C-17: Why evolutionary architecture cannot be alive

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After the reconstruction of the modern metaphor (as say Bauhaus, Le Corbusier etc.) architecture led the post-modernist *avant-grade* that made a strong impact in the social sciences and humanities. With the ensuing collapse of certainty in disciplines that this entailed, There is now an attempt to revive

epistemological certainty in architecture. One notable attempt was an important exhibition and book this year under the auspices of the Architectural Association (Britain) AA (B). This metaphor drawing partly on current literature on general evolution and Artificial Life discourse, attempts to create a new metaphor. This paper examines its theoretical validity.

Directly paraphrasing the author's work on general evolution. John Frazer (and the exhibition catalogue) defines an evolutionary architecture as having a thermodynamically open relationship with the environment, having stability with the latter through negative feedback, change through positive feedback, conserving information, having autopeoisis, autocatalysis and emergent behaviour, adjusting to the socio- economic system and growing with the environment, in a dynamic process not of being but of becoming, much like a living organism. The theoretical literature on these factors are examined, whether in fact the concept of 'living' can be applied to the architectures described.

The use of the evolutionary approach beyond that of a metaphor is misleading in the examples cited by the author. The concept of evolving technologies have been posited by recent writers on the relationship of technology to the environment, where the technology takes particular forms to fit into a human cultural ecology. The evolutionary architecture in the manner described by the AA (B) could approach these concepts. But these evolving technologies do not have thermodynamic properties of their own that approach those of living lineages. So the other aspects adduced such as autopeosis and autocatalysis cannot be applied to such systems. Further, a requirement of lineages in current discourses on general evolutionary thinking is the need for semeiotic of evolution (following the work of Conrad Lorenze and Riedel for example). These characteristics are notably absent in the AA (B) evolutionary concepts. The idea of architecture as a living organism may be however posited if highly intelligent autonomous artefacts are used in its construction, the 'third' evolutionary lineage of the present author. But these developments are not sufficiently foreseen in the AA (B) formulation.

An evolutionary architecture in the sense of an evolutionary technology is possible. But an evolutionary architecture reminiscent of Artificial Life formulation would require much more sophistication than the present AA(B) concepts.