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The courtroom as a built environment: On the usefulness of Amos Rapoport's theoretical framework

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Abstract

Amos Rapoport is one of the pioneers of the studies on the relationship between people and their environments. At the same time, analyzing the built environment as a factor co-determining human interactions in the courtroom tends to be more and more popular in literature. Following this line, the paper aims to consider whether Rapoport's theoretical framework (especially its part related to non-verbal communication through the environment) could be fruitfully applied to the study of the courtroom in order to shed some light on the spatial, physical, or architectural aspects of the courtroom (which is treated as a particular environment). This paper offers a preliminary examination of the usefulness of Rapoport's framework in reference to the courtroom interior. What needs to be stressed is that, rather than focusing on a given jurisdiction as a point of reference when elaborating on the usefulness of Rapoport's framework, the authors try to examine its general applicability.

Key words

Courtroom architecture; communication in courtroom; Environment-Behaviour Studies; Amos Rapoport

Resumen

Amos Rapoport es uno de los pioneros del estudio de las relaciones entre las personas y sus entornos. Al mismo tiempo, el análisis del entorno construido como un factor codeterminante de las interacciones humanas en el tribunal es cada vez más

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popular en la literatura. Siguiendo esa línea, el artículo se propone considerar si el marco teórico de Rapoport (especialmente la parte relacionada con la comunicación no verbal a través del entorno) podría ser aplicado de forma fructífera al estudio del tribunal, especialmente para arrojar luz sobre los aspectos espaciales, físicos o arquitectónicos del tribunal (el cual se trata como un entorno especial). El artículo ofrece un examen inicial, preliminar, sobre la utilidad del marco de Rapoport en referencia al interior del juzgado. Hay que subrayar que los autores intentan examinar la aplicabilidad general del marco de Rapoport, en lugar de centrarse en una jurisdicción concreta como punto de referencia.

Palabras clave

Arquitectura del tribunal; comunicación en el tribunal; estudio del comportamiento ambiental; Amos Rapoport

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1. Introduction

Studies on the built environment as a factor that co-determines human interactions in the courtroom tend to be more and more popular in the literature (see e.g., Mulcahy 2007, 2011, Resnik and Curtis 2011, Resnik *et al.* 2014, Branco 2016, Dahlberg 2016). There is also a plethora of more focused studies concerning some specific aspects of the courtroom as a built environment, for example, location of particular actors in the courtroom and its consequences (e.g., Austin 1982, Doerksen 1989-90, Rock 1991, Wolfe 1994, Shepard 2006, Tait 2011, Mulcahy 2013, McKimmie *et al.* 2016), the impact of the courtroom design on procedural principles (e.g., Wolfe 1995, Spaulding 2012, Rossner *et al.* 2017), courtroom symbolism (e.g., Greenberg 1987, Levine 1997, Rosenbloom 1998), specific objects in the courtrooms like furniture (e.g., Hazard 1962, Fox 2014), or attire of courtroom actors (e.g., Yablon 1995). Moreover, special interest is directed toward the official guidelines for building courts and courtrooms (e.g., Mulcahy and Rowden 2019). These examples clearly demonstrate the growing awareness of the importance of where exactly justice is served. However, the majority of studies dealing with this issue are either theoretically eclectic (being inspired by concepts and theories developed in various fields) or lack any well-established theoretical grounds. One can argue that studying the courtroom as a built environment through particular theoretical perspective could bring some serious advantages (such as providing a coherent conceptual grid, suggesting hypotheses, and guiding the research) (see, e.g., Collins and Stockton 2018).

The idea to explore the possibility of utilizing theoretical frameworks intended to grasp how environment shapes human interactions to study courtroom environment directs us toward a variety of possibilities. Searching for a broad theoretical approach for invigorating the study of the courtroom as a built environment we decided to move away from "well-trodden paths" of drawing on the legacy of founding fathers of spatial analysis in social science (e.g., Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre) or various approaches developed in semiotics and social geography, or approaches significantly informed by the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences, and try to examine new directions.

Having this in mind, we focus on Amos Rapoport's theoretical accomplishment as he is one of the pioneers of the study of the relationship between people and their environments (see Altman 2000). Rapoport is the author of numerous books, articles, and papers devoted to various aspects of the environment. He was much praised at the time for providing revolutionary ideas, based on anthropological perceptions of the relationship between space and culture, of how people are shaped by built environments. Moreover, his writings are filled with references to cross-cultural and cross-historical examples and comparative analysis. Crucially, his ideas have heavily influenced fields of architecture and urban studies but also they encouraged cross-disciplinary approaches, which helped in viewing built environments more and more as a vital product of and factor in everyday life. What is most important here, over the course of his long academic career, he has worked on the development of a broad research framework "applicable to a wide range of environments (…) and topics (...)" (Rapoport 1990, p. 10). A crucial and the most thought-provoking part of this framework is using an approach of non-verbal communication to the study of environmental "meanings". This theoretical frame has been successfully applied to a multitude of

settings, historical periods, and cultures (see, e.g., Heidari *et al.* 2014, Shakouri and Namdari 2018). In certain fields, Rapoport's works have earned the status of "mandatory references" and classics.

Even this brief description of the place of Rapoport in the tradition of studying humans in a built environment suggests that his theoretical framework is a serious candidate for opening new avenues in studying courtroom environments. Surprisingly, with one exception pinpointed below, Rapoport's framework has not been yet systematically utilized to study the courtroom as a built environment. Notice that works mentioned in the first paragraph of the paper do not even mention Rapoport. Frankly, it is beyond our interest to elaborate on why Rapoport's approach has not been widely applied or merely acknowledged in the leading studies on spatial or architectural dimensions of the courtroom. Nevertheless, one can speculate that the main reason lies in the fact that Rapoport's major field of interest was architecture and, consequently, his more theoretical thoughts were expressed, discussed, and applied within the architectural discourse, which definitely limited his influence on legal scholars who rarely draw direct inspirations from the architects.

As was mentioned, until now Rapoport's framework has only been systematically applied once to study the courtroom dynamics. Christine Richardson (2008) has conducted an empirical study of symbolism in the courtroom from the jurors' perspective. She studied whether the non-verbal cues in the courtroom influence jurors' ability to focus on the evidence. Richardson utilized three psychological theories (environmental uncertainty theory, environmental arousal theory, and environmental load theory) and Rapoport's framework to examine how individuals engage with the courtroom environment. In fact, she employed one of Rapoport's divisions, between fixed, semi-fixed, and non-fixed elements to quantify symbolism in the courtroom environment. Richardson's research proves that there is a place for applying Rapoport's framework to study the courtroom as a built environment. However, Richardson only shortly summarizes Rapoport's theory (Richardson 2008, pp. 51–57) and her discussions on the topic do not include a more nuanced examination of his assumptions, definitions, and aporias. In line with this, we opt for a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the usefulness of Rapoport's framework in studying the courtroom as a built environment.

