AN INTERVIEW WITH AMOS RAPOPORT ON VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

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QUESTION

It has been almost ten years since the publication of
your *House Form and Culture* which has been highly
influential in architectural theory. Along with the
works of Christopher Alexander, Paul Oliver, Lloyd Kahn,
your work on vernacular architecture has become more or
less a school of thought. Since the publication of *House
Form and Culture*, why has there been such a silence on
the subject?

ANSWER

Firstly, I would say that there was not a complete
silence. I did a number of things after that. The chapter
on the Navajo and Pueblo really dealt with vernacular
architecture, so did the thing I did on Australian
aborigines. At various times and places I have always
referred to, or used examples from, traditional cultures
but basically, as the field of man-environment studies
began to emerge, I thought that it became rather more
interesting, or rather, more important to begin to deal
with some other issues and to develop a theoretical and
conceptual approach to the study of man-environment
interaction. Thus, one began to see vernacular more as a
specific aspect, or case, of a more general question. It
seemed more important to develop this general question,
the general approach, than to deal with the specific
aspects of it. So, just to reiterate while I think that
I always referred to vernacular in all my work, the main
thrust became more a matter of developing some new
conceptual apparatus.

QUESTION
How did your recent work on man-environment studies
effect or even change your thoughts on the vernacular, if
there has been any change?

ANSWER
Well, in a number of ways. Firstly, one became more
interested in vernacular design rather than in vernacular
architecture as one developed a notion of house settlement
systems, of behaviour setting systems, of the fact that
people moved through environment organised in space and
time. It became obvious that one had really to look at
vernacular urban design, vernacular landscape design; one
had to look at a whole environmental system, not just at
architecture because people do not live in buildings but
they live in systems of settings. So, we cannot understand
one without looking at the other.

Another thing that changed is that vernacular became more
and more important, I think, as a point of entry into
understanding man-environment interaction generally
rather than a thing in itself. Because, as one begins to
look at the development of architecture and settlements
—I recently did a couple of chapters on the cultural
origins of architecture and cultural origins of
settlements— what becomes very interesting is the very
great age of both. Buildings seem to go back two or three
million years. The antiquity of building and other human
achievements seem to be pushed back all the time. Very
complex settlements also seem to go back a very long
time. It becomes more and more important —and this has
always been central in my work on man-environment theory
as well— that any theories or any concepts must apply to
a very large sample both historically in time, and in
space cross-culturally. Therefore, vernacular becomes a
point of entry into the system. Also, it is easier to see
some of the processes and some of the mechanisms in
simpler and more managable systems than in very much more
complex systems. One begins at a particular point and one
works back and then sometimes one tests concepts which
were developed in man-environment studies generally, to
see if they apply also to vernacular situations. But one
also becomes slightly less certain about what vernacular
actually is. Maybe later on we can talk about that.
Because, I think this approach possibly leads to a
redefinition of vernacular and of what are the environments
contrasting with it. Finally, in coming back and looking
at vernacular design, one can begin to ask much more
sophisticated questions and maybe use more sophisticated
techniques that one did in 1967 or 1968 when both the
study of vernacular and, certainly, of man-environment
interaction was much less developed and when I,
personally, knew a lot less that I think, or I hope, I
do now.

QUESTION
Our next question will be on the definition of the
vernacular. Especially referring to your set of
definitions in *House Form and Culture*, after being

involved in man-environment studies, is it possible that
you can develop on the expanded definition of the
vernacular and, also, the conceptual and the theoretical
framework of the vernacular?

