A PATTERN LANGUAGE

IN GHANA

by

AMY ELIZABETH MOORE

(Under the direction of Judith Wasserman)

ABSTRACT

Built environments exert a formidable influence on societal behavior--they shape the behavior of their users just as surely as an architect shapes a building. The form, therefore, of our environments becomes ultimately important. Christopher Alexander and the other authors of *A Pattern Language* address the general lack of meaning in our built environments by offering a system of building and planning based upon patterns which they assembled and consider to be archtypal. The patterns are based on observations from around the world of human behavior and structures. The authors describe the patterns as "being so deeply rooted in the nature of things" that they regard them as transcendent of culture and time. But are the patterns truly universal? Within the context of Ghana, West Africa, five patterns are explored with regard to their universality.

INDEX WORDS: Christopher Alexander, Ghana, West Africa, Pattern Language, Archetypes, Built Environments, Street Cafes, Market of Many Shops, Sleeping in Public, Individually Owned Shops, Four Story Limit, Cultural Landscapes, Urbanization

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For my family, whose love and encouragement

have sustained me for many years

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*"We shape our buildings...
then our buildings shape us."*

—Winston Churchill

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This thesis will explore the idea that patterns from *A Pattern Language*, by Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, Murray Silverstein, Max Jacobsen, Ingrid Fiksdahl-King, and Shlomo Angel (1977), are universal in scope and transferable across cultures, using Ghana, West Africa as a testing ground.

The authors offer this book and its system of building as a solution to the mainly unlivable towns we find ourselves constructing and residing in today. Published in 1977, *A Pattern Language* was a landmark book with an evolutionary approach to architecture and urban planning. Christopher Alexander and the other authors observed human uses and behaviors within the built environment and used these as the foundation for the ideas in the book. Consequently, *A Pattern Language* claims to "provide a language for building and planning," using patterns so arche-typal "-so deep, so deeply rooted in the nature of things, that it seems likely that they will be a part of human nature, and human action, as much in five hundred years, as they are today." In other words, these patterns provide a guiding system of building which may transcend time and culture alike, a sort of all encompassing approach which, when linked appropriately, can handle diversity and complexity.

Ultimately, *A Pattern Language* is about meaningful form, what constitutes it, and how it might be achieved. The structure of our physical environments influences our lives, affects our moods, and guides our movements. In increasingly multi-layered societies, complicated design issues revolving around form abound not only for urban planners and designers, but most importantly for the people who live in those societies. Aside from practical considerations of vegetation, topography, and so on, historical events and architecture should inform any thoughtfully considered created environment that is to have real significance in the day-to-day lives of its users. In terms of place making, environments which have no reference to the history of the people who use them are sterile and unusable, with a cumulative result of soullessness. "We can lose our humanity in places empty of meaning or surprises…" (Chermayoff, 1945).

Additionally, sociologists and anthropologists have long argued that built environments play a fundamental role in the formation and maintenance of a society: "One may think of space and its design as "sets of social relations [that] introduce and legitimize ways and forms of life. In such circumstances, space and program either maintain the status quo, or they can be formulated to express alternative social relationships" (Clarke and Dutton, quoted in Anthony Ward 1991). Political forces may also consciously wield architecture as a weapon of sorts. Michel Foucault theorized that architecture is basically a relationship of power and space used as a political "technology" for working out the concerns of government "that is, control and power over individuals--through the spatial 'canalization' of everyday life. The aim of such a technology is to create a 'docile body' through enclosure and the organization of individuals in space" (Foucault 1975). Designed space, in other words, can exert a formidable influence on societal behavior even as it is being created by its users or by other parties.

If there is, indeed, a symbiotic relationship between the built environment and the people who use it, the architectural components of the environment become overwhelmingly important. This ability to shape and alter behavior requires caution and discernment on the part of those doing the creating and planning. This has not always been the case; instead, "[d]esigners have unconsciously relied on their own implicit values and perceptions, projecting them on the physical world as if they were inherent qualities. Not so-one begins with the images and priorities of the users of a place and must look at place and person together" Lynch (1981). This is where the work of Alexander and his colleagues should come under close scrutiny. His patterns were drawn from observations across the globe, and his insistence on the archetypal nature of the patterns proclaims them as standards for all manner of livable communities. But do these prescribed forms work cross culturally?

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In the summer of 2001, I joined a group of University of Georgia students studying abroad for two months in Ghana, West Africa. During the second month of the program, I participated in an intensive service learning component in which several sites were selected for design work in urban Cape Coast. Enthusiastic staff from Cape Coast's Town and Country Planning Office paired with six students from the University of Georgia's School of Environmental Design to work on the projects. During the summer, as we learned more about Cape Coast's history, its process of acculturation, and its current rapid development, it became clear that the city provided an excellent test case for the legitimacy of the authors' hypotheses.

Ghana has, at various times, been colonized by the Portuguese, the British, the Dutch, and the Arabs, among others. It is also home to many indigenous tribes. Today, the country is inhabited by a 99% African population. A developing country, Ghana is considered a gateway for the rest of the continent. Its major cities are growing rapidly, due in part to new resources at hand with which to expand. Cape Coast

is a medium-sized town, and the bulk of its architecture stems from European colonial eras with indigenous and other cultural influences mixed in. In a town whose core was largely built by foreigners and is now used by the predominantly native population, and where development is in process and western cultural influence is extremely strong, interesting questions arise concerning the cultural use of space. Will new development respond to the cultural as well as the physical needs of the people using it? Can the ideas from *A Pattern Language* work appropriately in Cape Coast?

OBJECTIVES

The following chapters continue to explore cross cultural possibilities within *A Pattern Language*. Chapter Two, "*A Pattern Language,*" explains the book, its philosophic foundation and premises, and critical responses to it; Chapter Three, "The Built Environment of Ghana," takes a brief look at the layers of history of Ghana, including its architecture and its people; Chapter Four, "Patterns in Ghana," examines five patterns in Ghana and their legitimacy; and lastly, Chapter Five, "Conclusions," will consist of general recommendations about *A Pattern Language* based upon the exploration of its application in Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

Ideas about the patterns in Cape Coast, Ghana were drawn from personal observations from the summer, photographs, sketches, and existing scholarly sources on Africa. I have included my observations from all of Ghana in the discussion of patterns, but have given special reference to Cape Coast since it was the area in which I spent the most time and came to know best. This thesis is not intended to be an ethnographic study but rather an initial attempt to explore form within the specific cultural context of Ghanaian life. My only regret is that I did not have more time in Ghana among its hospitable people, absorbing and observing their culture.

CHAPTER 2

A PATTERN LANGUAGE

"People and environments-if they are so inextricably
and fundamentally connected, where do you start in
order to make good buildings and towns?"
                                        --Dennis M. Ryan

Since the beginning of time, people have been constructing towns by put-
ting together buildings largely in a piecemeal process, a bit at a time. Many of the
oldest towns across our continents stand as testaments to this slowly evolving,
creative process of building/planning--they are attractive, vital towns even after
hundreds of years. The authors of *A Pattern Language* believe that we have large-
ly lost the ability to create livable towns for ourselves, and that belief is the impe-
tus for the book. Published in 1977, *A Pattern Language* impressed the planning
community with a design process that was dynamic and evolutionary. Given the
clinical approach of environmental design in the 1960s, the "feedback loops,
parameters, performance specifications, criteria of evaluation, sub-set decompo-
sitions, environment behavior models and inevitable statistics" (Ward, 1979), it is
no surprise that many in the building community hailed the book as a radical and
welcome approach to designing the built environment. Regarded when published
as one of the most important books in environmental design in the 20th century,
A Pattern Language is still a preeminent book for planners, architects and land-
scape architects.

In writing *A Pattern Language*, the authors' purpose was to create a "joy-
ful" system of building based upon a language of archetypal patterns which coun-
teracts their idea that "the [building] languages which people have today are so

brutal, and so fragmented, that most people no longer have any language to speak of at all-and what they do have is not based on human, or natural considerations." They wish to enable people to create built environments that are a reflection of themselves and their specific needs, and to be an integral and natural part of the environment rather than fragmented or separated from it. *A Pattern Language*'s integration of architecture and planning and its consideration of social activity as a primary indicator for built form was an important attempt to "cut across structures and spaces that are separately designed by planners and builders" (Quinan 1981).

Christopher Alexander's book, *The Timeless Way of Building* (1979), explains the philosophical base for *A Pattern Language*. In this book, the quality of "aliveness" is introduced: "the search which we make for this quality, in our own lives, is the central search of any person, and the crux of any individual person's story. It is the search for those moments and situations when we are most alive." Alexander goes on to suggest that this quality can also be found in the built environment: "In order to define this quality in buildings and towns, we must begin by understanding that every place is given its character by certain patterns of events that keep on happening there." In other words, the services which happen regularly in a church help to give the church its character. At the same time, the particular structural patterns in place, such as roof vaults and column places, also help to give the church its character, and therefore, its meaning for the people using it. Alexander goes on to state that certain recurrent geometric forms are predictably linked with certain events; he takes these as archetypal forms for a system of building. These various archetypal forms are proposed as the solution to a set of fundamental and persistent problems within the built environment. A stated problem and its solution together comprise one "pattern" in *A Pattern Language*. The 'language' refers to the way the patterns can be put together to

form coherent statements. Though different societies will have separate languages from one another, they all employ the base structure of words; similarly, the building language relies upon its base structure of patterns. And just as verbal languages combine words to form any number of meaningful phrases, so are the patterns combined to create a variety of meaningful built environments. *A Pattern Language* stresses that the patterns are to be used in relationship and in different sequences with one another, not as isolated units; thus, the patterns can be used "a million times over, without ever doing it the same way twice." In both cases, wholly different languages might emerge and even dialects might be expressed and understood. The hierarchical properties of language, and of patterns, allow a clear understanding of purpose.

The patterns are largely regarded by the authors of *A Pattern Language* as common to everyone: "…at least a part of the language we have presented here, is the archetypal core of all possible pattern languages which can make people feel alive and human," underscoring the connection between form and feeling, form and behavior. As Kevin Lynch (1981) notes about the book, "…each proposal is linked to its human consequences. Each is meant to be a very real piece of the world, based on an imagined human way of relating to that world which is underlying and stable." Alexander, et.al., see many of these core patterns as so "deeply rooted in the nature of things" that he regards them as timeless. The authors employ a system to rate how successful they feel that their various solutions are in describing a "deep and inescapable property."

Patterns are grouped by regions and towns, then by a smaller scale of neighborhoods and clusters of buildings and the buildings themselves, and finally to the smallest focus, details of construction. Each pattern lists other appropriate patterns, both of larger and smaller scale, which would naturally fit well together like puzzle pieces. The possibility of identical towns or building sequences is

removed by the almost infinite number of potential combinations of patterns. The authors encourage users to adapt patterns as needed, to regard the language as being flexible; thus, individuality and the accommodation of specific needs is enhanced. Indeed, the premise of *A Pattern Language* is a democratic emphasis on users of the environment being involved in the process of building and planning, rather than relying only upon a central authority: "The living town can only be created and maintained by the people who are a part of them." Jane Jacobs (1961) supports this statement: "…effective planning and policy should also be bottoms up or street level, however, done by professionals as well as citizens…"

The system in *A Pattern Language* answered a long-felt need of a complex "methodology which is itself in constant process of change" (Ward 1979). This is in direct contradiction to a typical process of planning and building which is autocratic and dictatorial. Instead, users have choices when putting patterns together, ones which place control and adaptation in their hands, and which allow the system to evolve. The authors frankly acknowledge that some patterns are more successful than others in their proposed solutions and rate them accordingly. As successful as the book is in its attempts to put planning and architecture on a more humanistic and understandable level for both the layperson and the practitioner, as appealing as it is in its enthusiasm and ideas, there are valid criticisms of it.

Alexander's philosophic foundation set out in *The Timeless Way of Building* is a riveting idea: "There is a central quality which is the root criterion of life and spirit in a man, a town, a building, or a wilderness. This quality is objective and precise, but it cannot be named." This quality without a name is the path to the timeless way of building; according to Alexander, "a building or a town will only be alive to the extent that it is governed by the timeless way. It is a process which brings order out of nothing but ourselves; it cannot be attained, but it will happen

of its own accord, if we will only let it." It is both *A Pattern Language*'s strength and its weakness that it is based upon a core statement which appeals to such a deep inner knowledge in us that it is difficult to measure.

