism [Li et al. AAAI'17]

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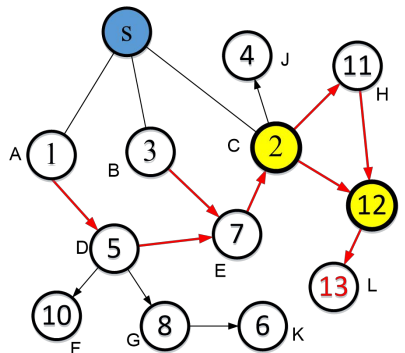
If the item is allocated to L , the payments of C , I and L are $10, 11, 12$ respectively .

- Identify the node i with the highest bid and the node's **diffusion critical node path** $P_{c_i} = (c_i^1, c_i^2, \dots, i)$.
- Give the item to the first node of P_{c_i} , the node pays to the seller and then decides to whether keep the item or pass it to the next node in P_{c_i} :
 - If **the payment of the next node is greater than the bid of the current node**, passes it to the next node and receives the payment from the next node; the next node makes a similar decision;
 - otherwise, keep the item.

The Information Diffusion Mechanism

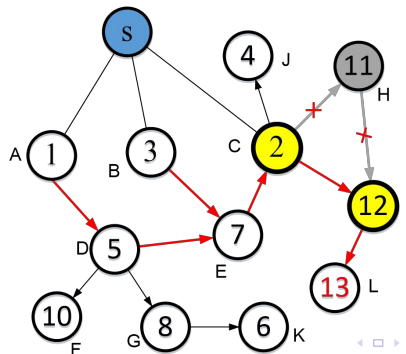
The **outcome** of the Information Diffusion Mechanism:

- the item is allocated to node I.
- node I pays 11 to C, C pays 10 to the seller.
- the **utilities** of I, C, the seller are 1, 1, 10.

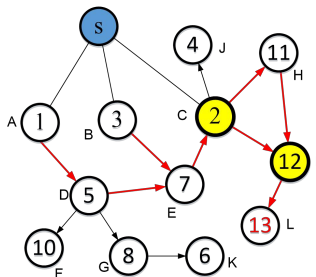


Why Buyers are Happy to Diffuse the Information?

- buyers receive the information earlier have higher priority to win the item (C chooses before I and I chooses before L).
- diffuse the information to more buyers will potentially increase their reward (if C does not invite H , her utility is 0).



Properties of the Information Diffusion Mechanism



- **Truthful**: report true valuation and diffuse the sale information to all her neighbours is a dominate strategy.
- **Individually Rational**: no buyer will receive a negative utility to join the mechanism.
- **Seller's Revenue Improved**: the seller's revenue is non-negative and is \geq that of the VCG without diffusion.

- Diffusion mechanisms for combinatorial exchanges
- Diffusion with costs and delays
- Network structure based revenue analysis
- Applications/implementations in the existing social networks
- Other mechanisms to further improve the revenue and/or the efficiency

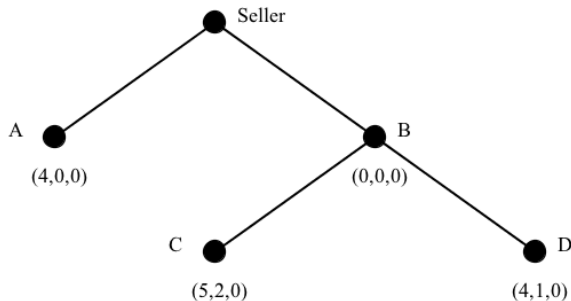
How to generalise the mechanism to combinatorial settings?

- A seller sells three units of one commodity, e.g. MacBook computers.
- Each buyer has a **diminishing marginal utility** for consuming the goods.