ANSWER
It is certainly a very large topic. I will have to be
very brief, simplify a number of things and leave out a
lot. But basically one can look at the vernacular either
as a product or as a process. In *House Form and Culture*
I looked at it mainly as a process of how it is designed.
I proposed a model which had to do with the use of an
accepted model with variations: the model was
unquestioned. Therefore it led to certain consequences.
Now, I think, one should look at vernacular both as a
product and a process. The other problem that one finds
is that, increasingly, it seems really rather unclear
what is vernacular and what it contrasts with. In other
words, using ideal types becomes a problem. Also, in all
these cases where modern popular design fits in is a
problem -I mentioned this briefly in *House Form and
Culture* and people have dealt with it since then- no one
however has really adequately fitted things such as
roadside strips, drive-in movies and suburban houses into
this kind of system. If you want to look both at product
and process -and I have recently done that in a paper
called "Learning from Vernacular" where I tried to
redefine it- it seems more useful rather than giving a
tight definition and working with ideal types, to use
what is called technically a "polythetic definition";
using, in other words, a number of variables so that the
definition is not a tight one but a "statistical" one. If
a particular environment meets "x" percent of the
criteria then it is what we call vernacular. If it does
not, it is something else. Without elaborating this here
at the moment, one can then say that the result is a
continuum of environments some of which we call
vernacular, some of which we call something else. But the
definition becomes much less critical. Also, if one
accepts the notion which I mentioned before, that one
wants to use vernacular as a point of entry into the
understanding of man-environment interaction, then you
can avoid the whole question of definition because all
you say is that in studying environments you want to
look at all the environments that people have in fact
produced. Almost inevitably most of them have then
become vernacular environments or popular environments or
anything else. So that not only can you redefine it, I
think, in a more useful way-this notion of polythetic
definition comes from biology and it has been used in
archaeology quite a lot, recently-but you can also avoid
the whole issue of definitions by just saying "we will
just look at all the kinds of environments no matter
what they are called". Then it becomes much less critical
what we call vernacular and what we call something else.
I think in a way it certainly does change the whole
approach because it becomes much less of a little ideal
thing sitting there all by itself which contrasts with
everything else.

QUESTION
Under any circumstances, can we say that vernacular
architecture or anything as such is what is opposing the
institutionalised one?

ANSWER
That becomes a problem again because one finds that in
many cases the same models or schemata are used in both
"high-style" or "polite architecture" or whatever you
wish to call it and also in so-called "vernacular". For
example, someone I know did some work on Roumanian houses
and churches and he shows that in fact both the house and
the church are based on the same model; just that one is
a bit more elaborated than the other. There has always
been both a move-up from vernacular to high-style, and a
trickle down from high-style to vernacular. It is really
very difficult to separate them. This is, in fact, one
good reason for changing the approach; because it is not
only difficult to define vernacular itself but even to
say in what way it contrasts with other things. I really
think that possibly we should give up this whole notion of ideal
types which many fields started with and have moved into
more subtle kinds of distinctions based on what are
essentially polythetic approaches. This may prove very
productive in this field as well. If you look at the
definition in *House Form and Culture* of a particular
model with variations, you could say the same thing for
the office buildings. Most office buildings are based on
a model-a core and office spaces around-with variations.
You put different curtain walls around it, different
proportions, different heights. A suburban house is also
a model with variations. So, it becomes a necessary but
not sufficient condition to define it. That is why, I
think, you need many additional variables to "describe"
rather than "define". That is the major distinction. I am
not so much worried anymore about "defining" rather I am
interested in "describing" characteristics of given
environments. Then we can say "here is an environment
with *this* set of characteristics; here is one with *that*
set of characteristics", we can call them what we will
but basically they form a continuum and this seems much
more important than to contrast ideal types. And, this
also gets rid of the problem of popular design like
squatter settlements, users adaptations of housing
projects and the like. All these things become a part of
a single continuum. You do not have to worry so much
about where it all fits in. You describe it in terms of a
set of descriptive variables.

QUESTION
In your mainly "culture-bound" definition of the
vernacular you seem either to pass by or not give much
importance to the socio-political or economic conditions
of a particular society. Is this on purpose, or can you
really separate cultural from the socio-political or
economic conditions?

ANSWER
I really had not thought very much about it. I neglect
it. I am just not interested in it, and it seems to me

that one can enter the system at any point. Obviously,
the culture and its expression is related to certain
social and political conditions and certainly the built
forms that result from the culture are greatly
constrained by economic, political and societal
variables. It seems to me that the more significant
starting point is, in fact, the culture although culture,
like environment, needs to be broken down into smaller
pieces. This idea of schemata and of structuring
principles becomes really a much more useful point of
entry in that the relationships to style, to behaviour,
to ongoing day-to-day activities can be conceptually
separated from the larger context in which they occur.
In other words, one could look at what actually is
happening without necessarily being concerned of how it
came to be that way: you can start at a given moment in
time and try to understand the system without going
through all the preceeding or antecedent variables. It
is the distinction between an antropologist who tries
to understand how human culture originated and myself
who, given a particular culture is interested in what
kind of environments result from it.