Alexander, however, also states that "the difference between a good building and a bad building…is an objective matter" which suggests that both good and bad buildings alike can be quantifiably examined for their qualities. The concept of aliveness in a building is understandable, but a gap still exists a gap between the philosophy and Alexander's objective right and wrong of built form. "The specific patterns out of which a building or a town is made may be alive or dead. To the extent they are alive, they let our inner forces loose, and set us free; but when they are dead, they keep us locked in place." One is left wondering exactly how this could be scientifically examined by Alexander and his cohorts in order to identify the original 253 patterns in the book. How exactly did they pick these 253? As Ward (1979) points out: "[t]he dilemma is: What is archetypal? The authors escape this dilemma by proposing that the final arbiters of pattern appropriateness be the users themselves." Dovey (1990) agrees with Ward's analysis: "...when it comes to justifying patterns he exhibits a kind of ambivalence." His emphasis on repeating patterns of events giving a structure its character and defining its functions is key to one way of evaluating success of a pattern; but it would be well to keep in mind that the mere repeated presence of people, even of bustling activity, may not be the optimal indicator of a successful pattern. A shopping mall, for example, would be generally regarded as successful merely by virtue of the number of patrons moving through it each day, certainly by commercial standards it would indeed be a success. By the authors' standards of "aliveness", however, one might conclude that this is not precisely what the authors had in mind. In the end, the built forms of the patterns are a means only--a certain experience for the user is the end goal. A certain harmony with the built environ-

ment as a goal, however worthy an idea, is a difficult thing both to create and to evaluate. As one town planner put it, "...this confusion is compounded by the reasonableness of the ideas in theory and their difficulty of implementation in practice" (Batty 1979).

A second area of concern is the presentation of the pattern language as, at least in part, the base language for any planning situation. The closing sentence of the introduction to the book states that "at least a part of the language we have presented here, is the archetypal core of all possible pattern languages…." One assumes that the "part of the language" in which they are confident are the archetypal patterns which are the highest rated by the authors. They feel that in these patterns they have "succeeded in stating a true invariant: in short, that the solution we have stated summarizes a *property* common to *all possible ways* of solving the stated problem." The conclusion to this statement is that if this "property" is common to all possible ways of solving a given problem, then this property will be an inevitable component of any solution. Ward (1979) expresses this: "a further ideological dilemma which has confronted the authors is that of *context*. If each pattern is, as the authors suggest, archetypal, then they will, by definition, have applications in *any* culture." Clearly the authors are making a case for a building language which transcends cultures. But how likely is it that any pattern language can transfer across whole cultures? Would the problem statements even be the same? Behavior differs widely across cultures. Take, for example, the phenomena of personal space. It is widely known that people from different cultures have different expectations about what an appropriate social distance is between themselves and others. Arabs, for example, are comfortable with extremely close interactions with friends and family; exchanging breath is "not only nice, but desirable" (Hall 1969). Americans on the other hand, would consider it unbelievably rude to intrude so closely on another's space. Surely this kind

of consideration would have an impact on the built environment, perhaps in the dimensions of public and private spaces alike. Could a universal language accommodate such differences? Or that of differing climates, politics, economics, and resources? If Alexander and his colleagues' belief that "a person is so far formed by his surroundings, that his state of harmony depends entirely on his harmony with his surroundings" is true, then these questions become urgent.

Another major criticism of *A Pattern Language* is that of utopianism. In short, his critics have argued that the pattern language would require a substantial shifting of economic policy in order for the process to work. As Dovey (1990) stated, "...the pattern language requires an economic system that recognizes the priority of use value (and therefore quality in everyday life) over exchange value (capital gains, economic return)." In order for some of these patterns to be put into place, socialism would have to take prevalence over capitalism. For example, in *A Pattern Language*, Pattern 7, The Countryside, requires a redefinition of "farms as parks, where the public has a right to be; and make all regional parks into working farms." This would entail a massive restructuring of our views of private property, a battle unlikely to be fought willingly in the foreseeable future, in America at least. This is a concept much more familiar to Europeans. Regaining public access to private lands has been a legal issue for well over 100 years in Scotland and Britain and continues to be today. Indeed, many of the patterns in the book seem to have a European, small village basis. This perhaps reflects Alexander's background; he was born in Vienna and raised in England before continuing his education in the United States. His latest work, *The Nature of Order* (2001), again reveals a highly philosophic approach to the art of building and the issue of identity:

> For I believe it is the nature of matter itself, which is soaked
>
> through with I. The essence of my argument in Book 4 [of *The*
>
> *Nature of Order*] is that the I, the thing I call the I, which lies

at the core of our experience, is a real thing, existing in all matter, beyond ourselves, and that we must understand it this way in order to make sense of living structure, of buildings, of art, and of our place in the world.

This "I" can be identified in architecture, art, even in the landscape, as a profound sense of "life," or a sort of "rightness," upon which the majority of us inherently in agreement upon when responding to selected forms. He sees it as a sort of fundamental response "to every aspect of the world which we encounter." The examples he gives in the book examine structures and art from around the world. The proposal that there is an order in nature which can be replicated in architecture is a fascinating one. Alexander sees this as taking the ideas from *A Pattern Language* a step further to: "...a deeper level of structure, embodied in the patterns, but more pure and more profound. This level of structure is almost purely geometrical, and it is this level which gives buildings life, simplicity, and grace." Only time and experimentation will tell whether this structure is so profound, so true, as to extend itself to all societies of people.

CHAPTER 3

# THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF GHANA

HISTORY

The hi story of the architecture of Ghana is naturally as complex as the history of the country itself. Aside from indigenous cultures, commerce, climate, and coloniza- tion have all contributed to the evolution of the architecture one sees in Ghana today. A brief overview of Ghanaian facts and history follows as a foundation for the discussion of the the country's architecture.
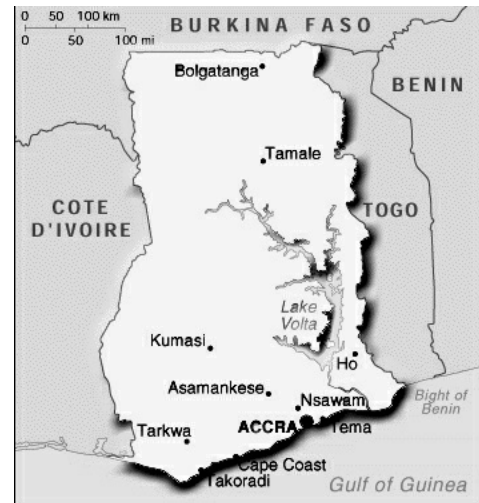
Ghana, West Africa
(Berry 1995)

Ghana is located in West Africa between Cote D'Ivoire and Togo and borders the Gulf of Guinea. Roughly the size of Georgia in the United States, Ghana also shares Georgia's hot, humid climate. Of Ghana's 19 million people, indigenous groups make up 99% of the population today, with almost 100 different ethnic groups represented (Berry, 1995). Almost half of the Ghanaian population consists of the Akan people; the Moshi-Dagomba, the Ewe, and the Ga tribes together comprise the rest. Although tribes have their own languages, most people also speak English, a holdover from British colonial days and now a strong link to the western world. A developing country in terms of its economy, Ghana is considered a gateway between the African continent and the rest of the world.

The history of Ghana and its inhabitants stretches back thousands of years, forming a richly interwoven tapestry of people, religions, architecture and art. Although no written history exists detailing the emergence of Ghana as a West African empire, scholars speculate that it may have been started by the Soninke people as early as 100 A.D., although possibly as late as 500 A.D. (Boahen, 1986). The original country was located northwest of its present location;
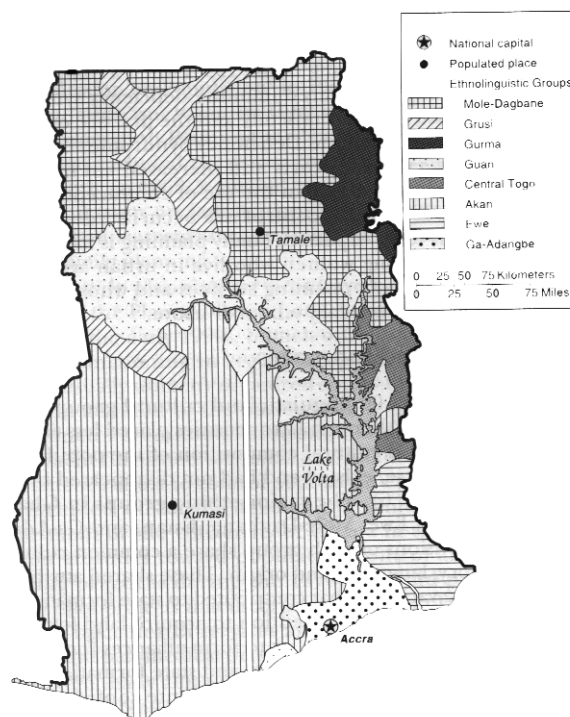
Tribal territories in Ghana
(Berry 1995)

over time, through tribal expansion and colonization by foreign countries, the boundaries of Ghana have changed, reflecting little of its original geography and ethnic boundaries. The country began, however, as a Soninke chiefdom, ideally situated on the trans-Saharan trade route, a factor which, together with rich gold mines, probably aided in its transformation into an empire. Gradually, influences from other regions of Africa crept into Ghana. One of the most significant was the Muslim influence, which began around 1050 A.D., after Egypt fell to Arab invaders. Muslims began migrating south to West Africa, introducing their culture and their religion to the area.

At this time, the Ghanaian empire was known throughout Africa as the Gold Coast for its rich gold deposits and flourishing society. Reports from Arab travelers included stories about its gold: "al-Bakri states that gold was so plentiful that

even the dogs which guarded the king while he sat in state wore collars of gold and silver" (Boahen 1986). The country had a strong monarchy, a civil service, and a history of welcoming those of different religions, such as the Muslims. By the 1300s, however, the empire had fallen, probably due to a series of tribal conquests and a shifting of the trans-Saharan trade route. Word of Ghana's rich natural resources reached foreign countries, and Europeans began venturing into Africa. By the late 1400s, the Portuguese had arrived, lured by the promise of gold. They began building forts and trading posts along Ghana's coastline on land leased from the natives in an attempt to monopolize the gold trade. By the mid 1600s, the Ghanaian population was again flourishing, and the Asante empire was in ascendancy. Kumasi, its capital city, was reported as being one of the finest in all of Africa. Travelers routinely found their way to the great city, and Europeans served as advisors to the Asante court. Through wars of expansion, the Asante secured adjacent lands, incorporated the people into their own kingdom, and created a highly organized state (Berry 1995).

The English, French, Dutch, and Danes, among others, had all routinely conducted business of various sorts in the country by the 1600s. By the end of the 17th century, foreign commerce centered around the slave trade; this continued until 1814, when it was finally outlawed by the nations that had been perpetrating it. The British increasingly sought control over the gold trade which resulted in conflict with the Asante. After a series of fiercely fought wars, the British gained control of the Asante kingdom, sending its king, the Asantahene, into exile. The British took formal control of areas of southern Ghana in 1874; other regions were annexed in 1902. They were a governing presence until 1957, when Ghana regained its independence. Democracy has been adopted and the country has had its fourth successful presidential elections; tribal councils, however, still have influence on the local level.

In early Ghana, communities formed around the "Ghana" or chief or war-lord; Clark (1975) states that "in many parts of Africa a settlement is called a town if a chief lives there; it is the seat of power and authority rather than agglomeration, and inevitably may have no more than a few houses". Communities were tightly knit. The individual knew his/her role and shared a communal sense of responsibility for other members. Dwellings were grouped as closely together as possible: "Man in Africa does not seek seclusion within isolated rooms, but, on the contrary, he strives for permanent contact with nature and with the community." (Kultermann 1963). Africans are part of a collectivistic society, "The group is primary in African societies; its needs supercede those of the individual." (Pellow 1999). Brown and Werner (1985) theorized within this framework that cohesion is made up of not only a psychological identification but also a commitment to people and to places. Traditionally, group land has been considered sacred in African societies; kinship is the tie that holds people together, and land is important because ancestors are buried there.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN GHANA

Examining the built environment in Ghana entails looking at indigenous architecture as well as architecture which came from outside influences. For a country as old as Ghana, this means going back thousands of years as well as looking at the last hundred. The lack of written documentation from the ancient history of Ghana and the long presence of foreigners in the country have resulted in the architectural styles being something akin to a watercolor; it is difficult to know exactly where one color stops and another begins. Some forms naturally overlapped, and some have been incorporated so thoroughly into Ghanaian life that they are themselves now considered part of the indigenous culture. This complex subject has been divided into coherent components by Ali Mazrui (1986), who has proposed the triple heritage theory of architecture for Africa. Simply put,

this theory examines architecture based on key historical eras and landmarks in Africa's evolution. Mazrui has determined indigenous, Islamic, and Western architecture to be the key encompassing influences in Ghana. This framework will be followed in the ensuing discussion.

