

Christopher Alexander

A City is Not a Tree:
50th Anniversary Edition



with

new commentaries by

Mike Batty • Luís Bettencourt • Howard Davis
Jaap Dawson • Bin Jiang • Michael W Mehaffy
Hans Joachim Neis • Dellé Odeleye • Sergio Porta
Yodan Rofè • MariaPia Vidoli
and other contributors

edited by

Michael W Mehaffy

Sustasis Press

In Association with

Center for Environmental Structure

In 1965, the architect and design theorist Christopher Alexander published a landmark theoretical critique of modern urban design, and by extension, modern design in general. His critique was different from others of the day in that it was not based on a social or political argument, but on a structural analysis, rooted in then-emerging insights from the fields of mathematics and cognition.

Here, published again on its fiftieth anniversary, is Alexander's classic text, together with new interpretive commentaries and discussions by leading theorists and practitioners. This volume is destined to become an invaluable resource for a new generation of students and practitioners.

"One of the classic references in the literature of the built environment and associated fields."

— Resource for Urban Design Information (rudi.net)

"At a time of increasing concern over the adequacy of design methods, "A City is not a Tree" broke open and reoriented the debate."

— Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf

"It pointed clearly to a change in the way we need to think about cities – not as assemblies of one-off components that are hierarchically sorted, but as systems with global properties that manifest at local places. That, for me, is also the key insight and power of Space Syntax as a methodology."

— Bill Hillier, Chairman of the Bartlett School of Graduate Studies,
University College London

"Seen from the distance of half a century, Christopher Alexander's "A city is not a tree" remains a landmark in our thinking about cities and design... It is a new beginning: The first step on a journey – for Alexander and for urbanism – to discover what the city really is. Its daring novelty is to place the problems of architecture and urban planning on the same level of those in physics or biology and to seek answers using the scientific method, expressed in mathematical language."

— Luís Bettencourt, Santa Fe Institute



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