Exploring the Context of Pattern Languages: A dialogue on the world around Christopher Alexander

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Abstract:

In advance of Purplsoc 2017, participants were invited to participate in a "Reading Tour" on The Nature of Order. *In that work, and in "Empirical Findings from The Nature of Order", a continuing thread in system theory and the systems sciences is exhibited. David Bohm's writing on complex adaptive systems are explicitly cited.*

A workshop during the Purplsoc meeting invites participants to explore some of the foundational philosophical directions that might be considered in progressing generative pattern languages.

Christopher Alexander's earlier training was in physics and mathematics, and his work was sympathetic to evolutionary approaches to biology. The systems sciences have their roots in general systems theory in the 1960s, and have progressed into the 21st century.

To encourage discussion, a starter set of 7 ideas is formed as a dialectic. The pairs are:

Problem-seeking (architectural programming, defining issues)	1	Problem-solving (design activity with science and creativity)
Wicked problems (argumentative planning, no stopping rule, type 4 errors)	2	Solution to a problem in context (parts + spatial relations between [e.g. forces])
Multiple perspectives inquiry (systems approach: politics, morality, religion, aesthetics)	3	Culture unselfconscious-selfconscious (repeating familiar pattern ↔ innovation, modifications)
Normative methods, social organization (agile development, liberating voices, group process)	4	Descriptive methods, physical space (phenomenon of life-wholeness, 15 geometric invariants)
Ecological quality outside/between (affordances, ecological epistemology)	5	Objective quality inside (origins of nature, unfolding, progressive differentiation)
Resilience, collapse, transformation (hierarchy, pacing layers: scales larger-slower smaller-faster)	6	Order, wholeness-preserving/disrupting (holistic, sequential processes → effective unfolding)
Interactive value constellation (coproduction of offerings: product, service, relationship)	7	Feeling of connectedness, living structure (test which induces wholeness + resembles inner self)

These 7 pairs are to be outlined during the workshop, as an introduction to prime the conversation.

The 2-hour collaboration will be captured as digital audio, and group findings will be subsequently summarized after the conference, on a blog.

References

Alexander, C. (2003, May). *New Concepts In Complexity Theory: A Scientific Introduction to the Concepts in the Nature of Order*. Retrieved from http://www.natureoforder.com/library-of-articles.htm

About the author:

David ING is a doctoral candidate in Industrial Engineering at the Aalto University School of Science. He is a trustee and past-president of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (2011-2012). In 2012, he graduated from a 28-year career in IBM Canada. He resides in Toronto, Canada, and can readily be found on the Internet at http://coevolving.com.