Indigenous Architecture

It is only very recently that any serious scholarly attention has been paid to African architecture, and opinions within this small body of scholars vary widely. A good understanding of indigenous architecture in Ghana is complicated by the fact that there are no written records about indigenous architecture in the pre-colonial era. The climate and the materials historically used in Ghanaian architecture combined to make buildings impermanent over time, resulting in meager archeological evidence (Ferrar 1996). Add to this that the Akan culture assimilated people from many different tribes with discrete customs, and the problem becomes even more complex. Scholars currently base their theories on historical records from neighboring countries, written records from early travellers to the area, oral traditions, and what archaeological evidence still exists.
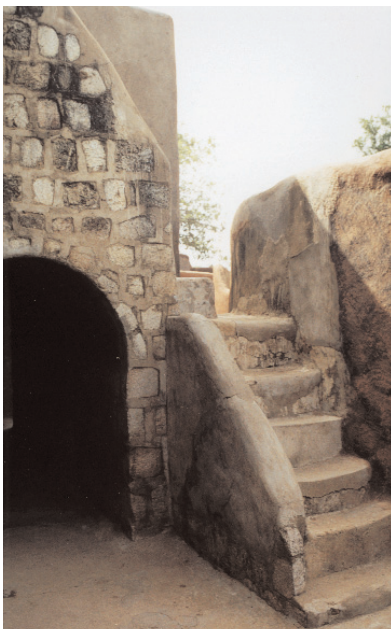

Indigenous construction in northern Ghana. (Rees 2001)

Elleh (1997) proposes that architecture in Ghana borrows from that of Egypt and was likely transmitted through sub-Sarahan travel. He theorizes that "the viewpoints advanced on the issue

of ancient architecture in Egypt and its relationship to architecture in the rest of Africa indicate that most of the house forms which constitute traditional African architecture have roots in Egyptian antiquity." Some architectural elements that Elleh considers as indigenous to Africa include external stairs, vaulted roofs, ventilated roofs, and central courtyards. Smith (1938) theorized that compounds are an ancient building form in Ghana, again perhaps evolved from early Egyptian architecture. Ashante fetish houses, used for religious purposes and as community focal points may well have been the model for compounds (Schmidt 2000). The fetish houses feature the central courtyards which Elleh distinguished as indigenous. Typically, rectangular buildings were built at right angles to one another, enclosing an open central space. Compounds evolved to incorporate several buildings, including living and sleeping quarters, covered storage areas, and semi-detached kitchens. A wall, an early defensive measure, surrounds the entire compound, which can house any number of extended family members through time. Common courtyards promote interactions among family members, allowing for both public and private activities. Pellow (1999) refers to the compounds as the "focal point of community life." Prussin's study (1969) of the compounds of the Tallensi of northern Ghana point to the melding of people and environment through structure: "the building structure and the family unit form a single   entity…The concept 'yir' [house or joint family] is also related to the nature of Tallensi ancestor worship, in which the Earth is viewed as the source of fertility and productivity [and] each compound seems to rise out of the ground."
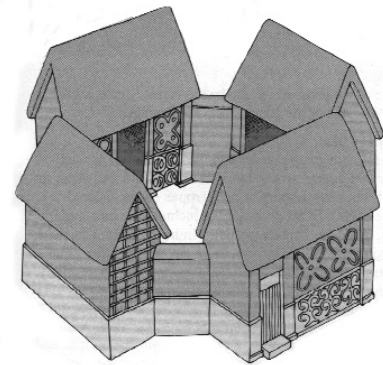
Ashanti Fetish House, 19th century. (Swithenbank 1969)
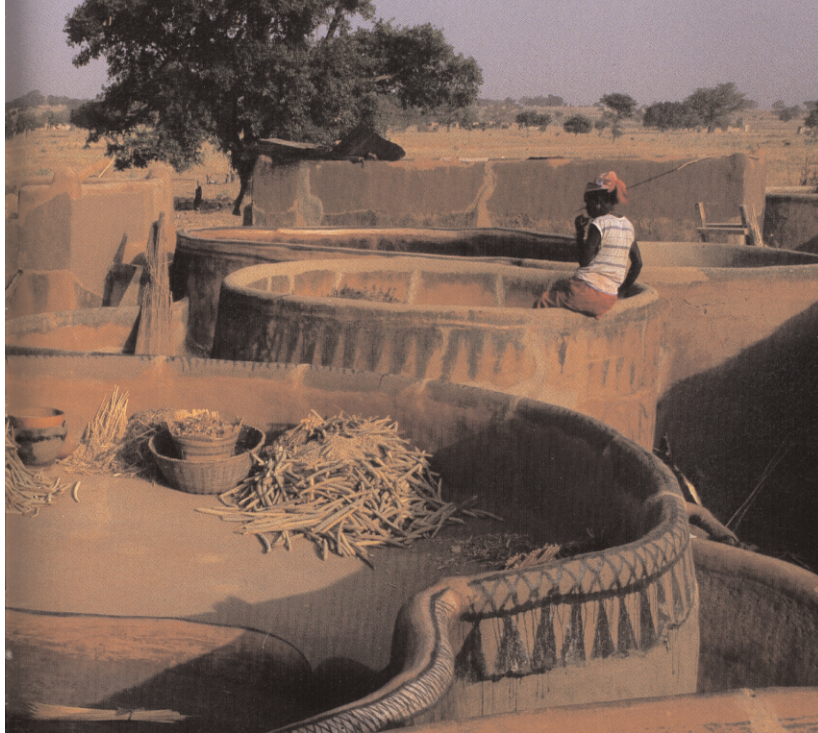
Circular West African compound--roofs used for sleeping in the dry season and for storage (Courtney-Clarke 1990)
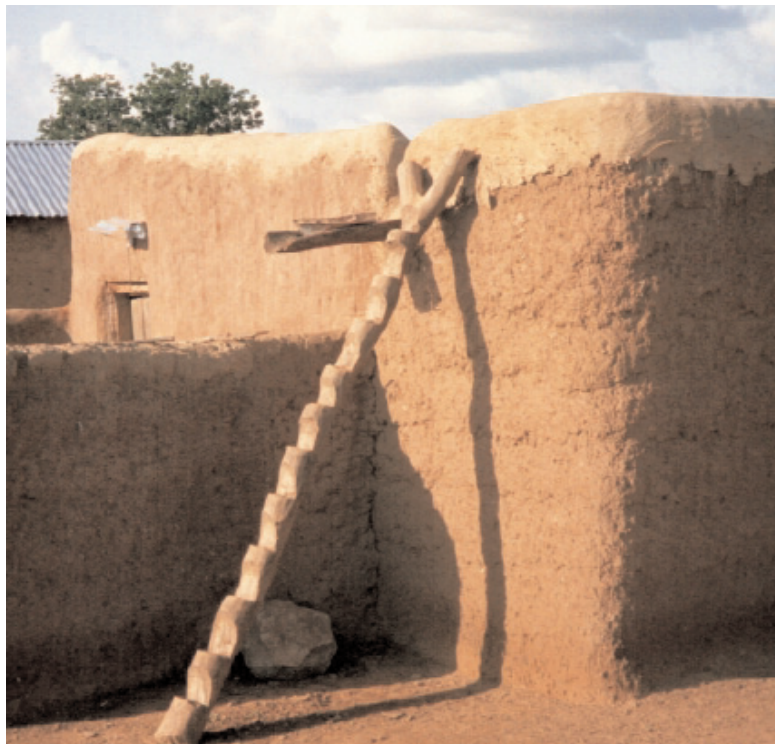
Mudded rectangular compound, Larabanga--exterior ladder leading to roof (Cassity 2001)

Compounds may take either a more rectangular or more circular form, or sometimes a combination of both. Farrar (1996) argues that the rectangular shape of most houses is indigenous, rather than the circu-

Compound room use
(From drawing by K. DeGraft-Hanson 2001)

lar forms found primarily in the north. Other studies suggest that the circular compounds in the north may have Islamic origins (Prussin 1969).
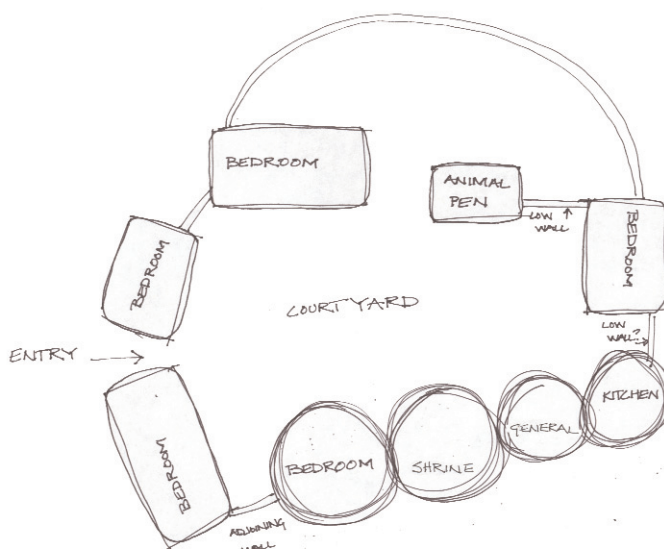
Scholars typically agree that materials used in construction by early Ghanaians include timber, usually as a structural element, and clay, which was primarily used to "mud in" walls. Grasses, palm fronds, and other plant materials were also used where needed, including as thatching for roofs. These building materials are visible today in both rural and urban areas, as they are still easily obtainable and work with the climate, rather than against it. The mud allows for the construction of very thick walls, which provide a cool atmosphere in Ghana's tropical climate.

Traditional compounds often had a wooden frame-

An example of a Ghanaian inland settlement plan with a wide main street. (McLeod 1981)

work and were built up with mud. Roofs might be thatched or flat with a lip. Flat roofs are used for storage and as sleeping roofs during the dry season.

Farrar (1996) relies upon oral traditions and written commentary of early travellers to Ghana for his proposal of settlement patterns in West Africa. He suggests two different settlement patterns, coastal and inland, based on descriptions of early travellers and current town layouts. He quotes Jean Barbot, who travelled through coastal Ghana in the late 1600s: "Their towns and villages are composed of several huts, standing in parcels, and scattering, which by their disposition, or situation, form many little lanes, crooked, and very irregular...." This was a common town layout for the Fanti and is seen in the Bentsir district in Cape Coast today. Drawings and commentary by Thomas Bowdich in the early 1800s provide detailed references about inland settlement patterns. The inland layout plan was characterized by a wide, straight road that extended the entire length of a settlement. Smaller roads branched off of it at right angles. The chief's palace typically was located toward the middle of the settlement just off of the main road.

Wall decoration is an ancient part of the decorative arts in Ghana and is used on both internal and external walls of homes (Ferrar 1996). This typically is the work of women and has been handed down from generation to generation (Courtney-Clarke 1990). Thomas Bowdich (1819) reported that detailed designs, geometric or animal motifs, often adorned the base of the walls in
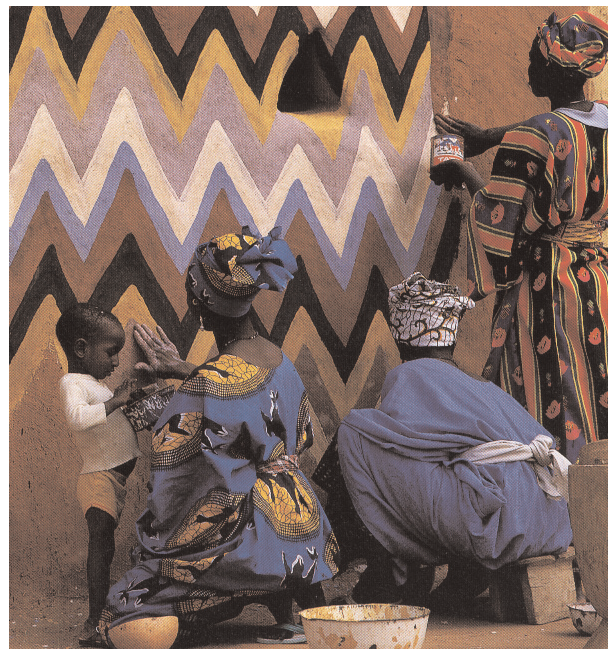
Women painting compound walls
(Courtney-Clarke 1990)

Kumasi. Designs on the homes of Ghanaian aristocracy were often especially elaborate. In rural areas of Ghana today, this art form is still actively practiced. Typically, after compound construction is finished by the men, women come in to plaster and paint, using their fingers or hand-made brushes.

