

A Message from Christopher Alexander

Since 1967 at the Center for Environmental Structure, many students, colleagues, and I have worked to develop an approach to architecture that makes sense for people who wish to live in healthy environments. *A Pattern Language* is one of many books and papers that share the results of our research and building projects. We have established websites to make these ideas and practices available to all who wish to participate in building and renewing their homes and neighborhoods.

To this comprehensive body of work, I would like to add a serious thought that I have not expressed in writing before. As we all learn to use these ideas to build the environments we long for, *communication through feeling* has to be the bedrock of our work together. Otherwise we will not be successful. We must speak from one heart to another heart, learning as we go, and discovering that our collective feelings can be the basis of a recovery that is needed if we are to avoid destruction.

If you do take very seriously the feelings of all of us, one by one, and feelings that we have together – that is the basis on which we can work out the details.

The problems of the world are increasing in number and getting worse, especially environmental problems, population problems, and building problems. Approaching these problems with love is certainly one way of making the world more peaceful and calm, and maybe even saving the earth from larger problems and disasters.

I get very emotional when I think and talk about this, because for me it is a tremendous hope. I don't feel anything hopeless about it. I feel it is absolutely the necessary bedrock of rebuilding our world. It is necessary, and it is attainable.

Rather than thinking about whether we have the power to take responsibility, we need to think about having the **love** to take responsibility for the many places that are dear to us and need repair. Replacing the word “power” with “love” changes our orientation to the task, to the people, to the place; and provides an energy which is essential to the careful consideration and care that will be needed as we build environments that are good for us.

We will also need help from professionals (like architects, engineers, craftspeople) to bring in the skills that are useful in construction projects. If relationships with these people who bring expertise can be charged with love of the place and the people, then we shall have something to stir our collective creativity. Then they will be happy to help us with the enthusiasm we can give them, in a happy and joyful spirit.

However, that can only be done through genuine love. If we rely on a mechanical way of creating the feeling of our environments, then we will not be able to make them human, and, in the end, we will not achieve our dreams.

If we do this work for love, we can hope to get clear in our minds about the true nature of this kind of work. We may begin to understand what is at the heart of things, at the heart of our feelings, and that the world can rely on all of us for our recovery.

Christopher Alexander
March 2014