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Rethinking Openness: Courthouses in the United States

AUTHOR(S)

Debajyoti Pati, Craig Zimring and Mallika Bose. (2007). The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 24(4), 308-324.

ABSTRACT:

Public architecture in the United States is confronted with the seemingly opposing needs of openness of a democratic society and heightened security concerns in a post-September 11th world. The reconciliation of these two contrasting needs is hindered by a lack of common understanding of the concept of openness. The authors believe that a better understanding of the concept of openness in the context of design will help in making sensible trade-offs between openness and security concerns in public buildings. Using courthouses as an example of public architecture, the authors investigate different interpretations of openness from the design teams' point of view. The study reveals six conceptualizations of openness: accessibility, transparency, exposure, organizational clarity, illumination, and inclusiveness.

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