Taking it into account, this paper aims to consider whether Rapoport's theoretical framework (especially the part related to non-verbal communication through the built environment) could be fruitfully applied to the study of the courtroom, particularly to shed light on the spatial, physical, or architectural aspects of the courtroom? "Fruitfully" here refers to (1) the idea of bringing a new general perspective for the study of the courtrooms or (2) merely offering analytical tools that can be employed for such a purpose. From a certain perspective, one could justify the need for the existence of a general framework that would enable the integration of works and research on various dimensions of the courtroom. The question is whether Rapoport's proposition could work as such an integrative, umbrella-like framework. Much more limited expectations are connected with the second scenario in which Rapoport's analytical tools are examined in terms of their usefulness for the study of specific features of the courtroom

which is treated as a particular built environment. Answering the research question will require a critical evaluation of Rapoport's thoughts (see Bradley 1970, Moore 2000).

This paper offers only a preliminary examination of what can Rapoport's theoretical framework and analytical tools bring to the studies on the courtroom as a built environment. It should be stressed that rather than focusing on a given jurisdiction as a point of reference when elaborating on the usefulness of Rapoport's approach, we try to test its general applicability. Such effort is justifiable because his framework is intended to be general, syncretic, and applicable to various environments. In this vein, it should be clear that Rapoport's theory can be applied indiscriminately to common law and civil law jurisdictions' different types of courtrooms. Moreover, it could shed some light on the putative differences between those jurisdictions in respect to what the courtroom's environment communicates toward lay and professional users.

2. Amos Rapoport's framework

During his long-lasting career, Rapoport has developed a research framework devoted to, generally speaking, environment-human relationships. The following subsections outline this framework's main characteristics and then examine his thought in detail.

2.1. Searching for a broad framework

First, rather than working within a particular scientific discipline (such as cultural anthropology or architecture), Rapoport has been studying a specific fragment of social reality (a particular set of relations). These studies have formed the field of Environment-Behavior Studies (EBS), an interdisciplinary approach that was co-founded and popularized by Rapoport (2008a). EBS was introduced as a broad research agenda aimed to cross the boundaries of particular disciplines. Rapoport's theoretical framework encapsulated three basic questions of EBS (Rapoport 2008b): how people's features influence the environment, how the environment influences people, and what mechanisms lie behind these mutual impacts.

A deeper exploration of his writings reveals that the culture-related factors are stressed in all of these three issues. Rapoport notices that culture-environment relations remain an important aspect of EBS (Rapoport 2008b, p. 32), and focuses on the relationships among the triad: environment-behavior-culture (Rapoport 2005, 2008b). The above-mentioned questions that are central to EBS, have been supplemented by a focus on culture. This has created quite a vast domain, which putatively makes it possible for the framework to be applied in various settings (e.g., the courtroom). However, such a broad approach also has potential pitfalls (discussed below).

Second, Rapoport has tried to develop an approach that is both scientific and humanistic. On the one hand, he believes that science is the most optimal way of approaching reality. The essence of science, according to Rapoport, lies in the formulation of explanatory theories. He has devoted much space to the advocacy of a more theoretically driven study of the environment. Moreover, he strongly stresses the need for an operational definition of basic terms and notions (culture, environment, etc.). Although for Rapoport, EBS should concentrate on building an explanatory theory (Rapoport 1997, 2000), at the same time, the preferred approach should also be a "humanistic" one, i.e. sensitive to the peculiarities of the human realm, hostile towards mono-causal

explanations, and opposed to strong determinism. This "humanistic" thread has been stressed in his early and mid-career writings. In general, according to Rapoport, pursuing science should not undermine the "humanistic" and practical side of studies. All theoretical developments are meant to contribute to the most crucial aim of EBS: "creating a more supportive environment for people" (Rapoport 2008b, p. 32).

Third, since his early career, Rapoport has been working on a conceptual framework ("a strong conceptual framework" or "a framework of thinking"; Rapoport 2008b, p. 17) intended to provide "unification and synthesis". He claims that "we need a shared taxonomy, vocabulary, and set of concepts. Without these, progress in the field remains seriously inhibited. The many isolated studies, descriptions, and findings cannot be compared or synthesized. In effect, they are lost" (Rapoport 1994, p. 496). Thus, formulating a broad conceptual framework to study various environments is, for Rapoport, "of crucial importance". The idea is to develop a set of concepts or analytical tools, ready to be applied to different environments (e.g., cultural landscapes, cities, houses, settings, rooms, and spontaneous settlements). Such a toolkit needs to be simple to use (Rapoport 1990, p. 10). Thus, Rapoport proposes only some rudimentary differentiations so that this toolkit could be easily adopted in different fields. This strategy is aimed at both building up the cumulative knowledge and unification (enabling the replacement of various conceptualizations developed in different disciplines working on how the environment influences behavior). Moreover, Rapoport stresses that the proposed framework must be testable. The set of tools should be ready to be used in new environments (in different cultures and across various historical periods) in order for the framework to improve itself. According to Rapoport, to upgrade the conceptual toolkit, maintaining research continuity, synthesizing various findings, and keeping up with studies in other fields are of crucial importance.

2.2. Built environment

The environment is defined by Rapoport as a series of relationships among elements ("things" or "inanimate components") and people. Rapoport states that "any environment (…) involves relationships among people (or, if nonhuman environments are considered, among animals), between people (or other animals) and inanimate components of the environment, and among these inanimate components themselves—the «hardware» of settlements, buildings, and the like" (Rapoport 1994, pp. 464–465). The environment is not a random aggregate of things and people (Rapoport 1990, p. 178). These relationships are ordered. That is to say, they have a pattern and a structure. Rapoport also distinguishes the built environment, which is central to his framework, defined vaguely as a product of deliberate human activity and culture (Rapoport 1994, p. 460).

The fact that the environment is "built" already indicates certain things. For example, it points to the existence of its "creator/s" or "co-creator/s". Generally, these are the subjects willing to influence the interactions by shaping some elements of the environment. Moreover, the phrase "built environment" suggests a number of fundamental dilemmas related to the influence of the environment or, to use a more modest description, the possibility that environmental factors can co-shape interactions. The important questions arise: whose perspective should be favored – users' or creators'; how to cope with putative changes in users' expectations; how to deal with the problem

of overdesign and underdesign, in a sense of leaving less or more space for people's own choices and expressions. Next, what is crucial here, according to Rapoport, a built environment is definitely more than a "container" or a "silent form"; its role moves beyond "inhibiting, facilitating, or even cataly[zing]" (Rapoport 1990, p. 77). Rapoport demonstrates the wide range of often silent and subtle functions of built environments, which are more pro-active and constructive than the "container" metaphor suggests.

