

Notes as Code

Notes are great. Whether they are box-drawings, bullet-lists, wiki-like linked pages, they help us increase and manage our understanding of something.

The problem seems that with notes we are not taking advantage of the “executability” property that on the other hand exists for code; where we can pivot what we just wrote against other things and slowly & correctly find a better understanding.

Of course code falls short in the opposite direction: too cryptic to understand; too unforgiving for quick thinking.

Unless you’ve gone through the process of writing code it’s impossible to understand just how pedantic and explicit you need to be when building software versus, say, giving your human colleagues instructions.

- On one hand there is the frustration of writing code that requires one to think of all the pedantic details. This frustration is not so apparent in notes which are much freer from structure and require less rules. From this point of view notes seem to be more *malleable* than code.
- On the other hand there is the frustration of writing notes without leveraging the computing power available to us. Can computing help us understand things better? Are new sentences and phrases conflicting with other things that were already stated?

Here I am not trying to provide a solution but rather to question our current ways: can notes and code find a new middle-ground medium?

Something that is both useful for thinking and for telling the computer what to do.

– Luca Matteis, June 2020