CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER is, in many ways, an anomaly. He is a trained mathematician and a practicing architect, a well-known theorist and a budding contractor, a prolific writer and an able designer. Anomalous too are his ideas about architecture.

Alexander believes that the rationalism and pluralism that characterize the modern world have blinded us to what it means to "be" in this world - to feel at one with community and at home in the environment. The ugliness of the modern environment, he says, testifies to our alienation from it. Most premodern societies possessed a sense of wholeness and of right and wrong - and most produced beautiful, timeless architecture.

While Alexander is certainly not the first theorist to admire traditional vernacular architecture, he differs from others in focusing on not just its form, but on the process of its creation. By following that process, he believes we can capture the beauty of vernacular architecture and regain the feeling of wholeness and connectedness that has been lost in the modern world.

The specifics of that process Alexander calls a "pattern language."

Thomas Fisher   *Progressive Architecture 6:86*