According to Rapoport, the built environment is constituted by the organization of (1) space, (2) time, (3) "meaning" and (4) communication (verbal and non-verbal communication between people). Although space is central to the built environment – it is the main point of reference when one is trying to understand, compare and analyze built environments – the four dimensions are equally important as they all are interconnected ("all four interact in many, interlinked, and complex ways"). In fact, they co-produce the environment by either acting together or interacting with each other. One also can distinguish between the redundancy effect (some of the dimensions of the built environment navigate people to the same point) and merely reinforcing (one dimension strengthens the others). Decoding the relationship between those dimensions is an important and intellectually inspiring part of Rapoport's framework, although, unfortunately, he has not carried it out in a systematic manner. It is also worth noting already here that "meaning" refers to non-verbal communication from the environment to people. This is certainly a non-intuitive form of understanding of the "meaning" and it certainly needs further elaboration.

Much of Rapoport's attention is devoted to the dimension of space and its relationships with time. Rapoport noticed that they are often related, which ensures that expected interactional or behavioral results are gained. What is more important, "not only can the spatial organization and the relevant cues indicate expected uses, but such spaces may only be used at certain times, not being used at all at others" (Rapoport 1994, p. 466). Spatial organization also interconnects with interpersonal communication. It sometimes reflects, reinforces, or guides the organization of communication. Rapoport analyzed the relationship between space and "meaning" even in a more detailed way. He noted that physical objects are an expression of space, and indeed – in one way or another – create it, which affects the organization of "meaning". However, most of Rapoport's original considerations are devoted to the relationship between "meaning" and communication. According to him, the environment transmits "meanings" that affect communication between people. However, it is important that the creation of "meanings" by the built environment takes place not only through space, but even more often through the materials (of the physical items), signs, lines, colors, forms, and sizes that are involved. All these elements together provide a picture of interpersonal communication as structured by space, but also by time and "meaning".

2.3. "Meanings"

Rapoport is particularly interested in "meanings" as a dimension of the built environment. For him, "meaning is communication from the environment to people" (Rapoport 1990, p. 181). In order to define his position, building on Paul Ekman's seminal works, Rapoport refers to the classical division of communication into verbal, vocal, and non-verbal elements (e.g., facial expressions, postures, touch, sight, voice, sound, gestures, distances, and rhythm). Each of them is based on different senses. In

the case of verbal and vocal communication, an essential role is played by hearing (and with regard to written and spoken words, eyesight is involved). In turn, vision dominates non-verbal communication, although, in fact, this kind of communication is multisensory. According to Rapoport, dominant studies on this subject did not take into account the fact that the built environment is a specific channel of non-verbal communication (Rapoport 1990, p. 49). He uses the phrase "non-verbal communication through the environment". His main claim is that the built environment communicates "meanings" in the same way (or similar) that people communicate using well-known non-verbal means (or that communication of the built environment is a part of non-verbal communication). For Rapoport, the non-verbal communication model when applied to the built environment is an adequate research tool due to its conceptual simplicity, non-abstract character, and avoidance of technical meta-language.

Rapoport stresses some structural similarities between non-verbal communication between people and use of the built environment as a specific proxy. In terms of commonalities, Rapoport utilizes a transmission model of communication as applicable in both areas (Rapoport 1990, pp. 52, 82; on the transmission model of communication and its critique see, e.g., Cobley and Schulz 2013, Wendland 2013). According to this vision, any kind of communication is based on the scheme: sender-coding-message-decoding-recipient. He also added a "cultural" dimension to acknowledge the role of culture in coding/decoding. Moreover, Rapoport emphasizes that verbal communication is mostly linear ("words follow words"), but non-verbal communication, including communication through the environment, is non-linear. Moreover, there is no clear-cut lexicon of non-verbal communication, which also applies to the non-verbal communication from the environment to people.

In turn, differences between the non-verbal communication between people and through the built environment rest on the type of the medium of communication and the functions of communication. The clearest difference lies in the greater ambiguity associated with non-verbal communication through the environment, also because, to a significant extent, it relates to the latent functions (Rapoport 1994, p. 470). Thus, for Rapoport, the built environment frequently communicates in a "soft way" mostly by defining a situation. A simple scheme of environmental "meaning" communication looks as follows. The built environment contains cues that communicate "roles, context, and situations" (Rapoport 1990, p. 68). Rapoport stresses that "it is the social situation that influences people's behavior, but it is the physical environment that provides the cues" (Rapoport 1990, p. 57). In this line, the built environment influences behaviors in an indirect way. This implies the rejection of strong determinism in favor of a subtler account of how the built environment co-produces activities.

The question remains, what are the exact functions, according to Rapoport, that environmental "meanings" fulfill? Why is this peculiar method of communication in some way necessary? Just as verbal communication requires non-verbal elements which are faster, "softer", and more suggestive, there is a similar need for stabilization mechanisms inherent in the environment that are relatively independent of people. Behind the main functional necessity of non-verbal communication through the environment lies several issues raised by Rapoport.

He notes that "one of the important functions of the formed environment is to make some [users'] interpretations impossible or very unlikely" (Rapoport 1990, p. 61). Thus, "meaning" of the built environment works negatively by excluding potential users' interpretations (excluding function). However, this is not a whole story. The environment has a more direct impact on interactions than just "stopping" or "excluding" – it directs reactions (directing function) (Rapoport 1990, p. 77). The "meanings" of the environment also provide pieces of information about status, lifestyle, ethnicity, and thus contribute to categorizing people by locating them within a framework of culturally formed cognitive schemata (categorizing function) (Rapoport 1990, p. 183). Rapoport also emphasizes that "meanings" are "reminding people about the situation and hence about appropriate behaviour, making effective co-action possible" (reminding function) (Rapoport 1994, p. 426). Material objects are used to organize social relations *via* non-verbal communication through the environment. This is done by "tak[ing] the remembering away from people and put[ting] reminders regarding the situation, rules and behavior into the settings" (Rapoport 1994, p. 493). What is more, Rapoport writes about "reducing the need to process information" (complexity reduction function) and stopping excessive individualization (deindividualizing function). According to these observations, the built environment reduces information overload and helps in communication.

2.4. Cues

Similar to non-verbal communication, communication through the environment operates on the basis of cues: the physical attributes of a given setting that are mostly perceived visually by users (see similarly: McKimmie *et al.* 2016, p. 887). "Meanings" are encoded in the environment by cues that evoke actors' "emotions, interpretations, behaviors, and transactions by setting up the appropriate situations and context" (Rapoport 1990, p. 81).

