School of Law 30th Anniversary Lecture: Big Data and Personalized Law

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The School of Law held a 30th Anniversary Lecture in the evening of 8 November 2017. Around 100 participants, comprising students, alumni, teachers and external legal practitioners attended the talk with the topic “Big Data and Personalized Law” given by Professor Omri Ben-Shahar, the Leo & Eileen Herzel Professor of Law at the University of Chicago Law School, and the Kearny Director of the Coase-Sandor Institute for Law and Economics.

The event was kicked off by the speech of the Dean of School of Law Professor Geraint Howells. He welcomed all the participants and introduced Professor Ben-Shahar. The School of Law was honoured to have such a great scholar to deliver a great talk. This event was co-organized with Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong and School of Accounting and Finance, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
Professor Ben-Shahar illustrated that the early Big Data identified patterns of behavior that could predict future behavior. For example, credit score predicts delinquency and insurance risk. Mature Big Data identifies regularities in the personalities of individuals; personality in turn predicts future behavior.

With the rise of Big Data, the costs associated with creating and administering personalized legal rules tailored to specific individuals or circumstances have decreased significantly. Professor Ben-Shahar pointed out that rules like standards of care in tort law; default and mandatory rules in contract law; disclosure mandates; sentencing rules; tax laws; and legal procedures — now face the possibility of becoming personalized in nature.
After Professor Ben-Shahar’s talk, the floor had an animated discussion. At last, on behalf of the School of Law, Professor Howells presented a souvenir to thank him for his inspiring talk.