Fame and fate: Why is global success so unpredictable?

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Principles of Complex Systems, Vols. 1 & 2 CSYS/MATH 300 and 303, 2021-2022 | @pocsvox

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Computational Story Lab | Vermont Complex Systems Center Vermont Advanced Computing Core | University of Vermont























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Outline

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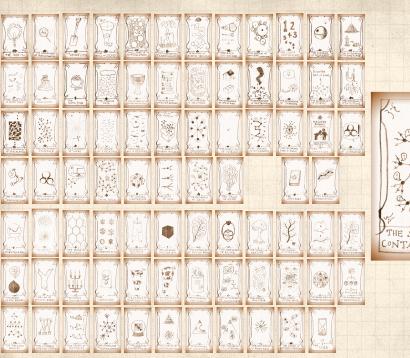
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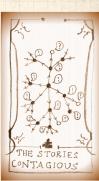
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The most famous painting in the world:



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The dismal predictive powers of editors

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References















Twelve ...

The completely unpredicted fall of Eastern Europe:



Timur Kuran: [3] "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989"

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We understand bushfire stories:

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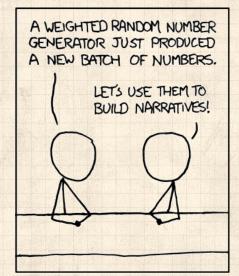
- 1. Sparks start fires.
- 2. System properties control a fire's spread.
- 3. But we make two mistakes about Social Fires...







Reason 1—We are Homo Narrativus.



ALL SPORTS COMMENTARY

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Reason 2—"We are all individuals."

Archival footage:

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Individual narratives are not enough to understand distributed, networked minds.





Reason 3—We are spectacular imitators.

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BBC/David Attenborough.





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Mistake 1: Success is due to intrinsic properties

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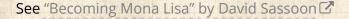
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48 songs 30k participants

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Exp 1— weak social

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Exp. 2—strong social





"An experimental study of inequality and unpredictability in an artificial cultural market"

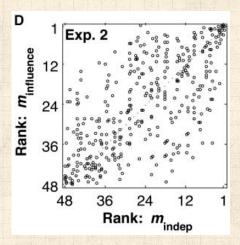
Salganik, Dodds, and Watts, Science, **311**, 854–856, 2006. [4]







Resolving the paradox:



Increased social awareness leads to Stronger inequality + Less predictability. Pocs @pocsvox

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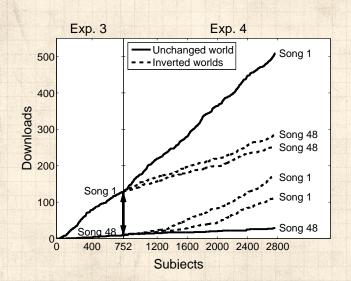
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Payola/Deceptive advertising hurts us all:



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Mistake 2:

Seeing success is 'due to social' and wanting to say 'all your interactions are belong to us'



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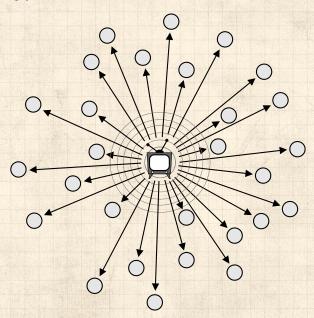






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The hypodermic model of influence:



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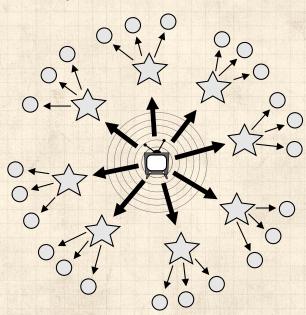






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The two step model of influence: [2]



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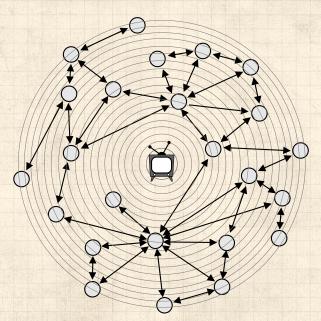
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The network model of influence:



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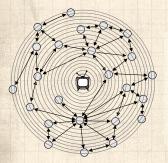






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The network model of influence:



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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"Influentials, Networks, and Public Opinion Formation"

Watts and Dodds, J. Consum. Res., **34**, 441–458, 2007. [5]







Things that spread quickly:



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+ News ...

buzzfeed.com <a>□:









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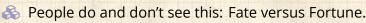


"The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge" a, 2 by Berger and Luckmann (1991). [1]

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Reality is socially constructed . to some hard-to-measure degree.

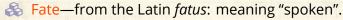








Etymological clarity:



Fate is talk that has been done. "It is written", fore-tell, pre-dict.

Destiny is probablistic.

Fame—from the Latin fāma: meaning "to talk."

Fame is inherently the social discussion about the thing, not the thing itself.

Renown :: Repeatedly named, talked about. Old French renon, from re- + non ("name").

Réclame . "Clamo"—Proto-Indo-European: "to shout" (again). Connected to "lowing".

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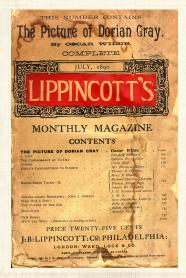
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Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray



"There is only one thing in the world

worse than being talked about,

and that is

not being talked about."

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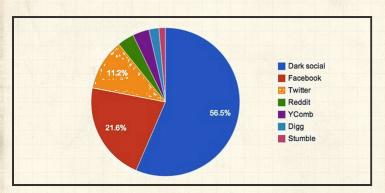






Spreading in the social wild:

The Dark Social Web



"The only real way to optimize for social spread is in the nature of the content itself. There's no way to game email or people's instant messages. There's no power users you can contact. There's no algorithms to understand. This is pure social, uncut. [sic]"

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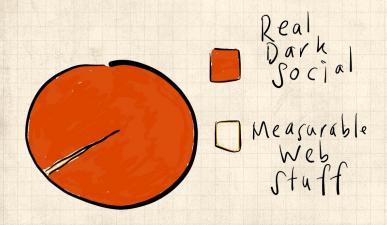
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A completely made up pie chart:



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How to make things spread (maybe):

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Shareworthy Content is King:

- 1. Build entities/messages/stories that have intrinsic and social value out in the Social Wild.
- 2. Advertise but lay off the social interactions.
- 3. Just keep trying.







References I

[1] P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann.
The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.
Penguin UK, 1991.

[2] E. Katz and P. F. Lazarsfeld. Personal Influence. The Free Press, New York, 1955.

[3] T. Kuran.

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World Politics, 44:7–48, 1991. pdf

[4] M. J. Salganik, P. S. Dodds, and D. J. Watts. An experimental study of inequality and unpredictability in an artificial cultural market. <u>Science</u>, 311:854–856, 2006. pdf PoCS @pocsvox

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