Why is global success so unpredictable? Making sense of influence, social contagion, marketing, and stories.

Principles of Complex Systems

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Why is global success so unpredictable?

Superstars
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References

Sealie & Lambie Productions
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The most famous painting in the world:
The dismal predictive powers of editors . . . .

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Twelve . . .
The completely unpredicted fall of Eastern Europe:

We understand bushfire stories:

1. Sparks start fires.
2. System properties control a fire’s spread.
3. But we make two mistakes about Social Fires...
How we want to understand:

‘Tattooed Guy’ Was Pivotal in Armstrong Case [nytimes] (TypeDef)

“... Leogrande’s doping sparked a series of events ...”
Why is global success so unpredictable?

Reason 1—We are Homo Narrativus:

A WEIGHTED RANDOM NUMBER GENERATOR JUST PRODUCED A NEW BATCH OF NUMBERS.

LET'S USE THEM TO BUILD NARRATIVES!

ALL SPORTS COMMENTARY

http://xkcd.com/904/
Reason 2—“We are all individuals”: Why is global success so unpredictable?

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Reason 3—We are spectacular imitators:

BBC/David Attenborough.
Mistake 1:  
Success is due to intrinsic properties  

See “Becoming Mona Lisa” by David Sassoon
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Exp 1— weak social

Exp. 2—strong social

Resolving the paradox:

Increased social awareness:
Stronger inequality + Less predictability.
Payola/Deceptive advertising hurts us all:

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Mistake 2: Seeing success is ‘due to social’ and wanting to say ‘all your interactions are belong to us’
The hypodermic model of influence:
The two step model of influence: \[1\]
The network model of influence:

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The network model of influence:

How superspreading works:
Many interconnected, average, trusting people must benefit from both receiving and sharing a message far from its source.

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Things that spread quickly:

+ News ...
The Dark Social Web

Dark Social: We Have the Whole History of the Web Wrong (_mirror) [The Atlantic]
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A completely made up pie chart:

- Real
- Dark
- Social
- Measurable
- Web
- Stuff
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