

Review of: "Serendipity and inherent non-linear thinking can help address the climate and environmental conundrums"

Hallam Stevens¹

¹ James Cook University of North Queensland

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This article contains some interesting examples of “nature-based” discoveries that are related to climate change. What they seem to show, however, is how discoveries and inventions arise in response to specific social, political, and economic circumstances. This seems to me a bit like the opposite of serendipity. What is most important is not chance or luck, but rather specific context and circumstances that lead to the sparking of an idea or insight. Arguably, a focus on serendipity, then, actually distracts us from the most important things we should be paying attention to (namely: context).

I wonder too how AI really fits in here? AI is a machine, following rules and, in the case of LLMs, synthesising information. This might lead to serendipitous outcomes, but this kind of machine-driven rule-following may be just as likely to lead to more of the same, railroading us into existing and repetitive patterns of thinking.