Culture, Architecture, and Design

By Amos Rapoport

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The three basic questions of EBS are (1) What 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?; and (3) Given this two-way interaction between people and environments, there must be mechanisms that link them. What are these mechanisms? 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, therefore, user-oriented. Design must also be based on knowledge of how people and environments interact. Thus, design needs to respond to culture. In discussing (1) the nature and role of Environment-Behavior Studies (EBS); (2) the types of environments; (3) the importance of culture; (4) preference, choice, and design; (5) the nature of culture; (6) the scale of culture; and (7) how to make culture usable, Amos Rapoport states that there needs to be a "change from designing for one's own culture to understanding and 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."

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Amos Rapoport is Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he was previously Professor of Architecture and Anthropology. He received his Bachelor's degree in Architecture from Melbourne University (Australia), his Master's in Architecture from Rice University as a Fulbright student, and his Postgraduate Diploma of Town and Regional Planning from the University of Melbourne. He has taught at the Universities of Melbourne and Sydney (Australia), the University of California at Berkeley, and University College London. He has held visiting appointments in Israel, Turkey, Britain, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Puerto Rico, India, and Switzerland, among others, and has lectured by invitation all over the world. He is a registered Architect in two states in Australia, a Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, and an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects. As one of the founders of the new field of Environment-Behavior Studies, Rapoport's work has mainly focused on the role of cultural variables, cross-cultural studies, and theory development and synthesis. He is the editor or co-editor of four books and several monographs and the author of approximately 200 papers, chapters, and the like, as well as six books (including this one) and several monographs. His work has been translated into a number of languages, including French, Spanish, German, Greek, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean.

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