

The Smartest Man in the World

Which of today's books will people still be reading 500 years from now? There will only be a few—how many books on your shelf are from the 16th century?

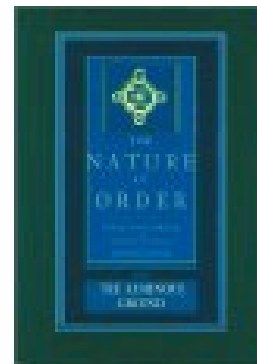
The first book I ever read that had a 'century spanning' feel to me was architect Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction* (1977) from the *Timeless Way of Building* series.



However, when I interviewed Alexander in 2001 he mentioned he was working on something much deeper and more significant than *A Pattern Language*. To be honest, I didn't believe him—what could be *much deeper* than this great book?

In 2004 his four volume *The Nature of Order* series was released. In this series Alexander put to rest any doubts I had: this is a profound and original work.

Alexander doesn't think the sharp division we make between living and non-living things is correct. The same order creating processes that make organisms can also make beautiful living places. Alexander explains the mechanics of how these processes work and why they have to work that way given the nature of the problem.



It's useful to know that Alexander is not just an abstract thinker. He is a practicing architect who has built real physical structures. Beyond that, he's not the sort of architect who sits in an office sketching designs; he's out there, mixing the cement and wielding the paint brush. His profound ideas about beauty and the nature of reality are deeply grounded in his experience in the physical world.

Obviously my pick for the smartest man in the world is highly subjective. Not everyone shares my opinion, certainly many architects actively dislike his radical ideas. But I wanted to share my assessment of this under-recognized thinker. Meet me in 500 years and we'll see if my judgement has stood the test of time.

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You can buy The Nature of Order series at www.patternlanguage.com