QUESTION
How would you define the state of art in the vernacular
architecture at the moment, especially in terms of its
teaching value and implementations drawn from vernacular
in contemporary design: In other words, what are its
effects on the praxis of architecture?

ANSWER
These are really two separate questions. The state of art
seems to be fairly confused at the moment. We get a whole
range of approaches starting with just classification
systems where people try to classify window shapes, roof
forms, and the like. This has been done for quite some
time and it is still being done. Then one finds more
analytical approaches where people try to describe and
analyse the forms, then one finds people who try to deal
with the transformation of forms, using structuralist
transformational approaches. At the other extreme are
those who are in a minority, who begin to try and relate
forms to behaviours. In other words, the hardware to the
software, to the people in them; how they use them, how
they think, what they do, where things happen, and so on.
This whole spectrum is occurring at the moment, but with
what I regard as the more important aspects being the
least developed. The state of the art, to my mind, is
still not satisfactory because the relationship of built
environments to what happens in them, the way they come
about from the cultural point of view, is still very
lacking.

The other question of how it influences teaching or even
practice is a topic that is particularly relevant. In
other words, "learning from vernacular"... Here again,
there are four possible points of view; all have occurred
in time and in different places, and probably still
coexist. You can either ignore vernacular which

certainly was the case for a long time, or you can
acknowledge its existence but then reject it because it
is seen as not having any valuable lessons. One can also
copy it directly which, unfortunately, is the most common
approach. In other words, people just copy the forms
without understanding what they mean or why they are
good. So you get some really ridiculous situations both
in developed and developing countries. Finally, there is
the approach that I am advocating: we analyse vernacular
through the concepts and models which we have developed in
studying man-environment interaction more generally,
derive lessons from that and apply the lessons to design.
This is a very different approach which seems to be the
least developed at the moment. In fact, I know very few
people who are really doing it. The most common at the
moment is still the first and the third: people who
either ignore vernacular completely or those who get very
romantic about it and copy superficial forms without
really understanding what is happening and why it is
good. Taking the fourth approach, the lessons could be
applied in different contexts and in different situations.

QUESTION
Outside the superficial issue of just copying from the
vernacular, can you dwell upon the process of the
vernacular and its teaching value on today's design? More
than just forms and shapes, obviously, there is a certain
quality and certain characteristics of vernacular which
definitely arise from its process. Can you dwell upon
this issue a little bit, please?

ANSWER
I agree with you that the product depends on the process
and, in fact, I think it still depends on the definition
that I used in *House Form and Culture*. If you have an
accepted model which everyone takes for granted and you
merely have variations on it, then one of the results in
terms of product is that the environment communicates
very clearly because the model is shared by everyone. The
results are environments and settings that have very high
degrees of relevance to people who, therefore, use them
in very appropriate ways. Thus, there is a good fit
between the life-style and the environment. It also leads
to the perceptual complexity of vernacular environments
which is what most of the designers like. If we have a
model with little variations, then the model is very
quickly understood. The variations produce the complexity,
the noticeable difference and, therefore, you get this
rather superb richness, opulence of vernacular
environments which most designers try to copy in formal
terms. But that does not work. With the exception of some
Third World situations and maybe using some notions about
open-ended design and personalisations, these kinds of
things, in terms of process, are very difficult to learn
from, except maybe analytically as ways of analysing
environments. It seems to me more useful, for learning
purposes, to analyse conceptually the forms-how they
contain behaviour, how they structure behaviour, how they
communicate, what their complexity is, how they relate to