In addition to painting, a system of pictographic images is often used in Ghanaian architecture. Each of the pictographs stands for an Akan proverb, which "transmits the accumulated cultural values of the Akan people" (http://www.marshall.edu/aka-nart/). These are used not only to teach, but also to beautify, and are often used as an architectural element. Prussin (1969) makes the argument through the examination of Arabic language and arts that many of the pictographic symbols are directly associated with Islam and were slowly, but thoroughly, incorporated into Asante architecture and life. Wall painting, widely regarded as indigenous, may also have its roots in the Islamic culture.

Compound wall painting
(Courtney-Clarke 1990)
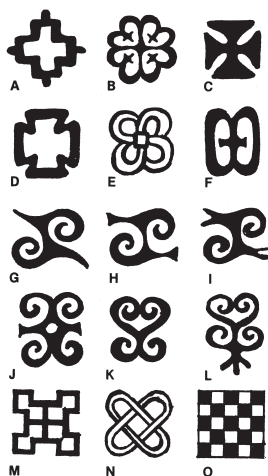
Fig. 8.10c Adinkra mourning-cloth patterns related to architecture and Islam. Drawings after Rattray (1927). Legend: *A. Aban*: circular house. *B. Nyame dua*: an altar to the Sky God. *C. Musuyidie*: something to remove evil. *D. Finhankra*: circular house. *E. Papani amma yenhu Kramo*: those who claim to be devout Muslims prevent us from knowing the true believers. *F. Nyame, biribi wo soro, ma no me ka me me nsa*: Oh God, everything which is above, permit my hand to touch it. *G. Nsa*, from a design of this name found on *nsa* cloth. *Nsa* cloth, made from camel's hair and wool, was used for the umbrellas or *katamanso* (the covering of the nation) used in all Asante political ritual. *H. Gyawu atiko*: literally, the back of the Gyawu's head. *I. Kwatakye atiko*: literally, the back of the Kwatakye's head. *J. Dwenini aben*: the ram's horns. *K.* and *L. Sankofa*: turn back and fetch it. Also the hawk, totemic symbol of the Oyoko lineage. Patterns H, I, K, and L all imply a conceptual reversal. *M.* The mark of a Hausa (Muslim) man. *N.* A wise man's knot. *O.* Checkerboard. While many of the patterns carry different names and meanings, they are, in fact, quite similar in form.

Adinkra mourning cloth patterns related to architecture and Islam (Prussin 1986)

Courtney-Clarke (1990) calls it "the subtle intermixture of Islamic elements with the African's needs and resources."

A mosque in northern Ghana, the most visible architectural evidence of Islam (Cassity 2001)

Islamic Influences

Quite early on, perhaps as early as 640 A.D., Islam began to appear in Ghana. Certainly by the eleventh century it was estab-lished and the country had "absorbed certain Islamic influences, while maintaining its pagan kingship" (Boahen 1986). In the beginning, there was a practice of accommodation within the Ghanaian empire for practicing Muslims, although not integration into its cities. Frequently twin cities existed, one for the indigenous people and a second city within a few miles for the Muslims. This arrangement avoided religious and cultural conflicts and worked extremely well until around 1076 when Islamic invaders from the north overran Ghana. Elements of Islamic architecture then became incorporated into that of African architecture. Some of these included "interlacing designs, open-work screens, and open work beams" (Schmidt 2000). The religion itself required spatial orientation of all buildings to be east-west. Secluded courtyards for the isolation of women were also typically built, usually far removed from any possibility of public contact. This feature appears in some compounds in northern Ghana, where the entrances to women's rooms are not immediately visible to the casual visitor (Prussin 1969). Other features include:

characteristics of the medieval city, both in function and in structure, such as: compact labrynth dwellings; high population density; wall or ditch that shows defense structure; uniformity of building height; and large civic buildings, mosques, church-

es, or palaces that break the uniformity of the buildings. The
city square, which is often near the market or king's residence,
is the central nerve of the city's social activities and major
roads lead to and from this particular square (Elleh 1997).

There are several architectural points of overlap with Akan society. While
the Asante did not build large civic buildings, they did build uniformly and com-
pactly. Compounds usually are enclosed by a wall, and markets are a well estab-
lished fact of life in Ghana. Religion was a great influence on Islamic art. The idea
of transformation was particularly important. Grube (1966) stated that "the orna-
mentation of surfaces of any kind in any medium with the infinite pattern [any dec-
orative element indicative of the eternal] serves the same purpose--to disguise
and 'dissolve' the matter, whether it be monumental architecture or a small metal
box." Thus, some historians theorize
that the wall painting may have origi-
nated with Islam.

Western Architecture

The presence of colonization
is still felt today through the struc-
tures left behind by their builders. In
some cities, such as Cape Coast,
architecture from the eras of colo-
nization comprises the foundation of

Cape Coast Castle
(Moore 2001)

the downtown area, encompassing businesses and homes. Every country which
came into Ghana came with its own itinerary of architecture and an intent to build
to suit its own needs, spanning architectural elements to the use of space (King
1976). The Portuguese, early colonizers, were primarily concerned with defense
and built the great forts and castles, such as Elmina, which still stand today. The

Dutch, too, built forts, and the English, the longest running foreign presence in Ghana, also followed some years later with Cape Coast Castle. Their later architectural contributions throughout Africa also included administrative buildings, housing and schools for their countrymen.

Although all brought different elements to Africa's built environment, the colonizers generally share a strong geometry in the town layout. European settlements were very linear, frequently a grid or a series of circular roads and diagonal arterials. Within the dual framework of western architecture and colonization, larger homes and their location in the city usually offered clues as to the status of the individuals housed within. The British tended to adhere to fairly rigid plans for the placement of their buildings and to segregate their buildings and quarters from those of Ghanaians (Elleh 1997). This was in opposition to the French, for instance, who colonized
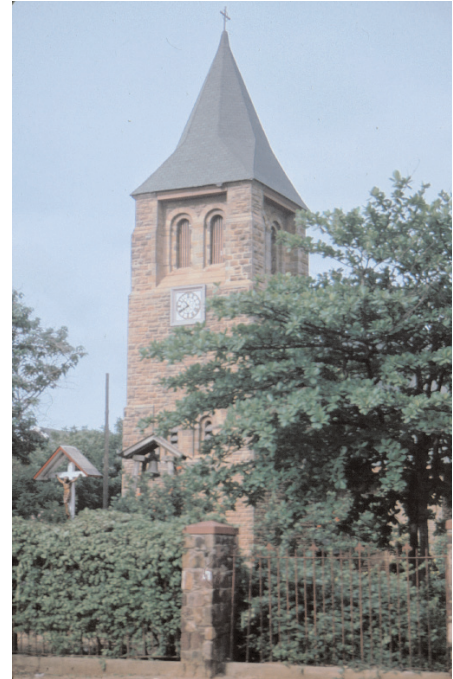
Western architecture, Accra (Cassity 2001)

University of Ghana, Legon (Cassity 2001)

Western architecture, Cape Coast (Cassity 2001)

other countries in Africa and tended to assimilate Africans into their colonized communities in a bid for control. This tactic demonstrates a direct recognition that the built environment has the ability to inhibit or facilitate communication, modulate it and control it (Rapaport 1982).

Since the 1960s, there has been a massive rural to urban migration in all parts of Africa. Improved infrastructure and amenities are focused in the cities, drawing people from rural areas to look for work and better lives (Berry 1995). In Kumasi, for example, between 1960 and 1970 the population almost doubled in size, from around 388,000 to well over 600,000. The cities, unable to cope, develop shanty towns that often reflect some rural patterns carried over from their homelands. The pressure to accommodate growing numbers of people from all over the country with everything from economic possibilities to adequate housing is enormous.

CHAPTER 4

PATTERNS IN GHANA

The complexity of Ghana's history is reflected in its built environment. In the larger cities, layers of buildings include indigenous construction, structures left by colonization and more modern construction. The current population has largely adapted their uses to existing buildings rather than rebuilding. Where new construction does exist, it has been produced at least partly by foreign architects with the result being a sometimes inappropriate use of both form and materials for the area. Considerations of climate, use, history, and even the economics of maintenance have often been ignored; consequently, buildings do not always serve the people for whom they were intended. According to Elleh (1997), there is "nothing wrong with a new kind of architecture that overshadows an under-developed architecture, but architecture is more than buildings. It is also a reflection of the behavioral, historical, religious, political, and environmental existential life of a people."

Would *A Pattern Language* serve as a better model for new construction than what has come before? Unique in its ability to be easily understood by the layperson, the book could provide a good structure for Ghanaians to use as they build and plan. The patterns within the book, however, must be closely examined before they are blindly applied. A discussion of five patterns follows. The patterns were selected based upon their obvious presence in Ghana or their conspicuous absence; I was extremely interested in the reasons behind either condition. The name of the pattern is listed first; immediately following the name is the main body of the description of the pattern given by the authors, followed by a discussion. As stated earlier, observations were made across the country, but are often particular to Cape Coast.

STREET CAFE

Pattern 88, Street Café, regards street cafes as a necessary part of community life. Cafés, are conspicuously absent, however, in Ghana except for areas which are geared directly toward tourists.

> *The street café provides a unique setting, special to cities: a place where people can sit lazily, legitimately, be on view, and watch the world go by.*
>
> *Therefore:*
> *Encourage local cafes to spring up in each neighborhood. Make them intimate places, with several rooms, open to a busy path, where people can sit with coffee or a drink and watch the world go by. Build the front of the café so that a set of tables stretch out of the café, right into the street.*

Pattern Discussion

The point of this pattern is to encourage the "social glue" of a specific area, allowing locals to get to know one another and giving them a sense of their own neighborhood. It also legitimately gives people a place to sit, for hours if they like, in one place and observe others, a favorite activity not just in Ghana but in many societies. The authors propose that a neighborhood café also provides a focus for an area, which together with other foci, begins to form an identifiable neighborhood, another pattern in the book. Although these patterns build upon one another, for purposes of directed discussion, only the street cafe pattern will be examined here.

Pattern Application in Ghana

As *A Pattern Language* suggests, street cafés are common in America, in university towns especially, but are absolutely ubiquitous in Europe, where "they are as ordinary as gas stations in the United States." They are not, however, common in Ghana. Aside from the University of Cape Coast, that has a small café

tucked away for the students, there is arguably no place which would even qual-ify as such. There are some places which come close. A few restaurants have seating outdoors available to those who wish to sit and have a drink. The patios for these restaurants, however, are located off side streets, with fences shielding customers from most foot traffic or are located on rooftops, removed from foot traf-fic altogether. They are certainly not places where most locals routinely go. There is also a café on the beach within easy reach of all Cape Coast residents, but tourists primarily frequent it. These are successful places, but they target a dis-tinct population--usually the tourist trade--not the local people. Thus, they do not meet the requirements for the street café pattern.

Commercial Street in Cape Coast is the heart of the town's business dis-trict. This vital retail area is lined with businesses which are set up in front of exist-ing buildings and from which locals sell everything from jewelry to plastic wares to food. Although it is a business district, it is also a residential district, as many locals live in the buildings above or behind their shops. There are small alleys or open spaces that would be sufficient in space to house a café. One is assured of seeing familiar faces as well as new ones. It would be hard to improve upon it as a people watching spot. In every sense, this area is ready for the kind of café which the authors prescribe in this pattern. So why are no cafés present here?

The philosophy of the street café pattern is that a neighborhood requires a space in which people can gather, talk, and watch the world go by. This informal network is one of the bonds of a community. But perhaps the "social glue" which the authors see cafés delivering is actually being formed in other ways in Ghana. A café is simply a gathering space; perhaps people are gathering informally in other places.

When Ghanaians gather specifically in groups, it seems to be primarily for special events. Sports, festivals, and special news events typically draw crowds.

At the University of Cape Coast, an important news event might draw the students to come together in a common room to watch television. Outside academic life, bars (which the authors specifically exclude from this pattern) with television sets will draw enthusiastic crowds when the Ghanaian soccer team is playing in a televised match. People regularly gather at festivals, such as the summertime Panafest, which draws large crowds from all over the country. Other than these special events, it is difficult to pinpoint a specific location where Ghanaians choose to gather in groups on a regular basis. For instance, there is a distinct lack of patronage by locals at Ghana's beaches in Cape Coast. Although they are very beautiful--shaded by palms and comfortably accessible by foot--one rarely sees locals there for entertainment or rest. Fishermen are common and many small villages are sited along the shore. On any given day, however, including weekends, there are no local crowds out to enjoy them, even though beach access is free. One might suppose that because some of the villages are fishing villages, the locals have lost interest in spending any more time around the water, but people in the heart of town who work nearby don't seem to use the beach in groups for recreation either. Reasons could include a lack of swimming skills among the locals, strong ocean currents, or perhaps health issues with the water. Without more time and interviews, it is impossible to know why locals are not found here regularly. So where do Ghanaians gather?

