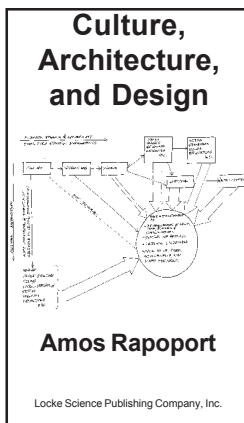


Culture, Architecture, and Design

Amos Rapoport



- Discusses the importance of culture for design and offers a definition of what culture is
- Describes the purpose of design
- Provides a description of the field of Environment-Behavior Studies by answering these three questions:
 1. Which bio-social, psychological, and cultural characteristics of human beings influence which characteristics of the built environment?
 2. What effects do which aspects of which environments have on which groups of people, under what circumstances, and when, why, and how?
 3. Given this two-way interaction between people and environments, there must be mechanisms that link them. What are these mechanisms?

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Focusing on answers to these and other questions, *Culture, Architecture, and Design* discusses the relationship between culture, the built environment, and design by showing that the purpose of design is to create environments that suit users and is thus user-oriented. Design must also be based on knowledge of how people and environments interact. Therefore, design needs to respond to culture.

The purpose of design is to improve environmental quality, which the author defines as the many characteristics, or attributes, of environments that respond to wants and are preferred (chosen) or rejected. It is linked to culture through the questions: What is better? Better for whom? How do we know it is better? And so on. Design can then be seen as a process of choosing among alternatives, which involves tradeoffs and ranking components of environmental quality.

Cultural variables also play a significant role in design. They are important in understanding specific user groups, situations, and environments. Environment can be understood as (1) the organization of space, time, meaning, and communication; (2) a system of settings; (3) the cultural landscape; and (4) the fixed, semi-fixed, and non-fixed elements of systems of settings.

Amos Rapoport comes to the conclusion that there needs to be a “change from designing for one’s own culture to designing for users’ cultures and basing design on research in EBS, anthropology, and other relevant fields. Such changes should transform architecture and design so that it, in fact, does what it claims to do and is supposed to do — create better (i.e., more supportive) environments.”

Table of Contents:

Introduction • The Nature and Role of Environment-Behavior Studies • The Nature and Types of Environments • The Importance of Culture • Preference, Choice, and Design • The Nature of Culture • The ‘Scale’ of Culture • Making ‘Culture’ Usable • Examples of Application • Footnotes • Index

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