According to Rapoport, cues work by calling on cultural schemata that drive behavior. However, the exact role of these schemata is not clear. Although Rapoport appreciates the role of the environment, he treats the cultural schemata as determining factors: "built forms (...) are physical expressions of these schemata and domains" (Rapoport 1990, p. 15). Cues trigger these schemata and also have been formed in reference to them. The built environment is an expression of these schemata and at the same time, it helps activate them in a particular setting. Sometimes cues may just identify the setting. In different situations, they help indicate social positions and establish social identities, defining a situation.

Rapoport considers how cues work. In many cases, the mere effect of polarity is sufficient (dark/light, close/remote, deep/on the surface). In particular, the presence or absence of something (e.g., physical barrier) could be an important communication tool. Thus, communication through the built environment is primarily done through differences and polar dichotomies (Rapoport 1990, pp. 115–116). Moreover, in order to be effective, cues should be recognized and understood by users. The person who decodes cues must be "prepared to «obey» and act accordingly and appropriately, so that they can co-act" (Rapoport 1994, p. 494). What is more, "successful settings are precisely those that successfully reduce the variance by clear cues" (Rapoport 1990, p.

78). The clarity of the cues introduced in this kind of communication often requires (1) redundancy – reproduction of the same content by other carriers (the effect of redundancy can be strengthened in various ways, such as through the organization of time, the application of specific rules, or the use of additional tools), (2) repetition by one specific medium, or (3) the harmonization between other dimensions of the built environment.

Rapoport also discusses the changes to which cues are subjected throughout the historical process: "all of these marking functions change with increases in scale, heterogeneity, complexity, specialization of settings, and so on" (Rapoport 1994, p. 493). He notes that modern cities, buildings, and other environments require the use of complex "iconic and verbal signals" in addition to the organization of space, "which, in itself, no longer communicates adequately" (Rapoport 1994, p. 490). Moreover, although Rapoport acknowledges that culture is crucial in the process of decoding cues, on the other hand, he notices that "many of these cues seem to be almost self-evident" (Rapoport 1990, p. 18).

In several places, Rapoport considers some fundamental questions and dilemmas related to the environmental cues from the designer's perspective. The most important of these questions are as follows: how can one ensure that users do not overlook cues (i.e., how to place cues and how to point to them; according to that, one can wonder about the need to distinguish meta-cues or second-level cues, that is the cues that direct to those first-level ones); to what extent is the redundancy of cues needed; are there any cues dedicated to communicating the opening of a space for self-organization and personalization; how it is possible to make cues recognizable by different kinds of users; does the use of particular cues require knowledge about a particular culture; and are there some universal cues that do not require a specific cultural knowledge? All these issues demonstrate how many factors influence how cues work.

2.5. Proposed analytical tools

The basic features of Rapoport's framework presented above give overall insight into his approach to the built environment. However, Rapoport also developed two distinct conceptual tools that have enabled him to conduct broad and multilevel comparative analyses of various aspects of the built environments.

First, referring to the epochal *The Hidden Dimension* by Edward T. Hall (1966), Rapoport proposes the distinction between three types of elements of the built environments: fixed, semi-fixed, and non-fixed (Rapoport 1990, p. 87). The criterion for their differentiation is the difficulty in changing a given environmental element. In the case of fixed features, changes are difficult to carry out and thus rare (e.g., stable communication routes, houses built in certain places, walls, and windows in rooms). Semi-fixed features, more mobile and flexible, bring a greater possibility of modifications (e.g., "signs, plants, personalized elements, furniture, trinkets and the like"). Users can more easily and effectively modify these fragments of the built environment. Lastly, non-fixed features, which are highly mobile and easy-to-be-changed, are associated with people, users, and visitors of the setting ("people and their behaviors and activities"). Non-fixed features refer to proxemics, body postures, eye contact, and manners of speaking (Rapoport 1990, p. 96). Rapoport concerns mostly about fixed and semi-fixed features, i.e., those that in

his opinion have been omitted in previous studies on communication and the environment.

Second, Rapoport has also discussed three types of "meanings". The first type is the high-level "meanings", which "refer to cosmologies, cultural schemata, worldviews, philosophical systems, and the sacred" (Rapoport 1990, p. 221). These "meanings" were once contained in "cities, sights, buildings, now they are in books, films, archives, documents, etc.". For Rapoport, high-level "meanings" have not disappeared entirely, but in principle, they have stopped being communicated by the built environment. Middle-level "meanings" are those "communicating identity, status, wealth, power and so on – that is the latent rather than instrumental aspects of activities, behaviour, and settings" (Rapoport 1990, p. 221). These "meanings" are often known by most people in a given culture. Low-level "meanings" refer to "mnemonic cues for identifying uses for which settings are intended and hence the social situations, expected behavior and the like; privacy; accessibility; penetration gradients; seating arrangements; movement and way-finding; and other information which enables users to behave and act appropriately and predictably, making co-action possible" (Rapoport 1990, p. 221). Rapoport believes that these levels are "complementary" (Rapoport 1990, p. 223) in a given setting, but obviously, it does not have to be that way.

It is important to note that a criterion used by Rapoport for distinguishing these levels of "meanings" is not clear. It seems that two (often related) criteria have been mixed up: the necessity of decoding "meanings" for the sake of an effective cooperation in a given place (low-level "meanings" need to be known to cooperate, but high-level not necessarily) and the scale of dissemination of knowledge about different kinds of "meanings" (only a few persons know the high-level).

Based on the simple differentiation of elements of environment and levels of the "meanings", Rapoport has conducted various cross-cultural and cross-historical analyses of built environments. For example, he has examined the scale of representation of the three levels of "meanings" in a given place, conducted historical analyses that involved tracking changes, and also made cross-cultural comparisons. Rapoport devotes particular attention to the analysis of wide historical tendencies using these categories as conceptual tools. For example, the discovery of the printed press has made it so that "high-level meanings in the built environment become less important, and many of the meanings of built environments emphasized in the anthropological literature on non-literate societies will tend to disappear" (Rapoport 1994, p. 473). According to Rapoport, the growing pluralism in society causes the breakdown of previously well-known forms of communication through the built environment. This breakdown has led to the search for new ways of using material objects to stabilize interactions between people.