A clue to societal patterns of behavior in Ghana lies in the outdoors, although not on the beaches. One striking aspect of Ghanaian everyday life is how much of it is lived outside, and, in the cities, on its streets, especially in comparison to most of American life. Although there are indeed many cars, especially taxis, in Cape Coast, people also walk. They crowd the streets, call from their windows to those passing below, and greet one another in the marketplace. Often people bring their washing or cooking to an outdoor spot next to their homes that

is accessible to passersby. Those who work indoors frequently lean out of windows or doors to beckon friends or food vendors. Kiosk owners stand and talk with their friends while waiting on customers. Only in the most modern buildings are people isolated from street life. There is a constant process of communication and interaction going on. The pattern's "social glue" is happening not in a place where people consciously gather to sit, but as they move from place to place each day. People exchange news while walking to the bank, perhaps, or while selecting new spoons in the market. At night, people gather under the street lights, stroll, buy food from vendors, and chat. Thus the streets themselves become an important venue for socializing.

Cultural Considerations

There are other important customs in Ghanaian society which maintain "social glue" in a much less public arena than the street. Ghanaians are part of a collectivistic society, one in which the needs of the group supercede those of the individual (Pellow 1999). One of the most important groups in the society is the family. This group dynamic is evident in the way in which Ghanaians have lived together in large groups and have learned to share space. If "spatial locales provide the settings and contexts of interaction that are internally regionalized" (Kent 1984), then the African compound must be a primary center of group social life in Ghanaian cultural memory. The rooms within the compound provide privacy and accommodate any number of kin at any given time. Bedrooms ring the central area, known as the compound yard. The yard is a space used by everyone within the compound for both public and private activities, throughout the day. "This courtyard is the living area of the house; it is there that arbitrations occur, cooking is done, children play, stories are told and family celebrations and funerals are held." (Faculty of Architecture 1978).

Courtyard life,
(Cassity 2001)

This communal paradigm has evolved in the rural to urban influx occurring in Ghana; the "traditional space has been transplanted to the city, generally to fulfill these same social functions, but often to accommodate nontraditional social arrangements, for the renters in different rooms are generally unrelated" (Pellow 1992). Common areas are still used by all renters and neighborliness replaces kinship. For those Ghanaians who have built homes along a more western construct, yards are an important gathering spot. Here friends will gather informally to drink beer and discuss ideas. In a society where people are imprinted with the communal lifestyle, where the home has long been the center of social life for quite extended family groups, the need to gather informally and publicly outside the home in groups may be greatly reduced. Perhaps the long tradition of a fluid, multi-purpose gathering space makes a café too limited in purpose to truly attract local patronage. It is somewhat ironic that the authors' system of building, meant to be flexible and adaptable, is in this instance, too restrictive.

Other cultural factors must also be considered. Although

Compound courtyard, northern Ghana
(Rees 2001)

gender roles are changing, most women are still responsible for meals and consider it an insult for family members to eat elsewhere. Meals are referred to as "the food of my wife," a common phrase indicating both the importance of the role and of the contribution. This remains true even when women are working a full-time job and taking care of a family. Therefore, repeated visits, which are implied in the pattern description, of sitting and eating and drinking outside of the home might become a source of dispute within a family.

Cafés are most prevalent in very urban communities. A feature of urban life is the fragmentation of time; hours of the day are divided into blocks of time according to function, such as "work" or "home" time, rather than the easy flow of work and leisure still evident in Ghana. The informal incorporation of labor and socializing is a common feature of more rural societies. Although the rural to urban influx in Ghana is undoubtedly changing traditional roles and customs, it has not yet affected the rhythm of daily life for significant numbers of Cape Coast's population. In a community where one sees one's neighbors continually, where work and home are not necessarily separated, a café may not be necessary to encourage community cohesiveness.

Economic Considerations

Economics provides an equally strong argument against the implementation of the street café pattern in Ghana at this time. The prices and menu of both places mentioned above are geared toward the wallets of the many tourists who travel through the country, not its permanent residents. As in many developing countries, the local people simply do not have much extra cash to spend. As one middle class local put it, "If I had money to spend on something, it would not be on something to drink…why buy liquid when I could buy food? And who would buy food out when you can get it cheaply at home?" Additionally, in a place where clean running water is an appreciated commodity, the authors' description of

"games, fire, soft chairs, and newspapers..." seems lovely but superfluous. Here we come up against the charge of utopianism which critics have leveled against *A Pattern Language*. Surely all people enjoy and deserve this kind of comfort, but as a necessary part of a community, it simply doesn't rank.

Summary

It seems, upon analysis, that the street cafe is a very constructed pattern--it may not be artificial by European standards, but it certainly is by African standards. The Ghanaian sense of community, which the pattern is intended to reinforce, is already in place. The street café is not a necessary component to the coherence of their communities, nor is it always a possible one. As urbanization continues, however, it is possible that, without forethought, some spaces that promote Ghanaian social interaction will entirely disappear. Where might it be important and traditionally correct to maintain gathering spaces for Ghanaians?

The every day, casual interactions of Ghanaians are an important part of their social network, and encouraging a pedestrian city is key. It seems important for Ghanaians to continue meeting on their lively streets, particularly where vendors have set up shop. Additionally, the street as a gathering space has a long history in Ghana. Wide central roads were part of many of Ghana's town layouts long before any kind of motorized vehicles were used for transportation; however, as vehicular traffic increases, walking from place to place becomes riskier. On Commercial Street in Cape Coast, for example, the pedestrian must actually walk in traffic to move along the road. Parking in most places is haphazard and impedes foot traffic, a condition common to many of Ghana's urbanized towns. In order to maintain pedestrian safety and comfort, in addition to promoting social interaction, wider sidewalks and narrower roads are a worthy objective for town planners. Narrower roads generally slow traffic somewhat and parking would be limited along these stretches.

Bustling outdoor markets draw people together into the downtown area. Their location directly on the street allows pedestrians best access. Consequently, markets must continue to be centrally located, generally visible, and comfortable for their users.

Water is essential to life and, as mentioned earlier, is not necessarily available in every building. In Cape Coast, one spigot serves as the only source of clean water for the Bentsir fishing district across the road, probably serving several hundred people. At the University of Cape Coast, a spigot behind guest housing provided for families who lived on the campus nearby; women and children gather there quite early in the morning to collect water. As major infrastructure improvement in Ghana, particularly in congested areas, will take time, and as people already gather here, this is an ideal spot to enhance interaction. Simple small shelters, such as the one below, over water sources would provide shade, be inexpensive to build and maintain, and allow people to linger more comfortably.

Fluid, multiple-use spaces

Simple structures are best

wider sidewalks →

narrower road →
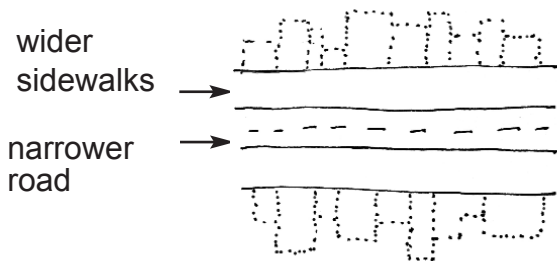
Protecting social life on sidewalks

MARKET OF MANY SHOPS

In Ghana, locals frequent open air markets for their daily household needs. This architectural form is found in *A Pattern Language* as Pattern 46, Market of Many Shops.

> *It is natural and convenient to want a market where all the different foods and household goods you need can be bought under a single roof. But when the market has a single management, like a supermarket, the foods are bland, and there is no joy in going there.*
>
> *Therefore,*
> *Instead of modern supermarkets, establish frequent marketplaces, each one made up of many smaller shops which are autonomous and specialized (cheese, meat, grain, fruit, and so on). Build the structure of the market as a minimum, which provides no more than a roof, columns which define aisles, and basic services. Within this structure allow the different shops to create their own environment, according to their individual taste and needs.*

Pattern Discussion

A place to shop has long been a necessity for people in most societies and a place which is conveniently located with a large quantity of diverse items available is sure to be frequented. Economics is another important issue. The authors quite correctly ask the question: "Is there a reasonable economic basis for a marketplace of many shops? Or are markets ruled out by the efficiencies of the supermarket?" They found that

> there do not seem to be any economic obstacles more serious than those which accompany the start of any business. The major problem is one of coordination--coordination of individual shops to form one coherent market and coordination of many similar shops, from several markets, to make bulk purchase arrangements.

The bulk purchases by an organized group of vendors would minimize costs and financial risks for vendors. Also the recommendation of a simple structure, no more than columns of wood to define the parameters of the market, requires no great financial commitment. More to the point, perhaps, is the question of where a market of shops might be located and how the property might be acquired.

Kotokuraba market, Cape Coast (Haney, US/ICOMOS 2000)

The issue of joylessness in shopping is one which westerners can well understand. The large supermarkets to which we are accustomed in the west offer low prices and great variety, but the authors suggest that these advantages are obtained at a dehumanizing cost. They suggest that if the scale is smaller, then the experience will be more enjoyable. Smaller stalls, combined with specialized wares and personal attention from vendors, would bring pleasure back into this essential part of life. No matter how appealing the local grocery store is made to be with soft music and free coffee, there is no doubt that Pike Place Market in Seattle, which the authors present as an example, is a more inviting shopping experience. This outdoor market, with its bright colors, movement, variety of goods, and personal contact with sellers, is not only lively, but also enjoyable. The senses are engaged on every level. This is the experience that the book suggests should be attempted.

Anafo Market, Cape Coast (Moore 2001)

Application of the Pattern in Ghana

The kind of marketplaces that the pattern promotes abound in Ghana. Like most countries, Ghana has a history of marketplaces. Jean Barbot (1732), writing of Ghanaian life in the late 1600s, describes "...many little lanes, crooked, and very irregular; all of them ending at the wide open place, which they commonly leave in the center of the town, and call it the market-place: serving daily both to hold the market, and to divert the inhabitants."   Towns usually had an area set aside for a market, but where there were not permanent markets, weekly markets were held somewhere on the length of the main street of town (Farrar 1996).

Today, large grocery stores are mostly an anomaly and while there are very small grocery stores dotting the towns, markets are still bustling, thriving centers of commerce in every good sized city. For many Ghanaians who live in town and walk almost everywhere, a central market that provides for all their needs is very important indeed. They seem typically to be located in business districts, are easily reached, and are a nexus for socializing. They are, without doubt, vibrant, loud, colorful, aromatic, and crowded, sometimes more like a bazaar than a farmer's

Kumasi market (Cassity 2001)

market. The market in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, covers what must be a couple of square miles; everything from tennis shoes to herbs is sold there. Kumasi, too, has a market which covers at least ten square miles, and is perhaps the largest market in West Africa. It would require many hours to see everything. In the smaller town of Cape Coast, there are at least two medium-sized markets, the Kotokuraba market and the Anafo market. These are located at opposite ends of Commercial Street and are linked together by the string of stalls and business-es established there. The markets vary slightly. The Kotokuraba market is the larger of the two and sells everything from food to hand-made utensils to rat traps.

The Anafo market sells mainly foodstuffs and has a slightly more intimate air. The markets themselves are characterized by very densely packed stalls and fairly small aisles. Personal attention by the vendors is a given--each stall is small enough so that it is inevitable.

Street market, Kumasi, (Cassity 2001)

The existence of the markets is a testimony to the truth of this pattern in Ghana. The markets, especially in the smaller towns, offer wares that reflect the talents of community members and locally grown food. The markets are well established and, given the activity in them at any time of the day, seem to be an indispensable part of town life. Human contact is maintained, and social life teems within and around them. The dense mix of commercial and residential uses in downtown Cape Coast means the markets are within easy reach for many peo-

ple. Pedestrian life, too, is so much a part of life in Ghana that even those who live some distance away will still walk to the market without difficulty. Obtaining land is not an issue as the market and its vendors are already in place. Bulk buying of produce could work especially well in Cape Coast where two markets exist to serve different sections of town. If the market incorporated more of the vendors selling directly on the street, they could also share in bulk buying and make a greater profit. Some other issues inherent in Ghana's outdoor markets, however, need to be dealt with so that the markets may continue to be a necessary part of everyday life.