Diffusion Mechanisms for Combinatorial Exchanges

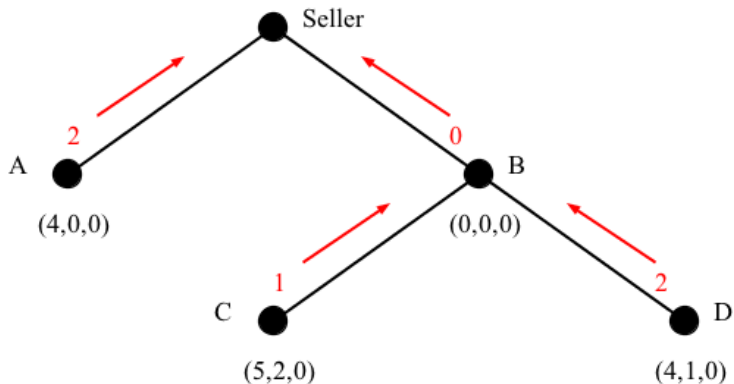
Consider the following simple setting:

- A seller sells three units of one commodity, e.g. MacBook computers.
- Each buyer has a **diminishing marginal utility** for consuming the goods.



Diffusion Mechanisms for Combinatorial Exchanges

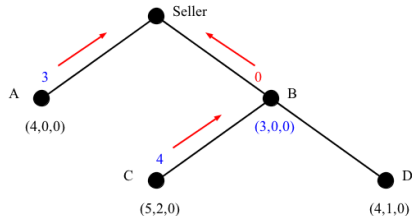
If we simply apply our information diffusion mechanism:



Extensive form game tree for the ultimatum game:

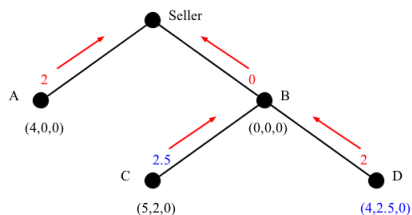
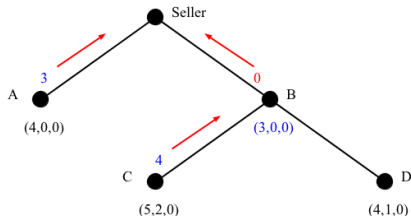
- Seller** (Root node) chooses between **A** and **B**.
 - If **Seller** chooses **A**, payoffs are $(4, 0, 0)$.
 - If **Seller** chooses **B**, the game proceeds to **Player B**.
- Player B** (Node after Seller chooses B) chooses between **C** and **D**.
 - If **Player B** chooses **C**, payoffs are $(5, 2, 0)$.
 - If **Player B** chooses **D**, payoffs are $(4, 1, 0)$.

Red arrows indicate the backward induction path: **Player B** chooses **C** (since $2 > 1$), and the **Seller** chooses **B** (since $5 > 4$).

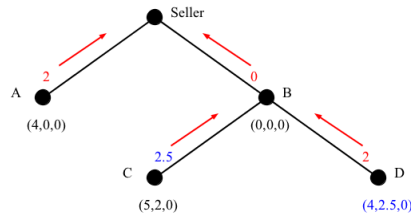
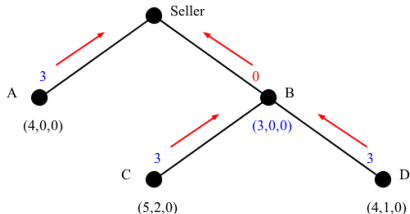


Diffusion Mechanisms for Combinatorial Exchanges

What if buyer D's valuation is $(4, 2.5, 0)$?



There is a very complex **Decision Making** at each node!!!



- The mechanism has to **maximise each node's utility** under truthful reporting.
- Each node's **payment** should **not depend on** her **valuation**.

- A node can influence her payments by controlling the items passed to her children.
- A node can influence the payments of her peers, without changing her own allocation and payments.
- This leads to a decision loop (very complex optimization) and may not be able to maximise everyone's utility.

A node **CANNOT** influence the payments she receives by controlling the items passed to her children.

Simplify the decision complexity we had:

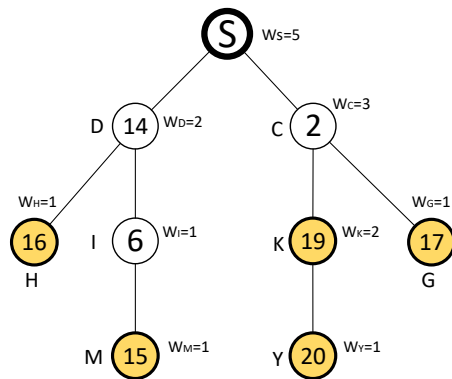
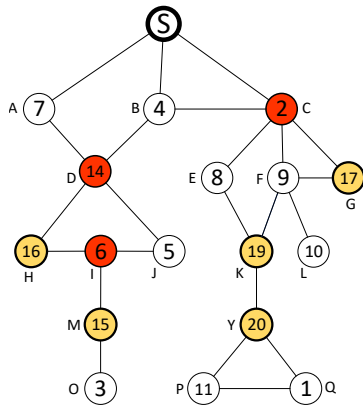
- A node can influence her received payments by controlling the items passed to her children.
- A node can influence the payments of her peers, without changing her own allocation and payments.
- This leads to a decision loop and may not be able to maximise everyone's utility.