3. Preliminary evaluation of Rapoport's framework – criticism and credit

It is not an easy task to comment on and critically evaluate Rapoport's approach because of its scope, complexity, and unfinished character. As we stressed, we focus our reconstructions and considerations mainly on the one particular element of his framework – communication through built environment. Thus, this preliminary evaluation should be understood as only the first step towards a comprehensive and critical reflection on Rapoport's thoughts (see Bradley 1970, Moore 2000). Moreover,

Rapoport's approach has been developing during a long academic career (which implies the necessary changes and inconsistencies between papers and books published at different stages of his career). Because the framework reflects a set of his assumptions concerning social ontology and epistemology, a deep evaluation of his thought requires a detailed reconstruction of these core assumptions. However, what is more important, the commentators' views and preferences regarding social ontology and epistemology inevitably influence the results of such evaluation. To avoid that problem, we try to apply the formal criteria of evaluation (clarity, coherence, and contribution to theory-building). Moreover, Rapoport formulates strong and ambitious expectations regarding the functionality of his framework. This additional criterion can also be used as a benchmark for evaluation of Rapoport's approach. Thus, examining the usefulness of this framework in studying the spatial and architectural features of the courtroom can also tell us whether this framework accomplishes its intended aims. Lastly, it is important to note that our evaluation of Rapoport's thoughts is instrumental in determining whether his framework provides (1) the general conceptualization needed for the study of the spatially relevant features of the courtroom or only (2) the concrete analytical tools for studying this specific setting.

3.1. Critique

Starting from the most general observations, although interesting and intriguing, Rapoport's framework does not form a well-grounded and clear conceptual grid. Even basic concepts lack clarity and coherence. We could consider as an example the concept of the environment, which is the most important element of EBS. Rapoport understands the environment as inanimate objects, people, and relations between them all. This understanding of the environment is quite broad and seems to be too inclusive.

In addition, Rapoport's framework lacks explanatory potential. Although Rapoport calls for the development of an explanatory theory, he only offers few differentiations and general models. It is startling that Rapoport insists on the study of the "mechanisms" underlying the relations between people and the environment, but his consideration of this issue does not lead to any firm conclusions (see Rapoport 1990, pp. 235–239). Moreover, building an explanatory theory in the case of such a broadly sketched subject of EBS seems to be difficult. It is important to note that the chosen research area – the relationships within the triad: environment-behavior-culture – is extremely complex. It is merely impossible to formulate a sound conceptual framework that is intended to explain so many elements using such rudimentary toolkit. As we mentioned, Rapoport proposes only two simple analytic tools (one differentiation of cues and one of "meanings") that can be applied to various environments.

Rapoport's framework lacks basic differentiation that could, for example, clarify the various ways in which the built environment can contribute to communication. Even the most fundamental issue – whether the built environment communicates something or merely participates in communication is not discussed in a detailed way. In consequence, his approach to many crucial issues is left unknown, or the reader is left to interpret Rapoport's writings in a way that develops much needed definiteness.

For instance, Rapoport does not distinguish between (1) the impact of the environment intended by the designer or current administrator of a given setting (inscribed

"meanings"), and (2) the "meaning" as a by-product of the multiple, to some extent spontaneous processes lying outside the control of the designer and open to co-creation by the participants of a given setting (ascribed "meanings"). To put it differently, the question is whether the "meaning" of the built environment as a whole is a product of a specific author who simply has designed how a given environment should be perceived, or whether "meaning" results from interactions between parts of the environment and unplanned, spontaneous co-creation by participants. Rapoport considers the deliberate choices of designers that lead to desirable behaviors *via* environmental cues, but is silent about the second possibility, which is more thought-provoking. Moreover, if one thinks about any built environment, which is "a consequence" of a plethora of different actors (designers, builders, users, visitors, etc.), then one can also conclude that a given built environment is, to some extent, a bundle of many inscribed and ascribed "meanings".

Rapoport also does not consider that the built environment can communicate (or participate in the communication) in a direct and indirect way. This differentiation rests on the speed and directness of affecting the behaviors of users of a given built environment. Although Rapoport's emphasis on the "soft", indirect impact of the environment is correct, he does not point out that in some situations the aim of a built environment is to immediately enforce certain users' behaviors without any filters or the need to decode the cultural schemata (e.g., prison).

Finally, Rapoport's framework does not discuss the role of relevant normative elements (e.g., social rules) and related cognitive schemata in "meanings"-creation. He rarely refers to the role of rules when explicating the relationship between the environment and people. Although he notices the role of norms in shaping behaviors, he does not highlight their place in the whole, complex web of interconnections that produce behaviors. In one paper, he named the built environment a "physical expression of expected norms" (Rapoport 1994, p. 467). Moreover, he does not notice that (1) the rules might be seen as activators of cues, or (2) elements that can be activated by cues, or even (3) that cues might work hand in hand with rules without being activated by them and activating them. Rapoport misses the simple differentiation that should be taken into account when comprehensively elaborating on communication *via* environmental cues.

3.2. Advantages

In the face of the above, the question is whether Rapoport's framework lacks any putative advantages? Rapoport's approach seems to avoid the most fundamental errors in the study of human and the environment. He rejects a very simple way of understanding how the environment influences behavior by emphasizing the complex intersections between organization of space, time, "meaning" and communication. His search for a new way of looking at this subject should be praised and evaluated positively. Moreover, Rapoport tries to combine many different approaches to the environment developed by various disciplines. His early writings were clearly more closely related to anthropological tradition, but later he expressed a fascination with developments in cognitive sciences and neurosciences. Importantly, Rapoport has established bridges between these fields, and tried to propose a general approach to studying people in the environment. What should be stressed, his works are full of cross-historical and cross-cultural examples of various settings, places, and contexts which provide a rich reservoir of case studies on the dynamics of the built environments. On

their basis, Rapoport wanted to formulate (1) a more subtle, nuanced, but (2) a general and simple framework. The question is, as we mentioned above, whether these two aims can be combined.

When judged against the background of its time, the 70s, 80s, and even 90s, his innovative approach stressed that the environment "helps organize people's perception and meaning". This was an interesting proposition especially against dominant approaches at the time and before the development of mature "flat ontologies" (see, e.g., Epstein 2018). The latter refers to ontological frameworks that do not focus on human-related issues, like, for example, language or conventions, in explaining some social phenomena and practices, but attempt to take into account other factors, like inanimate objects, and treat them as having their own specific yet significant agency and influence (e.g., actor-network theory, see Latour 2005, and its various applications, see McGee 2014, 2015).

To sum it up, Rapoport's overall idea is appealing. There are environmental cues, working just like cues in non-verbal communication, that can influence interactions. His general claim is still thought-provoking. The built environment can be seen as a channel of communication, sticking to one of the possible interpretations of his works, which functions in a similar way to non-verbal communication. Moreover, his initial sound intuitions lead to a rejection of the sharp distinction between people, things, and what is "external". He is suspicious of some common understandings of the role of the environment, but his innovative thoughts have been articulated in a language that has been poisoned by behaviorism. It should be noticed that the whole dichotomy between behavior and environment is based on a behaviorism-influenced way of thinking. Of course, he is not a behaviorist, but he unwillingly reproduces those oppositions. More crucially, Rapoport is more appealing when he tries to establish new directions of research, searching for more universal or historical tendencies. In the end, the simple differentiations he proposed still have some power to track historical changes and general tendencies, and to spark comparative assessments. One can also argue that the strength of Rapoport's framework lies in its ability to help to address fundamentals.