landscapes-and to derive principles which can then be
possibly applied via other processes to design. It seems
to me very unlikely, with the exception of a few very
specific situations, that we can still use the same
processes that were used in traditional environments,
certainly in more complex societies, in large cities and
so on. It is critical to understand the processes and to
see how the process led to particular product-results.
The lessons go beyond merely the process, they lead to an
attempt at trying to understand why vernacular
environments work well. Then, I think, one could apply
the lessons. In the first instance, the major application
will in fact be in the Third World developing countries.
Firstly, because there are still viable vernaculars
there. Secondly, one can see the whole sequence from the
traditional vernacular to modified vernacular, to
squatter settlements. There we can see the process
actually in place, of how people change, the dynamics of
change, what is being given up, what is being retained,
what seem to be the important things. It becomes much
easier to apply the lessons very quickly than it would be
say, in other countries where at the moment, one is
almost doomed to apply formal lessons rather than the
more profound ones. Once again, as in studying vernacular,
there is a more logical place of entry with the
application at that point, and then working one's way
back to more complex situations. Not that the Third
World situations are not complex, but in terms of
learning from vernacular they are really still simpler
because the thing is still there. Whereas in Britain, in
Australia, in Canada or in the United States, where there
are vernaculars of course, they are no longer being
produced in the same sense that they are in many other
places in the world. My own feeling is that the models to
be developed for learning from vernacular will be mainly
based on analyses of Third World situations.

QUESTION
Actually, your recent remarks covered this question but
may we ask you to elaborate on the future of this line of
thought in architectural theory? What are the areas of
research, what are the things to be done in the area?

ANSWER
The future I do not know because if people reject this
approach it will have no future. The few times that I
have tried to get people to use it, it has not worked.
Bu this may be an educational process. In the long run
obviously the future is what we are concerned with. The
kind of analysis which I briefly described above, begins
with a given situation in a vernacular context, or in a
developing context and you look at the changes. You can
observe the process, the sequence of changes from the
most traditional to the most changed, going in one
direction. You can begin to project scenarios of likely
future developments which reduce the range of possible
futures. Therefore, you have narrowed the range of
alternatives that you really consider for the next twenty
or thirty years because you are dealing with a much

narrower segment of development. You can also study the
impact of new ideas. In other words, start from the other
end and look at what is happening in the elite sector,
and how trickle-down processes are occurring, which
elements seem to be adopted most quickly by self-built
projects, and by the ideal things that people are
thinking about. One can also begin to look at the impact
of media which is so critical: what do television
programmes show, what do newspapers show, what do
magazine pictures and films indicate, so that you can
almost begin to forecast which elements will get
incorporated first. By doing this kind of analysis in a
number of different domains and in different directions,
one can begin to define an area whereby one can begin to
say certain areas are much more likely to happen than
others.

There is another lesson which one can draw from
analysing vernacular in this way. Consider urbanisation,
for example. We find that in certain cultures there are
ready-made social and spatial units which lend themselves
to be applied very easily. For example, the Kampong in
Indonesia, the Barangay of the Philippines, the Friq in
North Africa are all sorts of socio-spatial units which
you can easily see as the constituent elements in a city
to varying degrees. The Kampong being the easiest, the
Friq being the most difficult. But if you then go to a
culture like Botswana, where there are no cities, no
urban tradition at all but a very scattered pattern of
isolated homesteads, it seems quite likely that
urbanisation is going to be much more difficult; many
more difficult processes of change will have to take
place. If you then go to the next step, into nomadic
cultures, this is going to be even more difficult. Thus,
you can even begin to predict the difficulty of
urbanisation, you can even begin to foresee at which
points these problems will arise and take measures in
advance to lessen or moderate these problems. Note that
the model, comes from man-environment studies in the most
general sense. If you have difficulties, for example,
stress which results from a big gap between one state and
another state, one of the ways of reducing this stress is
to modulate the rate of change. So you can begin to think
of designing environments which reduce certain aspects of
the rate of change while allowing others to continue. For
example, one might talk about providing supportive
environments at the community and dwelling level where
people continue certain social structures, family
structures, food habits, religion, ritual and so on,
whereas work patterns, or the modernisation of economy,
can proceed. In fact, there is some evidence which one
can find in literature that by providing a highly
supportive traditional home environment, modernisation
in other sectors can occur much rapidly, much more
rapidly than if you change everything all at once,
because then you can get into a culture breakdown;
everything breaks down and nothing works. Thus, I think
one can begin to apply whole set of supportive
environments to modulate, moderate and articulate the

rate of change. All these lessons begin to add up into
a powerful tool for analysing all sorts of very
interesting questions.