- generalises the result from [Li et al. 2017];
- agent i 's reward/payment doesn't depends on how many of i 's children received items;
- agent pays to the seller directly rather than to their parent;

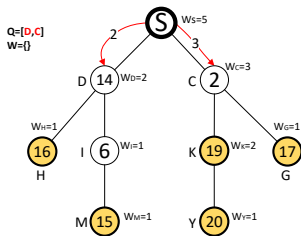
- A seller sells $\mathcal{K} \geq 1$ homogeneous items;
- each buyer requires at most one item (single-unit demand);
- the rest is the same as [Li et al. 2017].

The Generalised Diffusion Mechanism

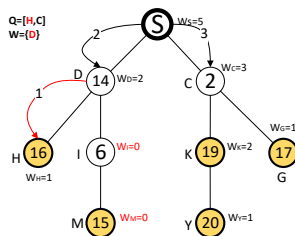
Consider $\mathcal{K} = 5$:



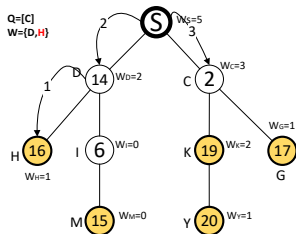
The Generalised Diffusion Mechanism



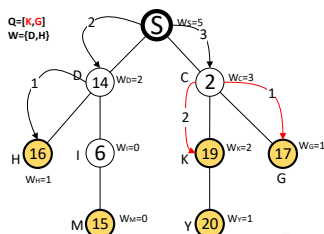
(a)



(b)

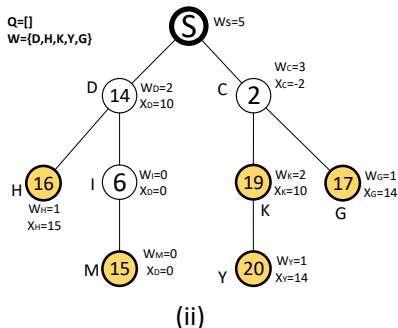
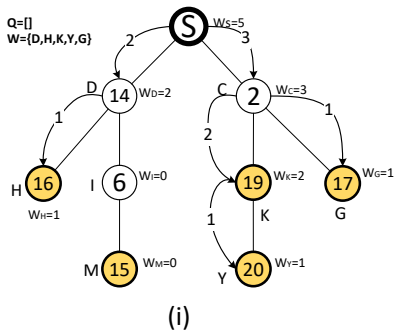


(c)



(d)

The Generalised Diffusion Mechanism



- 1 the top \mathcal{K} -highest valued children of i (and their parents, who are also i 's children) do not participate
- 2 and i wins under the efficient allocation with their absence

given that all i 's (critical) parents' allocation is determined and fixed.

The Payment Policy of the Generalisation

Node i 's utility is the social welfare difference of the efficient allocation **between**

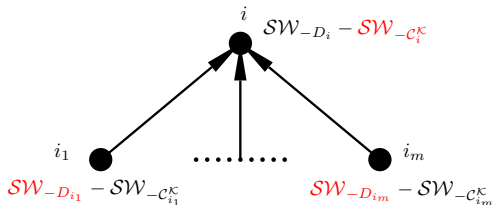
- 1 the top \mathcal{K} -highest valued children of i (and their parents, who are also i 's children) do not participate (**guarantees that i 's payment does not depend on how many items i 's children get**)
- 2 **and** i (and all her children) does not participate

Formally, i 's payment is:

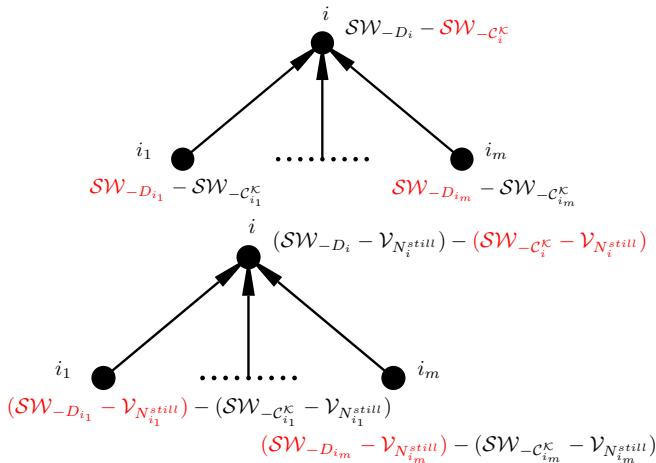
$$\begin{cases} \mathcal{SW}_{-D_i} - (\mathcal{SW}_{-C_i^\kappa} - v'_i) & \text{if } i \in W, \\ \mathcal{SW}_{-D_i} - \mathcal{SW}_{-C_i^\kappa} & \text{if } i \in \bigcup_{j \in W} \mathcal{P}_j(\theta') \setminus W, \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

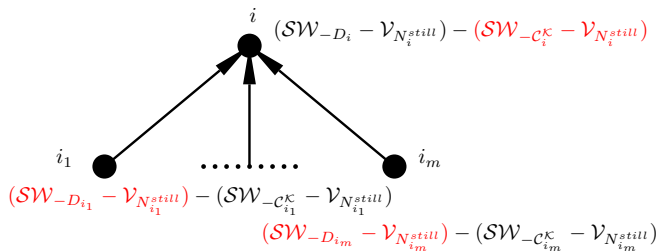
where W is the set of nodes each of whom received one item.

- **Truthful**: report true valuation and **diffuse the sale information to all her neighbours** is a dominate strategy for each node.
- **Individually Rational**: no node will receive a negative utility to join the mechanism.
- **Seller's Revenue Improved**: the seller's revenue is **non-negative** and is **$>$ that of the VCG without diffusion**.



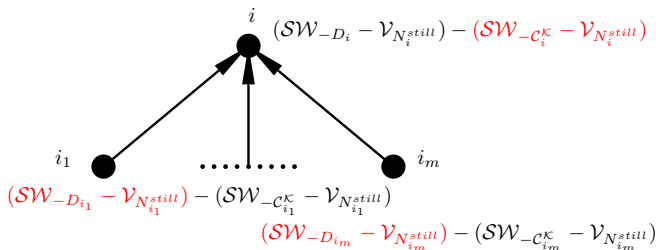
Guaranteed Revenue Improvement for the Seller





$$SW_{-C_i^K} - \nu_{N_i^{still}} \leq \sum_{j_l} (SW_{-D_{j_l}} - \nu_{N_{j_l}^{still}})$$

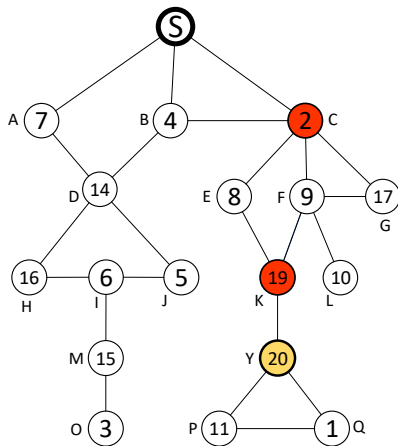
Guaranteed Revenue Improvement for the Seller



Theorem (Zhao et al. 2018)

The revenue of the generalised information diffusion mechanism is greater than or equal to $\mathcal{K} \times v_{\mathcal{K}+1}$, where $v_{\mathcal{K}+1}$ is the $(\mathcal{K} + 1)$ -th largest valuation report among r_s , assume that $|r_s| > \mathcal{K}$.

What happens when $\mathcal{K} = 1$?