4. Rapoport's framework applied to the study of courtroom

As mentioned, the framework proposed by Rapoport does not offer well-shaped tools. This is not a comprehensive toolkit ready to be used in various settings. As has been demonstrated, Rapoport's conceptual differentiations and theoretical insights do not reach the aims intended by him. However, it should also be stressed that some general ideas, as well as concrete differentiations proposed by Rapoport, still could be, to some degree, fruitful and useful, especially when the cross-cultural and cross-historical perspectives are to be employed. Thus, in some cases, this framework poses interesting, nontrivial, and perspective-opening questions for the formulation of new hypotheses in regards to research on the courtroom, especially its spatial and architectural dimensions.

First, we can consider the case of courtroom cues and components of a courtroom's environment. Next, the courtroom can be examined as a particular setting according to the basic analytical tools proposed by Rapoport. At the end of this section, we dwell on the possibility of using Rapoport's framework for developing more general thoughts about landmark changes in courtroom design and architecture, for elaborating on the

situational approach to designing the general shape of the courtroom, and for examining whether courtrooms communicate procedural principles or rules.

4.1. Courtroom cues

It is important to distinguish or identify the material elements of courtrooms (see, e.g., Jeffrey 2019). The mere entrance to a courtroom can be analyzed according to its general look, i.e., condition, used materials, or specific adornments. Moreover, in reference to the doors, the existence of a separate entrances for the judges or other judicial personnel could also be of significance. After entering the courtroom, one's attention could be caught by many specific elements. For instance, one might notice the color of the wall paint; wooden or stone additions used to cover parts of walls or other elements; the presence or lack of columns inside; symbols, like flags or national emblems; some smaller internal boundaries, like a little revolving door in a specific part of a room or a part segregated from the rest by glass or even metal bars; the amount and quality of benches for the public; their placement in relation to other benches; the placement of the benches for the parties to the case in relation to each other (are they in front or next to each other); the placement of the witness stand and whether or not it allows the questioned person to sit down or maybe forces one to stand; the look of the judge's bench (whether it is elevated in relation to the rest of the room, or what is placed on the desk); or the judge's outfit in comparison to that of legal representatives of the parties to the case. One could also look at, for example, the quality of the floor tiles, or the presence and placement of windows, microphones, cameras, or the specific site for media representatives. These might not even form a complete list of elements.

Moreover, one has to distinguish which parts of courtroom environment can actually be regarded as cues and which do not deserve that name according to some criteria that still need to be developed. In his original studies, Rapoport does not provide any guidance with regard to what exactly separates cues from non-cues. This problem is evident in the chosen example of the courtroom. For example, are microphones or walls specific cues? The answer can be drawn from the mentioned differentiation between inscribed and ascribed "meanings" about which, unfortunately, Rapoport is silent. He does not provide clear answers with regard to this problem and thus one is left to come up with one's own solution.

For instance, walls are a basic construction element, without which a particular built environment (in this case, court and courtroom) could not exist. In consequence, walls can be regarded as so foundational to built environments that they cannot be regarded as cues with some specific "meaning". However, in courtrooms in particular, walls are not a "meaning-free" element of construction that supports the ceiling of the room. In the end, they determine the height of the courtroom and are made with particular materials that can realize a decorating function (e.g., carved wood or marble slabs). Naturally, the height of a given room and its general appearance, co-constituted to a significant extent by how the walls look, cannot be easily dismissed as unimportant in terms of communication. Thus, one can say that walls, as an indispensable element of construction are not cues. However, when one takes into account other features, like height or finish, their character as cues emerges. In comparison, it seems it is easier to consider mentioned courtroom microphones as cues. Their presence signals that the proceedings are oral, recorded, and thus that what one says during a hearing is

significant. This contributes to the general sense of a courtroom's seriousness. In conclusion, one can try to distinguish cues from non-cues based on whether or not elements are relevant or irrelevant to the construction of a given built environment. One should stress though that this distinction is made from a specific academic perspective and the cue/non-cue problem can be addressed through many different perspectives such as the view of the actors who are much more involved in the creation and everyday use of courtroom environments. The solution to this problem still has to be found.

The case of the exact components of a courtroom environment is similar. As was said earlier, Rapoport considers as environment not only inanimate objects and construction but also actual people and relations between them all. This leads us to ask who, not just what, exactly is a part of courtroom environment? A quite clear approach would be to say that those who are usually in the courtroom – judges, professional lawyers, clerks, or security workers – constitute the human part of this particular built environment. However, courts are not only for court employees and insiders. They are constantly visited by outsiders. In the end, parties to a given case or summoned witnesses visit a courtroom when they simply have to – when their case is tried or when they are summoned to be questioned. However, this does not necessarily mean that outsiders do not constitute part of courtroom environment. On the other hand, if one argues that they form a part of it, then one has to be ready to address the question of whether people who are rarely present in courtrooms can be equated with those who are there every day? To escape this either-or situation, one would have to carefully explain what is the role of insiders and outsiders in constituting a courtroom environment. It is possible that Rapoport's distinction of fixed, semi-fixed, and non-fixed elements of built environment could help us explain these roles.

According to Rapoport, if people are considered elements of a built environment, then perhaps one should treat specific judges, lawyers, or clerks as fixed, or at least semi-fixed elements of a courtroom during a hearing. People professionally involved in the justice system appear in courtrooms on a regular basis. In comparison to them, people who are in the courtroom because they are parties to a tried case or are being summoned as witnesses are not permanent nor even semi-permanent elements of the courtroom. Non-professional participants in hearings come and go, and often do not come back to the courtroom. However, they are constantly replaced by other people. Just as a hearing in one case ends, another begins. Even though individual people are also in the courtroom for a specific, often relatively short period of time, they cannot be considered irrelevant to the entire courtroom environment. For instance, every person appearing in the courtroom is dressed and behaves in a specific way. Non-professional participants' outfits and behaviors add some novelty to other elements of the courtroom, engage in some relations with them, and can even be in opposition to some. We can consider, for instance, the visible discrepancy in the quality of outfits between scruffy-looking witnesses and the rest of the professionals and parties in the courtroom. It seems safe to say that such situations are important in terms of communication because they can change the "meaning" of a particular courtroom environment. However, after the person who caused that change leaves the courtroom, the environment can return to its previous, default state. From this perspective, one can consider the mentioned courtroom outsiders as non-fixed, at most semi-fixed elements of courtroom

environment. Still, there are most certainly other ways to address the issue of insiders versus outsiders.