QUESTION
Talking about rapid urbanisation and the problems that it
raises in most of the highly concentrated, large cities,
you have mentioned that the lessons to be learned from
the vernacular can be very useful especially in the Third
World countries. Now, none of the activities, including
the architectural, is devoid of the mode of production.
Under these circumstances, especially in view of the
present mode of production in capitalist or socialist,
industrialised or unindustrialised, developed or under-
developed countries, and with the given mode of
production therein, what type of future do you see within
the framework of the process that the vernacular
architecture came about?

ANSWER
I do not know. As I say, I still think that the aspects
of the process have less applicability except in
developing countries where there is still the self-help
process whereby people still do a lot of their own
building, their own construction, their own shaping of
environments. But I really cannot see very much future
for it at the moment except for the very small groups in
the population in so-called developed countries. At the
moment it seems that the more important lessons really
have to do with the structuring of the environment and in
terms of forms such as Kampong or Barangay, because in a
lot of the activities of particular aid agencies,
internationally, the concept of people building their own
houses; core houses, sites and services, etc., is pretty
well accepted and applied. But the larger, organisational
structures are still imposed; the road layout, service
layout and so on. And it seems very often that these
layouts at the larger scale of the community or the
neighbourhood or whatever you want to call it, in fact,
inhibit certain developments of the dwellings so that
even though in terms of process or production people can
shape their own houses, they really cannot because the
larger layout blocks certain developments. It is implicit
in a particular road layout that everyone can have a
little house, but you cannot shape a compound for fifty
or a hundred people which may be desired in Ghana or in
Kampong in Indonesia. It seems to me that the major
immediate applications at the moment seem to be in
understanding the spatial organisation and the systems of
settings at this next higher scale of the community;
what is a relevant social group, what are the spatial
equivalents, how should the non-domestic settings be
related and shaped so that the other elements can then be
introduced? In terms of longer-range research, yes, I
would think that one would want very carefully to analyse
the processes that are used in traditional vernacular
which produce certain results and to see what their
equivalent might be in a highly developed situation. As an
off-hand example, since I have not thought of that much,

it may be that the processes both of production and of
building construction, of who does it, when they do it
and so on, have much more limited relevance than the
understanding of some of the other variables. But this
may just be a blindspot on my part.

QUESTION
We would like to ask whether you have any conclusive
remarks for the people working in Turkey – more or less
your Turkish colleagues? Would there be anything you
would like to add to what has been said so far in terms
of vernacular and its teaching value and vernacular in
its immediate application in the institutionalised
architecture, if we can make such a separation, or any
other comments that you may have?

ANSWER
One of the things that I really did not get around to
saying is this: one of the lessons of the vernacular is
that it is highly culture-specific. In traditional
situations each little area, each valley, each district,
each province, and, very often, each town has certain
uniquenesses to make it different than the next one. This
has both implications for communication and for use, but
also for the product because the more variations of this
kind there are the more complexity, obviously, because
instead of going through a uniform environment you go
through many transitions. It seems to me that one of the
more important lessons is that one needs to look at the
teachings of vernacular in a very highly culture-specific
context. In other words, Turkey probably is too large a
context to use as an example; maybe even Eastern Turkey
or Southern Turkey. One really needs to look at local
variations and see to what extent they are really still
relevant and significant. Many of the decisions being
taken on a very highly uniform base, not only for reasons
of ignorance but also for reasons of policy, are the
result of the fear among the policy decision-makers to
deal with variations, not because it is difficult but
because they are afraid of being accused of, say, being
prejudiced. They think that "different" means "worse",
therefore they will not give group A something different
than group B. It is much easier to say that everyone is
going to get the same thing, and this then proves that we
are treating everyone equally. One of the lessons to
realise is that the differences are not a bad thing but a
good thing and need to be capitalised on. One needs to be
very, very specific so that the analyses one does in one
region are not necessarily the ones one does in another.
It is a matter of becoming very sensitive to the
variations and to what they mean. This becomes extremely
relevant to *all* design, not just Third World design or
vernacular design, because this process of increasing
entropy is occurring everywhere. It is just as bad in the
United States as anywhere else, or in Australia; the
specific qualities of places, in terms of climate and
materials, life-style, habits, activity systems, food and
everything else, are just being destroyed. That may be
one of the rather universal lessons which may flow from