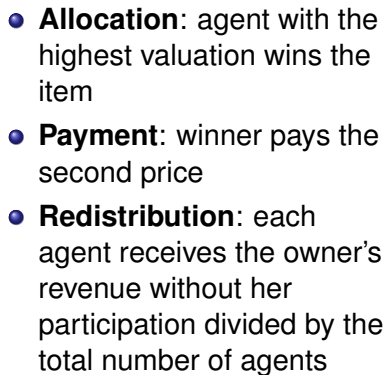


- According to the theorem of small-world networks, the chance for a node to be a cut-point in a well-connected network is **very low**.
- We hope to give rewards to all the related buyers not only the cut-points on the paths to the winner.

- redistribute rewards among critical ancestors based on IDM
- all critical ancestors have positive expected utilities
- seller's revenue is not reduced

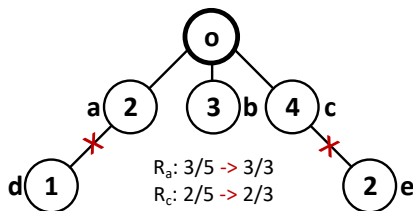
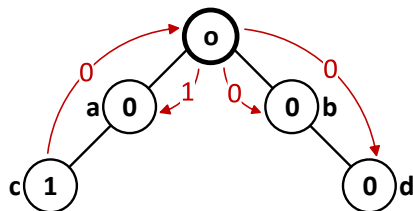
- to do the efficient resource allocation
- not for profit

- how to achieve a more efficient allocation?
- how to maintain wealth among agents?

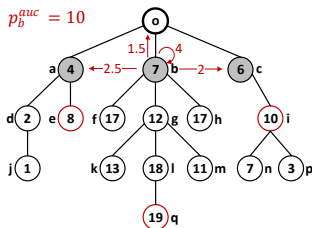
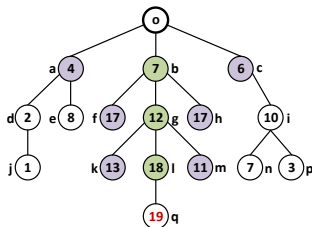


Why not Cavallo Mechanism on Networks?

- Run a deficit
- Disincentivize the diffusion



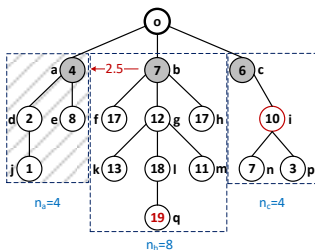
Redistribution Mechanism in Trees [Zhang et al. AAMAS'20]



For each ancestor:

- **Allocation:** keep the item if her valuation is greater than or equal to her payment
- **Payment:** the highest valuation without her participation
- **Redistribution:** a monotone increasing function to the number of descendants

Details for Redistribution



For agent a :

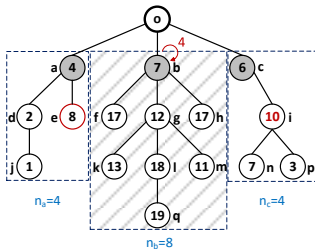
- Without her participation, b 's payment becomes $v_i = 10$

- $R_a = 10 * \frac{4}{4+8+4} = 2.5$

For agent b :

- Without her participation, c will be the new ancestor and her payment is $v_e = 8$

- $R_b = 8 * \frac{8}{4+8+4} = 4$



- **Individually Rational**: each agent will not have a negative utility as long as she reports her true valuation.
- **Truthful**: reporting true valuation and inviting all her neighbours is a dominate strategy.
- **Asymptotically Budget-balanced**: when the number of participants goes to infinity, almost all the money will be redistributed back to the participants.
- **No Deficit**: the resource owner will never pay some extra money for the allocation.

- characterize a **sufficient and necessary** condition for all incentive-compatible and individually rational diffusion auctions.
- propose a class of natural monotonic allocation policies with optimal payment policy that **maximizes the seller's revenue**.

- A diffusion auction (π, x) is incentive-compatible and individually rational if and only if for all type profile \mathbf{t} and all i , $P1 - P5$ are satisfied, where

- $P1 : \pi$ is value-monotonic,
- $P2 : \tilde{x}_i$ and \bar{x}_i are bid-independent,
- $P3 : \tilde{x}_i(r_i) - \bar{x}_i(r_i) = v_i^*(r_i),$
- $P4 : \tilde{x}_i$ and \bar{x}_i are diffusion-monotonic,
- $P5 : \bar{x}_i(\emptyset) \leq 0.$

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Outline

Mechanism Design Review

- The History
- Second Price Auction (VCG)

Diffusion Mechanism Design

- Resource Allocation
- **Task Allocation**
- Information Propagation

- Wen Zhang, Yao Zhang, Dengji Zhao: *Collaborative Data Acquisition*. AAMAS'20.
- Yao Zhang, Xiuzhen Zhang, Dengji Zhao: *Sybil-proof Answer Querying Mechanism*. IJCAI'20.