Problems with the Pattern

The largest problems facing the continuance of the marketplaces are urbanization and Ghanaian attitude. In any urbanizing situation, customs will be altered, and some will be lost altogether over time. It is difficult to imagine that the larger markets, such as those in Accra and Kumasi, might ever disappear completely; the smaller markets, such as those in Cape Coast, however, may eventually be overtaken by modernization. While some people appreciate the fresh produce and the relaxed air of the local market, others cite refrigeration and efficiency as desperately needed. Some Ghanaians already prefer to shop in some of the western style grocery stores that have been built. They are typically comparable in price to the markets and have the additional attractive quality of being a novelty experience. Should more chains eventually come in, the issue of joy in the shopping experience may well take a backseat to the issues of efficiency and cost. In a country where a third of the population is currently living below the poverty line (http:www.governmentguide.com), pleasure in shopping may be a secondary consideration.

Summary

The market pattern has a long history and, currently, a healthy existence in Ghana. It is important that the markets continue to evolve along with the economy in order for them to maintain a presence in Ghana. Markets are a cornerstone of social life in a way grocery stores as we know them cannot replicate; it would be a shame for locals to lose an important means of interaction and the sheer experience of the market to a western idea of shopping. They should remain as open air markets, both to retain existing character and use, and also to take advantage of breezes. It would seem likely that over time, as more grocery stores come into Cape Coast, vendors might have to specialize in what they offer in order to compete. Costs could potentially be cut if the vendors pooled their money to buy in bulk, as Alexander and his colleagues suggest. The markets themselves could potentially be more pleasant places to shop. Neither of the markets in Cape Coast has one common roof over all the stalls as is suggested in the pattern, but each has its own small roof or overhang which largely shades the vendor. The aisles are exposed to the sun, making it very hot in the middle of the day, especially for customers. A covered walkway for visitors or a system of roofs over the markets could be constructed with minimal expense and maximum efficacy. Thatched roofs or a simple overhead structure upon which vines could grow would also work. Timber could be used as anchoring posts with a system of heavy wires acting as the conduit for vines. This would allow any arrange-

timber posts

simple overhead structure

wires for vines
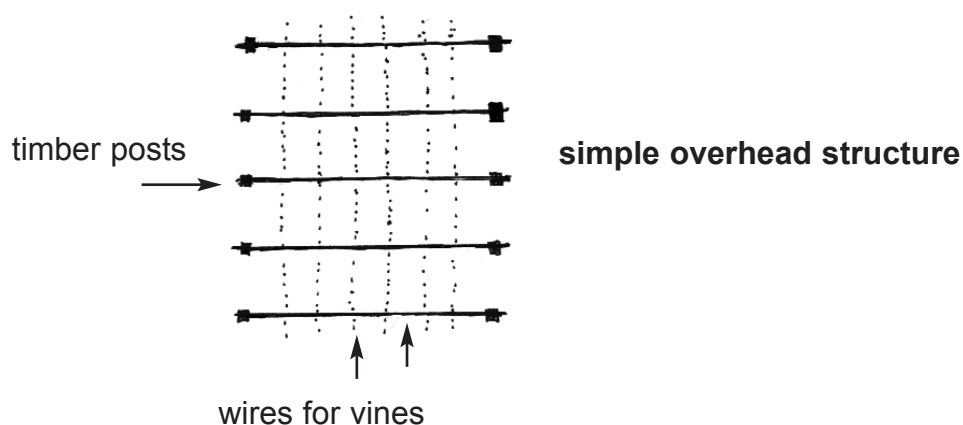
ment of stalls below. Also, keeping or planting trees around the perimeter of the markets would help with both shade and aesthetics. Should the infrastructure in the city advance to include electricity to the area, refrigeration might become possible in the marketplace, making it more attractive to a larger body of locals.

FOUR STORY LIMIT

Very tall buildings are not yet a trend in Ghana. Architecture in the past, for various reasons, has resulted in lower buildings being constructed. Pattern 21, Four Story Limit, is certainly in place.

There is abundant evidence to show that high buildings make people crazy.

Therefore:
In any urban area, no matter how dense, keep the majority of buildings four stories high or less. It is possible that certain buildings should exceed this limit, but they should never be buildings for human habitation.

Pattern Discussion

The authors' contention here is that tall buildings "actually damage people's minds and feelings." They cite a study published in the *British Medical Journal* in 1967 that Fanning "shows a direct correlation between incidence of mental disorder and the height of people's apartments. The high-er people live off the ground, the more likely are they to suffer mental illness." Other studies conducted in other countries are also cited to support the premise. Additionally, Alexander, et. al., cite research from several sources that found a
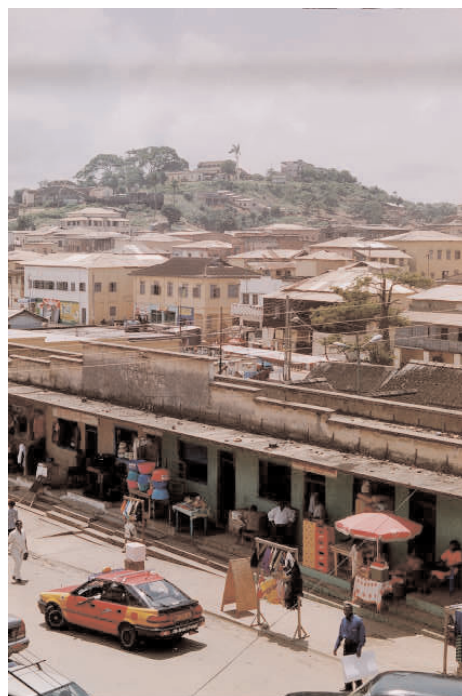
Cape Coast (Moore 2001)

correlation between high-rises and crime and a correlation between high rises and delayed social development in children.

Like other patterns in the book, the aim of this pattern is to promote connection. When done correctly, the relatively low construction of a building should help to maintain connections between the building itself and the town. For people at four stories or below, communication is possible between windows and street, and important visual information is comprehensible. According to the authors, when people are higher up than this, "[t]he visual detail is lost; people speak of the scene below as if it were a game, from which they are completely detached." It is difficult to see one's neighbors, much less hail them. Clearly this detachment does nothing to foster community.

An example of smaller scale in Cape Coast on Commercial Street (Moore 2001)

Pattern Application in Cape Coast

Cape Coast adheres to the four story pattern the authors prescribe. Almost all of its buildings are three stories or below. The height of buildings constructed by foreigners during colonization and those constructed and lived in by Ghanaians dovetail in this instance. Some of the vitality of Cape Coast is attributable to this pattern. While some of the buildings themselves may be in disrepair, the consistency of the town's small scale buildings makes a very attractive scene. The topography of the area is hilly; one can look across the expanse of the town to small buildings nestled into the landscape. From street level, one feels in touch with all of one's built surroundings, not overwhelmed by them.

A Pattern Language's "casual, every-day society that occurs on the side-walks and streets and on the gardens and porches" is a common sight in Cape Coast. It is typical to see people leaning on the sill of a second story window watching the street life below or standing in the doorway of a home or business. This is usually accompanied by greetings or harangues for friends and acquaintances. This easy communication keeps the decision "to go out for some public life" from becoming "formal and awkward" as Alexander and his co-authors fear. The open windows in Cape Coast provide great access for communication between those in the buildings and those on the street. This is true for businesses and homes alike. In the Town and Country Office, staff would often lean out the window to talk to or admonish the children who attended school next door, or to hail vendors selling bags of peanuts or fresh pineapple. This sort of informal communication would be impossible from several stories up.

Another example is Bentsir, a fishing district extending from the southeast end of Commercial Street to the beach in Cape Coast. Here, streets are replaced by footpaths leading past people's homes. Houses are generally quite small, one story with windows looking out over the paths. Some of these footpaths leading to the shore travel straight through informal family courtyards. The feeling of community here is great in part because of the easy contact between dwellers and passersby. Generally, the ability to communicate easily from inside to outside makes the pattern work.

Existing Architectural Scale

The pattern is helped along in Cape Coast by Ghanaian architectural history and climate. Low buildings are prevalent and reflect an indigenous building pattern. Early residential patterns were one-story. "As population grew, the village expanded outwards, for all buildings, except in Kumasi [the capital of the country] and a few state capitals, were single-storey ones" (McLeod, 1981). Homes, made

of clay and stone, typically started with a rectangular hut and grew to accommodate family members. Additional rooms were added at right angles to the base room; courtyards were thus formed in the central part of the home as a gathering space. The home expanded out, not up. Roofs were often thatched, although unroofed rooms were also common. Some rooms, called patos (a sort of verandah) had only three walls and were open to the elements. These were typically used for sleeping, gathering or storage. This pattern of building allowed better air circulation in a very hot country, more sunlight, and a savings of labor and conservation of resources. Today, in agricultural areas in northern Ghana, rooftops are frequently flat on one story buildings and accommodate sleepers during the dry season. Mud hut compounds, even those of chiefs, which may accommodate many extended family members, may go up to two stories but rarely any higher. The central courtyard feature has been retained; much of Ghanaian life continues to take place outdoors. Indeed, Ghanaian culture requires that people retain their connection to the outdoors and their neighbors. "Man in Africa does not seek seclusion within isolated rooms, but, on the contrary, he strives for permanent contact with nature and with the community" (Kultermann 1963). Lower buildings and rooms more open to the elements have maintained these contacts in Ghana.

When the British formally colonized Ghana in the early 1900s, they naturally built using the materials at hand, just as the Ghanaians did. Mud, or adobe, was appropriate to use for buildings two to three stories tall; consequently, non-indigenous architecture remained low. Buildings were roofed and were more closed as European custom demanded, but overall they retained the same sense of scale as
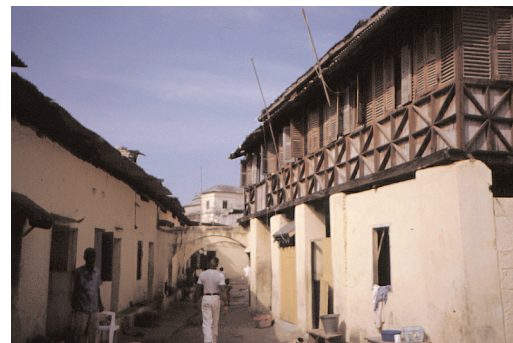
Small scale western architecture, Accra (Cassity 2001)

the indigenous architecture. Modern-day Ghanaians in Cape Coast have maintained these patterns. Although traditional architecture calls for lower buildings, lack of resources has also limited much modern construction that might well have resulted in high rise buildings. Many people who live and work in Cape Coast choose to repair or to add to existing buildings; the structure is regarded as a resource even though it may be in less than perfect condition. Those who choose to build from the ground up tend to do so in stages over a period of years, as money becomes available. This typically happens outside the core of the business district; thus the heart of Cape Coast's historic architecture remains largely untouched by large scale building.

Exceptions to the Pattern

There are a few notable exceptions to the general scale of the town. Cape Coast Castle, initially built as a trading hut in the 1600s and added to over time, is situated at the edge of town on the beach. Its primary use was as a prison for captured Africans before they were loaded onto slave ships. The outer walls are high and windowless, and the castle itself is several stories high in places. It dominates the landscape as one looks seaward. This is not a structure where one finds much street life although there are vendors across the road set up for the visitors who tour the castle. The lack of street life is perhaps attributable to the fact that the Castle was never intended to maintain ties to the street and, given its somber history, has never been adapted to do so.

Additionally, there are a few structures on Commercial Street looking toward the castle that are of more obvious modern (western) architectural style and materials. These are government or office buildings, perhaps dating from the 1960s and 1970s when Ghana had achieved independence and was modernizing its architecture (Kultermann 1963). Concrete was substituted for the traditional materials of clay and stone; the buildings have many glass win-

dows, and they are at least five to seven stories high. All the windows are intact, and it is likely that these buildings have air conditioning. In spite of the fact that there is a very busy bank almost next door and the Bentsir district just down the street, it is rare to see signs of activity, vending, perching, at the base of this building. These are common activities just a

Six-to-seven story government office buildings, Cape Coast (Moore 2001)

few buildings down. This lack of activity may be attributable to high buildings and a broken connection as the pattern suggests. It may also be due to a handrail that runs the length of the building, separating if from the street. Perhaps if these are indeed governmental buildings, vending or lingering is discouraged. Also, these buildings are on the outer edges of the business district where trade begins dropping off anyway. Without further observation and interviews, it is difficult to ascertain which, if any, of these may be the reason for the absence of activity.

Low, newer buildings maintain the pattern in Cape Coast also. A store called Pep on Commercial Street in Cape Coast is a good example. It is part of a length of one-story shops that share common walls. These modern buildings are rare exceptions to the older architecture that surrounds them. Pep, with its two glass front windows and iron bar reinforcements, mimics the style of some chain stores in the west; indeed, it is a chain store based in South Africa. From the point of view of the pattern, however, it is successful. Despite

a more closed entrance at the front of the store, there was never a lack of employees who would wander outside to stand in the entrance and observe what was going on, often entertaining themselves and passersby with music.