the so-called less developed countries to the more
developed. In other words, there are still differences
preserved but they are rapidly disappearing. In
archaeology there is a concept of "rescue archaeology";
maybe we need a concept of "rescue vernacular design" to
preserve some of these things that still exist before it
is too late. I feel very strongly that there are lessons
of this kind which have relevance for what you call
institutionalised architecture because they relate to
design in general. Why is it that in traditional
environments areas are different   yet not chaotic? They
vary in very systematic ways. You are aware of transitions
from one to the other. But each one in itself has this
consistency and uniformity. This is one of the big
lessons that we can learn. Because in design we have been
trying to achieve it for many years and have really not
succeeded. Another lesson is that vernacular seems to
have the ability of being added to, subtracted from, or
changed without losing its identity. It has what one must
call a very stable equilibrium. Whereas "high style
design", to go back to ideal type nomenclature, is very
unstable. You change one little thing in a classical
building and the whole thing looks like nonsense whereas
vernacular environments are completely, endlessly
flexible without losing their basic character. This is
another very important lesson when we talk about open-
ended design, flexibility and personalisation. How do you
create the kind of frameworks which allow for all these
things to happen without becoming just a mess or chaotic?
Again, there are lessons one could apply to climate, to
technology, to any number of questions which would lead
to a whole set of very general applications, not
specifically Third World, not specifically dealing with
urbanization, but dealing with basic issues of
architectural or design theory. So, in that sense, yes,
there is a great future for this approach if people will
use it.

QUESTION
Another important issue is the preservation of the
vernacular heritage as physical entities. Can you
elaborate upon that? Your points are very likely to be of
great interest especially for the Turkish academia.

ANSWER
I really cannot comment because I do not know the
situation: I have not been to Turkey for a long time. The
whole problem of how you preserve these things or, maybe
more importantly, how you preserve them without turning
them into a museum like Williamsburg (which, incidentally,
certainly may have its place). People do rescue
archaeology, maybe we need to rescue samples from all the
vernaculars for future references. But I really cannot
answer, or even address the actual problem, because I do
not know the situation. I do not think anyone can be very
successful either, because one of the interesting things
is that very often it is the academics or foreigners who
are interested in preservation whereas the local people
themselves seem to be very anxious to get rid of "all

that stuff". You can find quotations in literature from
people in Morocco and other countries saying "yes, we
realise how beautiful it is but we do not want any of it"
Hassan Fathy's experiment is a beautiful example where he
tried to do all the right things yet people rejected it
because they did not want mud brick, they did want
modern houses with big windows and all the rest of it. It
becomes a very critical issue of who is going to be using
those things. It may well be that if one wants to
preserve these areas, one maybe needs to accept that they
are going to be used not by the people themselves who
live there but maybe by the elites. Maybe it is the
university professors who will live in those places while
the people who have lived there now will move away. But
I really do not know the answer to that.

QUESTION
We have one final question. Most of the problems, or at
least some of the problems in institutionalised
architecture or contemporary architecture is attributed
to the deterministic approaches by the architects or even
those who consult the architects. Within these terms, can
you elaborate upon if there were any deterministic way of
approaches in the vernacular, or does its success lie in
a non-deterministic approach-due to its being a basic
response to the nature and to the needs of the people-by
the user or through a very strong contact with whoever
was building it? In the institutionalised architecture
there is at least the professional who is interpreting
the needs of the user.

ANSWER
I do not understand the use of determinism in this
situation, but let us forget this for the moment and look
at this last point. Firstly, in many vernacular
situations there were specialists involved also. Even in
the so-called primitive or preliterate cultures one finds
that specialists existed and they were very highly
thought of. I recently discovered that in traditional New
Guinea, in the Sepik River area there were these big
men's houses being built and the people who painted the
decorations owned these designs. If someone used your
design they had to pay a fee, which is just like our
copyright. The same thing applied to ritual music and
dances. There were specialists even then. The
difference was that the users and the specialists a) had
closer contact, b) specialists were not full-time
specialists and mainly, c) that the specialists, if
there were any, and the users shared the same basic
patterns, models, culture and life-style. Therefore they
understood exactly what was involved. In that sense, it
seems to me that one of the answers is that through the
application of man-environment studies it is possible for
experts and professionals, even for outsiders, to analyse
the situation in such a way that they provide the kind of
organisational frameworks which the people themselves
would want to have. I would even go further. Although I
know many people disagree with me, I believe that the
outside person can see some of these things more clearly