4.2. Courtroom "meanings"

Leaving aside a dedicated attempt at solving the problem of distinguishing cues from non-cues in courtrooms or the insider-outsider tension, one should address the issue of "meaning" levels. From Rapoport's perspective, one might notice that to some extent courtrooms today contain high-level "meanings". These are the fundamental ideas of delivering justice (procedural principles, such as the independence of courts, the impartiality of judges, the autonomy of law, or adversarial or inquisitorial model of proceedings) (see, e.g., DesBaillets 2018, pp. 147, 149). These ideas are rather diffused in many elements of the courtroom: organization of space (divisions, segmentation included); attire of professionals; or symbols (in the strict sense of the word) located in the courtroom, such as symbols of state and state power (which stress that delivering justice is not a matter of individual persons but of the whole state machinery, e.g., Royal Coat of Arms, gavel) (generally, on law, power and architecture, see Barshack 2010). For example, one might notice that in some jurisdictions, a medallion or chain (in Poland a chain with an eagle, the national emblem) around the judge's neck is a part of their dress but not part of the built environment (understood in a conventional way). It should be emphasized that sometimes one can find symbols of justice (Themis, scales of justice) or religious symbols inside a courtroom (see the Royal Coat of Arms of the United Kingdom, still used in Canada, which includes the words "Dieu et mon Droit" meaning "God and my right" (DesBaillets 2018, p. 148), which is a reference to the monarch's divine right to rule). However, today, these are placed rather outside courtrooms (in the hall, on the court building wall, etc.). In courtrooms, some high-level "meanings" related to a particular political community could also be traced (e.g., the emblem, the flag, name of the state). In summary, these "meanings" are present, but they are not overrepresented. If we look through these lenses, the courtrooms today are not overflown by high-level "meanings" (with the exception of, for example, the Constitutional Hill in Johannesburg; see Law-Viljoen 2006, Resnik and Curtis 2011, pp. 350–356).

Next, in courtrooms, one can find elements that could be classified as middle-level "meanings" that communicate the status and hierarchy. These elements are complex and quite sophisticated, forming an integral part of any modern courtroom. One might notice the various elements that communicate the elevation of a judge's position (e.g., the higher position of a judge's bench in comparison to the rest of the courtroom, the judge's gavel, the robe colored differently to other professional lawyers) (Dahlberg 2016, p. 232) and the distinctive roles of professional lawyers and administrative staff (e.g., clerks, guards). However, it is important to note, in general, the cues related to these issues communicate some of the most important ideas about the administration of justice (e.g., decision-maker impersonality), so they also constitute high-level "meanings".

Referring to low-level "meanings", there is a whole range of cues that influence interactions (movement restrictions, the order of speaking, etc.). However, some of these simultaneously constitute elements of high or middle-level "meaning". For example, the spatial organization that separates segments in a courtroom, such as the section dedicated for the judge, the places reserved for the "active" and "passive" parties as well

as for the audience, communicates something about the inherent idea of justice in addition to distinguishing participants and maintaining a certain interactional order in the courtroom.

4.3. Fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed elements of courtrooms

This subsection discusses the second distinction provided by Rapoport (fixed, semi-fixed, non-fixed elements of the built environment). In regard to the courtroom, besides the so-called hard architecture (walls, entrances, windows), one can consider more elements of the courtrooms as fixed. In many other settings, these elements might be semi-fixed. In the end, we need to consider types of furniture (e.g., benches, witness stand), their specific placement, national emblems, flags, and wooden or marble parts, which are often used to enhance the nobleness of the place. They cannot all be easily rearranged. Equipment, like monitors, computers, displays, or microphones, are similar to a certain extent. Naturally, a computer screen or microphone can be adjusted to the needs of a specific person, but the screen or a microphone itself can be fixed for good in the courtroom. The special attire of professionals could also be described as fixed components. All of these elements are not subject to any changes initiated by users (apart from small adjustments made by the judge or on his behalf – e.g., adjustment to the temperature by opening the windows). Moreover, since the interactions in the courtroom between hearing participants are limited in time (they have an episodic character for non-professional parties), the achievement of procedural goals relies on these fixed elements.

What is really interesting is, as a principle, courtrooms do not have many semi-fixed elements. This is due to the little amount of personalization that is allowed in this setting (both for judges and, to a greater extent, "users" of the justice system). The lack of semi-fixed elements (1) reduces the complexity and variability of the environment (it serves to the enhancing the uniformity of different courtrooms in a given jurisdiction), (2) improves the efficiency of the cues, and (3) helps activate users' knowledge about courtrooms and "how things happen here" (most often gained earlier *via* popular culture).

The place and role of non-fixed elements can also point out the distinctiveness of the courtroom as a setting. For instance, in comparison to many other work settings, it would definitely be deemed as extraordinary and highly unusual to see a judge placing a favorite house-hold plant on their desk in the courtroom. The impact of this type of "meaning" is relatively small (in comparison to different sites). However, the whole approach developed by Rapoport stresses the importance of the abovementioned elements. When looking at a courtroom, in reality, people (witnesses, professionals, parties) bring their own dynamics to the courtroom, but it is seriously reduced by spatial, organizational, and normative factors (e.g., the highly structured form of interrogation, the spatial separation of parties, the predetermined gaze pattern, the special costumes of professionals, the procedural requirements, etc.). The specificity of this environment lies then in reducing information overload (keeping in mind the relative nature of "information load or overload" – i.e., the same amount of the same stimuli can be differently assessed by insiders and outsiders in courtrooms) and deemphasizing the importance of non-fixed elements (see Richardson 2008, pp. 73–109).

4.4. Further commentary

In general, the courtroom as a specific setting must provide a stable framework for interactions between various users in a given jurisdiction (not only in regard to the differences between professionals and non-professionals but also in regard to more general socio-demographic differences). One needs to consider the multiplicity of types of cases proceeded in a courtroom and the fact that the courtroom must be well suited for all stages of judicial proceedings. From these reasons and also due to many cognitive requirements expected of witnesses, parties, and experts (as well as the public) participating in the trial, reducing the scope of "meanings" of all levels associated with the courtroom seems reasonable. At the same time, the strengthening of existing cues is necessary. For example, co-working of space-time arrangements and "meanings" might reduce doubts about who the judge is (in the courtroom, relative to the many people in the hearings), who the opposing parties are, where to sit, and whom to look at. It is enough to understand where our opponent is sitting (we occupy the "opposite" side) or follow the example of one's own representative.