Communications remained intact between the inside and the outside of the store.

Summary

The four story limit pattern is quite successful in Cape Coast and is fostered by several different factors. The climate allows year-round open windows, resulting in tremendous accessibility for communication. While a very cold climate would not affect issues of scale, it would impact levels of communication--a certain barricading behind thick walls would be necessary in a frigid climate. The density of the buildings and the fact that they have a zero setback from the street also facilitates this pattern. When people lean out their windows, they are almost directly over the edge of the street and in close contact with those below. Structures set back 15 feet from street, again, while not influencing scale, would certainly influence communication. Finally, while Cape Coast has its share of traffic, it has a terrific pedestrian life also. The fact that there are always people on the streets facilitates the communication process, which *A Pattern Language* deems so essential.
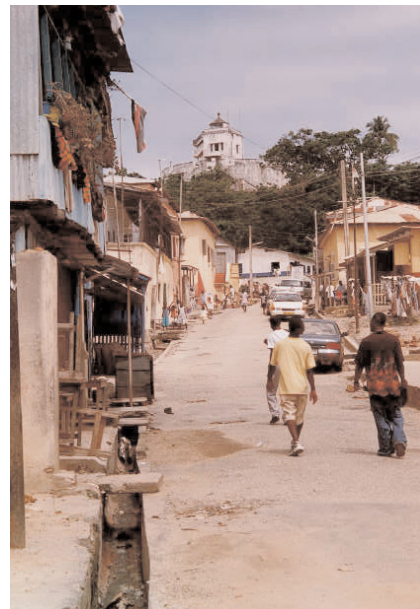
Examples of zero setback,
Cape Coast
(Moore 2001)

Should taller buildings become commonplace in Ghana, one can predict that they will indeed have a debilitating effect, over time, on communities. Given the pattern of Ghanaians to live outdoors, to conduct their social lives there, living in apartments far removed from the street would essentially be shutting themselves away. Such an act of isolation on a continual basis would be a violation of the culture's mores. That there would be cultural repercussions is likely; whether these would include mental illness is difficult to say.

As a final consideration, while the four story limit pattern makes sense from a cultural point of view, it does have an impact on the physical environment. People are moving into cities in Ghana at a rate which defies planning efforts. Housing is already an issue. Should one decide not to build up to accommodate new residents, building out is the only other option. Controlling sprawl would undoubtedly become an issue within a few years' time. For many reasons, efforts should be made to provide infrastructure and job opportunities in the more rural areas of the country.

INDIVIDUALLY OWNED SHOPS

Pattern 87, Individually Owned Shops, suggests the benefits of much smaller shops in a town, rather than larger ones. This pattern is conspicuously present in Ghana.

> *When shops are too large, or controlled by absentee owners, they become plastic, bland, and abstract.*

> *Therefore:*
> *Do what you can to encourage the development of individually owned shops. Approve applications for business licenses only if the business is owned by those people who actually work and manage the store. Approve new commercial building permits only if the proposed structure includes many very, very small rental spaces.*

Pattern Discussion

The authors contend that franchises are "vicious" and should be prohibited because they contribute to the failure of smaller businesses. Generally, the pattern states that large businesses also contribute to a look which is generic and devoid of character. Alexander, et.al., are referring to the kind of large discount store all over the United States that continually crowds out small business owners. These large businesses can buy in bulk and keep their prices low, thereby making it too tough economically for small businesses to compete. The pattern also recommends keeping businesses small so that start-up capital is minimized. Lower inventory costs and rent mean a smaller financial risk for owners. The pattern also equates smaller businesses with more personalized customer service.

Pattern Application in Cape Coast

Cape Coast retail is dominated by just the kinds of small businesses that Alexander and his colleagues recommend. One can walk about a mile up Commercial Street with very little break in the string of shops and kiosks lining it. Vendors and small businesses up and down the length of the street give it its enormous energy. Typical shops include fabric stores, music stores, and small grocery stores. Locals and tourists alike shop here. The shops, ranging from miniscule in size up to about 150 square feet, work exceedingly well. They are usually directly on the street and almost completely open to it. Walls are usually lined with fairly shallow shelves, and one can see at a glance almost everything the business has to offer. If the store is not configured to be open to the street, then the doors are open and a sample of goods is displayed outside
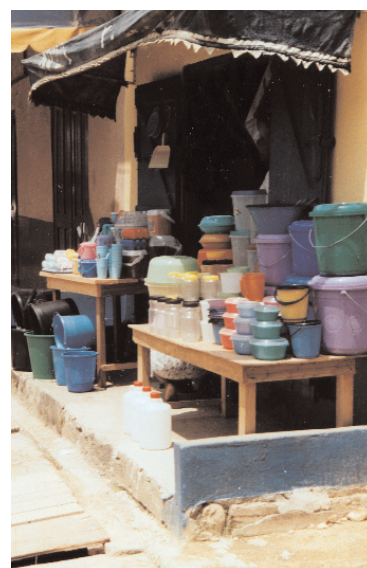

Small shop, Cape Coast
(Moore 2001)

in front of the store. Shops are usually very simply constructed, and when not in an actual building, are built out onto its facade. The stores are often a family concern, and an owner is always present. It is a rare experience not to receive excellent customer service; sheer proximity of customers and owners promotes personalized service. It is not uncommon for the owner of a fabric shop, for instance, to finger each bolt of cloth, describe its origin, and explain the meaning of the symbols stamped upon it, or for a music store owner to talk

Fabric shop , Kumasi
(Cassity 2001)

enthusiastically about favorite compact discs. This helps to get the "personal quality" the authors mention back into business transactions. There is nothing "plastic" or "bland" about the shops themselves or the service one receives. The street itself is full of character and life. Kiosks are also a popular way for enterprising Ghanaians to use a small amount of space for selling their goods. These stalls on Commercial Street are usually quite small--maybe 25 square feet at the most-- although larger stalls are also typical. The ones set up across from Cape Coast Castle for the benefit of tourists are approximately 100 square feet. Kiosks are set

up wherever space can be found, and once vendors have appropriated a space, they tend to put down roots. Many pour concrete foundations so their kiosks cannot be moved. The stalls fill in the spaces between buildings or are set up in front of them.
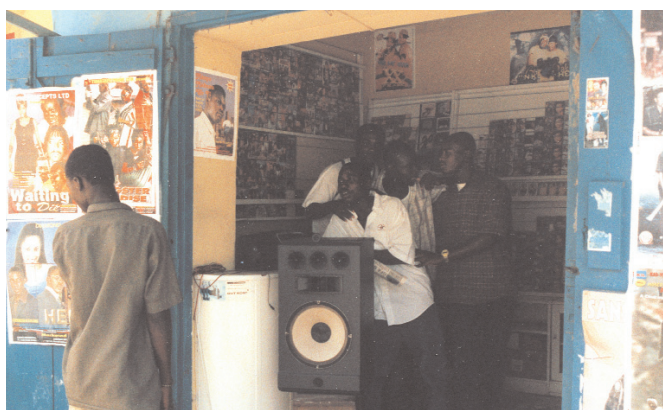
Music store, Cape Coast
(Moore 2001)

One of the ways in which this pattern is facilitated seems to be that everyone shares a similar economic footing. The number and variety of shops and services is large, although their various inventories typically are not. Many of them, just steps apart, sell the same wares. One immediately perceives that capital is limited, and so the size of the shops and their inventories are limited also. It takes capital coming in from outside of town to afford a much bigger store; therefore, there hasn't been a sweep of larger shops throughout Cape Coast. It is also conceivable that the small stores are an outgrowth of the marketplace tradition, and therefore a custom with which people are comfortably familiar.

Pedestrian traffic also allows this pattern to prosper. Taxis generally are used to transport people when some distance is involved; otherwise, people go by foot. Designated parking lots are largely non-existent in Cape Coast, and the streets are not set up to accommodate large, efficient amounts of parking. Shops are most easily accessed by pedestrians-who comprise most of the population of Cape Coast. The mix of residential/commercial districts means that people can buy almost anything they need within a relatively short distance of their homes, and the density of the shops compresses the shopping area.

Additionally, there may be problems with shipping/transport of goods to vendors. With only a little over a third of the country's highways paved

Kiosk, Accra (Cassity 2001)

(http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gh.html 2002), transport problems may keep inventory from out of town from being replaced reliably and fre-

quently. Shop owners may in part be forced to keep their inventory small to accommodate this circumstance.

Exceptions to the Pattern

Alexander's distaste for franchises would undoubtedly extend to Pep, the chain store from South Africa. Pep, with its two glass front windows and iron bar reinforcements, parallels the style of some chain stores in the west. It is roughly 1000 square feet in size and the interior of the store is completely closed off from the street, exhibiting none of the fluidity of space which characterizes almost all the shops nearby. Everything from dish towels to sundresses is sold inside, but none of the merchandise reflects the local community. One could as easily be in the United States as in Ghana. There are clerks and aisles, and registers at the front of the store, very much like a mini K-Mart. Prices seemed comparable to slightly higher than those of nearby vendors. The store did indeed look bland on the outside and was bland on the inside, although there didn't seem to be a lack of customers. Right now one gets the impression that it is more of a novelty shop than a threat to smaller retailers, but a developing economy may change that. Pep may, unfortunately, be the wave of the future.

Alexander and his colleagues argue that businesses "run for money alone" destroy community life whereas smaller shops "run as a way of life" enhance it. While the second idea is infinitely more appealing, and is actually what is taking place in Ghana, it has its limitations. This pattern requires a commitment on the part of the business owner to limit growth and, therefore, to limit profits. It seems more reasonable to require this of people who have the advantage of a stable economy and who are reasonably sure their needs will be met on a continuing basis. Otherwise, the notion of retaining the character of a town seems a bit quaint as opposed to the reality of having to make a living in a fluctuating economy. A third of Ghana's people is still living below the poverty line, and this is an important consideration.

Pep on Commercial Street, Cape Coast
(Moore 2001)

Summary

This pattern is definitely in place in Ghana and is currently working well there; like most things, however, the pattern should be allowed to evolve with the evolution of a town, and not adhered to in a static manner. Generally, one would have to agree that franchises and absentee owners are not desirable; it would be difficult to argue against this, especially if one comes from a western country and is familiar with their impact. Seizing an opportunity for growth, however, does not necessarily mean creating huge stores. *A Pattern Language* refers to shops that are 50 square feet as "just room for a person and some merchandise--but plenty big enough." In what is essentially a seven by seven foot room, "big enough" means one, perhaps two, people can come in and look around at a time. Surely greater profits could be made without sacrificing personal service or character in a store which is two to three times this size, should someone desire to build one. And certainly stores this size would not massively undercut the prices of other stores nearby. Maintaining a Ghanaian identity while allowing a certain amount of expansion seems to be the issue. The blandness of a Peps and the strict sepa-ration of exterior and interior should generally be avoided. When building larger

shops, certain characteristics could be considered, such as maintaining openings to the street and retaining density of shops.

As is evident in the United States, larger businesses may eventually over-run the small ones unless some restrictions are in place, especially at the scale *A Pattern Language* recommends. Ghana, however, might have an advantage over more entrenched governmental bureaucracies: in this relatively new government, regulations could potentially be decided and put into place very quickly. If Ghanaians wish to preserve this pattern, they may have the means to do so quick-ly. It is also possible, however, that Ghanaians may not be interested in preserving this pattern. A large percentage of the population desires the benefits of a thriving free market economy, and in this era of Ghana's development and economic strug-gle, the local population may not have the heart to restrict any part of it.

maintaining access to the street

wide openings to shop
from street
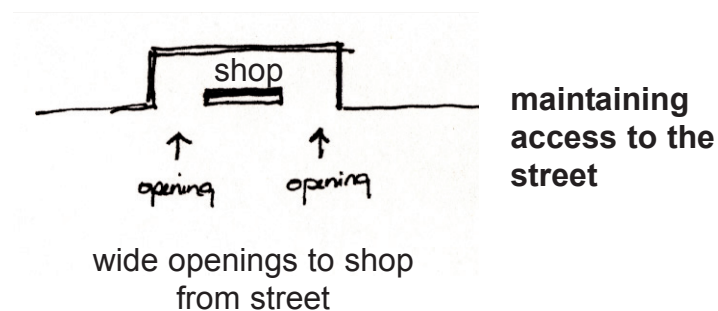
SLEEPING IN PUBLIC

In Ghana, one sees people sleeping in public almost everywhere. Pattern 94, Sleeping in Public, is well established.

It is a mark of success in a park, public lobby or a porch,
when people can come there and fall asleep.

Therefore,
Keep the environment filled with ample benches, comfortable
places, corners to sit on the ground, or lie in comfort in the
sand. Make these places relatively sheltered, protected from
circulation, perhaps up a step, with seats and grass to slump
down upon, read the paper and doze off.

