

A New Theory of Serendipity: Nature, Emergence and Mechanism

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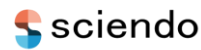
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Overview



The book explores the nature, underlying causes, and the information processing mechanism of serendipity. It proposes that natural or social survival demands drive serendipity, and serendipity is conditional on the environment and the mindset, on both individual and collective levels. From Darwin's evolution theory to Sun Tzu's war tactics, major innovations throughout human history are unified by this key concept. In the rapidly changing world, information is abundant but rather chaotic. The adaptive power of serendipity allows people to notice treasures within this wild sea, but only for those who understand how it works. To increase the probability of encountering and attaining serendipity, one should employ the mindsponge mechanism and the 3D process of creativity, for without these frameworks, serendipity is truly an elusive target. The book also discusses methods to build environments and cultures rich in navigational and useful information to maximize the chance of finding and capitalizing on serendipity. As a skill, serendipity has a resemblance to how kingfishers observe and hunt their prey.



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Preface



Like many curious people, I have long had questions about human creativity, innovativeness, capabilities of creating useful things in life, and sustainability as the most successful animal on this planet we call home.

I cannot say that I have all the answers, but some have been reached along the journey of studying this remarkable capacity of humankind. And this book intends to provide one such answer, specifically about serendipity and its conditions, much linked to the fight for the survival of humankind. Part of the answer arrived when Professor Ngô Bảo Châu – the Vietnamese French mathematician and Fields medalist, currently working at the University of Chicago and serving as Scientific Director of VIASM – told me the critically important period of his research path right before his great accomplishment (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngô_Bảo_Châu) in the 2019 Summer.

The book contains much of my thinking throughout the years of researching and contributions from some affiliates, who serve as contributing authors in several chapters. The book has the appearance of an edited volume. Nonetheless, contribution chapters are not separate; they together form only one answer.

I will show in this book that serendipity is a capacity, first and foremost useful for having creative performance. That capacity is conditional on the environment, the preparatory exercises, and the individual capability of managing information arriving at the individual. In light of this, serendipity is not a myth and is no longer the *thing* solely reserved for geniuses, as we usually think. Everybody can tap this resource for good. As people working in interdisciplinary social

research, we – the editor and contributing authors – have frequently employed this capacity to complete many of our research works; some of them had been thought of as impossible or unthinkable. That says, we have genuine trust in its value and now want to share it with the readers.

I hope that the book is useful and fun, and thank you for spending your time reading it.

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