Thus, a modern courtroom is characterized by a relatively small number of "meanings", but at the same time, the "meanings" are strong, which means that they are reinforced by many cues and formed as a result of an intersection of different parts of the built environment. Redundancy is a central word here. Rapoport often mentions the need for redundancy of cues in the face of creation of specialized places, pluralization of social life, and heterogenization of society. Against this background, contemporary courtrooms are examples of strong and multi-level redundancy. Using Rapoport's approach it is possible to analyze how spatial, temporal, communicational elements, and "meanings" work together. In other words, they work to create a built environment designed to uniformly protect basic judicial principles, but also create a space for local, slight modifications.

Preliminary observations demonstrate that Rapoport's simple differentiation could be applied to the courtroom setting. Questions can be asked about what is the saturation ratio of the three "meanings" in different times, places, and jurisdictions. Current discussions about the role of courtroom rituals (e.g., Gélinas *et al.* 2015, pp. 1–37) focus on the question, which could be reformulated in Rapoport's terminology, of whether high-level "meanings" should or should not be represented to a larger extent in modern courtrooms in order to achieve certain goals (e.g., legitimacy-building, or prestige-enhancing)? We are asking whether there is a need for the same amount of high-level and middle-level "meanings" in different types of court proceedings. In this respect, Rapoport's division may be useful, though it does not revolutionize our understanding of the dynamics of processes taking place in a courtroom.

Second, against the above remarks on the levels of "meanings" in the courtrooms (and the scale of possible, allowed, and legitimized personalization in the courtroom), it is worth considering a situational approach to the courtroom design (see also Branco 2018). For example, it has been recognized that high-level "meanings" (but also middle-level) should not be represented to the same extent in each type of court or for each type of case. We could consider that when a given court is closer to the bottom of the judicial hierarchy, its courtrooms should allow more space for personalization.

According to this way of thinking, the British organization JUSTICE distinguished simple, standard, and formal judicial spaces (Marks *et al*. 2016). The first is largely flexible, modular, adjustable, and ready to be used for all types of cases. The standard type has been characterized as semi-formal and only partly flexible. In this type, some fixed elements are needed (especially audio and video recording equipment). Additionally, the judge is more strongly distinguished from other participants by more cues, but the possibility of some scope of adjustment is still preserved (the same room can easily be changed into a different institutionalized place). Lastly, the formal judicial spaces are characterized by a limited amount of flexibility. Space is deliberately pre-arranged so that "state power is felt". As JUSTICE stresses, the latter type is to be dedicated only to the most serious matters. What is important here is that the idea of diversifying the design and layout of the courtrooms is based on the central idea of a "flexible court space" (Marks *et al.* 2016, pp. 12–14, 23). It marks a departure from the rigid character of the courtroom as a uniform type of organizing space in a given jurisdiction and the move to a more situational approach to the issue of how a courtroom should be designed. After all, "different types of processes (...) have different spatial needs and require a different level of formality, security, and ritualization". This is a move that contrasts with previous official courtroom guidelines (British Court Standards and Design Guide, issued by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service in 2010; see Mulcahy and Rowden 2019), which paid much attention to the standardization of court design, inflexible arrangements, unchanging furnishings, and unified spaces. JUSTICE proposes to create multifunctional spaces (in the case of simple and standard court space) so that the same courtroom can be staged differently depending on the situational variables (the type of case, number of people involved, decorum requirements, etc.). JUSTICE's approach is in line with Rapoport's general idea of adapting the built environment to specific activities and particular users and the idea of moving away from a vision of rigid uniformization. This example demonstrates that Rapoport's categories can be used for reflection on the courts of the future.

Third, another topic that can be approached using Rapoport's framework is related to the question of, whether, and eventually how the courtroom can communicate the procedural principles? Such a question may concern several issues: how exactly a courtroom design expresses procedural principles (by some arrangements related to the fixed and semi-fixed elements) or whether it affects participants in a manner consistent with the content of these principles. This second possibility could be expressed differently as follows: do the cues in the courtroom direct users to contents of the procedural principles? One can even determine whether the redundancy of cues in the courtroom is conducive to the implementation of these principles (e.g., in an adversarial model, the area designated for judge is distinguished and elevated and, at the same time, the judges wear specific robes which make them easily recognizable by lay-participants of the hearings), or whether some elements of the built environment are incompatible with them (e.g., there are fewer seats intended for the public which undermines the realization of the open, public hearing principle). This issue is especially important in the context of reforms of procedural laws. Unfortunately, those who make changes in this area often forget about the compatibility of new solutions with existing courtroom designs. As an example, we can consider reforms aimed at enhancing the adversarial system of the trial. Without the reform of the courtroom design, this would lead to some

dysfunctional results when the prescriptive "ideas" of the trial are incoherent with the "meanings" communicated through the courtroom's overall design. In any case, Rapoport's thought invites us to identify abstract procedural principles in the specific features of a staged setting (courtroom). It should be added that research on this subject has already been carried out. For example, the location of the accused person in criminal trials has been the subject of much research intended to test whether the concrete place for the accused violates the principle of presumption of innocence (e.g., Rossner *et al*. 2016). Following this direction, one should conduct much broader research into the relations between the procedural principles and the spatial, temporal, communicative, and "meanings" dimensions of courtrooms in specific jurisdictions.

5. Conclusion

One can say that Rapoport's ambitions are praiseworthy. He wants to create a general framework to address the significance of built environments and their impact on human beings. However, as was presented above, there are numerous details and aspects of his thinking that do not uphold this framework as a whole. Thus, Rapoport's theoretical approach (especially in its most interesting part related to non-verbal communication through the environment) does not have the potential to work as an umbrella-like framework that could integrate works and research on various dimensions of the courtroom. There are some serious weaknesses associated with this approach that make this impossible.

Nevertheless, the framework does provide interesting tools, and after some modifications following the chosen type of a built environment, these tools could be fruitfully used. This applies as well to the courtroom as a particular built environment. As we have demonstrated, some general tendencies associated with courtroom architecture might be analyzed in a constructive way *via* Rapoport's toolkit. The simple, but informative distinctions offered by Rapoport add something new for describing and understanding various courtroom environments. They also could bring some light on the emerging and pending issues such as an incorporation of the virtual courtroom, which definitely can be interpreted through Rapoport's lenses (for instance, and perhaps most crucially, if cameras utilized for the sake of virtual courtroom are focused exclusively on participants, then the majority of material cues in the room and "meanings" will be unnoticeable and thus ineffective). Moreover, Rapoport's framework easily can help policymakers or officials dealing with the administration of justice and architects or designers to ameliorate the desirable scope of different levels of "meanings" within the various types of courtrooms. What is also important, it calls for taking more into account users' perspectives when designing new courts and courtrooms.

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