Pattern Discussion

Alexander and his colleagues put it this way: "In a society which nurtures people and fosters trust, the fact that people sometimes want to sleep in public is the most natural thing in the world. If someone lies down on a pavement or a bench and falls asleep, it is possible to treat it seriously as a need." The pattern goes on to describe the hostile attitudes which public sleeping produces in the authorities in many countries and how citizens become uncomfortable when faced with it. It is, however, not first and foremost a social problem, according to the book's authors. They suggest that the lack of amenable facilities for sleeping publicly contributes to the absence of this behavior, saying that "these attitudes are largely shaped by the environment itself. In an environment where there are very few places to lie down and sleep people who sleep in public seem unnatural, because it is so rare." As a solution, the authors suggest various modes of providing resting sites that might lure people into slumber: substantial building edges, stairs, seat spots, and so on.

Application of the Pattern in Ghana

One often sees people sleeping outside in Ghana. Although one can observe public sleeping just about anywhere, it seems to be most prevalent in the larger cities, such as Kumasi or Accra, Ghana's capital city. During the day, people of all ages sleep on benches by their stalls, next to a four lane road, in parks, on low walls, under trees, wherever they are comfortable, without interference

from others. There is no directed attempt to provide comfortable spots for sleep-ing, nor do all the places people pick to sleep seem ideal, yet the behavior per-sists. The warm climate is conducive to outdoor napping and the sight of people sleeping is delightful. It seems to indicate comfort with both the environment and the people who are in it. The presence of the pattern seems to indicate a level of mutual trust among its community members. The reasons this behavior exists in Ghana, however, are myriad.

Sleeping in public is quite common in the rural north. Loose clusterings of compounds make up very small towns, remote from any commerce or conven-tional idea of a village. Agriculture comes directly up to the walls of the com-pounds, and, at a distance, an unpaved dusty road might wind past. These areas are not magnets for outsiders, but have clearly been homes to families for many years. People reliably spend their days out of doors working and rest and nap beneath baobab trees or wherever there is shade. Harking back once again to the Ghanaian tradition of living most of one's day outside, and given the daytime heat, sleeping in public would seem to be a most natural behavior in rural areas. However, according to conversations with several Ghanaians, sleeping in public is a recent occurrence in urban Ghana, just happening within the last twenty years. The interviews indicated that the likely reason that it has become more common there is that those Ghanaians who sleep in public do so out of necessi-ty. There is a growing contingent of homeless people in the larger cities, a con-sequence of the rural to urban migration. People have flooded the cities in Ghana, trying to find better opportunities for themselves and their families. In an urbaniz-ing society, moving to the city to look for work often means going where one has no family or friends. Given the fact that many have no money either, and that the weather is reliably warm in Ghana, sleeping on the street has become a matter of course for some people. Women who do this are known in the Ga dialect as

"kayayo" or "errand girls." They are available for any errands or jobs they can get in the streets and resort to sleeping there also. Young women living on the streets tend to stick together for safety at night. This is an uncommon situation in Ghanaian society where historically families tend to live closely together and can accommodate one another. Also, the sheer number of people moving into the cities has defeated available housing there. Limited opportunities for jobs within the cities contribute also, and suddenly a city is contending with a permanent group of homeless people which it never had before.

However, with the country's agricultural history as a cultural consideration, it seems possible that at least some of the people sleeping in more urban areas are sleeping because they are comfortable doing so, not because they are home-less. Perhaps this behavior is found primarily in people who are in a lower eco-nomic bracket than those who work in offices. For those who work outside daily, it might be very natural to stretch on on a stall bench or under a tree and sleep for a few minutes. Perhaps as people become more urbanized, their views on what appropriate behavior is begin to alter also. Sleeping in public may be regarded by urbanites as a somewhat rustic thing to do. It is difficult to tell without more interviews.
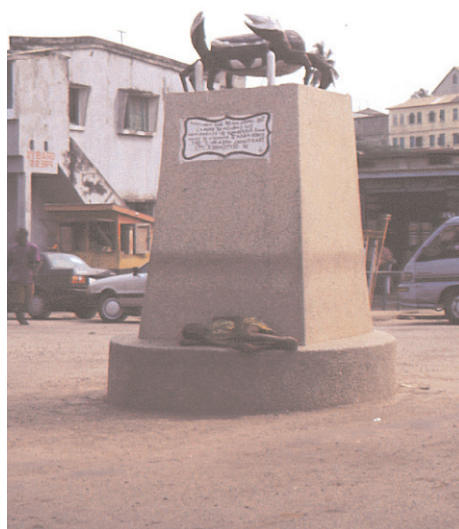
For some people, sleeping in public may be indicative of illness. Malaria and AIDS are both problem dis-eases in Africa; it would not be unusual for a very ill person to simply stop and sleep during the day when necessary.

Aside from cultural con-siderations and climate, safety is another factor to be consid-

Child, rural north (Cassity 2001)

ered. For a westerner and a woman, the first thought that occurs when thinking of sleeping in public, even in the daytime, is that of safety. One would definitely be apprehensive about being robbed, if not assaulted. In Ghana, crime is low and robbery is rare indeed. There is a very strong societal attitude against stealing in Ghana. An interview with a Ghanaian woman from Elmina revealed that if one is caught stealing, it is approved for a crowd to beat the offender before turning him over to the police. Stealing is considered an offense against the entire society, not just against the person from

Child sleeping on monument in traffic circle, Cape Coast (Cassity 2001)

whom something was stolen. Violence, although rising, is also comparatively rare by most western standards. Vulnerability of person or possessions, therefore, is not as much of an issue as it would be in the United States.

Man asleep, Kumasi
(Moore 2001)

Summary

The pattern suggests that societal attitudes do not determine the act of sleeping in public; rather, providing appropriate benches and places to sleep changes attitudes which, in turn, allows the behavior to occur. This is an interesting supposition and in direct opposition to

what actually happens in the United States. The United States is filled with the sort of places for public sleeping that *A Pattern Language* recommends, such as parks, plazas, steps, etc., but a wide range of people using them for sleep is not necessarily routine, except perhaps, for the homeless. Perhaps issues of safety, perhaps the pace of life affect this behavior in the United States; whatever the case, the structures alone have not changed societal attitudes and behaviors.

In Ghana, it seems that sleeping in public happens both because of economic and cultural reasons, without the consciously applied physical structure that the authors of *A Pattern Language* put forth as crucial to the pattern. While it is true that people do still sleep in public in Ghana, there is a growing disfavor with it in urban areas. It became clear during conversations with urban middle-to-upper class Ghanaians that they would not be comfortable with sleeping in public. They associated this behavior solely with the homeless, and their reactions ranged from distress to distaste with the situation. This may reflect class differences as well as the impact of urbanization. Modernization and the assumption of office jobs with eight hour days may cause some people to regard this behavior as inappropriate in an urban environment. Aside from the issues of homelessness and illness, it is possible that this accepted behavior in rural areas will continue to decline in urban areas due to societal disapproval.

An argument can certainly be made that this pattern reflects a bias toward less urbanized communities. A certain familiarity and predictability of other community members is essential to develop the level of trust required for sleeping in public. Urbanized societies by their nature incorporate disparate groups of people, and the population is typically in flux. The level of vulnerability which sleeping in public requires may simply not be possible for those living in larger cities.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

A Pattern Language serves as a valuable lens through which even new-comers to the planning/building process can view their environments and begin to make solid decisions. Clarity of vision, however, will depend upon the user keeping in mind certain very specific factors--potential users, their backgrounds, and their needs, both present and future. These areas of concern involve some criticisms which are not resolved within the scope of the book. Utopianism, for example, in and of itself is not a bad thing, as forward-reaching vision is a necessary impetus to change. However, Alexander and his colleagues' ideals spring from a European framework. Kimberly Dovey's (1990) assessment that the pattern language would require an overhaul of existing economic and/or political systems is a point well taken. The tiny individually owned shops, for example, may be charming, but are not terribly feasible in a competitive economy. They would require an agreement among shop owners in a community to limit shop size in order for them all to stay in business. A developing economy, with its special needs and unique considerations, further complicates the picture. Ghana's cities are growing and the country's economy desperately needs this growth. It will be a rare community which is willing to limit its financial prospects for the sake of a more livable town, especially when towns and regions around them may not be willing to do the same. Ward's (1991) criticism of utopianism is also not entirely answered, as the pattern of sleeping in public bears out. In an ideal society, it would indeed be excellent for all members of a society to sleep comfortably in public, but it is a unique community in which this is actually possible, for a variety of reasons. It is

interesting in Ghana, that the pattern is in place partly due to poverty, and not to a set of ideal conditions which allow for its continuance.

The air of nostalgia which permeates the book is not manifested in one particular thing, nor one particular style of architecture, but generally emerges as an attitude for a way of life, one characteristic of European village life. The authors consistently recommend architecture and behavior appropriate to these smaller communities which were typical across Europe in the pre-industrial age. Indeed, the presence today of some of the patterns in Ghana is due to the fact that Ghanaian society is largely pre-industrial. This, however, is changing. For instance, the four story pattern serves Ghanaian society well and has done so for centuries; however, the rapid growth and the surge in population in the larger cities makes the continued existence of this pattern on a wide scale somewhat doubtful. Eventually, most cities begin to build up as they run out of room. The smaller markets, also, may struggle for existence as urbanization takes hold. Although the premises behind these patterns may be true, the practical issues of applicability become pressing. Without directives for handling real economic and social issues which come with urbanization, some of the patterns will not survive.

It has been demonstrated that not all the patterns in *A Pattern Language* will be adaptable across cultures. One cannot blithely assume that what evolves naturally in one country is going to work as a mandated element in another. Ryan's (1980) criticism that there is an "aura of prejudice" in the selection of the patterns rings true with a bias toward western building patterns. It has been shown through the examination of the five patterns in this thesis, that the mere existence of the patterns in Ghana is not necessarily proof of their success, present or continued. And a pattern which may seem likely, or charming, may actually, upon deeper inspection, be an imposition on a culture. An example is the cafe pattern. Given the factors of indigenous life, colonization, climate, and the diffi-

culties of a developing country, it almost seems as though separate pattern languages would be required to handle all the many layers which exist in Ghana.

Recommendations

Underlying all of the patterns in *A Pattern Language* is the authors' urging of attention to vernacular architecture, to what is specifically true to a given locale, based on its history and culture. The dialect of the vernacular, attended and adhered to, is what will encourage "aliveness". This is so vital to the whole of the pattern language. The quality of aliveness transcends cultures; however, in practice it will be translated quite differently in the built environment. It seems highly unlikely, in our many and diverse societies, that one's cultural background will not come into play in one's experience of the environment.

Taking a look at this from another angle brings one to the issue of nature versus nurture, which seems peculiarly applicable here. Does our environment solely shape us or does what we inherently bring to it shape us? The answer is, of course, both. This debate raged in psychological and educational circles for years before it calmed down (Lefton 2000).The debate itself lasted for so long partly because the wrong question was asked. It is not a question of either/or, but a question of degree. Each person will exhibit a different amount of influence from either side of the equation; no one correct answer satisfactorily covers everyone. I believe this is also true of our built environments and the pattern language. While we will have some areas of commonality based on being human, our cultures shape us and our perceptions. Our ideas of "aliveness" will differ from culture to culture just as surely as our ideas of beauty vary. Certainly the compounds of Africa have the cultural "aliveness" which Alexander promotes, they almost shimmer with "rightness," but these beautiful structures work so well in Ghana because they are uniquely African, both in form and in function. And function is key: How we use our structures is always going to be a product of history and culture, if they

are indeed "alive" buildings. The stated problem, then, in each of the patterns will stay consistent over time, but its solution and expression in the built environment should be particular to a given society.

Designers in all professions need to fully explore the possibility of cultural bias in their own work and remain sensitive to the needs of other cultures in which they design. A mindset such as that which Jane Jacobs (1961) brought to her research for *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* is necessary when exploring these patterns--one which observes what *is*, not what *should be*, working. Indeed, a comparison of theories and conclusions by Jacobs and Alexander, et. al., would be a useful topic for further study. In the interim, users, as encouraged by Alexander and the other authors, will make the final decision as to what is appropriate--but they will need to approach their task with a certain dispassion and a great deal of caution.

Although some patterns in *A Pattern Language* do apply to many cultures, one cannot assume universality. All those using the patterns in *A Pattern Language* must at least begin the design process by regarding each culture as unique, in both customs and built expression. Careful observation and a heightened sensitivity to the nuances of a society and how it uses its buildings will help to ensure the appropriateness, and finally, the usefulness, of a design.

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