- 1 task requires more participants' contribution (**collaboration**)
- 2 but participants' contribution may conflict with each other (**competition**)

- a requester is collecting data from the crowd
- more participants gives richer dataset
- participants' contribution depends on the quality of their provided data
- if two participants offer the same data, how to calculate their contribution?

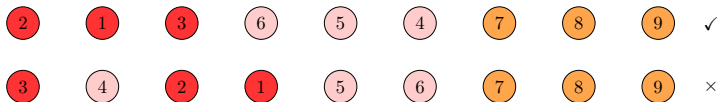
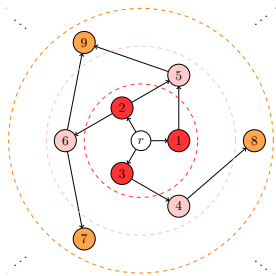
- a requester is collecting data from the crowd
- more participants gives richer dataset
- participants' contribution depends on the quality of their provided data
- if two participants offer the same data, how to calculate their contribution?

Shapley Value?

- two participants offer the same data will share the same Shapley value
 - the Shapley value is doubled if one of them didn't participate

Solution: Layered Shapley Value

- participants are layered
- the Shapley value is calculated for each lower layer first
- the calculation for higher layer assumes that lower layers' participants are always in the coalition



$$\hat{\phi}_i = \sum_{S \subseteq L_i - \{i\}} \frac{|S|!(|L_i| - |S| - 1)!}{|L_i|!} \cdot \left(v \left(D'_{L_{i-1}^* \cup S \cup \{i\}} \right) - v \left(D'_{L_{i-1}^* \cup S} \right) \right)$$

Properties:

- participants are incentivized to invite more participants (new participants do not compete with them)
- the requester does not need to pay for redundant data

Sybil-proof Answer Querying [Zhang et al. IJCAI'20]

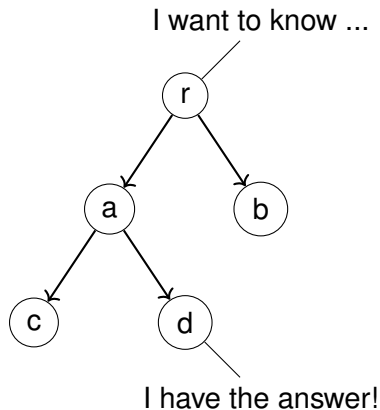


Figure: Query via Network

- Online networks has offered many opportunities for people to collaborate remotely in real time, e.g. P2P file sharing and Q&A platforms.
- Utilizing the social connections, we can enhance the power of answer querying via networks, e.g. DARPA Red Balloon Challenge.

- **Fact:** An SIR path mechanism cannot be both SP and CP.
- What if relax SIR to IR?
- **Theorem:** A path mechanism is IR, SP and CP if and only if it is a two-headed mechanism.

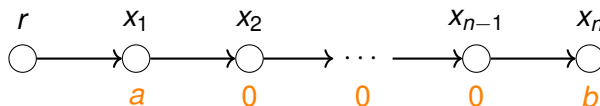


Figure: The rewards distributed by a two-headed mechanism

Sybil-proof Answer Querying

- What if relax CP to λ -CP?
- **New Idea:** Double Geometric Mechanism

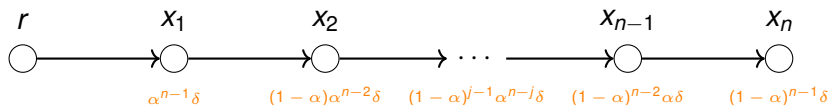


Figure: The rewards distributed by a double geometric mechanism

- **Characterization:** Under mild condition, the properties of IC, SIR, BC, SP, 2-CP and ρ -SS determines a DGM.

