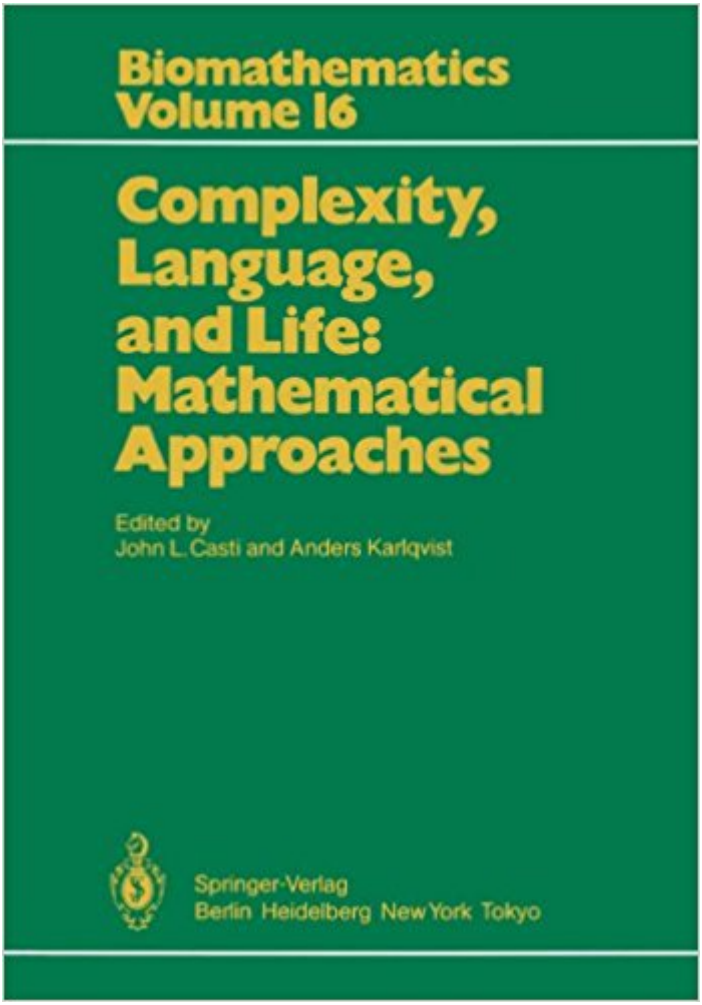
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Synopsis

In May 1984 the Swedish Council for Scientific Research convened a small group of investigators at the scientific research station at Abisko, Sweden, for the purpose of examining various conceptual and mathematical views of the evolution of complex systems. The stated theme of the meeting was deliberately kept vague, with only the purpose of discussing alternative mathematically based approaches to the modeling of evolving processes being given as a guideline to the participants. In order to limit the scope to some degree, it was decided to emphasize living rather than nonliving processes and to invite participants from a range of disciplinary specialities spanning the spectrum from pure and applied mathematics to geography and analytic philosophy. The results of the meeting were quite extraordinary; while there was no intent to focus the papers and discussion into predefined channels, an immediate self-organizing effect took place and the deliberations quickly oriented themselves into three main streams: conceptual and formal structures for characterizing sysÃ Â- tem complexity; evolutionary processes in biology and ecology; the emergence of complexity through evolution in natural lanÃ Â- guages. The chapters presented in this volume are not the proceedÃ Â- ings of the meeting. Following the meeting, the organizers felt that the ideas and spirit of the gathering should be preserved in some written form, so the participants were each requested to produce a chapter, explicating the views they presented at Abisko, written specifically for this volume. The results of this exercise form the volume you hold in your hand.

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