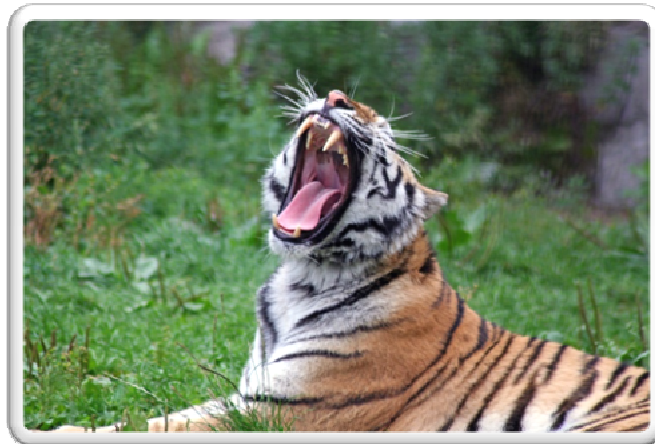


2 Pages on Patterns



Introduction

Throughout the streets, people are briskly walking with a determined look on their faces; towards targets that must not be missed, deadlines that desperately need to be met. The people do not need to look where they are going, for they have been there many times before. They are all prisoners of habit; of following existing patterns.

Infrastructural Patterns

The Two Pages Series always uses the same design and composition. In most of the articles, I use a similar style and tone. All articles end with “Thank you for reading”. I also follow the same steps for writing, rewriting, and publishing. It’s a pattern that works well for me; I have learned from my mistakes and created an efficient way of doing it. It lets you recognize me and my writing.

Most cities have highways leading to them. They have subways that help you get around town, and there are sidewalks where people can safely get from one place to another. This pattern of organization emerges in all cities around the world. Few people wonder **why** there are highways instead of smaller roads. But they do complain about traffic jams during rush hour (could they be avoided? Could you travel earlier?). They sit there – frustrated – every day. About the same time. Always thinking the same thing. “Why doesn’t somebody *do* anything?”

Both of these are examples of *infrastructural patterns* (not including the whining – that’s a *social pattern*). Just like an ant hill will rise in the same way around the world, so will we perform many tasks – optimized in ways that minimize conscious efforts and maximizes the likelihood of success; getting to work, writing an article.

Social Patterns

When we interact with other people, even more patterns are used; in fact, they are often required in order to survive. If you don’t follow the patterns, you will not be accepted in society. A conversation always starts with a

greeting; you don't ask someone you just met to marry you; it's not acceptable to hit someone because you're angry; you don't go out naked. These are social protocols, but they are also *social patterns*.

Many times we don't even think about social patterns. But they can be very harmful. For example, patterns emerging from rivalry between groups (such as gangs) are similar all over the world; they are violent and dangerous. Some patterns, on the other hand, give a context in which most people are able to operate. You become friends with someone. Your family always comes first. **This is not just instinct, and it's not just a social protocol.** It's a pattern that has evolved for thousands of years. And it's constantly changing.

Work Patterns

In the workplace, patterns can be found in almost every corner. Management principles, organization hierarchies, group dynamics, marketing efforts. Sure, these are driven by **processes, knowledge** and **experience** – but they also follow very similar patterns. Take, for example, the entrepreneur who brings her business to great success. As the business grows, the proud founder helplessly tries to retain control of what happens to the company, leading to micro-management, increased administration, less customer value. Profitability goes down. What's wrong? Not much, except that the company follows the most common pattern for fast-growing entrepreneur-like businesses.

Many other work patterns exist for how we work; can you think of some?

Design Patterns

You knew this was coming. Software engineers have long known about the great power of *design patterns*; **generic recipes for success**. Described on a higher level than any implementation, design patterns capture the essence of good design, enabling you to clone success in similar scenarios. Software design patterns were inspired by architecture, and that's another good example of patterns; but also of boring, monotonous, mind-numbing repetition. Where's the novelty, where did creativity go? That's true for both buildings and software.

Breaking Out

Ok, there's been a lot of talk and no conclusions. Contrasted against this carpet of pattern-oriented models of humanity standing in a well-ordered line are the innovators. The thinkers. Those who are not afraid to go beyond the ordinary and the expected. They *have* to exist; without them there could be no evolution of new patterns.

I encourage you to break free from some learned patterns in life. Don't get me wrong; patterns are good, but they should be applied consciously, not with an ant's inherited instinct to follow an alluring trail of hormones. This is where the human mind must rise above and go beyond – by looking **outside** of the environment in which we sometimes blindly walk the paths determined by our genetic codes. Have you noticed how the work week just flies by? **It's because your brain doesn't have to register existing patterns.** To me, that's **not** living life to the fullest.

Breaking out – to me that means resisting my existing patterns and habits, and creating new ones. Better ones. It's the essence of evolution, right in the middle of a world of followers. It is life.

Will you break out with me?

Bjorn Karlsson