- 1 Mechanism Design Review
 - The History
 - Second Price Auction (VCG)
- 2 Diffusion Mechanism Design
 - Resource Allocation
 - Task Allocation
 - Information Propagation

- Haomin Shi, Yao Zhang, Zilin Si, Letong Wang, Dengji Zhao: *Maximal Information Propagation with Budgets*. ECAI'20.

- The sponsor s wants to propagate some information to the social network modelled as a directed acyclic graph $G = (N, E)$.
- The sponsor holds a fixed budget B , which is prepared as agents' rewards.

Challenge

How to find a reward scheme that is propagation incentive compatible and budget balanced?

Maximal Information Propagation with Budgets

● Budget Distribution Scheme

Budget Distribution Scheme

INPUT: the graph G and the budget B .

1. Using breadth first search to compute the layer sets $L_1, L_2, \dots, L_{l_{\max}}$ and $L_{l_{\max}+1}$.
2. For each $i \in L_1$, set $b'_i = B/|L_1|$.
3. For each l in $\{1, \dots, l_{\max}\}$
 - (a) For each $i \in L_l$ compute A_i according to its propagation.
 - (b) Let $B_l = (1 - \beta) \sum_{i \in L_l} b'_i + \beta \sum_{i \in L_l} A_i b'_i$ and $B'_{l+1} = \sum_{i \in L_l} b'_i - B_l$.
 - (c) Distribute B_l to agents in L_l , i.e., for agent i in L_l , she gets r_i as reward.
 - (d) Distribute B'_{l+1} to agents in L_{l+1} , i.e., for agent j in L_{l+1} , she gets b'_j as current reward.

OUTPUT: the reward vector \mathbf{r} .

- Parameterize the distribution between 2 layers;
- Split the origin amount in the upper layer into 2 parts;
- The budget distribution scheme is IR and WBB.

Maximal Information Propagation with Budgets

- Budget Distribution Scheme Instance

Distribution Algorithm between Two Adjacent Layers

INPUT: the graph G and b'_i for each $i \in L_1$.

1. For each agent $i \in L_t$, set $r_i = i.V_b + i.V_h$, initialize $i.V_b = b'_i$ and $i.V_h = 0$.
2. For each agent $j \in L_{t+1}$, initialize $b'_j = 0$.
3. For each agent $j \in L_{t+1}$
 - (a) Let P be the set of agents in L_t who propagate information to j .
 - (b) For each agent $i' \in P$:
 - For each agent $i \in L_t \setminus \{i'\}$, set

$$i', V_h \leftarrow i', V_h + \alpha\beta \cdot i, V_b$$

$$b'_i \leftarrow b'_i + \alpha(1 - \beta) \cdot i.V_b$$

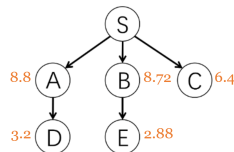
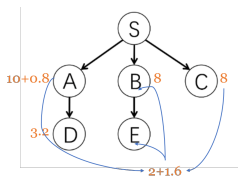
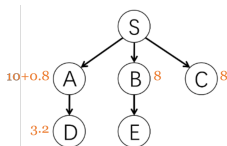
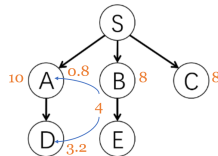
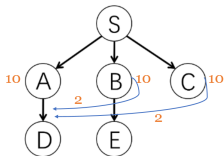
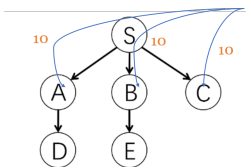
$$i.V_b \leftarrow i.V_b - \alpha \cdot i.V_b$$

OUTPUT: r_i for each agent $i \in L_l$ and b'_j for each agent $j \in L_{l+1}$.

- Incentivize propagation based on competition in the same level;
- Agents will get extra reward for their invitation from their competitors;
- This instance is IR, BB, and PIC.

Maximal Information Propagation Example

- Example: Incentives from Peer Pressure



- Diffusion Mechanism for Resource Allocation (competitive environment)
 - for selling single and multiple items
- Diffusion Mechanism for Task Allocation (both competitive and collaborative)
 - crowdsourcing, sybil-proof, execution uncertainty
- Diffusion Mechanism for Information Propagation
 - information propagation with budgets

<http://dengji-zhao.net/ijcai19.html>