because the insiders take things so much for granted that they cannot articulate them. They really do not know what is going on. It sometimes takes the trained outside observer to really see what is important and what is significant. Therefore, I have some hesitancy about some of these anti-professional, anti-specialist attitudes which seem quite common. Obviously, there is a vast fund of knowledge and learning from traditional situtations which one needs to use. This applies not only to design but also to medicine. Increasingly, people realise that folk-medicine is important. It applies to psychiatry, to agriculture, to animal husbandry, to all sorts of places where experts tended to come in and apply *a priori* standards and techniques Now they come and try to find how and why the things work. There is a very well-known example from Turkey where agricultural experts came in and tried to remove all the rocks from fields because rocks were obviously a bad thing. Then they discovered that rocks were important because dew condensed on them and produced the only water the fields in fact had. So when you removed the rocks, fields went dry and the crops failed. If people do something for a long time, they often have very good reasons for it but this does not mean that you let the people continue doing them. Because it may well be that if you want to use tractors you cannot have the rocks. But once you have understood the principle, then a specialist or an expert can say "if that is the principle behind these rocks, what other ways are there for achieving the same objective?" Knowing the range of alternatives they can, possibly, suggest ways which are better, not just from that point of view but which introduce other benefits as well. Thus it becomes a very complex interplay of learning from the people themselves and applying some of the knowledge, methods and concepts of outside or inside experts, I do not really care where they come from. The problem with many designers is that they have *a priori*, rather rigid, determinist theories which are based on nothing but their own guesswork. They would come in with, for instance, La Ville Radieuse, they would build it anywhere in the world, and it did not work anywhere in the world; it did not make a difference where you built it, it was pretty bad anyway because it was based on a complete neglect of how people live and how they use space, what privacy is, what a house means and so on. Of course determinism is one of those words which can be interpreted in many different ways, some of which are very important. But this is not the place to start on that.

ÖZET

AMOS RAPOPORT İLE YÖRE MİMARLIĞI ÜZERİNE BİR SÖYLEŞİ

Amos Rapoport ile *House Form and Culture(Konut Biçimi ve Kültür)* adlı yapıtının yayımlanışından on yıl sonra yapılan söyleşide yazarın yöre mimarlığı görüşünde genel olarak şu aşamalar saptandı.

Yazar, model-ürün(süreç-sonuç) ilişkisinin bütünlüğünü savunmakla birlikte, *House Form and Culture* yapıtındaki modelci yaklaşımdan ayrılarak ürüne ağırlık vermektedir. *vernacular*(yöre değerlerini taşıyan, yansıtan, yöre kültürünün parçası olan) kavramında önemli bir aşamayı vurgulayarak, yöre mimarlığını bir üst düzeyde, çevre kapsamında görmekte; artık *vernacular architecture*(yöre mimarlığı) üzerine değil, *vernacular design*(dikkat edilirse *vernacular* artık "yöre" sözcüğünü zorlamakta ve bu çok önemli kavramın Türkçe'de enine boyuna ve kültür-zaman boyutunda işlenip eğitimimize kazandırılmasına gereklilik vardır, yalnız bu konu, burada, bu özetin boyutlarının çok çok dışındadır) üzerine ağırlık verilmeli görüşünü savunmaktadır.

Yazar, *polythetic* tanım dediği "çevre" düzeyindeki çeşitlilik ve değişkenlerin değişen toplamlarının, birden çok açıklamalı, bir bakıma istatistik uzanımlı, *vernacular* kavramı üzerinde durmakta, tekilci, romantik, gerekirci, kopyacı tanımların üzerine çıkmaya çalışmaktadır.

Rapoport şu çelişkiyi vurgulamaktadır: Belirli bir mimarca görüşün bulduğu yöre değerlerini taşıyan algılamalar ile yöre değerleri taşıyan ortamların içinde bulundukları halde artık onları yaşamak istemeyen ve sürekli değişim içinde bulunan kitleler arasındaki çelişki.