



A BOUNDED EPISTEMOLOGY OF ARTIFICIAL RELATIONAL CONFIGURATION

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Are information architectures real? Can we have knowledge of them? And what does this knowledge reveal?

Information architectures (IA) are stabilised formations of relational configuration within artificial assemblages, which condition action and consequence and which persist across frame-scales. As socially operative stabilised configurations, IA are real insofar as they exert consequence.

If artificial assemblages structure social life, and those assemblages stabilise as formations, then studying their configurations reveals how meaning holds, and therefore reveals how social reality is structured.

The claim is not of a universal ontology, nor that IA replaces structural realism. IA does not claim to explain natural relational structure, nor does IA claim that language alone creates reality.

Information architecture, as articulated in Information Architecture Design (IAD), claims neither total access to social reality nor jurisdiction over reality as such. Its epistemic scope is bounded. That boundary is artificial relational configuration.

Human social reality is structured by meaning. However, IAD does not claim to account for all meaning, nor for the totality of causation, nor for metaphysical ontology. It claims something more specific and more defensible: that human-made artefacts and artificial assemblages exhibit structured relational configurations through which meaning is composed, stabilised, and made operative.

This claim rests on a modest but firm premise: relations are structurally intelligible. Where relations are intelligible, they may be modelled. Where they are modelled descriptively, they may be examined. Where they are composed intentionally, they may be articulated and transformed. In both cases, what is known is not “reality in itself,” but the configuration of relations internal to artificial things and the formations they participate in.

The epistemic boundary of IA therefore lies at the domain of the artificial: that which is human-made. Artificial artefacts and assemblages are not meaning-neutral substrates awaiting interpretation; they are structured configurations of relation that condition use, understanding, and consequence. Because these configurations persist across time and frame-scale, they may be studied as formations. Because they are composed through acts of making, they may be treated as objects of design-theoretic inquiry.

This boundedness is crucial. IA does not claim jurisdiction over quantum ontology, biological substrate, or metaphysical structure as such. It does not reduce reality to information, nor information to technical systems. Its scope begins and ends with artificial relational configuration: the structured

arrangements introduced, modified, or sustained through human making. Where such configurations stabilise, they become formations; where formations persist, they exert consequence; and where consequence occurs, structured meaning becomes an object of inquiry.

Within this boundary, IA can legitimately claim two things. First, that information architectures are real in the modest but robust sense that they are structured configurations internal to artificial things and observable in their persistence and consequence. Second, that knowledge of such configurations provides knowledge about the way meaning holds in social reality. Not exhaustively, but specifically, at the level of formation and frame-scale propagation.

The epistemology of IA is therefore neither metaphysical realism nor constructivist relativism. It is a bounded realism of the artificial. It holds that artificial relational configurations are intelligible, modelable, composable, and stabilisable, and that the study of these configurations constitutes a coherent domain of inquiry.

STRUCTURAL COMMITMENTS

The bounded epistemology of artificial relational configuration rests on the following structural commitments:

ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARY

The domain of IA is limited to human-made artefacts and artificial assemblages.

RELATIONAL INTELLIGIBILITY

Relations within artificial configurations are structurally intelligible and therefore modelable.

DESCRIPTIVE AND COMPOSITIONAL MODELLING

Relations may be modelled descriptively (examined as they are) or compositionally (intentionally articulated through making).

INTERNAL COMPOSITION

Artificial configurations manifest internal meaning through Structural Logic and Semantic Formation.

TRANSCENDENCE

Internal configuration becomes externally operative in use.

FORMATION

Where external operativity stabilises across time and frame-scale, formation occurs.

CONTRIVED ONTOLOGY

Formation manifests along a scale from minimal to maximal stabilisation and consequence.

LIMINAL CONTINGENCY

Stabilisation is contingent; artificial configurations enter a meaning-full but transformable reality.

NORMATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

IAD names the explicit and reflective engagement with relational configuration and its ontological consequence.

These commitments collectively define the epistemic scope of IA without extending jurisdiction beyond the artificial domain.

